

Marriage and Love in the Narrative Lay in French (12th and 13th Centuries):

A Historical and Literary Study

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ABSTRACT

The narrative lay in French (not to be confused with the Occitanian lyric lay which resembled the *descort*) flourished in Northern France and Britain in the years c. 1150–1250. This thesis discusses its peculiar characteristics, form, content, chronology and audience, which are often disputed, as a necessary prelude to an examination of the treatment of love and marriage contained in them. This is preceded by a study of contemporary attitudes to marriage among the nobility, taking ecclesiastical and lay opinions into account, and likewise a study is made of attitudes towards love, concentrating on influential contemporary French and Latin treatises on the subject.

In the lays marriage and love are prominent factors, often included even when plainly extraneous to the authors' source material. Some authors devote their whole attention to them, and the narrative content is but slight. Most lays avoid these extremes. Marriage is perceived as an event over which individuals (particularly women) have little control, since it was generally assumed that marriage was an important means of achieving stability, and so many people had a legitimate interest in arranging them for reasons other than emotional satisfaction. Consequently, marriages were frequently unavoidable, unwelcome and unhappy.

At the same time, love was highly regarded by the nobility as an essential personal experience, eagerly sought and accepted despite the dangers it might have posed as a threat to social order if it was extra-marital; agents of that order defended their interests vigorously. The lays presented no easily available alternative to marriage (death or the Otherworld being the only possibilities), but found love and marriage compatible, provided individuals were consulted, and in this they display commonsense humanity compared with the legalism of Church and feudal society, and are refreshingly free of the over-complexities of theories of love.

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1. The French Narrative Lay in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.

The existence in the latter part of the twelfth century and the first half of the thirteenth century of a short narrative genre specialising in courtly tales, often with a Celtic colouration, known as the *lai* or *lai breton*, is attested in a number of ways. Contemporary literature frequently mentions lays, often in connection with music, as part of an entertainment at court or as a means by which individuals commemorate an important event or console themselves. Sometimes these lays are given titles and a summary of the content may even be given: such are the so-called "phantom lays".¹ Denis Piramus speaks of lays and of their author as well. Some manuscripts exist that are collections of lays: Ms. Harley 978 is celebrated for the twelve *Lais* of Marie de France.² In the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris Ms. 1104 bears the incipit "Ci commencent les lays de Bretagne"³ and contains 24 lays of various authorship. Some lays were translated into Old Norse for King Haakon Haakonsson (1217-1263), which shows that the genre enjoyed popularity outside its homeland of Northern France and Angevin England. Indeed the lays won a new lease of life in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when some were translated into English. Additionally the Shrewsbury School manuscript⁴ preserves a list of 67 titles of lays without, unfortunately, preserving the narratives. Finally, there is the evidence of the works themselves; a handful of stories to which the author, scribe or compiler of a manuscript has given the title of lay in preference to that of *fabliau*, *conte* or *dit*.

It is not our purpose in this thesis to dwell at length on matters connected with definition of genre; this has proved a fruitful field of study for many other critics in the past. However, in view of the fact that there is little general agreement on what constitutes a lay, we have decided that there is a case for a brief examination of some questions relating to the definition of genre as a preliminary step to selecting works to form a corpus of lays. It is true that some modern critics have minimised distinctions between the short narrative genres. Paul Zumthor, for example, has written "entre les genres narratifs brefs traditionnellement écrits en octosyllabes, fabliau, lai et "dit" (...), il est impossible de relever des distinctions valables".⁵ Glyn Burgess and Keith Busby have commented more helpfully that "recent genre criticism also suggests that, rather than seek to make strict definition of genres, we may better view medieval vernacular literature as a system of interdependent types each with characteristic features. Some of these features, but not all, are interchangeable and may be found in works of a basically different kind".⁶ Medieval authors did however distinguish between genres by the use of titles such as *lai*, *fabliau* and *roman* and doubtless had a more intuitive sense of what constituted a lay than even the most acute critic of more modern eras.

The lay is difficult to define because those narratives surviving which bear this title differ widely in subject matter, form and tone. Although many lays and some romances (eg. *le Roman de Horn* and *Galeron de Bretagne*) contain descriptions of how lays were composed, there is nothing extant as detailed as the following definition of the lay as it existed in the

realm of the *langue d'oc*: “Si vols fer *lays*, deus parlar de Deu e de segle, o di eximpli o de proverbis de laurons ses fement d’amor, qui sia axi plazent a Deu co al segle; e deus saber ques de far e dir ab contriccio tota via, e ab novell e plazen, o de esgleya o d’autre manera. E sapies que y ha mester aytantes cobles com en la canço, et aytantes tornades; e segueix la rahon e la manera axi com eu t’ay dit (...) *Lays* es appellat per ço *lays* quis deu far ab gran contriccio, e ab gran moviment de cor vers Deu o vers aycellas causas de que volrass parlar”.⁷ It will be appreciated that this description bears no resemblance to the narrative lay in French. The difficulties experienced are common to all short narrative genres. Jean Rychner, commenting on Per Nykrog’s work on the *fabliau*, makes this comment which is applicable to any attempt to define the lay: “son premier soin devait être (...) de délimiter son matériel, de dresser son inventaire: il avait à décider en premier lieu des pièces qui allaient être ou ne pas être pour lui des *fabliaux*. Pour le faire, il se fondait naturellement sur une définition, dans laquelle se trouvaient presque nécessairement impliquée déjà la description future”.⁸ The dangers of such an approach can be seen in the case of Jean Frappier, who saw the notion of “*aventure*” linked to the structure of the lay as the determining feature of the lay.⁹ This led him to reject *Equitan*, *Bisclavret*, *Chaitivel* and *Deus Amanz* from his canon of Marie de France’s *Lais* despite his assertion that “quand l’auteur lui-même désigne son œuvre comme un *lai* (...) je me refuse en principe à lui infliger un démenti. Cet auteur devrait savoir ce qu’il voulait dire”.¹⁰ This is not the only attempted definition that has foundered in the same way. Subject matter and structure alike are not certain guides in this matter. Moreover, over-concentration on the work of Marie de France has led to distortion. Her *Lais* are accepted by many critics as the earliest extant examples and the model to which other lays should conform. Many lays do not do this, and so were discounted. In order to minimise the difficulties we have decided, as Frappier originally did, to employ self-definition: “the main generic test for a Breton lay is self-determination – if the poem says that it is a Breton lay, so it must be”.¹¹ We require very strong motivation to set aside the decision of an author or of his contemporaries who thought a narrative should be included in a collection of lays. Several critics have drawn up inventories of lays as part of their own work. These are reproduced below. The differences may be attributed to critical disagreement and the fact that some scholars include Norse, and English lays as well.

Inventories of Lays.

	Baader	Baum	Donovan	Dubuis	Payen	Wennburg	Williams
Amours	X	X		X		X	
Aristote	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Auberee	X						
<i>Bisclavret</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blanc Chevalier				X	X		
Chaitivel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Chev. au Chainse						X	
Chev. qui recouvra						X	
<i>Chevrefoil</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Conseil	X	X	X	X		X	
Cor	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Desiré	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dit du levrier				X	X		
<i>Deus Amanz</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Doon	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Eliduc</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Epervier	X	X	X	X		X	
Epine	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Equitan</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fresne</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Graelent	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Guigemar</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guillaume au faucon						X	
Guingamor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Haveloc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ignare	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<i>Lanval</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Laustic</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lechor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mantel	X	X	X			X	X
Melion	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Milun</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nabaret	X	X	X	X		X	X
Narcisse	X	(X)				X	
Oiselet	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ombre	X	X	X	X	X		
Ourse (<i>Perce-forest</i>)		(X)		X	X		
Ourse (Jean de Condé)					X		
Pergamon		(X)			X		
Philomena						X	
Pitieux		(X)			X		
Pyrame et Tisbé	X	(X)				X	
Rose		X					
Trot	X	X	X		X	X	X
Tydorel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tyolet	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vair Palefroi	X	X		X		X	
Yonec	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Notes

1. Baader also includes the English lays *Sir Launfal*, *Lay of Haveloc*, *Sir Gowther*, *Lay le Freine*, *Emaré*, *Sire Degare* and *The Franklin's Tale*, *Sir Orfeo* and *The Erle of Toulous*. He also includes all the *Strengleikar*. List of lays in the Bibliography pp.

351-56.

2. Baum gives an *inventaire de base*, items in brackets being provisionally admitted. Although he mentions an *inventaire exhaustif* (p. 18), he does not give one, but says that it would include works such as *Philomena*, the *Folies Tristan*, *Chevalier à l'épée*, *Mule sans frein* and the *Châtelaine de Vergi* (p. 19).
3. Donovan also includes the *Strengleikar*, the same English lays listed in Note 1 with the addition of the following variants of *Lanval*: *Sir Lambewell*, *Sir Labewelle*, *Sir Lamwell*, *Sir Landaval*. He also adds 2 phantom lays, *Guiron* and *Orphee*. List from Bibliography pp. 262-65.
4. Roger Dubuis does not give a list as such. The list given is derived from the editions given on pp. 573-4 and 569-70.
5. Payen does not draw up an inventory but cites all these works in his essay.
6. See the list given in chapter 4 of Wennburg's ^{thesis} ~~thesis~~.
7. Williams (only) intends to draw up a canon of anonymous Breton lays and so rejects *Cor* and *Ignaure* (not anonymous) and *Aristote*, *Conseil*, *Narcisse* and *Vair Palefroi* (not Breton). He also includes all of Marie's *Lais*.

Excluding non-French lays, 48 works are accorded the title of lay by modern critics (and to these we could add *Ille et Galeron*) . ←

Taking works by Marie de France, there is one point that requires clarification. In the past doubts have been raised as to whether or not Marie thought of herself as an author of lays. It is a matter of fact that she generally distinguishes between the hypothetical (or at least non-extant) lay composed by the ancients (or the Bretons) and her own poem, which she calls a *conte* eg.

→ De un mut ancien lai bretun
Le cunte et tute la reisun
Vus dirai...

Eliduc 1-3

Martin de Riquer sums up the evolution of the lay: "A fin de conservar el recuerdo (*pur remembrance*) de ciertas anécdotas, llamadas *aventures*, alguien, generalmente los bretones, hicieron ciertos *lais*. Maria de Francia jamás afirma que ella haya hecho *lais* ni da el nombre de *lais* a sus narraciones".¹² If we were to accept this, it would be incorrect to include the *Lais* in our study. The mistake, if it is one, is longstanding. The title has been used since Warnke's edition of 1885. More importantly, her contemporaries did not observe the separation she makes. Her first known critic, the monk Denis Piramus, refers to

... dame Marie autresi,
Ki en rime fist e basti
E compassa les vers de lais,
Ke ne sunt pas del tut verais;
E si en est ele mult loée
E li rime par tut amée.

35-40

There is then a certain consistency in following this tradition. Other critics have quarrelled with the use of the term to designate narratives because of the lay's links with the lyric composition from which it is supposed to derive. Jean Maillard writes "Marie de France et ses épigones ont créé un genre littéraire, celui de la "nouvelle versifiée" s'inspirant de récits d'origine souvent celtique, dont elle offre un résumé d'ensemble ou partiel. Ces nouvelles sont abusivement appelées *lais* par leurs auteurs, ce terme désignant les seuls fragments lyriques de ces légendes".¹³ Nevertheless, as Frappier remarked, "il n'en reste pas moins vrai qu'après Marie de France, ou de son vivant déjà, on n'a pas dû tarder beaucoup à nommer *lai* le type de conte qu'elle avait mis à la mode. En tout cas il est sûr que Jean Renart et Huon le Roi entendent par *lai* un genre bel et bien narratif".¹⁴ Perhaps the argument is of limited relevance as Marie was only continuing a process that had already taken place once, as Rachel Bromwich points out: "there is no need to distinguish between the *contes* and the *lais* to which Marie refers, since she and her contemporaries were only doing in their own language what the Bretons had already done in theirs – that is, versifying older narratives. Marie attempted to give free renderings in French of *contes* which had already been versified in Breton, no doubt to a musical accompaniment on the *rote* (...). She knew that narrative poems of a type somewhat similar to her own existed in Breton, for at some previous date which can hardly have been earlier than the beginning of the twelfth century the older Breton prose-verse saga with lyrical interludes of the Llywarch Hen type had begun to be recast in the form of narrative lays".¹⁵ This tradition was continued when the French lays were translated into Norse and then English. In addition, it is by no means certain that Marie invariably distinguishes between her own work and its source. Philippe Ménard justly notes that "à certains moments l'auteur appelle ses propres créations des *lais* et se considère comme écrivain des *lais*. Le commencement du *Fresne* ou d'*Yonec* le montre sans ambages. De même les derniers vers de *Chèvrefeuille*:

Dit vus en ai la verité
Del lai que j'ai ici cunté .

117-18

On a donc parfaitement raison d'appeler du terme de *lais* les productions de Marie de France",¹⁶ and we see no reason to exclude Marie's *Lais* from our study.

Doubts have also been expressed about the "true" genre of Robert Biket's *Lai du Cor*.¹⁷ There are two reasons for this. C.T. Erickson, who edited it, defined a lay as "a poem written in octosyllabic couplets, dealing with a single romantic adventure"¹⁸. *Cor* presents the oddity of being written in hexasyllabic couplets and the material has little to do with romantic adventure, being a rather scurrilous tale, if amusing, about infidelity and jealousy. Robert Biket however had no doubts on this score, claiming, like Marie, that his tale is based on the original composed, supposedly, by the hero of the lay:

Seingours, cest lai trova
Garadue ki fest l'a.

583-84

In addition, we would agree with Erickson that the defence of love by Garadue's *amie* materially assists the case for treating *Cor* as the lay its author evidently considered it to be.

Although it is an anonymous work, we should consider here the case of *Mantel*¹⁹ to be included in this study because of its manifest similarities with *Cor* in its subject and setting; that is, a chastity test at the court of King Arthur. *Mantel's* genre is difficult to determine as the author makes no indication, and while the tale is both Celtic and courtly, its persistently misogynistic tone and the bitter ridicule poured on the unfaithful ladies differentiate *Mantel*

from other lays and give it more affinity with the *fabliaux*. Its author uses the term “*aventure*” but this term is by no means confined to lays.²⁰ Of 5 extant manuscripts only one scribe calls it a lay; this however is B.N. 1104, so evidently the compiler of this collection thought *Mantel* was a lay. It was also translated for King Haakon as *Möttulsaga* (although it did not apparently form part of the *Strengleikar*). Critical disagreement is rife. Jean-Charles Payen admitted that “par sa forme et par son fond, le *Mantel* pourrait bien prétendre au nom de “lai de Bretagne” qui lui est assigné par le ms. Bibl. nat. nouv. acq. fr. 1104”.²¹ However, he finally decided it is “un authentique fabliau à cause de sa verve un peu égrillade”.²² Richard Baum takes the opposite view: “puisque le sujet est sensiblement le même que celui du *Cor* explicitement qualifié de *lai* et assez généralement considéré comme un *lai breton*, parfois même comme un des plus anciens spécimens du genre, et puisque le cadre des deux poèmes est *arthurien*, il semblait légitime de l’admettre au nombre des lais narratifs”.²³ It is in the tone that *Cor* and *Mantel* differ most obviously. The former is light-hearted whereas in the latter all-pervasive bad temper lingers after the resolution of the tale. However we would agree with Philip Bennett that *Mantel* is a lay: “quant au terme *lai*, nous le gardons, bien qu’il ne paraisse que dans le M.S. n.a. 1104, qui est un recueil de lais bretons. L’ambiance féerique et chevaleresque qu’on trouve d’habitude dans cette sorte de poèmes est sans doute traitée sur un ton ironique dans celui-ci, mais toutefois son atmosphère n’est pas aussi brutale que celle d’*Equitan* de Marie de France. En outre les personnages du poème dérivent uniquement de la littérature arthurienne de l’époque, et, si l’épilogue de l’histoire, en partie moralisateur et en partie humoristique, n’est pas typique de ceux des *Lais* de Marie,

le prologue, dans lequel le poète parle de l’*aventure* qui provoqua la composition du lai, et réclame pour lui seul la connaissance de la version authentique de l’histoire, appartient bel et bien au genre”.²⁴ *Mantel* is therefore retained.

Another equally contentious tale is the tragic story of *Ignauze*²⁵ by Renaus (possibly after either Renaud de Beaujeu or Renaud de Bagé). This bizarre story mingles comedy and tragedy and does not shrink from bad taste either. Lucien Foulet thought it “un fabliau alerte, spirituel parfois, un lai, non pas”.²⁶ Rita Lejeune follows Foulet, remarking that if “fabliau alerte” is a harsh judgement, “ce n’est pas non plus un véritable lai”²⁷ and believed it showed a certain decadence in the genre. Per Nykrog compromised by calling it a “lai burlesque” in which “des personnages de grand style” are mixed with “des événements de style bas”²⁸ in order to show that heroic figures had their problems too. Jean-Charles Payen declares that Renaud gave his tale the title of lay to “bien marquer que cette œuvre appartenait à une littérature de pure fiction, par opposition à des romans prétendument historiques”.²⁹ The events are improbable but this is acceptable if the “invraisemblance reste tolérable si elle s’inscrit dans le cadre d’un genre qui postule une fuite constante dans l’imagination”.³⁰ It has to be said though that Renaus, like many authors of lays, claims that his tale is authentic, and we should not forget that many *romans* are just as improbable as *Ignauze*. Roger Dubuis, despite sharing Rita Lejeune’s reservations about the degeneracy of the poem defends Renaus’ designation: “il n’en faut pas moins se rendre à l’évidence; c’est un lai certifié tel par son auteur et ce n’est pas à nous, quelle que soit notre conviction propre, qu’il appartient de modifier cette appellation”.³¹ This is surely the crux of the matter. Renaus is positive about his intentions:

C’est la matere de cel lay
 Ichi le vous definerai
 Francois, Poitevin et Breton
 L’apielent le Lay del Prison.

657-60

We might quarrel with the title – Renaus obviously meant it to be called “The Prisoner” – but not with the genre.

The *Lai de l’Ombre*³² has also attracted disagreement. Jean-Charles Payen thought the high proportion of dialogue compared to Marie’s *Lais* departed from the original sobriety of the genre: “les subtilités du langage courtois exigent des procédés d’expression trop délicats pour se plier aux contraintes d’une narration efficace”,³³ which is why *Ombre* does not appear in any of the extant collections of lays.³⁴ He counted it as a “nouvelle en vers”. and concluded that in calling it a lay Jean Renart “dénature le genre qu’il utilise”.³⁵ Ancillary to this, there is the lack of any supernatural motif (unless we count as supernatural the knight’s ability to remove a ring from the lady’s finger and replace it with his own without her noticing anything). Jean Renart has no such reservations: the title is embedded in the prologue:

Or escoutez en icest conte
que ferai, s’aucuns ne m’encombe
et dirai ci, du Lay de l’Ombre.

50-2

This is repeated in the conclusion:

Ici fenist li Lais de l’Ombre:
contez, vos qui savez de nombre!

961-62

As stated, we prefer to take the author’s designation, and really there is no reason to exclude *Ombre* simply because it contains no Celtic material and has a high proportion of dialogue.

Little work has been done on Huon le Roi’s *Lai du Vair Palefroi*³⁶. It is generally classed as a *fabliau*. Joseph Bedier thought of it as one of the “contes sentimentaux” which showed how “des transitions insensibles nous mènent du fabliau proprement dit au lai, dans le sens primitif du mot”.³⁷ *Vair Palefroi* is sentimental and melodramatic but Huon has no doubts:

En ce lay du Vair Palefroi
Orrez le sens HUON LE ROI
Auques regnablement descendre;

29-31

There is nothing that could lead us seriously to deny that *Vair Palefroi* is a lay.

The *Lay d’Amours* by a certain Girarz has been ignored since its publication by Gaston Paris at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁸ It differs extensively from other extant lays in being apparently a blow-by-blow account of a love affair composed by Girarz for the delectation of one of the principals, and left unfinished because discretion became necessary. Paris commented “Girard a eu la fantaisie de donner à son ouvrage le nom de *lais* – au pluriel, sans doute à cause des deux parties – qu’il ne mérite ni pour le fond ni pour la forme”.³⁹ Certainly *Amours* is unlike any other lay, but the author concludes

Li mes s’en va qui s’avoia
A li, et cis contes remaint
Jusqu’a tant que, besoinz remaint
Le message qui l’escrit porte:
Car s’il revient et il aporte
Autres noveles que devant,
GIRARZ dira des lays avant.

512-18

Given this statement, and the fact that the lay is included in Ms. 1104, it is retained despite its manifest peculiarities.

A much better known work is the *Lai d’Aristote* by Henri,⁴⁰ possibly Henri d’Andelys, author of the *Bataille des Vins* and the *Dit du Chancelier Philippe*. The audacious tale,

showing how the honoured philosopher allows himself to be placed in a ludicrous situation because of the power of love, has nothing to do with Celtic myth and the genre has been disputed because of these two facts. Maurice Delbouille, in his edition, states that the attitude, style and title are determined by the subject and the characters. The situation is one of low comedy and suitable for a *fabliau*, but noble characters like Aristote and Alixandre merit more respectful treatment than that accorded to the villeins and townsmen of the *fabliaux*. Henri maintains the comedy within the framework of a lay, but Delbouille considers he treads a very fine line between the two genres, concluding that Henri has written "sous le titre et les apparences d'un lai, un fabliau du meilleur cru"⁴¹ and that *Aristote*, apparently "le plus audacieux des lais" is in fact "le plus fin et le plus élégant des fabliaux".⁴² Henri himself is reticent about the genre, referring to his work as a "dit": "en cest dit ..." 517. He is more expansive on other aspects of it: the excellence of his material and the care with which he has composed his tale with the aim of pleasing a discerning audience:

Or revenrai a mon traité
 D'un affaire que g'enpris ai,
 Dont l'aventure molt prisai
 Quant g'en ai la matere oïe,
bien Qui doit estre desploïe
 Et dite par rime et retraite,
 Sans vilanie et sanz retraite,
 Quar œvre ou vilanie cort
 Ne doit estre contee a cort.

38-46

The prologue and epilogue in which he explains the value and meaning of his work are, at 59 and 63 lines respectively (out of a total of 579 lines,) among the longest in any short narrative. This insistence is found in many other lays, especially in Marie's work. If Henri said nothing explicit about his intentions as to genre, scribes are more forthcoming. Ms. B.N. 837 entitles it "Li lais d'Aristote" and concludes "Explicit li lais d'Aristote". Ms. B.N. 1104 begins "C'est le lay d'Aristote" and ends "Li lays d'Aristote" and is of course a collection of lays. The title of ms. Arsenal 3516 has been cut but was probably "lay". We must conclude that a body of contemporary opinion was convinced that *Aristote* was a lay and did not require a specific statement from the author to this effect. Maurice Delbouille, while admitting that the farcial elements in the plot allied *Aristote* to the *fabliau*, concludes in the end that "c'est bien un *lai*, c'est-à-dire un conte d'inspiration courtoise à l'honneur de l'amour, et non pas un *fabliau*, c'est-à-dire un poème plaisant d'allure plus ou moins discrète, qu'Henri d'Andeli prétendait offrir au public. Cela ressort des assurances qu'il prodigue dans son prologue, des commentaires dont il truffe son récit et des conclusions qu'il en tire *in fine*".⁴³ *Aristote* is then "un lai courtois", risqué sans doute, mais digne de ton et d'intention".⁴⁴

The author of the *Lai du Conseil*⁴⁵ does not name himself but informs his public of his status:

Uns chevaliers qui ne vout mie
 Que l'aventure fust perie
 Nous a cest lai mis en romanz
 por enseigner les vrais amanz

855-58

Conseil is particularly interesting being an "art d'aimer" given a framing story and some of the appurtenances of the lay. Albert Barth, its only editor, states categorically that "von echten *Lai* hat das *Lai du Conseil* nicht mehr als den Namen".⁴⁶ No doubt this is because he was following Gaston Paris and certainly *Conseil* bears small resemblance to any of Marie's

Lais or to those published by Paris. The knight is quite firm however: “li lais du conseil nous chastoie” 835 he declares, adding “li lais du conseil fine et conte” 846. Therefore, although *Conseil* is mostly exactly what the title would lead us to expect, it is a genuine lay.

The anonymous lays⁴⁷ have given rise to less dispute either because their material is clearly Celtic or because the authors firmly claim to be writing in the tradition of the Breton lay. This is so in *Graelent*, *Guingamor*, *Desiré*, *Tydorel*, *Tyolet*, *Épine*, *Melion* and *Doon*.⁴⁸ In the past aspersions have been cast on the quality of some of these lays and on their authors. Lucien Foulet rejected *Tydorel*, announcing that the author, “lacking artistic sense, spoiled his fine legend and that he belonged to the generation which no longer believed in the authenticity of the tales they related”.⁴⁹ It seems to us that an author’s skill and belief in the veracity of his material cannot possibly be used to determine genre. Other authors, notably those of *Graelent*, *Guingamor*, *Desiré*, *Doon* and *Melion*, have been accused of plagiarising elements from Marie de France, but this scarcely precludes them from being considered lays in their own right, and may even be thought to reinforce their genre.

More removed from the examples cited above, but still claiming to be authentic Breton lays, are *Nabaret*, *Trot*, and *Lecheor*.⁵⁰ At a mere 48 lines, *Nabaret* is the shortest extant lay, but it lacks nothing in the formal sense. The opening lines:

En Bretagne fu li laiz fet
ke nus appellum Nabaret 1-2

situate events in the heartland of the genre (either Great Britain or Brittany – we cannot be sure which). The material is not specifically Celtic, recounting as it does how a banal domestic dispute is concluded by a particularly witty remark, but it then goes on to relate how a lay was composed “pur le deduit de la parole”^{M5} in order to preserve the joke for posterity:

Cil ki de lais tindrent l’escole
de Nabarez un lai noterent
e de sun nun le lai nomerent. 46-8

In this respect, *Nabaret* has strong affinities with *Ignauze*, *Chaitivel*, *Lecheor*, *Cor* and *Chevrefoil*, all of which recount how lays were composed. Despite this unequivocal designation, the flippancy of the material has led some critics to dismiss *Nabaret*. Mortimer J. Donovan calls it an “elevated fabliau”⁵¹ and Prudence Tobin classes it with *Lecheor* as “un effort conscient pour se moquer des lais: c’est-à-dire une parodie”.⁵² Harry Williams on the other hand accepted it because of its Breton setting.⁵³ We see no reason to discount *Nabaret*. The preservation of a good joke is as worthy an object as that of a lover’s sighs, and there is little point in claiming that *Nabaret* must be a parody because of its humour, as if humour were the exclusive possession of the *fabliau*. We accept that *Nabaret* is properly a lay, which was evidently the author’s opinion also.

Lecheor is probably the most controversial of all lays. It covers much that is found in other lays: how a lay is composed, the choice of a suitable subject closely allied with an interest in love. Of the first, Gaston Paris remarked of the principle of collective composition “l’introduction de ce lai est fort curieuse pour la manière dont on se représentait la production de la poésie traditionnelle bretonne”.⁵⁴ We must point out however that *Nabaret* and *Ignauze* both hint that this was not an unknown practice. Paris did not dwell on the subject matter of the ladies’ lay which he considered to be obscene and contrary to the courtly ethos he expected in a lay, although he recognised the skill and discretion of the author; “le ton élégant (...) règne; le poète veut exciter le sourire et non le gros rire que provoquent les fableaux

(sic)

obscènes".⁵⁵ The author is positive about his intentions:

D'icest lai dient li plusor
Que c'est le lai du lecheor,
Ne voil pas dire le droit non,
C'on nu me tort a mesprisun.
Selonc le conte que j'oi
Vos ai le lai ainsint feni.

120-25

Despite his protestations, only the dullest reader could have failed to guess the correct title since it has a prominent position in the lay itself and the dreadful syllable is to be found directly after the author's refusal to repeat the word. Moreover, the strictures pronounced by the lady on the motivation of some men in requesting love not only forms a useful counterbalance to the prevailing attitude to love in the lays, but is an integral part of courtly doctrine; Andreas Capellanus warns against men who seek sexual conquests rather than love as we have stated in Chapter III. It certainly should not have its genre altered because some find its directness offensive.

*Trot*⁵⁶ is a less contentious example of the "courtly" lay. Like *Oiselet* and *Épervier* it draws on Latin sources, in this case the *Tractatus de Amore* of Andreas Capellanus. The author has taken part of the dialogue between a noblewoman and a nobleman in which the man relates how he came into possession of the twelve rules of love. The author of the lay has taken the first part of this story, added a little Celtic colour by making the protagonist a knight of the Round Table⁵⁷ and given the title of lay to his work (we note that the original tale was not Arthurian, but another very similar tale from the *De Amore* is). The author seems to have felt that the lay could be utilised as a medium for a brief excursion on love and concludes:

Un lay en fisent li breton
le lay del trot l'apele l'on.

303-4

*Oiselet*⁵⁸ and *Épervier*⁵⁹ use material drawn from the *Disciplina Clericalis*⁶⁰ or from its Old French redaction, the *Chastoiement d'un père à son fils*,⁶¹ both works intending to improve the morals of their readers. Doubtless their authors would have found little to applaud in *Épervier*, a comic tale of adultery presented with due solemnity as an "essample":

Une aventure molt petite
Qui n'a mie esté sovent dite
Ai oi dire, tot por voir,
Que je ne vos voil ramentevoir;
Nes puet en mie toutes dire,
Ne tretier en romanz, n'escire;
De plusors en ot en conter
Qui tres bien font a remembrer:
Car qui bien i voudroit entendre
Maint bon essample i porroit prendre

1-10

Épervier differs from its analogues in that the woman's skill in explaining the presence of two men in her chamber to her husband's satisfaction is hailed as a tour de force by the author, whereas in the didactic work it is presented as an instance of feminine perfidy. *Épervier*, like *Trot* and *Haveloc*, was originally part of a lengthy work presented independently as a lay:

Cest aventure si fu voire:
Avoile doit on en memoire;
Tot ainsi avint, ce dit l'on:

check →

Li lays de l'esprevier a non,
 Qui tres bien fait a remembrer.
 Le conte en ai oi conter.
 Mès onques n'en oi la note
 En harpe fère ne en rote. c94)

225-32

Paris (who believed narrative lays were "le livret d'une mélodie bretonne connue"⁶²) thought there was no question of the actual existence of a lyrical lay on the subject, and that the author was simply employing the conventions of the Breton lay with a story of Arabic origins, which is highly likely. Joseph Bédier and Per Nykrog, in their studies of the *fabliaux*⁶³ both counted *Épervier* as a *fabliau*. Nykrog called it a "conte presque purement courtois", extant only in B.N. 1104 which he refers to as "un recueil spécialisé de contes courtois",⁶⁴ ignoring the explicit reference to lays. *Épervier* is excluded from the lays because Nykrog sees in it "une intention humoristique" and because "l'allusion à un original lyrique ne convient pas du tout à un conte "contemporain", tant soit si peu grossier. C'est la spécialité des nouvelles bretonnes, et le conteur n'avait donc aucune raison de souligner qu'il n'en a jamais entendu le lai lyrique".⁶⁵ However, we see no reason why an author should not have chosen to use "contemporary" material (which in fact it is not, though it is presented as such, but this is true of most lays) and the lay, as a short narrative genre dealing with aristocratic characters, was well suited as a vehicle for such a tale.

Oiselet follows its source much more closely than *Épervier*, and has none of the characteristics normally associated with the lay. The author sets events in an orchard and does not claim that this orchard is situated in any Celtic land; neither does he claim to have heard a lay composed by Celts on the subject of his tale. He keeps closely to the original Latin story, but differs in the addition of the passage in which the bird reconciles human and divine love (ll. 124-82), which is unique to the lay,⁶⁶ and which is prefaced by the words "or entendez tuit a mon lai" 16, a rare usage of the term in its original sense.⁶⁷ It is perhaps to this that we should attribute *Oiselet's* inclusion in B.N. 1104 with the phrase "Explicit le lai de l'oiselet".

Lecheor, *Trot*, *Épervier* and *Oiselet* show the use of the lay as a means of presenting part of a lengthy work as an independent tale. This is also true of *Haveloc*⁶⁸ which uses historical material drawn from Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* or from a common source. *Haveloc* is the only extant lay with a historical basis although some titles in the Shrewsbury manuscript eg. *Le rey alured*; *le rey pepin*; *le rey richard* and *le ieune rey* suggest these were not uncommon. The author then simply extracts the story of *Haveloc* and apparently follows Marie de France in his claims and intentions:

L'aventure d'un riche rei
 E de plusurs altres baruns
 Dunt jo vus nomerai les nuns,
 Assez brefement la vus dirai,
 L'aventure vos cunterai.
 Aveloc fu cist reis nomez
 E Cuaran rest apellez.
 Pur co vus voil de lui cunter
 E s'aventure remembrer
 K'un lai en firent li Bretun
 Si l'apellerent de sun nun
 E Aveloc e Cuarant.

12-22

The lay is additionally attached to the Breton tradition by the inclusion of Arthur as the

supporter of the villainous Hodulf, possibly suggested by Wace's description of how Arthur gained the suzerainty of Norway and Denmark (ll. 1265-1344). The concluding lines are also suggestive of Marie:

Li ancien en remembrance
Firent un lai de sa victoire
ki tuz jorz mes seit en memoire.

1110-12

Haveloc, unlike other lays, does not concentrate on one single event or on a closely related series of events, but is a biography crowded with incident. The lay certainly did preserve the memory of Haveloc's struggle to regain his kingdom and its translation into English perpetuated it even further.

There are good reasons for supposing that the works we have cited above were considered by their authors to be lays.

It will be appreciated that while the works already cited are to be used as a basis for a discussion of love and marriage in the lays, some tales in the inventory have been excluded. This study is limited to the period 1150-1250 (as we shall see, few lays were composed after this date and there are no extant lays before c. 1160). For this reason the lays contained in the *Roman de Perceforest*⁶⁹ are not included: *Rose*, *Secret*, *Ourse*, *Pergamon*, *Pitieux* and *Dieu des Desirriers* are all composed in stanzaic form and, with the exception of *Rose*, are closely linked to the prose romance, which was composed between 1307 and c. 1350. Richard Baum included *Rose* as a narrative lay and hence the others as well. The *Tristan en prose*⁷⁰ also contains a number of lays but they are all lyrical of the type called by Jean Maillard "lais lyriques d'action"⁷¹ and so are irrelevant to the present study. Excluded on the grounds of date are the lays of Jean de Condé,⁷² who worked at the court of Guillaume le Bon, comte de Hainault, between c. 1300 and 1350. Approximately 75 pieces of his work have survived, three of which are lays: the *Lai du blanc chevalier* (l. 21; 1599; 1600); the *Dit dou levrier* (l. 63; 1577; 1613; 1620) and the *Lais de l'ourse* (l. 154). The first two are tales of magic, chivalry and love, not unlike earlier examples of the genre, though somewhat lengthier. The third is an exposition on the nature of love and the title is more difficult to comprehend: "nous ne voyons pas – du moins avec nos yeux, peut-être myopes, de modernes – comment on pourrait justifier ici l'étiquette de *lai*, alors que d'autres poèmes, purement didactiques et qualifiés par l'auteur lui-même de *dits*, ne manifestent aucune différence de structure avec le prétendu *Lais de l'ourse*".⁷³ The fact remains though that Jean de Condé did give it the title. At the time he was writing, the narrative lay was not a current literary form, and the existence of even three examples is curious. The answer almost certainly lies in Jean's upbringing. He was a professional *trouvère* and in *Ourse* he relates how he learned his craft from his father:

... Nature en a mon cuer fondé,
Fils fui Baudoin de Condé,
S'est bien raisons k'en moi opere
Aucune teche de mon père,
E.i. petitet de son sens,
Et à ce est bien mes asenz
K'en ce chemin le voel poursivre,
Et non mie pour lui consivre –

39-46

Jean then was influenced by the father who taught him. Baudoin's work is dated between c. 1240 and 1280 which coincides with the fashion for lays. Jean most likely composed the lays as a young man, practising the outmoded genre as an example of the minstrel's repertoire.

Three poems which utilise themes from classical legend are also sometimes classed as lays. These are *Philomena* by "Chrestien", dated by de Boer⁷⁴ at c. 1168; *Piramus*, which is held to date from the third quarter of the 12th century⁷⁵ and *Narcisse*,⁷⁶ which is dated to the 1170s. They are therefore contemporary with the lays and would have interested the same audience. Donovan in fact, who classifies them as forms related to the lay, believes they may even have been a model for it.⁷⁷ It is however doubtful that these Ovidian tales are lays. As far as *Philomena* is concerned, the author does not give it this title and neither does any scribe. The case for *Piramus et Tisbé* is not much stronger. A lay of Thisbe is mentioned in Gottfried von Strasburg's *Tristan*, but the author does not use the title and the metre is strange. For these reasons we follow F. Branciforti, who wrote on this matter of identification "Senza indulgere alla tentazione di una prestigiosa identificazione, il nostro *Piramus et Tisbé* ha alcune caratteri, interni ed esterni, per aspirare al riconoscimento di tanta nobile e vetusta antichità. Il suo argomento di derivazione classica, la sua forma alternativamente narrativa e lirica, la sua versificazione arcaica così adeguata al ritmo musicale, la sua tradizione manoscritta (...), sono elementi tutti che impegnano ad una alta datazione del nostro testo ed al suo inquadramento nella letteratura dei *Lais* e dei *fabliaux*".⁷⁸ *Narcisse* has a stronger claim since the title is found in one manuscript, though the author gives no indication. In B.N. 2168 it is called "de narciso li lais", probably because the manuscript also contains versions of *Guigemar*, *Lanval*, *Yonec* and *Graelent* and the scribe has been influenced by the context. B.N. 19152, which also has *Aristote*, *Ombre* and *Piramus*, has it as "de narciso le roumanz". Its latest editors consider the desire to assign it to any genre is a modern preoccupation, not a medieval one, and chose not to use the loaded term *lai*. Since the title is only used once, and since B.N. 2168 is not, unlike B.N. 1104, specifically intended to be a collection of lays, we discount it, while noting the similarities it has with the lay.

Also roughly contemporary with the lays is *Ille et Galeron* by Gautier d'Arras.⁷⁹ This *roman* of 6,592 lines is a version of the legend of the man with two wives. It was dedicated to Béatrice de Bourgogne and to Thibault de Blois. We are considering it because Gautier refers to it as a lay in his dedication: Blais!

Servir le voel si com jo sai,
Car a s'onor voel faire .i. lai
De Galeron, seror le duc,
Et d'Ille, le fil Eliduc. 71-4

He also criticises other versions:

Grant cose est d'Ille a Galeron:
N'i a fantomes ne alogne,
Ne ja n'i trouverés mençonge.
Tex lais i a, qui les entent,
Se si sanlent tot ensemment,
Con s'eüst dormi et songié.

929-36

The use of 'lai' probably results from the source; either Marie's *Eliduc* or its source, possibly the lost *Anyle e Galerum* of the Shrewsbury manuscript. Despite this, in its length and richness, it is to be classed as a *roman* and not as a *lai*.

Two short narrative poems given the title by scribes are *Courtois d'Arras*,⁸⁰ and *Auberee*.⁸¹ *Courtois* has the title in B.N. 1553, with an incipit "Li lais de courtois" and the explicit "Chi define li lais de cortois". It is only found in this manuscript, and according to Richard Baum, *Courtois* cannot "selon le commun avis des critiques, être considéré comme un lai".⁸² It probably owes the name in this case to the other lays contained in the manuscript;

“Li lais de dame Aubree”, “Li lais de l’espine”, “Li lays d’Ygnaure” and “Li lais de l’ombre et de l’aniel”. It is much closer to the *miracles* than to the lays in its content. *Auberee* exists in five complete manuscripts and at least twelve fragments and only has the title of lay in B.N. 1553. There is no doubt that it is actually a *fabliau*, being a story of marital deception aided by a crafty go-between and set among the *bourgeoisie* of Compiègne. This is clearly stated at the end of the work:

Por cest fabel vous vueil moustrer
Que pou puet on fame trover
Qui de son cors face mesfet,
Se par autre fame nel fet.
Teus est hors de sa droite voie,
Se fame n’ert qui la desvoie,
Qui seroit nate et pure e fine.
Ainsi nostre fabliaus define.

663-30

There remain four poems, *Guillaume au faucon*, *Le chevalier au chainse*, *Le Chevalier à l’espée* and *Le Chevalier qui recouvra l’amor de sa dame*, which Benkt Wennburg counted as lays and Jean-Charles Payen as related forms. *Guillaume au faucon*⁸³ is a courtly enough tale (up to a point), which tells how a young squire called Guillaume loves his lord’s wife. During the absence of the latter Guillaume declares his passion but is rejected and takes to his bed, dying. When the lord returns he enquires after his squire, discovers his illness and questions his wife. She has been touched by Guillaume’s sufferings and replies ambiguously that he had asked for the gift of the lord’s falcon which she had refused. The lord grants this favour and Guillaume, understanding that the lady has relented towards him, soon recovers. For Omer Jodogne⁸⁴ the lady’s words when her husband gives the bird to Guillaume demonstrate the separation of the lay and the *fabliau*:

... or avez faucon;
deus besanz valent un mangon.
Ce fu bien dit, deus moz a un,
que il en avroit deus por un,
et cil si ot ainz l’endemain.

607-11

The sudden descent into an obscene pun – the “laid” that Henri d’Andeli and Jean Renart wished to avoid – is the distinguishing mark of the *fabliau*.⁸⁵ This “*sottise*” is the central event of *Guillaume*. In addition the author designates the genre himself:

Par le raison de ces flabel
Moustré ai essanple novel ...

614-15

Consequently there seems no reason to change the classification.

*Chainse*⁸⁶ is not without parallels with the lays and is more consistently “courtly” than *Guillaume au faucon*. A lady and her husband give hospitality to three knights who are attending a tournament. During the course of the evening the three all declare their love for the lady. As a test she sends to each knight in turn one of her “*chainses*” with a message asking that at the tournament this garment should be worn instead of a hauberk. Not surprisingly only one agrees. He fights bravely at the tournament (though the other participants hold back from pity) and naturally is wounded. Later, cared for at the lady’s house, he sends the “*chainse*” back to her with a request that she should wear it at the feast that night. She agrees:

... por ce k’il est molliés
Dou sanc à son ami loiaul,

Tient ele à parement roial
Le chanse, car ors fins ne pieres
Ne poroient estre si chieres
Ke li sanc dont ilh estoit tains ... no line ref. in edition (sic)

The husband is furious but apparently powerless to intervene, because he himself did not take part in the tournament. The author, Jacques de Basiu, then asks a question of the readers:

li queis d'aiz fist plus grant emprise
U dut ki sa vie avoit mise
En aventure amant sa dame,
U cele ki honte ne blame
Ne cremi tant ke lui irer;
Por s'amor s'ala atirer
Del chainse, si c'ai dit deseure;
Jugiés droit, k'Amurs vos honeure.

This open appeal is held to indicate that *Chainse* is not a lay, since these are always complete and self-sufficient. However, while no extant French lay contains a similar appeal, one is to be found in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, which is a lay. Nevertheless, since *Chainse* gives no indication as to genre, it is best left to one side.

The *Chevalier à l'épée*⁸⁷ draws on Arthurian tradition and is a story about Gauvain. Here also there is no indication of genre, either in the prologue:

Cil qui ainme desduit et joie
Viegne avant si entende et oie
Une aventure qui avint
A bon chevalier qui maintint
Loiauté, proëce, et amor ...

1-5

or in the concluding lines:

S'aventure si con el fu
Lor a de chief en chief contee –
Mout volentiers l'ont escouté –
A premiers bele e perillouse,
Et apres laide et annuiose
Por s'amie que il perdi,
Et puis con il se conbati
Por les levriers a grant meschief;
Ensi fina tot a un chief

1198-1206

These are in many respects similar to some lays, and the material would not be out of place either, despite the vein of misogyny present. In the absence of any claim to Breton origins though, in a work which could legitimately claim them, it is not counted here as a lay.

Finally there is the *Chevalier qui recouvra l'amour de sa dame*.⁸⁸ This relates how a knight defeats his *amie's* husband at a tournament. She gives him a rendez-vous for that night, but is unable to come at the time she promised. The knight falls asleep waiting for her and when the lady arrives and discovers this she is so piqued she sends her maid to dismiss him instantly. He is not prepared to take this quietly and enters her chamber and wakes her husband... claiming to be the ghost of a knight killed that day at the tournament. He says he has offended the lady and cannot rest until she has forgiven him. The terrified husband wakes his wife (who is far more sceptical about the apparition) and insists on her forgiving the "dead" knight who thus regains his lady's affections. The author of this amusing tale sets it in France:

Sans plus longuement desloier,
M'estuet conter d'un chevalier
Et d'une dame l'aventure,
Qui avint, ce dit l'escriture,
N'a pas lonc tans, en Normandie ...

1-5

but says nothing about the genre. He concludes:

Pierres d'Anfol, qui ce fablel
Fist et trova premierement,
No fist fors por enseignement
A cez qui parler en feroient:
Car nus ne l'ot qui n'en amant,
Se mauvaistiez trop ne sorprant.

no line ref.

The poem is therefore to be included with the *fabliaux* rather than the lays. The author is most unlikely to be "Pierres d'Anfol" (ie. Petrus Alphonsi, author of the moralising *Disciplina Clericalis*, who would not have approved of such a frivolous work).

Excluding these works then it would appear that there is a strong case to be made for saying that there are 34 poems of the period 1150-1250 which can reasonably be considered as lays. These are: Marie de France's twelve lays, *Amours*, *Aristote*, *Conseil*, *Cor*, *Desiré*, *Doon*, *Épervier*, *Épine*, *Graelent*, *Guingamor*, *Haveloc*, *Ignoure*, *Lecheor*, *Mantel*, *Melion*, *Nabaret*, *Oiselet*, *Ombre*, *Trot*, *Tydorel*, *Tyolet*, and *Vair Palefroi*.

We come now to the chronology of the lays, a necessary element if we are to study the attitudes displayed in them to marriage and love. Unfortunately there is little precision possible: anonymous authors; manuscripts compiled over a period of time and consisting of the work of many authors; the knowledge that some works have not survived; the similarities of some lays; the claims of their authors for an antique origin; lack of references within the lays to dedicatees or to events that might assist in the task; the difficulties of dating through linguistic criteria.

The manuscripts are of little use in establishing dates: most are dated by the script. The oldest, Harley 978 is mid-thirteenth century, but internal evidence suggests that the *Lais*, which it contains, are earlier. Of the manuscripts in Paris, B.N. 1104 is late 13th or early 14th century; B.N. 2168 and 1553 are late 13th century and Arsenal 3516 probably dates from 1267-68 as it contains a table of dominical letters for the years 1268-1367. The list of titles in the Shrewsbury manuscript was drawn up after 1270.⁸⁹ Perhaps the most useful manuscript for dating purposes is the Old Norse manuscript composed during the reign of Haakon Haakonsson (1217-63); probably c. 1230, a translation of an Anglo-Norman manuscript no longer extant. It can readily be appreciated that while the Arsenal and Uppsala manuscripts furnish a *terminus ad quem*, it is rather vague. The *terminus a quo* is generally accepted as being the *Lais* of Marie de France because of her claim to be the originator of the narrative genre in French:

Des lais pensai k'oï aveie;
Ne dutai pas, bien le saveie,
Ke pur remembrance les firent
Des aventures k'il oïrent
Cil ki primes les comencierent
E ki avant les enveierent.
Plusurs en ai oï conter,
Ne[s] voil laisser nē oblïer;
Rimez en ai e fait ditié,
Soventes feiz en ai veillié.

32-42

The difficulty is that her work cannot be dated with great certainty. Karl Warnke⁹⁰ decided the state of the language revealed an author of the second half of the 12th century, from the reign of Henry II. Alfred Ewert⁹¹ however reminds us of the uncertainties of relying on linguistic data: "the rôle of literary licence and the well known anachronistic tendencies of any literary language make it impossible to arrive at a more precise conclusion, on linguistic grounds alone, than that Marie's usage, having regard to her continental origin and insular domicile, might well find a place anywhere between the middle of the twelfth century and the early years of the thirteenth."

The dedications in Marie's work are no easier to pin down (always allowing of course that the same person wrote the *Lais*, the *Ysopet* and the *Espurgatoire St Patrice*, an assumption called into question by Richard Baum).⁹² Warnke and Hoepffner identified Marie's noble king (ll. 43-48) with Henry II (1154-89). Ezio Levi⁹³ preferred Henry the Young King (1170-83) on the grounds that the flattery of the dedication was unsuitable for the stormy life of the elder Henry (unless we are to assume the *Lais* were dedicated to him before the beginning of his quarrels with Eleanor and their children). Alfred Ewert believes this is irrelevant as any dedication is likely to flatter; indeed the reverse would be highly unusual. In any case, Henry II was not an uncultured man and is known to have commissioned works or had them dedicated to him.⁹⁴ As far as the linguistic evidence goes, nothing would preclude Richard I, and Axel Ahlström noted that Louis VII visited England in 1179.⁹⁵ It would not have been impossible for a French author to have presented her work to him. There are no references in the *Lais* to historical events that could assist the task of dating. The use of other contemporary works is not helpful either, since there is much dispute about who was influenced by whom. It is argued, for example, that since there is no evidence of the influence of Chrétien de Troyes' work, Marie must predate him; Jean Rychner asks whether if she had read him, would she have remained "si complètement elle-même et tellement différente de lui, dans son écriture comme dans son inspiration générale?"⁹⁶ This begs several questions. Knowing so little of the transmission of vernacular, secular texts we cannot assume that any of Chrétien's work would have come to Marie's attention, even had they been exact contemporaries. Moreover, the dating of Chrétien is uncertain. It is the accepted view that he began writing in the 1160's and died before 1190, but Claude Luttrell believes he may have started as late as 1184.⁹⁷ Finally, while Chrétien was a great author of romances, no author of lays was obliged to be influenced by him; the two genres demand in many ways completely different approaches. In brief, all we can say is that the *Lais* were begun after 1155 (Marie uses Wace's *Brut*) and completed, together with the General Prologue, by 1189, since it seems highly probable that either Henry II or Henry the Young King was the dedicatee. To say more is to enter the realm of speculation. Some work has been done to establish the order of composition of the twelve lays of the Harley manuscript; to this we would say with Philippe Ménard "nous n'arrivons pas à dater le recueil de *lais*. Comment pourrions-nous préciser la chronologie relative des pièces qui la composent?"⁹⁸

It is no easier to date other lays in which the author reveals his identity and almost impossible to date the anonymous ones.

Aristote can be dated by the songs it contains. The use of songs and refrains of songs in narrative verse is not common. Jean Renart uses it in *Guillaume de Dole* and so does Gerbert de Montreuil in his *Roman de la Violette*, dated c. 1212 and c. 1227-29 respectively.⁹⁹ The former cites entire examples of "chansons de toile"; the latter simply the refrains. In a study of the songs in *Aristote*, Maurice Delbouille concludes that they are of an archaic variety and

that "l'ensemble de ces faits semble avant 1230, (...) et peut-être même avant 1225".¹⁰⁰ The author, Henri (Henris ceste aventure fine 1.543) is identified with Henri d'Andelys who wrote the *Dit du Chancelier Philippe*, the *Bataille des Vins* and the *Bataille des sept arts*. If this is indeed so, he was a Norman who lived and worked in Paris c. 1220-1240. Obviously he had connections with the university and the lay was probably written to amuse this clerical world.

The *Lai de l'Ombre* can also be dated with a degree of certainty. Its author names himself in the closing lines: "N'i covient mes penser [de] rien / Jehan Renart a lor affaire!" (ll. 952-3). There is also a reference in the prologue to another poem by this man: "Par Guillaume, qui despeça / l'escoufle ..." (ll. 22-3), that is, the *Roman de l'Escoufle*. Jean Renart also wrote the *Roman de Guillaume de Dole* (sometimes called the *Roman de la Rose*), an author of some distinction. *Guillaume de Dole* can be dated by a reference to a tournament which took place at St Trond in 1212 and is dedicated to Miles de Châtillon-Nanteuil. The lay is dedicated to an "Esliit":

e por cē ai cest lai empris,
que je voil mon sens desploier
a bien dire et a souploier
a la hautesce de l'eslit.

38-41

Miles de Châtillon-Nanteuil was bishop-elect of Beauvais between 1217 and 1222 when he was consecrated by the pope. It is highly probable therefore that the lay was composed between these dates.

The *Lai d'Ignaure* also has a named author: "Ensi con tiesmoigne *Renaus*, / Morut Ignaures, li bons vassaus" (621-22). Rita Lejeune identifies him with Renaut de Beaujeu, author of *Le Bel Inconnu*. Noting that in the epilogue he makes a distinction between "Franchois" and "Poitevin", she is inclined to date the lay before 1202, when France and Poitou were unified. She admits that *Renaus* may simply mean that the story was known independently in each of these regions. A date from the turn of the century would fit in with what is known of Renaut de Beaujeu. However, the attribution of *Le Bel Inconnu* to Renaut de Beaujeu has recently been contested by Alain Guerreau¹⁰¹ who identifies its author with Renaud de Bâgé, lord of Saint Trivier (c. 1165-1230). He does not address himself to the common authorship of *Le Bel Inconnu* and *Ignaure*, but the dating would not be materially altered and the early 13th century remains the most probable date for *Ignaure*.

Artur Långfors gave no date at all in his edition of the *Vair Palefroi*, but it does not seem to be later than the first half of the 13th century.

The manuscript of *Cor* (Digby 86) was written between c. 1272 and 1282 which at least gives a *terminus ad quem*. *Cor* is however composed in hexasyllabic metre which would perhaps argue for a much earlier date, as it is normally associated with Anglo-Norman didactic works, especially those of Philippe de Thaon, author of a *Bestiaire* and *Comput*, composed between c. 1100 and 1125, although it was used in some early 13th century works. The chastity test motif itself was popular and C.T. Erickson believes the lay is contemporary with the German *Lanzelet*, in which case the lay would date from around 1184. Philip Bennett dates both *Cor* and *Mantel* from "la dernière décennie du xiie. siècle, sinon la première du xiiie. siècle".¹⁰²

The *Lai d'Amours* has no indication as to date; Paris comments that "notre rimeur manie assez adroitement la langue, et il ne paraît pas postérieur au milieu du xiiie. siècle".¹⁰³

The *Lai du Conseil* has a very specific *terminus ad quem*; ms. Barrois XI concludes "Chis livres fu escrits l'an ml cccxx et neuf, au mois de octobre le vendredy apri le Saint Denis de

France". Barth uses linguistic criteria to date the poem: "da die Hss A.B.C. der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts angehören und eine nicht zu lange Tradition hinter sich habe, dürfen wir nunmehr auf Grund der sprachlichen Untersuchung, das Gedicht in die erste Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts setzen, und zwar schon in die ersten Dezennien".¹⁰⁴

The anonymous lays are no easier to date. Alexander Bell noted parallels between some passages of *Haveloc* and *Deus Amanz*, eg.

Dedenz le jor k'il orent pris
Edelsi manda ses amis
E tuz icels k'il pot aveir;
N'en i laissa nul remaneir

Haveloc 1031-34

Terme li a nume e mis
Ses hummes mande e ses amis
E tuz cels qu'il poeit aveir;
N'en i laissa nul remaneir.

Deus Amanz 165-68

This gives the *terminus a quo*; the author decided to write the saga of *Haveloc* in the newly-popularised form of a lay. Bell also noted a reference in l. 794 to Grimsby, which figures prominently in the tale, as "vile et marche". Grimsby received its charter in 1201. In addition, when *Haveloc* returns to England from Denmark he and his army land at "Carleflod" l. 1002 a port which, according to Bell, had lost its importance by the middle of the 12th century. This evidence, taken with a study of the language, led him to conclude that *Haveloc* was written c. 1190-1220.

Neither Gaston Paris nor Raymond Weeks have much to say on the date of *Oiselet*. The latter contents himself with stating that it dates "de la première partie du xii^e. siècle".¹⁰⁵

The most comprehensive attempt to date the anonymous Breton lays is that made by Prudence Tobin. She uses Marie's *Lais* as the *terminus a quo* and the Uppsala manuscript as a *terminus ad quem* when this is possible. *Graelent* mentions "croisiés" in l. 382. The Second Crusade was preached in 1147, which seems rather too early, and Tobin believes it to be a reference to the Third Crusade, preached in 1189. It was certainly written by 1230, date assigned to the Uppsala manuscript.¹⁰⁶ *Guingamor* is "vers la fin du xii^e. siècle"¹⁰⁷; *Desiré* between 1190 and 1230, and possibly before 1208, since after this date the shrine of St Gilles to which the hero's parents make a pilgrimage fell out of favour.¹⁰⁸ *Tydorel* is between 1170 and 1230 or possibly 1210, since the German poem *Titurel* (c. 1212-40) and Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* (c. 1180) both contain a primitive form of the hero's name.¹⁰⁹ *Tyolet* probably appeared in the first quarter of the 13th century "peut-être vers le début du siècle, avant la parution des lais du style plus didactique, où s'estompé l'élément du mystère breton encore présent dans *Tyolet*".¹¹⁰ *Épine* also dates from the end of the 12th century.¹¹¹ *Melion* dates from between 1170 and 1268, or more narrowly between 1190, the date of Layamon's *Brut*, in which the name of the hero is found, and 1204. The author also appears to have some familiarity with the *De Amore*, which Tobin believes supports the date of c. 1190. *Doon* is between 1178 and 1230 but probably after 1200.¹¹² *Trot* like *Melion* is dated with reference to *De Amore*, that is, it was composed after 1184 and before 1267, but more narrowly between 1200 and 1220.¹¹³ *Lecheor* is c. 1178-1230¹¹⁴ and so is *Nabaret*.¹¹⁵ *Épervier* is not dated by Gaston Paris.¹¹⁶ It is posterior to Marie de France and nothing leads us to suppose that it was composed any later than the other lays. We would assign a date of c. 1200 to it.

The lays were mostly composed between c. 1160 and 1230, but we can say very little about the evolution of the genre because of the lack of precision. Marie's *Lais* are accepted as the earliest extant examples. It has been assumed that these all derived from Celtic sources. The form became popular and it was realised that any short narrative could be written in this form and claim a Breton origin. Later lays, it has sometimes been said, are contaminated by overt didacticism, excessive use of dialogue and direct speech, realistic description and the intrusion of courtly doctrine. These are all present in the *Lais* however (to varying degrees) and it seems to us that later authors in the tradition of the narrative lay expanded such elements as happened to appeal to them. The fashion for lays lasted for approximately a century in French. It declined after 1230 as the lay met with competition from the *fabliau* and the *nouvelle* in prose. Possibly its strong connections with the otherworldly made it difficult to adapt to the demand for more realistic material. Its time had passed.

It remains to examine the audience of the lays, and how the lays were disseminated. Most vernacular literature of the period was intended to be read aloud.¹¹⁷ Martin de Riquer, it is true, distinguishes between "l'épopée jongleuresque à écouter, l'épopée chevaleresque à lire"¹¹⁸ but we would agree with Pierre Gallais when he says "toute la production littéraire en vers a été, au moins pendant le premier siècle et demi, destinée à la récitation".¹¹⁹ It is highly improbable at this time that the lays were accompanied by music of any kind. There is no extant evidence of musical notation in any of the manuscripts. It is true that ms. B.N. 2168 *Graelent* is preceded by some blank bars of music, but the following text is *Aucassin and Nicolette*, and we may suspect a scribal error.

If the lays were recited, it was probably not in the market place or in the great hall of a house, because, as Gallais says, the lays "sont presque toujours des histoires d'amours contrariées et cachées, ce ne sont pas là des choses qu'on crie sur les toits".¹²⁰ The most natural place would be the "chambre des dames," but according to Domenica Legge a lot would have depended on the composition of the court.¹²¹ She concludes that the type of literature popular at court was dependent on the number of women present and on their marital status. Unlike Gallais she believes lays could have been performed in the great hall, but if there were several unmarried girls at court, their chambers would be more likely.

The courts themselves varied in their composition. Pierre Gallais states that the "genre narratif courtois" (ie. Lays and octosyllabic romances) was destined for "les cours et ceux qui les fréquentaient: vassaux, clercs séculiers et bourgeois cultivés dont le nombre ne cesse d'accroître".¹²² This opinion is shared by Jean-Charles Payen who comments on the rise of the bourgeoisie as part of the audience: "Tous les genres, s'adressent, au moyen âge, à un public commun, d'abord aristocratique et chevaleresque, puis de plus en plus hétérogène au fur et à mesure que la bourgeoisie accède à la culture proprement littéraire".¹²³ He distinguishes however between the audience of the *fabliau*, composed for the "bacheliers" and town dwellers, while the lay remained "l'apanage d'amateurs plus délicats",¹²⁴ by which he apparently means the knights at the very least.

The interest of the lays to an audience composed of members of the nobility is evident since the lay "peint un monde qui est celui de la noblesse et de la chevalerie".¹²⁵ We have to look long to find any character who does not belong to the nobility. In addition, we may hypothesise that the audience was even further restricted. Jean-Charles Payen points out the lays often make intellectual demands on their listeners that other genres do not: "la correction constante de son langage permet de supposer qu'il circule en milieu attentif au bon goût; le recours fréquent à la litote ou à l'ellipse exige des auditeurs de pénétration; le lai s'adresserait

donc à un public de connaisseurs, ceux-là même que ravissaient les grâces courtoises".¹²⁶

The lay is a genre often supposed to have close links with women. This is due to the pre-eminence of Marie de France, whose popularity is grudgingly admitted by Denis Piramus,¹²⁷ who also comments on the partiality of women for the narrative lay:

Les lais solent as dames pleire,
De joie les oient e de gré,
Qu'il sunt sulunc lur volonté

46-8

Why this should be is not stated, but it is interesting that apart from the historical example of Marie, women in fiction are often seen as performers and composers of lays. In *Chaitivel*, *Ignature* and *Lecheor* women compose, singly or jointly; as do the ladies in Chrétien's *Erec* after the *Joie de la Cort*:

... les dames un lai troverent
que le Lai de Joie apelerent;

6135-36

Perhaps the most striking example of female authorship is that of the "*femme rousse*" commissioned by William the Conqueror to preserve the memory of his pleasant sojourn by the seaside in the *Strandar Ljod* or *Lai de la Grève*,¹²⁸ a woman who evidently enjoyed a wide reputation. Heroines of romance may be performers of lays; Lenburc attempts to catch Horn's eye; Fresne attracts Galeron's attention by singing at his wedding a lay he wrote.¹²⁹ It would be incorrect to suppose that the lay was reserved exclusively for women, but its affinity with them should be noted.

In conclusion then, we are aware that much more could be said on the narrative lay, particularly with respect to its forms and origins, but our purpose in this chapter is the very basic one of defining a corpus of lays; of deciding when they were composed and for what audience. Our first objective was achieved by using, as far as possible, the definitions given by authors or their contemporaries to certain narratives in order to minimise the considerable problems associated with defining genre. The chronology of the corpus presents difficulties in that very few extant examples of the genre can be dated accurately: there are few dedications, fewer references to contemporary events, and authors regrettably do not follow Wace's example in giving explicit dates. It is however possible to state that the vast majority were composed between c. 1160 and c. 1250. This provides us with benchmarks for later chapters which will discuss attitudes to marriages and love prevalent during this period. This last question raises the matter of the composition of the audience. We believe that the internal evidence provided by the existing dedications and the social origins and preoccupations of the lays' characters, together with the external evidence of Denis Piramus, indicate an audience predominantly composed of the aristocracy, with a possible bias towards women, although it is advisable not to be too dogmatic about this. Given that medieval literature reflects "the attitudes of the group for which it was written, or an idealization of those attitudes, or a criticism, frequently humorous, of the group itself ...",¹³⁰ it is now possible to proceed to an examination of attitudes towards marriage and love current during the lay's period in vogue, and then to a study of how these matters are treated in the lays: how far they reflect actual practice; how far they reject it and how far their authors innovate in the field of human relationships.

Notes.

1. There are numerous examples of the use of *lai* in medieval literature. Some examples are given below.

Folie Tristan

Coment dan Guirun fu surpris,
Pur l'amur de la dame ocis
Qu'il sur tute rien ama,
E coment li cuns puis li dona
Le cuer Guirun a sa moillier
Par engin un jor a mangier,
E la dolur que la dame out
Quant la mort de sun ami sout

Sneyd 784-90

Lai de l'Épine

Le lai escoutent d'Aielis
que uns Irois doucement note,
moute le sonnë en sa route.
Apriés celi, d'autre conmenche,
nus d'iaus n'i noise ne n'i tanche;
le lai lor sone d'Orpheý

178-83

Roman de Renart

'Ge fot savoir bon lai Breton
Et de Merlin et de Noton,
Del roi Artu et de Tristran,
Del Chevrefoil, de Saint Brandan.'
'et ses tu le lai dam Iset?'
'Ya, ya: goditoët,
Ge fot saver', fet il, 'trestoz.'

2389-95

Roman de Flamenca

L'uns viola (1) lais del Cabrefoil,
E l'autre cel de Tintagoil;
L'us canteit cel dels Fins amanz,
E l'autre cel que fes Ivans.

591-94

Tristan (Gottfried von Strasburg).

de la cürteise Tísipë
von der alten Båbilõne
... leich von Dîdõne

3614-15

13351

These passages all give evocative titles recalling material from Latin and Celtic sources besides the more ambiguous "Lay of Alice" and the well-known medieval tale of the eaten heart.

Brut

Lais de vieles, lais de notes,
Lais de harpes et de fretiaus,

2002-3

Tristan Ménestral

En sa main a pris an flagueil
Molt doucement en flajola
Et par dedans le flaguel a
Noté le lai del Chievrefueil

758-61

Cligès

As spees notent un lai
Sor les hiaumes qui retantissent,
Si que lor genz esbaissent.

4024-26

Ansëis de Carthage

Li rois seoit sor un bufet d'argent;
Pour oblier son desconfortement
Faisoit conter le lai de Graëlent

4975-78

Roman de Horn

Lors prent la harpe a sei, qu'il la veut atemprez.
Deus! ki dunc l'esgardast cum la sout manier,
Cum ces cordes tuchout, cum les fesoit trembler,
Asquantes feiz chanter, asquantes organer,
De l'armonie del ciel li pouïst remembrer!
Sur tuz homes k'i sut fet cist a merveiller.
Quant ses notes ot fait si la prent a munter
E tut par autres tuns les cordes fait soner:
Mut se merveillent tuit qu'il la sout si bailler.
E quant il out [is] si fait, si cummence a noter
Le lai dunt or ains dis, de Baltof, haut e cler,
Si cum sunt cil bretun d'itiel fait costumier.
Après en l'estrument fet les cordes suner,
Tut issi cum en voiz l'aveit dit tut premier:
Tut le lai lur ad fait, n'i vout rien retailler

2830-44

These extracts give information on the performance of lays. It will be noted that more often than not there is a musical element and that many instruments could be used to perform lays. References to the recounting of a story are rarer.

2. A. Ewert ed. Marie de France, *Lais* (Oxford 1976) pp. xviii-xix. ←
3. G. Paris, "Lais inédits: Tyolet, Guingamor, Doon, Le Lecheor, Tydorel", *Rom* 8 (1879), pp. 1-21. ←
4. Georgine E. Brereton, "A Thirteenth Century List of French Lays and Other Narrative Poems", *MLR* 45 (1950), pp. 40-45.
5. Paul Zumthor, *Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale* (Paris 1954), p. 239.
- 6. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby eds., *The Lais of Marie de France* (London 1986), p. 35.
7. *Doctrina de compondre dictaz* in Richard Baum, "Les troubadors et les lais", *ZRP* 85 (1969), pp. 1-44; p. 20.
8. Jean Rychner, "Les Fabliaux: genre, styles, publics" in *La littérature narrative d'imagination. Des genres littéraires aux techniques d'expression* (Paris 1961), pp. 41-54; p. 45.
9. Jean Frappier, "Remarques sur la structure du lai. Essai de définition et de classement" in *La littérature d'imagination* (op. cit. note 8), pp. 23-39. ?
10. J. Frappier, op. cit. p. 26.
11. Shirley Anne Kahlert, *The Breton Lay and Generic Drift: A Study of Texts and Contexts* (Unpub. Ph.d. dissertation, UCLA 1967), p. 7. ←
12. Martín de Riquer, "La "aventure", el "lai" y el "conte" en Maria de Francia" *FilR* II (1955), pp. 1-19; p. 13.
- 13. Jean Maillard, *Évolution et esthétique du lai lyrique des origines à la fin du xive. siècle* (Paris 1963), p. 66.
14. Jean Frappier, op. cit. p. 28.
15. Rachel Bromwich, "A Note on the Breton Lay" *MAe*. XXVI (1957), pp. 18-31, p. 28.
16. Philippe Ménard, *Les Lais de Marie de France, Contes d'amour et d'aventure du moyen âge* (Paris 1979), p. 53.
17. C.T. Erickson ed., *The Anglo-Norman Text of Le Lai du Cor* (Oxford 1973).

18. C.T. Erickson, *op. cit.* p. 11.
19. F. Wulff ed., "Le conte du mantel, texte français des dernières années du xiii. siècle," *Rom* 14 (1885), pp. 345-80.
20. E.g. T.B.W. Reid, *Twelve Fabliaux* (Manchester 1958) has this example from *Du vilain qui conquist Paradis par plait*:
 Nos trovomes en escriture
 Une merveilleuse aventure 1-2
 Many others could be given.
21. Jean-Charles Payen, *Le Lai Narratif* (Turnhout 1975), p. 46.
22. J-Ch. Payen *op. cit.* p. 46.
23. Richard Baum, *Recherches sur les œuvres attribuées à Marie de France* (Heidelberg 1968), p. 16.
24. Philip Bennett, *Mantel et Cor. Deux lais du xiii. siècle* (University of Exeter 1975), pp. vii-viii.
25. Rita Lejeune, *Lai d'Ignaure* (Brussels 1938).
26. Lucien Foulet, "Marie de France et les lais bretons," *ZRP* 29 (1905), pp. 19-56 and 293-322; p. 54.
27. R. Lejeune, *op. cit.* p. 35.
28. Per Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux* (Geneva 1973), p. 97.
29. J-Ch. Payen, *op. cit.* p. 38.
30. *Ibid.* p. 42.
31. Roger Dubuis, *Les Cent nouvelles et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au moyen âge* (Grenoble 1973), p. 379.
32. Levy B.J., Hindley H., Langley F.W., Pickford C.E., eds. *Le lay de l'ombre* (Hull 1977).
33. Jean-Charles Payen, *op. cit.*, p. 53. Payen accords a great deal of importance to the manner of writing; the lay is defined "... par la manière de conter: narration rapide, usage fréquent du style indirect, style direct souvent réduit à des citations de discours (et plus précisément à des conclusions de discours), rareté des monologues, accélération finale du récit, etc."
34. This is not relevant. Harley 978 is a collection of Marie's *Lais* and other authors are not involved. The Uppsala ms. was translated from an Anglo-Norman original of the late 12th or early 13th centuries; *Ombre* is not an Anglo-Norman text and dates from after 1219 which would in any case make it rather late for inclusion in such a compilation. This only leaves B.N. 1104, and exclusion from one ms. does not have the same force as exclusion from three. It should be noted that there are seven extant mss. of *Ombre*, the largest number for any lay.
35. J-Ch. Payen, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
36. Artur Långfors, *Le vair palefroi avec deux versions de la male honte par Huon de Cambrai et par Guillaume* (Paris 1912).

37. Joseph Bédier, *Les Fabliaux* (Paris 1925), pp. 34-36.
38. Gaston Paris, "Un lai d'amors", *Rom* 23 (1878), pp. 406-15.
39. G. Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 408.
40. Maurice Delbouille ed., *Le Lai d'Aristote d'Henri d'Andeli* (Paris 1951).
41. M. Delbouille, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
42. M. Delbouille, *op. cit.*, pp. 18 and 17.
43. M. Delbouille, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
44. M. Delbouille, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
45. Albert Barth, "Le Lai du Conseil. Ein Altfranzösisches Minnegedicht" *RF* 31 (1911/12), pp. 799-872.
46. A. Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 823.
47. Tobin Prudence, *Les lais anonymes des xiiie. et xiiiie. siècles* (Geneva 1976).
48. P. Tobin, *op. cit.*

Graelent

L'aventure de Graalent
 vos dirai si que je l'entent;
 bon en sont li lai a oïr,
 e les notes a retenir. 1-4

L'aventure du bon destrier,
 l'aventure du cevalier,
 com il s'en ala o s'amie,
 fu par tote Bretagne oïe.
 Un lai en firent li Breton,
 Graalent Mor l'apela on. 727-32

Guingamor

D'un lay vos dirai l'aventure:
 nel tenez pas a troveüre,
 veritez est ce que dirai,
 Guingamor apele on le lai 1-4

Por l'aventure raconter
 en fist li rois .i. lai trover;
 de Guingamor retint le non,
 ainsi l'apelent li Breton. 675-78

Desiré

Entente i mettrai e ma cure
 a recunter un aventure
 dunt cil qui a cel tens vesquirent
 par remembrancë un lai firent.
 Ço est li lais del Dessiré
 ki tant par fu de grant beuté 1-6

Pur remembrer cest aventure
en aveient un lai trové,
si l'apelerent Desiré. 762-64

Tydorel

L'aventure d'un lai nouvel
que l'en apele Tydorel,
vos conterai comme ele avint. 1-3

Cest conte tienent a verai
li Breton qui firent le lai. 489-90

Tyolet

ll. 1-36 describe how lays in general were composed before the author opens his own tale:

.i. en firent que vos dirai,
selonc le conte que je sai
du vallet bel e engingnos,
hardi e fier e coragos.
Tyolet estoit apelez ... 37-41

De Tyolet ce lai ci fine 704

Espine

Qui que des lai tigne a mençaigne,
sacies je nes tienc pas a songe;
les aventures trespassees
qui diversement ai contees,
nes ai pas dites sans garant;
les estores en trai avant
ki encore sont a Carlion
ens el moustier Saint Aaron
e en Bretaigne sont eües
e en plusiors lius conneües.
Por chou que les truis en memore,
vos vuel demonstrer par estore
de .ii. enfans une aventure
ki tous jors a este obscure. 1-14

De l'aventure que dit ai,
li Breton en fisent un lai
por chou qu'elë avint au gué
n'ont pas li Breton esgardé
que li lais recheüst son non,
ne fu se de l'Espine non.
Ne l'ont pas des enfans nommé,
ains l'ont de l'Espine apielé,
s'a a non li lais de l'Espine
qui bien conmenche e biel define. 503-12

Melion

No introduction
Vrais est li lais du Melion,
ce dient bien tot li baron, 591-92

Doon

Doon, cest lai sevent plusor:
n'i a gueres bon harpëor
ne sache les notes harper;
nes je vos voil dire e conter
l'aventure dont li Breton
apelerent cest lai Doon. 1-6

De lui e de son bon destrier
e de son filz qu'il ot molt chier,
e des jornees qu'il erra
por la dame que il ama,
firent les notes li Breton
du lay c'om apele Doon. 281-86

49. Quoted by Harry F. Williams in "The Anonymous Breton Lais" from *Festschrift Albert W. Thompson*, (Washington 1964), pp. 76-84; p. 80.
50. See P. Tobin, *op. cit.* pp. 347-358.
51. Mortimer J. Donovan, *The Breton Lay: a Guide to Varieties*, (Indiana 1969), p. 99.
52. P. Tobin, *op. cit.*, p. 362.
53. Harry F. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
54. Gaston Paris, *op. cit.*, note 3, p. 64.
55. Gaston Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 64. Charmingly courteous, he did not believe Marie was the author of *Lecheor*: "aucune femme, à coup sûr, n'imaginerait ou ne répéterait la cynique profession de foi que les demoiselles et les dames de Bretagne (...) n'approuvent pas moins que les chevaliers" p. 39. In this he displays a very 19th-century view of what subjects were proper for a woman to tackle.
56. See also E.M. Grimes, "Le Lay du Trot", *RR*, 26 (1935), pp. 313-321.
57. The protagonist Lorois does not figure in G.D. West, *An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Verse Romances 1150-1200* (Toronto 1969).
58. Raymond Weeks, "Le Lai de l'Oiselet" in *Medieval Studies in Memory of Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis* (New York 1927), pp. 342-353.
59. Gaston Paris, "Le lai de l'épervier", *Rom* 7 (1878), pp. 1-21.
60. *Die Disciplina Clericalis des Petrus Alfonsi* eds. Alfons Hilka and Werner Sönderhjelm, (Heidelberg 1911); pp. 33-4 *De rustico e avicula*; pp. 16-7 *De gladio*.
61. *Le Chastoiement d'un père à son fils* ed. Edward D. Montgomery, Jr, (Chapel Hill 1971); pp. 136-140 and 84-7.
62. G. Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

63. P. Nykrog, op. cit., p. 85.
64. P. Nykrog, op. cit. p. 85.
65. P. Nykrog, op. cit. p. 85.
66. In the analogues, only three sentences ^{ae plural} are related. The passage on love in the lay is wholly the work of its author.
67. The origin of the term "lai" is probably the Old Irish "laí" meaning song or birdsong; melody or composition. According to Jean Maillard (op. cit. note 13) it is derived from "la déformation du terme bas-latin *leodos* (laudis), servant à désigner les rythmes latins adaptés aux langues vernaculaires, et répandus dans les Marches du Nord et de l'Ouest de l'Empire." p. 26. Richard Baum, studying the use of the word in Provençal literature of the 12th and 13th centuries, records an example from Marcabru (c. 1130-48) with this sense:
- Hueymais dey esser alegrans
 Pus l'aura doussa vey venir
 Et auch lays et voutas a chans
 Dels auselhs que.m fan esbaudir
- Richard Baum, "Les troubadours^u et les lais", *ZRP* 85 (1969), pp. 1-44.
68. Alexander Bell, *Le Lai d'Haveloc and Gaimar's Haveloc Episode* (Manchester and London 1925).
69. Jeanne Lods ed. *Les pièces lyriques du roman de Perceforest en prose* (Geneva 1953).
70. Tatiana Fotitch and Ruth Steiner, *Les lais du Tristan en prose*, (Munich 1974).
71. J. Maillard, op. cit., p. 86-7.
72. Auguste Scheler, *Dits et contes de Baudoin de Condé et de son fils Jean de Condé* (Brussels 1866). 3 vols.
73. Jacques Ribard, "Des lais au xive. siècle? Jean de Condé" in *Mélanges offerts à Jean Frappier* (Paris 1970), pp. 952.
74. C. de Boer ed., *Philomena: conte raconté d'après Ovide par Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris 1909).
75. F. Branciforti ed., *Piramus et Tisbé* (Florence 1959).
76. Martine Thiry-Stassin et Madeleine Tyssens eds., *Narcisse. Conte ovidien français du xiiie. siècle* (Paris 1976).
77. M.J. Donovan, op. cit. p. 72.
78. F. Branciforti, op. cit. p. 6.
79. F.A.G. Cowper ed., *Ille et Galeron par Gautier d'Arras*, (Paris 1956).
80. Edmond Faral ed., *Courtois d'Arras. Jeu du xiiie. siècle*, (Paris 1911).
81. Georg Ebeling ed., *Auberee*, (Halle 1895).
82. R. Baum, op. cit., note 23, p. 16.

83. In: *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des xiii^e. et xiv^e. siècles* ed. Anatole de Montaignon, (Paris 1872). 6 vols. Vol. II, pp. 92-113.
84. Omer Jodogne, "Considérations sur le fabliau" in *Mélanges René Crozet* eds. P. Gallais, Y-J. Riou, (Poitiers 1966) 2 vols. Vol. II, pp. 1043-1055.
85. O. Jodogne, op. cit. p. 1054: the fabliau possesses "un caractère trivial" and can be described as "un conte en vers où, sur un ton trivial, sont narrés un ou plusieurs anecdotes plaisants ou exemplaires, l'un et l'autre ou l'un ou l'autre".
86. Op. cit. note 83, vol. III, pp. 123-36.
87. Edward Cooke Armstrong ed., *Le chevalier de l'épée*, (Baltimore 1900).
88. Op. cit. note 83, vol. IV, pp. 128-51. *unbear reference - to this text*
89. The ms. is dated by the script and by a list of English kings concluding "Henricus tercius regnauit quinquaginta quinque annis". Op. cit. note 4, p. 40. *unbear ref*
90. "Die Sprache der Dichterin, wie sie sich besonders aus der Durchsicht der Reime ergibt, weist im Gegenteil auf die Mitte und die zweite Hälfte des zwölften Jahrhunderts als die Zeit ihres dichterischen Schaffens hin. So ist es wahrscheinlich, dass Marie zur Zeit Heinrichs II (...) in England dichtete und diesem ihre Lais widmete" Karl Warnke ed., *Die Lais der Marie de France*, (Halle 1885; 3rd ed. 1925), pp. iv-v.
91. A. Ewert, op. cit. note 2, p. vii.
92. R. Baum, op. cit. note 23.
93. Ezio Levi, "Sulla cronologia delle opere di Maria di Francia", *Nuovi Studi Med. I*, (1923), pp. 41-72
— "Studi sulle opere di Maria di Francia: I. Maria di Francia e il Re Giovane. II. Maria di Francia e le Abbazie d'Inghilterra". *Arch. Rom. V* (1921), nos. 3-4.
94. See Charles H. Haskins, "Henry II as a Patron of Literature" in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Thomas Frederick Tout* (Manchester 1925), pp. 71-77 and Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, "Henry II Plantagenêt patron des historiographes anglo-normands de langue d'oïl" in *La littérature Angevine médiévale* (Angers 1981), pp. 91-105.
95. Axel Ahlström, *Studier i den fornfranska laislitteraturen* (Uppsala 1892), pp. 37-38.
96. Jean Rychner, ed., *Les Lais de Marie de France* (Paris 1966), p. xi.
97. Claude Luttrell, *The Creation of the first Arthurian Romance: A Quest* (London 1974).
98. Philippe Ménard, op. cit., note 16, p. 33.
99. See Maurice Delbouille, op. cit. note 40 p. 29.
100. M. Delbouille, op. cit. p. 29.
101. Alain Guerreau, "Renaud de Bâgé: 'Le bel Inconnu'. Structure symbolique et signification sociale", *Rom* 103 (1982), pp. 28-82.
102. Op. cit. note 24 p. vii.

103. Op. cit. note 38 p. 408.
104. Op. cit. note 45 p. 822-23.
105. Op. cit. note 58 p. 341.
106. Op. cit. note 47 pp. 89-90.
107. Op. cit. pp. 130-31.
108. Op. cit. pp. 163-164.
109. Op. cit. pp. 207-8.
110. Op. cit. pp. 228-9.
111. Op. cit. p. 259.
112. Op. cit. pp. 291-2.
113. Op. cit. p. 320.
114. Op. cit. p. 336.
115. Op. cit. pp. 347-8.
116. Op. cit. pp. 359-60.
117. Robert de Blois, in *Beaudous*, identifies "lire romanz" as one of the social graces, together with "conter fables", "chanter chansons" and the ability to play "tables" or "eschoz" ed. J. Ulrich, (Berlin 1889-95), ll. 547 and ss.). Chrétien de Troyes portrays a family group engaged in literary activities:
- Apuiié voit dessor son cote
 Un prodome, qui se gisoit
 Sor un drap de soie, et lisoit
 Une pucele devant li
 An un romanz, ne sai de cui.
 Et por le romanz escouter
 S'i estoit venue acoter
 Une dame, et c'estoit sa mere,
 Et li prodome estoit ses pere,
- Yvain* 5360-68
118. M. de Riquer, in "La technique littéraire des chansons de geste" (Liège, 1959), pp. 75-84.
119. P. Gallais, "Recherches sur la mentalité des romanciers français du moyen âge", *CCMe* VII (1964), pp. 479-93; XIII (1970), pp. 333-47; p. 483.
120. Op. cit. p. 483.
121. M. Domenica Legge, "The Influence of Patronage on Form in Medieval French Literature" in *Stil- und Formprobleme in der Literatur*. Vorträge des VII Kongresses der Internationalen Vereinigung für moderne Sprachen und Literaturen in Heidelberg. (Heidelberg 1959), pp. 136-41.
122. P. Gallais, op. cit. p. 490.
123. J-Ch. Payen, *Le motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale (des origines à 1230)*. (Geneva 1967) p. 487.

124. J-Ch. Payen, op. cit. p. 17.
125. J-Ch. Payen, op. cit. p. 52.
126. J-Ch. Payen, op. cit. p. 52.
127. H. Kjellman ed. *La Vie saint Edmund le rei* (Geneva 1974) stresses the nobility's liking for lays:
- E dame Marie autresi,
 Ki en rime fist e basti
 E compassa les vers de lais,
 Ke ne sunt pas del tut verais;
 E si en est ele mult loée
 E li rime par tut amée.
 Kar mult l'aiment, si l'unt mult cher
 Cunte, barun e chivaler;
 E si enaiment mult l'escrit
 E lite le funt, si unt delit,
 E si les funt sovent retreire. 35-45
128. See P. Tobin, op. cit. pp. 371-73.
129. Reference has already been made in note 1 to *Horn*, in which the hero completes a lay that Lenburc has performed inadequately. Lucien Foulet ed. *Jean Renart: Galeran de Bretagne* (Paris 1925)
- par un doulx lay le desconforte;
 Les autres laiz, celuy a pris
 Que Galeron li a apris.
 Et dit ne mesprent n'en la note:
 De Galeron le Breton note.
 Si l'escoutent toutes e tuit;
 Des moz n'entent nulz le deduit
 Fors que dui; mais li chans est doulx,
 Si les fait entendre a li tous. 6996-7004
130. D.W. Robertson, Jr., *The Literature of Medieval England* (McGraw-Hill 1970), p. 28.

2. Marriage in Aristocratic Society in the Period 1150-1250.

It has been shown that the audience of the lays was in all likelihood largely composed of members of the nobility, distinguished from the other estates of medieval society by the exercise of military power. It is our intention here to show briefly how this group was organised in the period under consideration and how it dominated secular society. We shall then consider the place of marriage in this system. In addition we shall relate how the influence of the Church gradually came to affect all decisions concerned with marriage and the effect this had on the nobility. As a means of illustrating certain aspects of marriage among the nobility at the time of the lays we shall be referring to a contemporary biography the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*.¹ The *Histoire* is of particular interest as William Marshal has been put forward as "le cunte Williame", dedicatee of Marie de France's *Fables*.² While this attribution must remain unproved, it is certain that William's long life (c. 1144-1219) coincided largely with the fashion for lays, and he himself belonged to the group that in all probability formed the audience for this type of literature. The *Histoire* is based on material given to the author by John of Early, a long-time companion of the Marshal, and much of it is verifiable from other sources, which gives the reader respect for those facts that cannot be so verified.³ Moreover, though William was remarkable in his achievement (no one could have expected the fourth son of an unimportant baron to attain the regency) his aspirations and achievements differed only in extent from those of his fellows, and this gives his life an exemplary value.

The aristocracy of Northern France and Norman dominated England was set apart from the Church, peasantry and urban dwellers by the profession of arms.⁴ This should however be understood in a particular sense. The noble usually fought on horseback, armed perhaps with sword and lance, protected by a shield and some type of protective armour. As a force, the nobles were mobile, well-equipped and well-trained, the élite of any army. They lived for war, which was the occasion for them to use the skill in fighting acquired since childhood and also an opportunity to win fame through their exploits and fortune as well, either as a reward for their services or booty from raids and ransom. Totally preoccupied by their military duties, they had little time for any other type of activity except the allied pastimes of hunting and toumeyng even if they had had the inclination.

The noble was also distinguished by the possession of land which was his payment for the military service he gave and the support he needed in order to be able to render it. Normally this fief was granted to a soldier by a more powerful noble to whom the vassal owed service. The relationship was essentially a personal one created by the ceremony of homage which dated back to Frankish times.⁵ In it, the vassal swore to be the man of the lord and his service was accepted. It was only held once and was binding on both parties for life unless there was some grave infraction of the relationship. From Carolingian times the ceremony of homage was often accompanied by another, of fealty. In this, the man swore on the Bible or

on holy relics to be faithful to his superior. This could be repeated at frequent intervals throughout the time of association and was also used, as will be shown in some of the lays, as a way of taking temporary service with another lord as a mercenary. In return for the fief and the support given by the lord, the vassal performed certain military duties, attended the lord's court and assisted in the settlement of disputes and paid certain financial dues (e.g., on the knighting of the lord's eldest son, the marriage of his eldest daughter, or if the lord were to be captured and ransomed). The link was broken when one of the two died, but from Carolingian time onward it became common for the rights and responsibilities of both lord and vassal to be inherited. This was for reasons of facility as much as anything else. The vassal naturally wished to secure the future well-being of his family and this meant retaining the fief that was their economic support. The lord wanted to ensure that he continued to receive the services due. Both sides gained in security and stability. The question remained as to who was to inherit. If a man left only one son, there was no problem, but when several were involved, matters became more complex. The fief was, it must be remembered, originally intended to support one fighting man. It would not be sufficient to do this if it were to be divided among several heirs. In the north of France and in England preference was given to the eldest son who would inherit the bulk of the estates at his father's death. Provision for younger sons might be made by granting them parts of the estate which they would hold from their brother, or they might simply be given their training as a knight or as a cleric and left to make their own way in the world (the situation was different in the south where Roman law still survived and division of estates was more common). The principle of hereditary possession of estates became so strong that even when the heir was incapable of rendering the services because of age or sex, it was still generally accepted. If the heir was a young boy, a guardian would be appointed who would ensure that the lord received his dues. The situation was similar if the heir was a girl. If several girls were left, things were more complex. William, the younger son (the fourth son) of a baron of minor importance despite his hereditary title of marshal of England⁶, owed much of his later eminence to his marriage to Isabel de Clare. She was the daughter of the Earl of Striguil and Pembroke and, after the death of her brother at an early age, she inherited his estates and the titles he held as the only surviving child. She was therefore countess of Striguil and Pembroke *suo jure*. William was only created earl in 1199 at King John's coronation 10 years after his marriage to her. None of their five sons were survived by their children and after the death of the youngest, Walter, in 1245 the titles fell into abeyance between the five surviving daughters and their heirs. They were eventually conferred by Henry III on a descendant of their youngest daughter who was married by the king to his favorite half-brother.⁷ The estates however were divided equally among the heiresses as was the normal rule, and the specific office of Earl Marshal passed to the descendants of the eldest daughter, the Countess of Norfolk. It can be seen that women were of considerable importance in the feudal system. They could not of course render the

services expected of the fief in person, but their husbands could do so on their behalf. We will show later how important the control of marriages of heiresses was to overlords.

The original simplicity of the feudal system was greatly complicated by the hereditary factor since a vassal could easily find himself with more than one overlord. He might unexpectedly inherit a fief – William Marshal inherited his brother's estates in 1194 – for which he might owe homage to a different lord. It was also possible that one inheritance might comprise lands dependent on different lords. Isabel de Clare inherited lands in Normandy for which homage was due ultimately to the French king. Marriage could also complicate these matters: Henry II's interests in Aquitaine, which he owed to his marriage to Eleanor, were dependent on the homage she owed her former husband Louis VII. The difficulties of this type of situation can be seen in the events which followed the estrangement of Eleanor and Henry in 1164. In 1169 the treaty of Montmirail recognised Richard as the future ruler of the duchy of Aquitaine and Henry was more or less obliged to make an equally generous settlement on his eldest son Henry. In 1173, following the revolt of the Young King, Eleanor confided the care of Richard and Geoffrey to her overlord, Louis, who promptly knighted them, thus creating a very difficult situation for Henry, who saw his wife and sons taking sides with his most vehement enemy and knowing there was very little he could do against this threat.⁸ This situation was unstable: in the event of a quarrel breaking out between two overlords, what position was a vassal who held land from both of them to adopt? This was a problem faced by William when John and Philip Augustus came to blows, although he was canny enough to retain his lands in both Normandy and England. Custom hovered between supporting the lord who had granted the oldest fief and who had first taken homage from a vassal and supporting the lord who had granted the richest fief. A partial solution was found in the institution of liege homage.⁹ It was to the liege lord that the vassal owed his chief duty and the liege lord was usually the grantor of the original fief. But this bond too was soon debased. Nobles in search of more land did not hesitate to take several liege lords, while the lords themselves would not accept anything less than full liege homage. A noble who possessed no land, or who possessed little and who was in quest of lucrative adventure might employ the separate notion of fealty and swear to be the man of an overlord for a specified period of time during which he would receive pay and subsistence from the lord. However, such bargains were of limited duration and did not necessarily involve the longer term relationship implied in the act of homage.

Another method of rewarding men for their services was to grant them not a fief but their expenses within the household of the noble. This was known as *chisement* and had existed since Carolingian times. It was a ^{the} favorite method with the Angevins as it did not lead to the permanent alienation of lands as did the granting of a fief. Philip Augustus adopted it for the same reason. It was not incompatible with the holding of fiefs. The hereditary marshal of England received pay when carrying out his duties – two shillings a day if he ate his meals

ambiguity in whole
sentence

outside the king's household and 14 d. if he ate in hall¹⁰ and also possessed hereditary estates.

It is important to note that there were similarities between the interests of lord and vassal. A man could be both at the same time. William Marshal owed his allegiance jointly to the kings of England and France but when he was on his deathbed he did not neglect the distribution of costly clothing to the knights who held land from him (ll. 18670-18746). There was a hierarchy however. At the bottom was the vavassour, the *vassus vassorum*, who was not himself the lord of any other knight. At the top were the great feudal magnates who controlled huge territories and the allegiance of many vassals and who were sometimes, like the Marcher lords of the Welsh Borders (of whom William was one), virtually independent rulers within their own fiefs. Despite these wide variations in power all belonged to the same military caste and had similar aims and ideals. They were also marked out from other sections of society by belonging to a particular *ordo* within it: they were knights. There are many references in fiction to the fact that the young hero is created a knight before setting out on his adventures, and there are also some in the '*Histoire*'.

In common with many young nobles of this period, William was sent away from his home to learn the skills of knighthood. After the cessation of hostilities between the Empress Maud and King Stephen, in which his father had played a rôle, William was sent to Normandy, committed to the care of Guillaume de Tancarville, chamberlain of the duchy and a cousin of the Marshals. He would then have been about eleven years old. He was noted principally for his capacity for sleeping and eating:

"De quei vos sert cist encombriers,
"Cist mangiere, cist aversiers
"Qui toz diz dort s'il ne mangüe?
"Fols est qui li trove mengüe."

785-88

The chamberlain had confidence in his young kinsman however and predicted that "*Enkor traïra féve de pot*" 792. It was usual to create knights at some festival, often a Church feast day. William was knighted at a tournament by his cousin:¹¹

Li Chamberlans fu a Drincourt
Ou molt out tenu riche cort.
La fu Guill. chevaliers,
Li marechals, qui volentiers
Pris l'enor que Dex li out faite;
Lonc tens en out [eü] sofrate.
Li Chamberlans li ceinst l'espée
Dunt pu(i)s dona mente colée;

815-22

The essential elements of the ceremony are seen: the girding of the sword by a more experienced knight, the blows which were partly a reminder of the ceremony to the newly initiated knight (and to the witnesses) and also symbolic: the only blows that could not be returned. There is no mention of any involvement by the Church on this occasion apart from in 1.189 which refers to the fact that it was God who had prepared this honour for him. The

Church was sometimes involved in the ceremony of dubbing knights – William the Conqueror's son was dubbed by the archbishop of Canterbury – but this was not the case here. William would have been about twenty at this time and spent the next years winning fame, if not fortune, at tournaments and in the service of the Plantagenets. By 1170 his fame was such that Henry II made him a member of the entourage of his newly-crowned son Henry the Young King. His position was clearly one of some eminence for it was William who knighted Henry in 1173. This event occurred after a quarrel between father and son. The Young King's partisans pointed out that he was at a disadvantage in this dispute:

“Mais tant i a, bel sire chiers,
“Qu'encor n'estes pas chevaliers,
“Ne plaist pas a toz, ce me semble.
“Meilz en valdrion tuit asemble
“Si en dreit vos ert ceinte espée.
“Plus hardie & plus anorée
“Sereit tote vostre maisnie
“E plus très joiose & plus lie”

2071-78

The king agreed, and specified who should do the deed:

“Certes, li meldres chevaliers
“Qui en toz tens est ne sera
“E plus a fait & plus fera
“Me ceindra, si Deu plait, l'espée”

2080-83

When the sword was fetched, it was to William that Henry gave it, saying

“... “De Deu & de vos
“Voil avoir ceste enor, beal sire.”

2088-89

space → Here again the ceremony is extremely simple, perhaps because of the circumstances attending it. William agreed, and

comment? → L'espée li ceinst volontiers,
Sil baisa; lors fu chevaliers;

2091-92

This was all that was considered necessary: liturgies had existed from the 9th century that could accompany such a ceremony, but at this period all that was required was for the candidate to be received by a more prestigious predecessor. And the prestige did not have to be connected with birth. William was certainly of noble birth, being the younger son of the marshal of England and the nephew of the Earl of Salisbury, but even his biographer notes that compared with others present at the Young King's knighting, William was of minor status:

Seignors, icest[e] grant enor
Fist Dex al Mareschal le jor:
Veiant contes, veiant barons,
E veiant genz de houz nons,
Ceinst l'espée al rei de Engleterre.
Si n'aveit il reie de tere
Ne rien fors sa chevalerie.

2097-2103

It was to his prowess as a knight that he owed this honour, and to this alone. It will be noted

then that at a time any knight could create another and that although knighthood was considered desirable it was not essential to command. Henry had been a king, if only in name, for three years before he was made a knight, and must then have been some twenty years old. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that it was thought that Henry and his men would enjoy more prestige if he were knighted. By the end of the century matters had changed somewhat. After the death of King John in 1216, the heir of the throne was the nine-year-old Henry III. This time those present made sure to knight the king before he was crowned, despite his age, and it was William who, at the request of those present, gave the sword to Henry before his coronation (ll. 15281-15332). Of course by this time William was no longer a landless man and was soon to take on the duties of regent, and it is doubtful if at this time anyone other than an extremely powerful man would have been considered for such a task. The knighting of William Marshal in c. 1164 and of Henry III in 1216 reveals processes at work within the upper echelons of society.

In '*Situation de la noblesse en France au début du XIIIe siècle*',¹² Georges Duby states that in his opinion the aristocracy became a legally definable nobility capable of transmitting its privileges to new generations, at the beginning of the 13th century. Before this date he had distinguished two levels within those dedicated to military service: those having the title of *dominus (sire)*, who had castles and various legal powers to command other men and to deal out justice, and the *milites (chevaliers)* who had duties towards the first group. However, according to Duby, during the period c. 1180-1220/30 the distinctions were diminishing. The *domini* were increasingly being made knights and the dubbing ceremony was becoming a *rite of passage* even for those destined to rule. As the Church strove to control the bellicose attitudes of the nobility, the ritual was becoming more important. In addition, the institution of knighthood was rising in the esteem of those eligible to become members.

The knights meanwhile gradually took to themselves privileges which had hitherto been restricted to the first category: they began to fortify their dwelling-places, adopt heraldic arms and to use the title of *messire*. They also began to adopt the principle of primogeniture, albeit rather slowly. Duby discerns several reasons for these changes. As the great feudal magnates, and in particular the kings, strove to consolidate their power, they attacked the autonomy of the castellans, claiming superior powers to raise armies and to give justice. In addition they reinforced the duty of homage and of direct feudal service. In 1209 for example Philip Augustus abolished the practice of *parage* in his territories. In this, the oldest brother alone did homage to the overlord for his lands and granted his brothers portions of his domain. The brothers owed their allegiance to him, and only indirectly to the king, which obviously lessened royal power and incidentally also reduced his revenues on the right to succession (it has to be said that Philip Augustus was not entirely successful in stamping out this custom). As for the castellans, encouraged by the Church and the change in mental attitudes, they became more interested than before in the institution of knighthood. At the same time.

according to Marc Bloch, the right to be made a knight became restricted to those whose fathers or grandfathers had been knights, thus excluding those who in earlier times might have won the honour for themselves through their abilities on the field of battle. The principle was not totally exclusive though. It was believed that the intangible qualities associated with noble birth – generosity, courage and “youth” could be inherited from both parents. The offspring of a marriage between a noblewoman and a non-noble (and these were not uncommon) could be considered noble. In addition the king, as the fountain of honours, retained the right to create new knights if he wished, while restricting the rights of others to do so.¹³

Georges Duby also comments on the increasing economic problems of the nobility through this period which led to indebtedness. To be a soldier was expensive and knights had always resorted to moneylenders to pay their way. In the late 12th century they began to experience difficulties in repaying the loans and some were forced to sell either their fiefs¹⁴ or their homage to the highest bidder. In this way, some non-noble gained rights to land and lordship. The reason for this crisis, according to Duby, was not a lack of money due to the failure to exploit the land – he finds that revenue from the tithes, mills and the sale of seigneurial rights actually increased – but due to increasing expenditure. Military equipment was becoming more sophisticated and more expensive. It was more expensive to serve a lord who lived some distance away than it had been to serve the former castellans. Lords were insisting on the regular payment of monetary dues and seeking to find new methods of increasing their incomes which at this point were scarcely distinguishable from the revenues of the state. They were also insisting more and more on the performance of court obligations which were expensive as they involved a great deal of show. It became more expensive to knight a son for the same reasons: the expense of the weapons and the necessary display of wealth. As Duby says, “Être noble, c’est gaspiller, c’est une obligation de paraître, c’est être condamné, sous peine de déchéance, au luxe et à la dépense.”¹⁵

The remedy was to take service with the king whose financial resources were greater. A paid post in the army might be sought, or service in the royal administration, although here the knight was in competition with men who may not have been of noble birth but who possessed a sound knowledge of the law. Philip Augustus was notorious for his promotion of the low-born but the efficient. The nobles were under threat on all sides: the monarchies and the great lords were increasing their power at the expense of those further down the scale in an attempt to assert their authority. At the same time the king who promoted villeins to positions of power over nobles would knight them, make them noble by statute. This was necessary because otherwise the knights by birth would certainly not feel inclined to obey any orders emanating from low-born nobodies. The king had another method at his disposal as well. He could offer the children of the noble but poor as spouses to the rich commoner. This disparagement was greatly disliked by the nobility.

We have considered it important to dwell briefly on the economic and juridical status of the aristocracy before looking at the place of marriage in the system because it is they who, through their monopoly of military and economic power within a carefully designated and limited set of families, possessed the money (financial crisis notwithstanding) to act as patrons for a type of literature independent from the didactic and hagiographical works sponsored by the Church. The conception of marriage held by this group is of interest in acquiring an understanding of what they expected from the poets and writers who entertained them.

In any society the rôle of marriage is fundamental: Duby summarises its importance:

“C’est en effet par l’institution matrimoniale, par les règles qui président aux alliances, par la manière dont sont appliquées ces règles, que les sociétés humaines (...) gouvernent leur avenir, tentent de se perpétuer dans le maintien de leurs structures, en fonction d’un système symbolique, de l’image que ces sociétés se font de leur propre perfection. Les rites du mariage sont institués pour assurer dans l’ordre la répartition des femmes entre les hommes, pour socialiser la procréation. Désignant qui sont les pères, ils ajoutent une autre filiation à la filiation maternelle, seule évidente. Ils distinguent le statut d’héritier, c’est-à-dire des ancêtres, un nom, des droits. Le mariage fonde les relations de parenté, il fonde la société toute entière”.¹⁶

Marriage supplied a clear line of transmission between the generations by ensuring that some unions were regarded by all authorities, secular and religious, as licit; it allowed property and power to be handed down to the offspring while excluding those whose birth was not so regular. It allowed the designated heir to take his inheritance without having to fight for it, thus saving lives and preventing bloodshed. Lords knew who would serve them, and vassals knew whom they would serve. But marriage was expensive. It involved losing direct control of land since fathers had to provide a young couple with the means of support. Since they did not wish to diminish the family holdings unnecessarily, the younger sons, if there were any, were left unmarried for some considerable time. They had to take their chances and hope to win a bride who possessed land in her own right or else enter the Church. As Duby notes, these young men, deprived of most hope of inheriting much from their families and debarred by custom from ever earning money by entering a trade, constituted a turbulent group within the nobility. It was these men who, like William Marshal, formed the feudal levies and who inclined towards violence either as a way of attracting the notice of a patron or of carrying off a wife. These *juvenes*, as they were called at the time, roamed the land in search of adventure and booty. Again, in Duby’s opinion it was these young men who formed the public for the chivalric romances, being particularly fond of stories in which knights such as themselves won lands and established families, and of stories in which the typical erotic situation was that of husband-wife-young lover, rather than those in which the lover was also a married man.¹⁷ We wish now to examine how the aristocracy arranged marriages and what was expected of them, and to examine the rôle of the Church in directing conceptions of the institution and its development during this period.

In *La Société féodale* Marc Bloch says of marriage “il n’était souvent, de la façon la plus naïve, qu’une association d’intérêts”,¹⁸ in the sense of the economic interests of the families involved. This factor was so strong that he notes “une étrange et double antinomie entre les mœurs et les lois religieuses”.¹⁹ The nobility had clear temporal objectives. These included the provision of recognised heirs to continue the line and fulfil the duties expected of them. It was a time of exchange: the dowry that a wife brought with her, and the jointure that had to be provided for her, as well as the means to support her. It was also a means of forming alliances between groups. Seen in this light, it was far more important that the families should control unions than that any form of dangerous individualism should be allowed to interfere with the formation of these carefully considered treaties. The Church on the other hand had a different opinion, and at this time the development in the theological and canonical bases of marriage was rapid and radical. Particularly active were Hugues de Saint-Victor, Gratian, whose *Decretum* appeared c. 1140, Peter Lombard, whose *Sententiae* date from c. 1152, and the two popes, Alexander III and Gregory IX, both of whom were involved in the codification and dissemination of the Church’s new doctrine on the subject.

The Church had always admitted that marriage was the sole form of permissible sexual relationship. Its model was the union of Adam and Eve, instituted in Paradise before the Fall for the express purpose of populating the Earth, and approved by Christ at Cana. The Church therefore favoured marriage, and advised it to all those not vowed to chastity. It was easy to get married – there were few formalities – and difficult to dissolve a marriage. The early Church however saw it as a state inferior to that of celibacy dedicated to God. It was a remedy for those who could not exercise restraint, but it tended to separate man from God and was not to be too readily promoted on that account. Nevertheless, it was the only licit sexual relationship and so could not be ignored, and indeed the Church had been involved with the question of marriage from its earliest times. By the 11th century it alone was the competent authority on the subject. The Church’s doctrine was in something of a state of flux though since although the references in the Gospels gave guiding principles, as did the Old Testament and the writings of St Paul, detail had to be worked out later. Episcopal courts had a fair degree of independence and judgements often differed because each area was ruled by its own form of law, Frankish, Saxon or Roman, and this inevitably influenced the interpretation of the Church authorities. The main areas of concern were the establishment of the indissolubility of the marriage bond, its formation and the possibility of dissolving it.

Indissolubility was apparently straightforward, although two texts (Matthew V, vv. 31-32 and Matthew XIX, v. 9) appear to allow a husband to divorce an adulterous wife. These texts were the subject of much controversy given that in the Gospels the overwhelming trend is towards total indissolubility and the equal rights of women in marriage. By the time of St Augustine (345-430) it was accepted that in the strictest interpretation a marriage could not be dissolved during the lifetime of the partners. The spouses might separate, but they could not

re-marry. It is clear however that this strict view did not prevail over former custom. In her thesis *A Study of Some Aspects of Marriage in Selected Octosyllabic Romances of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*²⁰ Sally Burch cites some penitentials of the Merovingian period which allowed an innocent partner in a triangular adulterous affair to re-marry. In some cases the guilty partner was also permitted to marry again after the performance of a suitable penance.²¹ Other grounds for divorce included leprosy of a spouse, the return to his own land of a man who, serving his lord in foreign lands, had married there, and who was allowed to re-marry if his wife did not wish to accompany him. At the Council of Verberie in 757 re-marriage was permitted to those whose wives entered the religious life (this decision seems to have been regarded as something of an aberration, and it was reversed at the Council of Compiègne which took place the following year). Impotence (of both sexes), desertion, the attempted murder of a spouse were all accepted reasons for bringing a marriage to an end. However by the end of the 9th century most of these indulgences had been swept away by various reforms, although enforcement was always difficult until, by the late 11th century, the Church's jurisdiction was accepted as total. By the mid-12th century, "neither adultery, leprosy, captivity, prolonged absence nor monastic vows dissolved the marriage or gave the other conjoint freedom to remarry".²² Consequently it follows that the lays were composed at a time when the indissolubility of all properly constituted marriages was accepted by churchmen and by most laymen as well, though they might well have regretted the passing of the old order. Many nobles found the new hard line on indissolubility difficult to swallow, either because a marriage had been arranged for family or state reasons and the spouses did not get on – an example of this is the marriage of Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine, or because the factors that had made the alliance desirable in the first place had altered. There are many instances of nobles trying to secure a divorce; Duby cites some in *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre*.²³ The first of several marriages evoked in the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* is that of the hero's parents, and here we see an example of a *divorce de convenance*. William's father, John Marshal, was married twice. His first wife is described as a

... feme de haut parage,
 Bele et bone e jioise et liée,
 E si estoit bien enseignée.
 A grant joie furent ensemble
 Lunc tens, eissi come[e] mei semble,
 Tant que dous fils out de la dame:

370-77

This charming but anonymous lady was evidently of some rank and in giving her husband two sons had done her feudal duty. It would seem that the marriage was successful, even happy – the phrase "A grant joie furent ensemble / Lunc tens" is unusually fulsome in the context of the *Histoire*, but it did not last.

John supported the Empress Maud in the civil war of the 1140's, but he had a powerful neighbour, Patrick of Salisbury, who was a partisan of King Stephen. In the many skirmishes

between them, John was getting the worst of it. It became necessary to seek an accomodation, so the two made a deal, and John divorced his wife:

De sa feme si departi,
Par conseil, si com j'oi dire,
Puis prist damesele Sibire,
La sorur le cunte Patriz,
Ce ne fist il pas a enviz,
Por oster entre els la discorde;
Puis i ont amor e concorde
Qui lur dura tute lor vie.

370-77

The incident tends to show, as Paul Meyer comments, that “au milieu du XIIe. siècle des motifs de pur intérêt suffisaient à l’obtention du divorce”.²⁴ The chronicler is very casual about the event, probably because he had little knowledge of it beyond the fact that it occurred. The interesting thing about it is that what appears to have been a regularly constituted marriage was broken up on political grounds. John acted “*par conseil*”, and certainly many people would have been involved. Besides Patrick, acting on behalf of his sister, there would have been the family of John’s first wife, probably vassals, if there were any, from all sides and the Church which alone had the authority to nullify a marriage, but which is not even mentioned here. We are not told on what grounds the annulment was secured – perhaps consanguinity? – or what happened to his first wife afterwards. She would still have been an asset to her family and may well have married again: women of the nobility were rarely left single at this time unless they decided to enter the religious life, and this was not very common. The major religious orders were somewhat ambivalent about convents of women and were wary of accepting women into their collective bosom.²⁵ Nothing is said of the emotions felt by her or her former husband. Only the satisfaction felt by John at the settlement with Patrick is considered relevant. This was indeed marriage *pro bono pacis*, in the evocative phrase of the day. As for Patrick, he changed his allegiance and became a supporter of the Empress, who duly rewarded him with an earldom. The tightening up by the Church on the dissolution of marriages continued to make headway though. If in 1154 the marriage of Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine had been dissolved, ostensibly on the grounds of consanguinity (while Eleanor and Henry II were related in exactly the same degree), this tactic did not work so well in the thirteenth century. The great-grandson of Sibyl and John Marshal, Roger Bigod, married the daughter of William the Lion in 1226. In 1245 he repudiated her on the grounds of consanguinity – taking his time to discover the impediment, it has to be said – but in 1253 he was forced to take her back.²⁶ The climate had indeed changed. It also shows how long it could take to get a judgement from the Church on affairs of this sort.

If the doctrine of indissolubility was gaining ground fast it has to be remembered that it applied to those couples who had been married according to the Church’s definition. But here again there was doubt. There was confusion between what is now called betrothal, and

marriage. Both ceremonies used the same vocabulary (*desponsatio*, *sponsus*, *sponsa*, *sponsalia*) and both consisted of mutual promises to marry. To this were added the complexities of the debate between those who believed that consent alone made a marriage valid, and those who held that consummation was also necessary.

Because of the involvement of families in the arrangement of marriages betrothal vows were almost as binding as marriage vows. The Church regarded them as an initial stage in the formation of the bond and so not to be broken without good cause. The aristocracy for its part viewed them in a not dissimilar way. A carefully negotiated alliance was not to be thrown away, but of course circumstances might make a change desirable.

The debate between consent and consummation had been running for some time. In the second half of the 9th century Hincmar de Reims had declared that it was consummation that made a marriage, and that this distinguished betrothed from married couples. This view was not altogether to the taste of other members of the clergy since it placed unwelcome emphasis on the carnal side of marriage. Moreover it raised considerable problems when the marriage of Joseph and Mary was concerned. If Mary was, and always remained, a virgin, how then could she have been Joseph's wife? If she had been Joseph's wife, as Hincmar defined it, what happened to the doctrine of her virginity? A partial solution was found in the rediscovery and revival of Roman law and the adage "*consensus facit nuptias*"²⁷ in the Justinian Code. This appeared to solve the dilemma neatly: if consent alone was needed, then there was no necessity to insist on physical consummation as well. Unfortunately this aggravated the difficulty of distinguishing between betrothal and the actual marriage and raised the acutely difficult question of just whose consent was required – that of the prospective spouses and theirs alone, or was that of their families needed as well? Could children refuse to marry spouses selected for them by their parents or guardians?

Gratian considered that consummation was required to turn a betrothal into a "*matrimonium ratum*". Betrothal itself was "*matrimonium initiatum*". He also insisted that parental consent should be given. This was not the view taken by Peter Lombard. A professor at the University of Paris, he had considerable influence within the Gallican Church. He was the first to distinguish clearly between what he termed the *sponsalia de futuro*, or betrothal, which was a promise given to take effect at some future date, and the *sponsalia de praesenti* which took effect immediately, provided there was no impediment. Parental consent and consummation were both unnecessary, as was a priest or indeed any other witness. It followed that a couple could be legitimately married in this scheme even if the civil and religious authorities were unaware of it and the relationship was unconsummated.

Clandestine marriage evolved naturally from this doctrine – it had hitherto been almost impossible since the involvement of the family was a necessary precondition for any marriage to take place. The Western Church, in requiring nothing but free consent, expressed in the present, of the two spouses, was obviously leaving itself open to being obliged to recognise

marriages that families had not approved. This may be compared with the situation in the Eastern Church which required a blessing to be given to a couple by a priest for the marriage to be considered valid and which was careful to carry out an enquiry before giving this blessing in order to find out if there was any impediment to the match.²⁸ Naturally enough the Church preferred to be involved, and it preferred families to be involved too – it made for fewer problems all round – and indeed, as we shall see, it came to give preference to marriage celebrated *in facie ecclesiae*. This is defined by Christopher Brooke as

“... the drawing together into a single *ordo* of many earlier elements; and the formulation of a service commonly at the church’s door, in which the handing over by the parents of the bride, the blessing and exchange of gifts, the exchange of promises and the blessing of the couple could precede a nuptial mass, and be in the evening followed by a priestly blessing on the bridal chamber and bed as the couple entered it”.²⁹

In this way, there could be no doubt as to who was married. However, this was not a prerequisite for validity, desirable though it may have been. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council forbade priests to officiate at clandestine marriages and demanded the publication of bans, but these measures still proved ineffective as the Church still fought shy of making them a precondition for a marriage to be acceptable. In fact, only in 1579 was a public ceremony imposed in France, by the Ordonnance de Blois, and this was promulgated by the civil authorities.³⁰ It has to be said though that there are very seldom any references to clandestine marriages in the literature of the period, although there are many references to clandestine affairs. In William Marshal’s biography there is one reference to an illicit affair, that of the sister of Raoul de Lens and the young monk discovered by William as they eloped. William offered to reconcile the girl with her brother but she refused. Duby believes this shows that

“les filles, dans les maisons de haut parage, n’étaient pas toutes dociles, il arrivait que leurs amours soient libres, que des couples se forment sans l’assentiment de la parenté”.

In such cases Duby thinks it was not impossible for the girl to be reintegrated into society, as William offers, but this was only feasible if she agreed. Perhaps in this particular case the girl was unwilling because her lover was a monk and it would not have been possible for them to find a regular existence in society.³¹ One possible example of clandestine marriage concerns a grandson of William Marshal, Richard de Clare. He was born in 1222 and in 1237 he married Margaret, daughter of Hubert de Burgh and his third wife, Margaret of Scotland. They were married in 1222, so that at the time of their daughter’s marriage, she cannot have been more than 15 years old and may well have been younger, while Richard was definitely 15 years old. The marriage took place during Hubert’s absence but was apparently known to Margaret of Scotland (whether she knew before or after the event is unknown). It came to light later in the same year when Henry III proposed to marry Richard, who was his ward, to his half-sister. The king was greatly displeased by this clandestine marriage which interfered with his

own plans to marry off his family advantageously, and it was not until 1239 that he pardoned Hubert on the understanding that he had not been a party to it. Unfortunately the young bride died in November of the same year.³² The perils of clandestine marriage are demonstrated by the king's anger. Possibly the conception of marriage was so inextricably combined in the collective consciousness of the nobility with that of family alliance and the exchange of lands and goods that it was almost unthinkable to marry without the knowledge and approval of the *lignage*.

The systems elaborated by Gratian and Peter Lombard did not have automatic legislative force, although they were influential. However Pope Alexander III (1159-81) was greatly involved in instituting a more coherent policy on marriage and he introduced over the twenty-two years of his pontificate many reforms in the practice of the Church. He spent the years 1162-65 in France and was influenced by Peter Lombard's views on the importance of consent and the distinction between vows made *de futuro* and those made *de praesenti*. However Alexander was also something of an innovator. He gave precedence to a marriage celebrated in church over a clandestine one, even if the clandestine marriage had been earlier. He also established that under certain circumstances a marriage made *per verba de praesenti* but *not* consummated could be dissolved if one of the spouses wished to enter religious life, which was still considered preferable.³³ He maintained that under similar circumstances a marriage could be dissolved if it turned out that one of the spouses had previously had sexual relations with a relative of his or her partner. He also developed the doctrine of marriage by *copula superveniens sponsalibus* in which a couple who had exchanged vows by *verba de futuro* and who consummated this without waiting for the second ceremony, were held to have given their consent *de praesenti* by their actions and the marriage bond was therefore completed. From this time onwards, the Church's views on marriage did not change in any spectacular manner. Gregory IX (1227-41) asked Raymond de Pennaford to establish a set of decretals to follow Gratian's work in 1230 and four years later these were promulgated and formed the basis of legislation on marriage until the Council of Trent. The interest felt by lay society in this area of legislation which above all others touched on their hopes and expectations must have been considerable. There was little time lost in making the new code available in the vernacular: *Li Livres de Jostice et de Plet*³⁴ which was compiled between 1254 and 1260 (or possibly 1270) contains many of the cases dealt with by Alexander, Clement and Gregory and attests to the desire to disseminate knowledge on this matter.

Increasingly the Church was drawing a line between those who were married and those who were not. One was either married, in religious orders, or vowed to temporary chastity. This led to another conflict with lay society, that concerning the institution of concubinage. (It is not our intention to discuss the different problem of clerical concubinage which is outside the scope of this thesis.) Roman law had permitted concubinage, particularly when the two people involved were of unequal social status, and it appears that in Frankish

law a similar institution existed. In both cases it was a question of a different form of relationship which lacked the prestige of marriage, but which was still acceptable. Children of such unions had rights, and in the absence of heirs from a full marriage could inherit. One thinks of William the Conqueror (otherwise known as William the Bastard), born of a union *more danico*. The Church's attitude was ambiguous. In 400 the Council of Toledo stated that an unmarried man who kept a concubine should not be forbidden to receive communion. It appears to have been generally accepted that it was not acceptable for a man to have a concubine and a wife, or to have several concubines. Monogamy was still the rule. This ruling was intended to accommodate those whose marriage would not have been legitimised under the prevailing Roman law. The principle was however constantly under attack. Yves de Chartres declared that if a man treated a woman as a wife, then the bond was indissoluble and the man could not put her aside to marry someone else. This was the view of a churchman fighting to impose ecclesiastical control on marriage and to force either marriage or abandonment onto these marginal relationships.

Concubinage remained common though, perhaps in part due to a misunderstanding by Gratian on the decision of the Council of Toledo, which he included in his *Decretum*. He seems to have been of the opinion that concubinage was inferior to marriage because the two parties in concubinage relationship were of disparate social classes, whereas the parties to a marriage had to be of approximately equal social standing.³⁵ Concubinage therefore appears as an essentially unequal relationship which is inferior to marriage but not completely illicit. The nobility was for its part quite attached to the institution. It allowed heritages to remain unencumbered by a superfluity of marriages, and it allowed younger sons some form of recognised union. In the event of there being no legitimate heirs, the children of such unions might even inherit the estates, and in any case their parents could leave goods to them in their wills. The concubine could also receive goods and property in her own name and for her own children. The position of the concubine was not totally secure though. She had most of the duties of a wife and few of the privileges (except perhaps that of being able to leave if she felt like it). She could be repudiated at will by her partner, or might find that his family had arranged a more suitable match for him. In this event, she had no redress against the man unless she could bring evidence to show that their relationship had actually been a clandestine marriage (which was not impossible, given that any words which appeared to promise marriage might well be classed as a vow *per verba de futuro*). In fact, lay concubinage proved extremely tenacious, finally outlawed by the Church at the Council of Trent in 1563, at the same time that clandestine marriage was finally forbidden. That it existed so long is a tribute to the place it filled within the system of marriage as it developed.³⁶

Certain instances of other aristocratic practices can be discerned in the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*. Reference has already been made to the first marriage of William's father, and it is our intention now to compare these practices with what the Church expected,

where this is relevant. This involves a brief discussion of the notion of impediment, and particularly of diriment impediments, which was developing alongside the doctrine of marriage. The notions of annulment and impediment gave a partial solution to the need to reconcile the principle of marital indissolubility with the need felt by the Church to dissolve illicit marriages and the needs of lay society to end marriages which had outlived their desirability in political and emotional terms.

There were two types of impediment: the lesser illegalities which incurred a penance but did not lead to the nullification of the marriage itself, the commonest of which was clandestine marriage, and the diriment impediments which did cause nullity once the partners were aware of them. These were listed in a mnemonic of c. 1253 by Hostiensis in his *Summa*:³⁷

dis paritas
Error, conditio, votum, cognatio, crimen,
Cultus disparitas, vis, ordo, ligamen, honestas,
Dissensus, et affinis, si forte coire nequibis,
Haec facienda vetant connubia, facta retractant.

Burch deals with each of these in great detail in her thesis and it is obviously superfluous to repeat her work. In some ways though we see certain of these impediments, either used or ignored and so for ease of reference we shall describe briefly *error* and *conditio*, which have some common aspects; *crimen*, *vis* and *dissensus*, which again have similarities and which can be linked to certain notions pertaining to the aristocratic conception of marriage, *ligamen*, *affinitas* and *honestas*.

Error had developed from Roman laws which forbade the marriage of slaves with those who were free (such relationships, as we have said, were a form of concubinage). In mediaeval times *error conditionis* referred to a marriage in which one of the partners, unknown to the other, was a serf. This marriage could be nullified when the misunderstanding was discovered unless the free partner signified his or her consent to the union by remaining. It did not apply if one of the spouses had voluntarily taken on servile status in order to pay off a debt. It is important to note that this impediment only concerned those of unfree birth; it did not affect marriages between nobles and free commoners – this would be an *error fortunae vel qualitatis*, which was a venial offence,³⁸ and which would not have applied in any case if the spouses were aware of the difference in their respective social status before they married. The Church was then, at least in theory, more or less indifferent to the rank of the spouses provided that they consented freely to marry. This was not the case within the nobility. It is vital to understand that at this time it was believed that women as well as men could transmit family characteristics to new generations. Consequently a mother's nobility, and through her that of her male relatives could be passed on to her children. This made the quality of mothers important. In the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* the author does not neglect it: all the people he is concerned with are the offspring of excellent mothers and worthy fathers and born in wedlock. After relating how John Marshal came to marry Sibyl,

he continues

De si mais est dreis que je die
Des bons enfanz qu'il engendra
En la dame qu'il esposa.

378-80

The following passage (ll. 381-98) is a résumé of their children: John, William (our hero), Anselm, Henry (bishop of Exeter) and two unnamed daughters of whom it is merely said that "*Richement furent mariées*" l. 398. The important ^{thing} is that they were legitimate. Similar praise is heaped on William's wife and her procreative rôle: she is described as

La bone, la bele, la sage,
La corteise de halt parage
Dont sunt descendu li enfant
Cui Damledieus essaça tant
Comme l'om veit e a veü,
Que eissi l'a Dex porveÿ.

9539-44

It is implicit in the juxtaposition of Isabel's virtues and the fact that William is not even mentioned in this context that the advantages God has given the children are due in a large part to her. The equality of the parents in this matter is even more stressed when the author comes on to speak of the marriage of their eldest daughter Maud to Hugh Bigod, a match which seems to have enjoyed the approbation of all:

Li prodomme distrent e saige
Qui oïrent cest mariage;
Tuit ensemble a grant bien le tindrent,
E distrent qu'onques mès n'avindrent
Deus enfanz de *si très boens pères*
Ne de *si très vaillantes mères*
Par mariage metre ensemble,
E si dient que raison semble
E qu'a dreit devreit avenir
Que d'els devreit bon frut venir.

14981-90

It is clearly stated here that the qualities of the Bigods and the Marshals are expected to combine in the offspring of this new marriage. The nobility was very concerned that marriage outside of the caste was demeaning for the noble partner and that no amount of money could compensate for the basic lack of noble blood in a partner. This concern is evident in the care that was taken to ensure that those with the responsibility for arranging marriages (parents and feudal superiors) did not disparage their wards by selecting unsuitable spouses. Again, this is an important factor in the mind of William's biographer. When he refers to the marriages made by William's daughters, he says of the three oldest, Maud, Isabel and Sibyl

Bien sait l'om qu'a treis filz de contes
Dona les treis bien enplei[é]es;
Ne furent pas desparagi[é]s.

14930-32

and indeed, in getting the earls of Norfolk, Gloucester and Derby for sons-in-law, one feels that William had done well for his family. This is not to say that the remaining daughters,

Eve and Joan, were left on the shelf: Eve married William de Briouze and Joan, who was unmarried when her father died, was found a husband by her brother, who acquitted himself well in the task, marrying her off to Warin Munchensi. So none of the Marshal's daughters lost rank through their marriages, which was important as increasingly surplus daughters were being used to obtain more money for families through giving them to the *nouveaux riches* of the towns. Neither was the author of the *Histoire* alone in ~~these~~ eugenic preoccupations. In his moral treatise *Le Livre des Manières*, Étienne de Fougères, bishop of Rennes, refers to what he expects of a knight:

Franc hom de franche mere nez,
 s'a chevalier est ordenez,
 pener se deit, s'il est senez,
 qu'il ne seit vils ne degenez

589-92

In this stanza it is again implicit that the son owes his qualities to his mother, although it is also stressed that he should always act in a way fitting to his rank as well. Nobility of birth alone is insufficient. This reflection is all the more important since as we shall see the bishop's opinion of women considered as a class within society was not high.

A similar example of the importance of lineage is expressed in the opening lines of the *Enseignement des Princes* by Robert de Blois in which he refers to the wife of his patron, Hue Tyrel:³⁹

Et que dirai je de ma dame?
 Se deus me desfande de blasme,
 Ne saig moillor ne prés ne loing
 S'an ai de mainte gent tesmoing.
 Et si li vient bien de paraige
 Qu'ale soit prouz, cortoise et saige.

247-52

In the case of social status, it will be recognised that the nobility saw an impediment which the Church only partially accepted.

Both Church and lay authorities were convinced of the evil effects of *crimen* or adultery. That the Church disapproved is well-known. The rest of society disapproved on the additional grounds of confusion: adultery could introduce strangers into a lineage and so dilute the nobility of a family.

The link between marriage and inheritance remained very strong indeed. A contributor to the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* in 1923 renders it as

“Ce que nous comprenons très bien également, c'est qu'il (adultery) est plus odieux quand il est commis par un homme libre avec une femme mariée, que lorsqu'il survient entre une fille et un mari; car, dans le premier cas, il risque de faire entrer dans une famille un enfant illégitime, un héritier étranger”.⁴⁰

Crimen also had antecedents in Roman law. The Justinian Code forbade the marriage of adulterers: and Gratian cites a maxim of Leo I (440-61) that “*nullus ducat in matrimonium,*

acc. to Burch, a 'decision' - judgement?

quam prius polluit in adulterio".⁴¹ Under certain circumstances then the marriage of adulterous lovers after the death of a spouse or the dissolution of an existing marriage was null. This was particularly so if the lovers had attempted in any way to rid themselves of their legal partners. This had been mentioned in the Council of Verberie which prevented a couple from marrying if they had plotted the death of a spouse. Alexander III upheld this doctrine and also extended it to cover cases where the adulterous couple had exchanged promises to marry in the future. It was breaking-up an existing marriage and so an offence against the sacrament itself. Of course, this impediment would have been difficult to prove. Lovers would not have declared publically their intention to marry and still less would they have wished to find themselves facing charges of murder as well. Any attempt to dispose of unwanted partners would obviously have been clandestine and unknown to the ecclesiastical authorities. The view of the Church though was unambiguous and well-known, rendered in *Jostice et Plet* as "... nul ne pot avoir a feme cele que il a cochié en avotire".⁴²

Lay and ecclesiastical authorities were also in agreement over another impediment, *ligamen* or bigamy (that is, in this context, having two spouses simultaneously). The Church had never tolerated the practice of any form of polygamy, and generally speaking, nobles were careful to ensure that they had obtained dissolution of one marriage before going on to the next. The consequences of not securing an officially recognised annulment can be seen by what happened to Philip Augustus. In 1193 he married Ingeborg of Denmark, but immediately after the wedding decided that he wanted a separation. He then attempted to prove that the marriage was incestuous because they were cousins in the fourth degree. Ingeborg's brother appealed to the Pope and proved that this was not the case. Philip was warned that he was not free, but in 1196 he married Agnès de Méranie, a marriage that the Church considered not only bigamous, since Ingeborg was still alive, but incestuous as well because Philip's nephew was married to a sister of Agnès. Innocent III, who was then pope, did not excommunicate the king, but he did throw an interdict on the kingdom and the matter dragged on for another 15 years.⁴³ If, as was no doubt frequently the case, nobles were keeping a mistress (e.g. Henry II and Rosamund Clifford), it was understood that it was an illicit, adulterous relationship. The one exception to the consensus on bigamy concerned remarriage after the death of a partner. The Church, following St Paul, discouraged second marriages. This was not so among the nobility. For various reasons it was often vital for a woman to remarry. She could not perform the duties attached to her fief and had to find a husband. Often, quite simply, she had been married young, was still a young woman when her husband died and needed protection. Isabel of Jerusalem, to take an example, had her first marriage annulled (probably on a trumped-up charge of force) and was then married to Conrad de Montferrat in 1190. Conrad was assassinated on April 28th 1192, and on May 5th Isabel married Henri de Champagne. He died in September 1197 following a fall from a window and Isabel then married Aimery de Lusignan in the following month.⁴⁴ At the time

of her second marriage, Isabel was already pregnant by her late first husband and had never met Henri, who was only recently arrived from France. She was obviously, given the instability of the kingdom of Jerusalem, very much at the mercy of her vassals. Eleanor of Aquitaine to take another example married Henry Plantagenet a mere six weeks after her divorce from Louis.⁴⁵ Some of William Marshal's children married twice, Maud's second husband was the Earl of Surrey, Isabel's was the Earl of Cornwall. The oldest brother, William, also married twice; his first wife died young. Just as women tended to need protection, men might require an heir – this is probably why Henry I married Alice of Louvain. In short, the aristocracy saw frequent marriage as justified and even essential and in this respect were inclined to ignore the Church preference – for this was all that it was – for one single marriage.

In discussing the impediments of *vis* and *dissensus*, it is also desirable to consider how marriages were negotiated during the period among the nobility as this has direct bearing on these two causes of nullity.

Choice of a spouse was much too important to be left to the predilection of a couple, particularly when it was formed of two young people. As it involved the fortunes of a whole group of families, many factors had to be weighed up before a decision could be taken – the relative age of the prospective couple, their rank, wealth, degree of kinship, any other existing alliances between the families, any previous agreements made by one or other to marry someone else. In the *Histoire*, it is seen as the responsibility of the head of the family or of the feudal superior to do this. William arranged marriages for four of his daughters and one of his sons before his death, with those of the eldest son and daughter receiving the most emphasis. The first is that of Maud. His reasons for so doing are entirely laudable:

Si boens peres qui molt l'ama
A son vivant la maria.
Al mielz e al plus bel qu'il sout,

14923-25

The initiative comes from the father:

... al conte Roger le Bigot
Parla li Mar. adonques
Qui trop perechos ne fu unques
De son pru & de s'enor faire
La ou il ert seant a faire.
Beal le requist e come sage
De faire un corteis mariage
De sa fille a Hug. sun fiz
Qui fu proz & doz & gentiz.
Si resteit molt la dameisele
Giene chose e gentil e bele.
Bien fu seanz li mariages,
Si en fu bel a lor languages.

13336-48

William raised the matter with Hugh's father and once they were agreed, the families appear to have given their approval to what had been decided. A similar pattern is found in the

marriage of the younger William, and here the decision is saluted as an example of common sense, as the Marshal managed to find an heiress for his son, and so we are told something of the financial arrangements:

Li peres porvit a [l'a] faire,
Qui trop bien e bel le sout faire,
E qui de grant senz fu garniz,
De marier son ainze filz,
Quer bien porvit e bien saveit
Que li quens Baudevins aveit
D'Aubemale une fille belle.
N'out enfant fors la damisele.
Li dui compaignon s'entramérent,
Quer compaignon furent [e] érent.
Del mariage, ce me semble,
Parlérent entre eus deus asemble,
Que chescuns en out boen coraige.
Otrié fu le mariage,
Si que li quens en Engleterre
D'Aubemale tote sa terre
E aliors par tot li donout,
Si li reis isi l'otreiout.

14963-80

No reference is made to the mothers here, and William's choice was dependent on two factors: that he and Baldwin were companions in arms, and the knowledge that Baldwin's daughter (Alice) was his only heir. But beyond members of the immediate family is the king, who could not have been indifferent to the prospective amalgamation of two powerful families. His consent was deemed essential. It will be appreciated that nobles in general and kings in particular had a serious interest in controlling the marriages of their families and their vassals, since there was a direct link between marriage and control of land and power:

“L'hérédité des fiefs ... fournit un motif de plus, et très puissant, pour surveiller des unions qui, lorsque la terre était tombée en quenouille, aboutissaient à leur imposer un fidèle étranger à la lignée primitive”,⁴⁶

This was particularly important if the fief fell to a woman, who could not hold it herself: the incapacity of women to govern a fief is linked to their perceived inability to fight. The remedy is marriage, a notion expressed in Chrétien's *Yvain*:

Fame ne set porter escu,
Ne ne set de lance ferir.
Mout amander et ancherir
Se puet de prandre un buen seignor.

*Alice
reference*

2096-99

This was the case here: Baldwin had no heir other than Alice. However, the principle extended to all marriages. Glanville^e cites the case of a noble who had been ousted from his fief after arranging the marriage of his daughter without first consulting his overlord. The jurist comments: ??

“The reason for this is that, since the husband of the heiress is bound to do homage to the lord for that tenement, the agreement and consent of that lord are necessary for doing it, lest he receive homage for his fee from an

space

→

enemy or some otherwise unsuitable person",⁴⁷

The overlord had to give a reason if he forbade the marriage, but it is evident that considerable power to direct marriages rested in his hands and it is not clear that any appeal against his decisions was possible. It is also known that in some cases it was possible to buy the right to a marriage. This practice was particularly prevalent where widows were concerned.⁴⁸ It appears then that while the Church declared that marriage involved consent, freely given, the feudal powers were able to restrict choice by threat of the loss of the fief. Permission had to be sought first to marry – or else bought.

The situation was different if the overlord himself was marrying, always supposing he was of full age and under no obligation to account to a guardian for his actions or choice, or indeed to indemnify his guardian if he had not married a suitable woman proposed by the guardian (it was possible to avoid marriage if it could be proved that a suggested marriage was disparaging to the ward. Of course most guardians ensured that their wards did marry before they reached their majority since they gained financially from it). Bloch makes it clear that it was considered politic for an overlord to consult his men and any others who had a legitimate interest, but that he was not bound to accept their advice. The familial character of such compacts is amply proved by the contract drawn between William and Baldwin in 1203. At this time the bridegroom-to-be was only 12, below the age of consent, and Alice was only 6 years old. Part of the contract provides for the eventuality of the death of either of them:

"Si contigerit Aelicam predictam decedere, predictus Willelmus, filius predicti Willelmi comitis, alteram filiam predicti Balduino comitis, si Deus eam ei dederit, habebit in uxorem cum predicto maritagio. Si vero de predicto Willelmo, filio predicti Willelmi comitis, humaniter contigerit, Ricardus junior filius suus habebit predictam filiam cum predicto maritagio",⁴⁹

The agreement is striking: William after all knew that he had a replacement if his eldest son should die, but Baldwin had no other children and after some years of marriage probably did not expect to have any more. It is a marriage contract for a hypothetical child, who might well, had she ever existed, have found herself engaged before she was born. In this particular case, the individuals who form the alliance appear to have very little importance and are totally interchangeable.

William only concerned himself with the marriage of his heir. This was a common device to prevent the estates from becoming encumbered. All his other sons had to take their chances. Richard married Gervaise de Dinan in 1222 (he became earl in 1234), but he had been given his mother's estates in Normandy after the death of his father, and Gervaise was in any case an heiress in her own right (Richard was her third husband). Gilbert, who had been intended for the Church, the fate of many a younger son, became earl in 1234. He had only taken minor orders, and in the following year he was married to Margaret, the daughter of Alexander II of Scotland. Walter became earl after Gilbert's death in a tournament in 1241 and married in 1242. As for Anselm, he became earl in 1245 and died the same year. He was married, but there is no date for the marriage. Two at least of the sons then and probably three only married after becoming earl, and the dangers of postponing matrimony for them become apparent. None ^{was} survived by legitimate children – in fact, there is no record of

any of them ever being fathers, except for Gilbert, who had an illegitimate daughter. Thus, after Anselm's death, there was no direct heir in the male line, and the title fell into abeyance between the sisters and their numerous progeny.

Female members of the family however were married off, and William is shown as being involved in the quest for suitable husbands. Reference has already been made to his efforts on behalf of his four eldest daughters, but before he was married himself he is portrayed assisting his sister. After the death of Henry the Young King in 1183, William undertook on his behalf a pilgrimage to the Holy Land which ^{he} had vowed to make, but had been forestalled by his final illness. Before setting out, William paid visits to his friend and family:

Vint a ses congie quere,
A ses serors, a son langage,
A tot son autre parantage,
Kar ce esteit dreit e raison.

7260-63

One of his sisters, the wife of Robert du Pont de l'Arche, lamented this imminent departure, and for one very specific reason:

"Por Deu! que feront ore, sire
".V. filles k'ai a marier?
"Qui lor porra conseil doner?
"N'est mais kui faire lor pëust" 7268-71

It is interesting that she asked her younger brother for help in this matter: after all, her husband was probably still alive, and the official head of the Marshal family was her brother John (who must have appeared something of a nonentity compared with William). Perhaps she thought William would be of more use. He replied that it was for them (and his other "*boens amis*") that he had returned to England; obviously he was not discomfited by this expectation that he should help his nieces. Unfortunately, there is almost certainly a lacuna in the text at this point, and we never find out what he did for his sister's children, or indeed what he did in Syria.

Many years later, when William was on his deathbed (admittedly rather a protracted one: he fell ill in February 1219 and died in May), one of his main preoccupations was the fate of Joan, his youngest daughter. The unease he felt on her behalf was because she had no husband:

"Ce me depleist molt & deshane
"K'a min vivant ne l'ai donee,
"Car s'ele fust bien mari[e]e
"M'alme en fust toz dis plus a esise.
"Ne truis rien que tant me desp[le]i[se]:
"Je voil qu'ele ait trente livre[e]s
"De tere e li sei [e]ent livrees
"E deus cenx mars en aventure,
"Tant que Deus prenge de lui cure."

18160-68

In a way, it appears that even the possession of money and land is not a substitute for the more permanent asset of a husband. As for Joan, it appears that she was conscious of the

evils of her situation:

Joane souvent se repasme,
Mes en ce n'a el point de blasme,
Car encore ert desconsilli[e],

18522-24

The narrator finds her single status a completely adequate explanation for her continual state of collapse. Obviously it was a serious problem to remain a spinster, particularly after the death of one's father. In the event, Joan passed to the control, not of her mother (who died the following year in any case), but her brother, now head of the family, and the author reassures his audience: nothing dreadful happened to her:

Mes l'a puis bien conseille[e]
A cui li peres la lessa,
Qu'onques de point ne l'abessa.

This is a noteworthy point: brothers were known to marry their sisters off as cheaply as possible.⁵⁰

It can be seen that the importance of marriage of women meant that they remained under the control of their male relatives, who appear to have had the chief responsibility for arranging them – the only intervention made by a woman is that of William's sister. The women are shown as having no choice in the matter: if Patrick of Salisbury and John Marshal had decided that it would be suitable to seal an alliance between the two of them, then it was not for Sibyl to complain of her brother's choice or for John's wife to protest. But there is much left unsaid. For all we know, William's choice of Hugh Bigod might have been motivated by the thought that Maud would like him, and he may have rejected other possible candidates because either he or she found them unpleasant. It should be noted that the author is only concerned with the marriages that actually took place and which have dynastic relevance. He is not concerned with any sentiment that may have lain behind them.

If the situation for young girls who were in the care of their families merited concern, that of girls who lacked this basic protection was precarious indeed. It has been mentioned that women who were heiresses required husbands, whether they wanted them or not. But who was to choose a husband? Certainly it could not be left to the girl herself: there was no knowing who she might choose! The natural person to do this was, in the mind of the nobility, the overlord. He after all had to have vassals who were acceptable to him. And heiresses were very useful to overlords. As the principles of primogeniture and the heritability of fiefs became entrenched in custom, the numbers of landless knights increased rapidly. They could expect little from their families except their training and hoped instead for a reward – a fief of their own – from their patron. But patrons no longer possessed fiefs that they could dispose of as they willed, since this almost inevitably meant depriving someone else. The remedy was to seek land through war, or to give heiresses, together with their land, as rewards to those who had served a patron well. The post-Conquest kings of England derived revenue for all this as well, since it was only a short step from bestowing women as rewards

to allowing men to "buy" the right to marry them from the overlord, who was in many cases the king. The practice became so flagrant that at his coronation in 1100 Henry I promised that he would not refuse his barons consent to marry female members of their families as they pleased, and would not exact a fine from them for this permission, unless the groom was one of the king's enemies. He also swore that widows, childless or not, were to receive their marriage dowers and portions and were not to be forced to remarry without their consent. The guardianship of lands and minors should be awarded to the mother or to some other suitable relative. He also promised that he would not dispose of heiresses in an arbitrary manner:

"And if, on the death on one of my barons, a daughter should be his heir, I will dispose of her in marriage and of her lands according to the counsel given me by my Barons"⁵¹

Marriages were however a lucrative source of revenue and an excellent means of controlling land. In 1107 Henry made the succession of an earl's daughter depend on her marrying in accordance with his wishes. In 1131 he granted the land of a dead tenant and his daughter to his chamberlain. The system developed throughout his reign and that of his grandson. Those who had an interest in an heir (of either sex) could make an offer for custody of the lands – and there could be several custodians for this – and in this case, they gained some of the income from the fief. Or they could buy custody of the heir's body, which entailed the obligation to pay for the keep of the child in a suitable style, but allowed them to arrange the marriage. There could be only one custodian in this position, and very often these rights devolved on the monarch, who might grant them (or sell them) to anyone he wished. Thus 1184/85, Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford, obtained the wardship of Isabelle de Bolebec (whose lands were in the care of another guardian). In 1190 Aubrey gave 500 marks to the king for permission to marry her to his son and heir. In 1221 the mother of Hugh de Vere paid 6,000 marks for the custody of her son and his lands, and Hugh later bought the wardship of the land and marriage of Alice de Sanford for his son. Alice's previous guardian had been the Bishop of London, who had bought the rights from the king, but he had been unable to pay the entire sum, so Hugh bought him out. Custody of Roger Bigod, William Marshal's grandson, was granted first to the Earl of Salisbury and then to his father-in-law, the King of Scots. It has already been shown that Henry III discovered the secret marriage of his ward Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, when he wanted to marry him to his half-sister. Even if the nobles concerned had no immediate plans for their wards, they were still useful purely as a means to increasing wealth. It can be seen that the attempted reform of this practice in Magna Carta aimed only at stamping out the worst abuses: wardship and the right to arrange marriages are totally accepted. Only the enforced re-marriage of widows, the necessity of not wasting land or disparaging the heir in marriage are mentioned.

The control of the overlord is demonstrated on several occasions in the *Histoire*. William possessed nothing except his good connections and his skill as a knight. It seems then that he, like many other *bachelers*, would have been in search of an heiress. In fact, it was quite some time before he married. The first offer he received was from Robert de Bethune, and it followed a difficult period in his life. Some of Henry the Young King's household were jealous of the pre-eminent position he held (and he was moreover an *English* knight) and accused him of being unduly intimate with Marguerite de France, Henry's wife. William denied the accusations, but was never allowed to face his traducers. He offered trial by combat but such was his reputation that no one felt like accepting it. Consequently he felt that the best thing to do was to take himself away from the court for a while. During this period (c. 1182-early 1183) he received many offers from French nobles seeking to attract him to join their men, and Robert's offer is spoken of as being more generous than those made by the Count of Flanders and the Duke of Burgundy:

"E li avoez de Betune

"Molt greingnor ofre li fist une:

"De bien mil livr[e]s de rente

"O sa fille qui molt est gente,

"S'il li pl[e]üst, a marier.

6265-69

William was at this time some 36 years old, not an inconsiderable age given the dangerous and exacting life he led. Many would have been happy to accept the offer: it was evidently a very good one for a landless younger son (compare it with what William later left to his daughter Joan). Robert had in fact two daughters, Mahaut and Clemence, and there is no indication which he intended as a bride. At any event, when their brother Baudouin heard of the offer, he exclaimed "Dex! tant fust ma suer enore[e] / "S'ele fust a lui mariée!" 6287-88. But it came to nothing: William replied that "... mariage / Ne li vint encor en corage" 6271-72. (Perhaps William still felt he had expectations from the Angevins.) The reactions of the two sisters are not recorded. The quarrel with Henry was soon patched up and they remained together during his battles with his father. When William returned from Syria in 1186 Henry II granted him custody of an heiress

La damisele de Lancastre

Qui ert de grant aceselement

Li dona o son tenement;

E il la tint en grant ennor

E la garde de desennor

Lonc tens, comme sa chiere amie,

Fors que il ne l'esposa mie. 7312-18

Helwis of Lancaster was plainly a desirable match, but he did not marry her, although it appears that he carried out his duties with regard to her scrupulously, which is what one would expect from William. Meyer felt that the phrase "comme sa chiere amie" was suspicious, but he would not venture any further comment on the nature of the relationship between the two, but it is difficult to conceive of William seducing a lady committed to his

care. Perhaps the reason was that he was after a yet greater prize. In 1188 Henry offered him Isabel de Clare, then arguably the greatest matrimonial catch in the kingdom, and it is stated that this was a reward:

Lors promist li reis la pucele
D'estriguil, qui fu bone e bele
Al. Mar. por son servise.

8303-05

Isabel, always referred to as the "pucele" or "damisele" of "Estriguil" (Striguil, i.e. the town of Chepstow) before her marriage and as "la contesse" afterwards, was the daughter of Richard de Clare (Strongbow) and his wife Eva, a daughter of Dermot Mc Murrough of Leinster. She had been Henry's ward since 1176 and inherited everything her parents had owned when her brother died young. She had land in Normandy, East Anglia, Ireland and Wales, including the palatine earldom of Pembroke. It would seem that this time William did intend to marry, but events forestalled him. War broke out between the king and his sons, and William remained with Henry until his death. His situation vis-à-vis Richard, the new king, was somewhat precarious. The two did not get on and during the fighting William had killed Richard's horse under him. He had no reason to expect that the new king would look favourably on him. Richard though seemed ready to accept William's contention that he had not intended to harm him, and was ready to conciliate his father's supporters. The question of William's marriage was raised immediately:

– Sire," feit sei li chanceliers,
"Ge voldreie molt volontiers
"Ke vos nel tenissiez a mal:
"Li reis dona al Mar.
"La damisele d'Estreguil,
"E amantevoir le vos voil".
– E, par les jambes Dieu! non fist,"
Dist li quens, "mes il li pramist;
"Mais ge li doins tot quitement
"La meschine e le tenement
"Que molt bien sauve en lui qui!"

9361-71

It seems that Richard was being more generous than Henry: It is implied that the latter's gift was not free and that William had paid for the privilege of being Isabel's guardian. But this was not the end of the matter. The chancellor, Maurice de Craon, reminded Richard of other, similar cases:

Ainz dit: "S'il ne vos deit despleire,
"Li reis a done la pucele
"De Chasteal Rad. qui est bele,
"Debonairement, sanz rancune,
"Seingnor Bauduin de Betune.
"E si vos en di en bone fei
"Que Gilebert le fiz Reinfrei.
"Ne retint il pas a filastre:
"Cele li dona de Lancastre
"Que li Mar. out en garde,
"Dont il fist molt corteise garde.
"E si vo di tot en apert,

“Que a Renalt le filz Herbert
“Dona cele, e l’enor o sei,
“Qu’ot Gillebert le filz Reinfrei,
“Et a Reinalt de Danmartin
“Otreia Lundelbone en fin.”

9375-90

Given that Richard has only just arrived at Fontevrault after learning of his father’s death, this evident desire on the part of the chancellor to confirm his friends’ donations may seem hasty, but the very speed emphasises the importance of these heiresses to them. Richard, for his part, does not seem to have been put out, and his reply is suggestive of thought already given to the matter:

“J’ai a Andrieu de Chaveingni
“Done, c’est la verite fine,
“Chasteal Rad. et la meschine;
“Mais tant vos di k’a[i]nz la parclose
“D[o]nrai a Bauduïn tel chose
“Dunt bien se tendra a paie;
“Si n’en seit de riens esmaie.
“Que bien otrei iceste fin
“Seignor Reinalt de Danmartin
“E Gillebert le filz Reimfrei
“K’il ai[e]nt volentiers de mei
“Ce qui mi[s] peres lor dona,
“Si com il lor abandona;
“Reinalt le filz Herbert ausi,
“Quer bien la voche sauve en li;
“E plus li fera de bienfait
“D’asez que mis peres n’a fet.”

9392-9408

These donations are also mentioned in contemporary chronicles,⁵² but there is a discrepancy in that the chronicler places them not at Fontevrault, before the burial of Henry II, but at Rouen, after Richard had been acclaimed Duke of Normandy, which does have the merit of having them confirmed before a well-attended gathering at an exceptionally solemn occasion. But wherever and whenever the event took place (and a private agreement between the king and two men who were important to his plans for the future could easily have been ratified publicly later), it can be seen that the power of the king over his female vassals was absolute and he could re-shuffle them as he wished. There is no indication that he thought it incumbent on him to consult either the women themselves or their guardians. His word alone was sufficient authority.

This time William acted swiftly. Richard sent him to England as a messenger to Queen Eleanor and on the way he stopped off to take possession of some of Isabel’s Norman estates:

En Cauz vindrent en cel termine
Saisir la terre et la meschine
Ke li reis li avoit donee
Kui pu[i]s fu bien guerredonee

9455-8

It so happened that she was not there at the time, so William and his companion continued on their way to Winchester, where the queen was, and then on to London. Ever attentive to his duty, William first delivered his messages,

Si porchaca la damisele
D'Estregoil qui fu bone e bele,
Que gardout Rad. de Glanvile,
A Londres, en la bone vile;

9513-16

[At this point, it is worth noting that neither Isabel nor her guardian may have known of the projected marriage, since Henry had been in France when the offer to the Marshal was made and had not returned to England before his death. In addition, Richard had confirmed the gift in Normandy. Whether they knew of it or not, the actual arrival of the bridegroom must have come as a surprise and Raoul de Glanville's reaction was perhaps a result of this: "A enviz li fu rendue." 9517. It is fair to conclude that this problem was speedily resolved since no more is said about it.] Again, William appears to have wanted to conclude this business as soon as possible:

N'i fist mie grat atendue:
Tantost comme il [en] fu saisis,
N'en volt pas estre dessaisis,
E inz dist qu'a ses terres irreit,
Iloques si l'esposereit.

9818-21

He was probably referring to her chief castle of Chepstow, but in the event they were married in London at the insistence of William's host Richard fils Reinier, the viscount of London. When William protested that he did not have what was necessary for a wedding – "Ge ne m'e[n] sui point porvëu" (l. 9532), Richard replied that he would see to this and that William would want for nothing. Unfortunately there is no indication as to what it was that was required for a wedding – clothes for the bride and groom, food, gifts, a priest – although Meyer cites an item from the Pipe Rolls which could refer to a wedding feast on this occasion.⁵³ Once William had accepted this offer, there were no more delays and he and Isabel were married immediately. Afterwards he took her to Stoke d'Abernon, "en lieu paisable / E aesie e delitable" (ll. 9549-50), surely one of the earliest recorded honeymoons. William was then some 46 years old; Isabel was about 17. Despite the difference in their age, they appear to have been happy together, although once again the author makes no specific references to any emotional attachment.

Marriage to an heiress completely changed William Marshal's status. As Duby writes, "par ce geste Richard l'enrichit, certes, mais surtout il le transforma; il le fait changer d'échelon au sein de la hiérarchie des conditions sociales; il le hausse au rang de ceux dont la puissance est active et stable".⁵⁴ He no longer had to rely solely on his abilities as a soldier, a diminishing asset in view of his age. The elevation was so considerable that Duby can refer to it as "un changement de classe".⁵⁵ From this time, William controlled Isabel's lands, which obviously made him one of the most important men in England, but he was not earl himself. In 1194 his brother John died and he inherited the modest estates of his family and the office of Earl Marshal. At John's coronation in 1199 he was granted the title of earl of Pembroke but he always remembered that he owed this to his wife. In 1205/1206 he and Isabel were in

Kilkenny. Their situation was difficult. The devious John had allowed Meiler Fitz Henry to usurp some of the authority due to William in his possessions of Leinster and William was facing a revolt of his own men. Appealing to them, he raised two feudal points: the loyalty due to Isabel as the daughter of the man who first enriched them and the fact that he owed his position to her alone. He also appealed to sentiment:

“Vez la contesse que j’amain
“Icy devant vos par la main:
“Vostre dame naturalment,
“Fille al conte qui bonement
“Vos feza tuz par sa franchise,
“Quant il out la terre conquise.
“Entre vos enceinte remaint.
“Vos pri a toz que bonement
“La gardez e naturalment,
“Que vostre dame est, ce savon;
“Ge n’i ai rien si par lui non.”

13531-44

It will also be appreciated that many of these marriages concerned boys and girls who were very young indeed, an example being that of the sister of Alice, the young bride of William Marshal the Younger. This practice was common: Henry the Young King had been betrothed in 1158, when he was two or three, to Marguerite de France, who was then only six months old. These were marriages *pro bono pacis*. Evidently it was not supposed that such children could give valid consent. These were marriages *per verba de futuro*. The Church disapproved of them, but did very little to stop them.

With marriages potentially a source of riches, there was a risk of force being used. Etienne de Fougères, one of Henry II’s chaplains and later bishop of Rennes mentions this in the *Livre des Manières*, although characteristically he blames the women for the violence of the men:

Si aucun fol les veolt requere,
de lor amor tost en a erre.
Aste vos semence de guerre
qui gent essille et gent enterre!

981-84

The Church however had always condemned violence: consent to a marriage had to be given freely (though consent and choice are not synonymous). As *Jostice et Plet* puts it, “La où est force n’est pas mariage”.⁵⁶ The question was, what constituted force? There was little difficulty in establishing that the use of physical force could nullify a marriage. Gratian, Peter Lombard, Alexander III and other theorists all agreed on this. The difficulty was one of proof. Honorius III (1216-27) declared that women had to show their aversion to the marriage by running away as soon as possible and preferably before consummation. Gregory IX recognised that women were particularly prone to this form of coercion. The Church was much slower in admitting that moral or financial pressures could lead to nullity. This links *vis* with the impediment of *dissensus* which covered failures to give valid consent due to a cause other than violence. It was often closely connected with age. The Church normally took the view that those who had not reached puberty could not marry. Hugues de Saint-Victor

expressed this as follows:

“Selon les lois, les jeunes hommes ne peuvent contracter un mariage avant quatorze ans et les jeunes filles avant douze ans; s'ils se marient avant cette époque, on peut les séparer, même s'ils sont unis avec le plein consentement de leurs parents”⁵⁷

Gratian had decided that children ^{under} seven years of age could not marry, but that if any were in this position, they could employ the notion of *dissensus in matura aetas*⁵⁸ to free themselves when they came of age. Peter Lombard took the view that between the ages of seven and puberty an agreement could only be made *per verba de futura*.⁵⁹ The Church did however allow dispensations if it was claimed that the marriage was for the public good. This followed a decision of Nicholas II who forbade the practice except in these circumstances. It was widely ignored. When the principle was reaffirmed at a synod at Westminster in 1175, the number of marriages said to be “*pro bono pacis*” increased.⁵⁹

The difficulties connected with enforcing these two rules were due to the ambiguous view of both the Church and lay society. Families wished to arrange marriages to their advantage and so were unhappy at any constraints on their actions. The same applied to overlords. There could be real cause for complaint. The *Complete Peerage* relates the marriage of Margaret de Reviers, daughter and heir of Warin fitz Gerold, King John's chamberlain. She married Baldwin de Reviers, who died in 1216. John forced her to marry Faukes de Breauté, and she only managed to escape when he fell from grace in 1224. She immediately sought an annulment on the ground that she had been taken prisoner in time of war and married without her consent. Faukes was forced into exile and went to Rome to try to obtain the restitution of his wife and her lands, but died on the way back.⁶⁰ The story of Christina of Markyate shows how far parents were prepared to go to obtain consent from their children. Christina lived between c. 1106 and 1155. She was the subject of a biography in Latin prose,⁶¹ evidently by someone who had known her well. The eldest daughter of a noble Saxon family in Huntingdon, she took an oath of chastity in c. 1111 after a visit to the abbey of St Albans. She was a very beautiful woman – her biography makes it clear that many of her later vicissitudes were due to this – and in c. 1114-15 her parents Authi and Beatrix betrothed her to a man named Burhred. Christina refused energetically to give her consent, reminding them of her vow, but they persisted and kept her confined to the house for a year and used all possible means to secure her agreement. At last, forced by her family in church, she agreed to the betrothal, but refused to allow Burhred to consummate the union (showing incidentally the confusion between the two terms of betrothal and marriage and the small difference between them). She attempted to convince him of the higher value of chastity, but her family exhorted him to remember his manhood and he tried to force her. She eluded him. The marriage ceremony was put off several times and eventually her father confessed to Prior Fredebert of Huntingdon that he was well aware that he had forced his daughter into the marriage in the

full knowledge that she was opposed to it. Nevertheless he asked the prior to use his influence to make her submit to the wishes of her parents. Fredebert lectured her on the duties of spouse and daughter, but Christina stood firm. Fredebert referred the matter to the bishop of Lincoln, Robert Bloet, who first found in her favour. Burhred meanwhile had been convinced by emissaries from Christina that she would never willingly submit, and he agreed to release her. Authi and Beatrix were furious with the bishop and also with Burhred for backing out without consulting them, and bribed both to retract their statements. Christina was again locked up and submitted to beatings, public humiliations, and even the use of sorcery in an attempt to get her to agree. She then contacted a hermit called Eadwin and asked him to arrange her escape. He went to a cousin of his, Roger, who lived in a hermitage nearby, but when he was told that Christina was "married" he was outraged at the suggestion and refused to have anything to do with her. Eadwin decided to present the case to the archbishop of Canterbury, Ralph d'Escure, said to be a man with an extensive knowledge of civil and canon law. He declared that Christina was in no way culpable and advised Eadwin to act as quickly as he could to obtain her release. This was done and she took refuge with a recluse called Alfwen, and then later with Roger, who had by then repented of his treatment of her, at Markyate. She was obliged by the enmity of the bishop of Lincoln to remain concealed in great discomfort for several years. Then Burhred came to the hermitage and told Roger he wished to release Christina from her betrothal vow. Roger prudently waited until he could find reliable witnesses before accepting this, no doubt remembering what had happened before. After this, Roger decided to make Christina his successor in his hermitage and arranged for her to meet Archbishop Thurston of York to settle any outstanding matters. At this secret meeting Thurston promised to obtain for her "the annulment of her marriage, the confirmation of her vow (of chastity), and permission for her husband to marry another woman by apostolic indult".⁶² This was not the end of the matter though: Robert Bloet continued to pose a threat until his death, and Christina only took full monastic vows in 1131.

Christina's parents were prepared to go to almost any lengths to obtain her agreement to a marriage. The reasons were of a secular nature. The family was noted for its stubbornness (and the author carefully distinguishes Authi's stubbornness directed towards an evil end and Christina's stubbornness in a worthy cause) and Authi did not want to become a laughing-stock because of his daughter's disobedience. She was rejecting the future they had planned for her: she was their worthiest child:

"... conspicuous for such moral integrity, such comeliness and beauty, that all who knew her accounted her more lovable than other women. Furthermore, she was so intelligent, so prudent in affairs, so efficient in carrying out her plans, that if she had given her mind to worldly pursuits she could have enriched and ennobled not only herself and her family but also all her relatives. To this was added the fact that her parents hoped she would have children who would be like her in character (...) For if she

remained chaste for the love of Christ, they feared they would lose her and all that they could hope to gain through her.”⁶³

She represented the hope of her family, and the rage of her parents is that of people thwarted in their nearest and dearest. But if they were unwilling to admit defeat, the attitude of the Church is harder to explain. Although it is true that Christina had agreed to marry Burhred, no one had any illusions as to why she had agreed. It was known and accepted that force had been used. Yet Fredebert was not ready to declare the vow null. Possibly he was aware that he was dealing with a very influential local family. Robert Bloet, when his mind was not clouded by Authi's bribes, was prepared to find in her favour, but not to maintain this view. The two archbishops seemed less impressed by either the forced vow or her family connections, but though they both agreed that she was blameless, Christina spent many years in great discomfort eluding Robert Bloet. If this case was typical – and there is no way of knowing this – it is not surprising that heroines of romance such as Fenice were unwilling to go to law for their rights. So while Nicholas I condemned those who forced their female vassals into marriage and Yves de Chartres condemned parents who forced their daughters, little was done. It seems to have been accepted that had Geoffrey Plantagenet succeeded in capturing Eleanor of Aquitaine on her way to her lands after the divorce from Louis VII, she would have little choice but to remain with him although it would have been a clear case of force. In the Papal States, female vassals who refused to marry as their overlord desired were excommunicated. The Church failed to prevent bride-napping and child marriage because it was itself a proprietor with an interest in real estate and it too was affected by

by plerate
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b=No match

“... the force of deeprooted secular prejudices in favour of the authority of parents and overlords ... in part to the failure of churchmen themselves to free themselves from the same prejudices”⁶⁴

Finally, there are the impediments of consanguinity, affinity and *Honestas*. The commonest sex crime in ^{the} medieval period was almost certainly incest, which is hardly surprising given the very large number of people who were held to be so closely related as to make marriage impossible. This was due to a change in the computation of degrees in kinship. In the eighth and ninth centuries the Church had changed from using the Roman system to the Germanic one. In both systems it was not allowed to marry anyone related more closely than in the seventh degree. In the Roman system this corresponded to second cousins, as they would be defined today. In the German system this referred to the sixth cousins. Since nobles tended to marry within their own caste, very soon many were related within forbidden degrees. Consanguinity became a favorite device for ending a marriage: indeed it was more often than not technically true. Duby cites the case of a knight who said of his prospective wife

“Elle me plaît car la dot est grosse, sans doute m'est-elle liée par une affinité au troisième degré, qui n'est pourtant pas assez proche pour que je m'en sépare; mais si je veux, et si elle ne me plaît plus, en raison de cette affinité je pourrais obtenir divorce”⁶⁵

Consanguinity affected the nobility greatly because they did not wish to marry outside their caste if it could be avoided, and here they soon came up against the network of cousinship which in theory should have prevented such marriages but which did not. There was also a financial aspect. William Marshal married his second daughter Isabel to her cousin Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Hereford, a marriage destined to “favoriser le rassemblement d’héritages démembrés”.⁶⁶ In fact the Church’s demands proved impossible to enforce and were widely ignored. At the Lateran Council in 1215 the Church finally conceded the point and some sort of order was restored.

The impediment of affinity is similar in its effects. Spouses were linked to each other’s relatives by affinity – once William Marshal married Isabel he considered her father Strongbow to be his own “ancetre”⁶⁷ – and marriages between those related in this way were restricted, as were those between blood relations. It should be noted that affinity resulted from consummation and only operated if the marriage had been consummated.

There were two consequences of this. From the 8th century it was held that this relationship formed an impediment to a marriage whether or not it was licit. Refining this doctrine, Alexander III recognised an impediment of *affinitas ex copula illicita*. By this, a marriage would be null if one of the spouses had had illicit carnal relations with a relative of his/her partner before the wedding. Recognising that it would be easy to make a false accusation, the Church insisted that there should be strong proof of the alleged misdemeanour, “*nisi hoc publicum et notorium fuerit aut idoneus testibus comprobatum*”⁶⁸. The other impediment, *affinitas superveniens*, occurred when sexual relations took place with a relative of the spouse after the contract had been made and so created an affinity which had not existed before. Alexander III subsequently declared that affinity, when public and well-known, dirimented an unconsummated marriage.

This brief survey of the realities of marriage in the late 12th and 13th centuries shows that its value “... se haussait d’un même mouvement au sein de l’éthique lignagère et celle que prêchaient les prêtres”.⁶⁹ Both the Church and lay society gained from it. The former wished to impose its conception of marriage as the union of two people of opposite sexes, entered into freely for the purpose of procreating offspring. It was a sacrament, instituted by God for this reason and a reflection of the love of Christ for his Church. As such, it was to be treated with great seriousness. It could not be broken if the two partners happened to fall out. It was only invalid if some major flaw in the formation of the bond could be proved. The Church alone, acting through its higher clergy, and even on occasion the pope himself, possessed the power to say who was legitimately married, or to declare that a marriage was illicit, although here it came up against its own teaching that the consent of the spouses was all that was strictly necessary to form the bond. The Church sought to limit some of the grosser abuses of marriage among the laity, but was not always successful because it was itself in an ambiguous position, being a landowner, and also in retaining some secular notions of what was due to

respect to parents and guardians. It did not however interfere with the more practical side of marriage. Questions relating to dowries, jointures and inheritances for example were governed by the prevailing custom of the area. All that the Church did, by recognising some unions as marriages, was give the couple concerned its legitimacy, which made the children born of them the undoubted heirs of their parents. In this way it gained an ascendancy over the lives of the people which was the more effective since it reached to the very centre of their being, unlike some ecclesiastical matters which must have seemed irrelevant.

The laity also made some gains. As already stated, the line drawn between the legitimate offspring and the rest meant that the heirs were clearly designated. Combined with the rise of primogeniture, this led to the situation already described: the oldest son knew he would inherit in due course the larger part of his parents' lands. The rest knew they would receive little unless their brother died. They knew that it would be wiser to seek their fortune elsewhere. As for illegitimate children, their prospects became even more limited, and they could demand little as of right. Their parents could, if they wished, provide for them with gifts of money, land or spouses, but the bulk of the estates was reserved for the legitimate offspring. William the Conqueror would have had a very different career had he been born a hundred years later. One thinks of Robert of Gloucester, illegitimate son of Henry I. It never seems to have been suggested that this eminently capable man should have been preferred as monarch either to his sister the Empress or to his cousin King Stephen.

The number of cases of annulment that were brought before the episcopal courts shows that the new hard line on marriage was not accepted without a struggle. As we have said, spouses might find each other's company insufferable, or political changes might affect the marriage policy of a family. There was relief though. The simultaneous development in the concept of dispensations meant that while the Church might normally disapprove of a marriage (e.g. on the grounds of the age of the couple or too close a relationship), in certain cases permission could be sought to go ahead regardless. Obviously this power was limited. In real life the French and English kings were given a dispensation for the marriage of Henry the Young King to Marguerite de France despite the age of the couple and the fact that they were related within forbidden degrees, not to mention the additional complication that Henry's mother had been married to Marguerite's father, but no one would have taken too seriously the proposition in the 13th century romance *La Manekine* that the pope would grant a dispensation for a father to marry his own daughter. Given that it was also possible to seek an annulment, although it had to be recognised that the process was lengthy and not invariably successful, it can be appreciated that there was still considerable freedom to manoeuvre within the system. On the whole then, the nobility did not have too many serious objections to the Church's re-definitions on the subject, although individuals certainly did. ^{Ar} it is to the position of the individual that we must finally turn.

For the nobility, marriage was a group affair in which many people, family and feudal connections had a legitimate interest. Being so closely connected with the transfer of wealth, land and power, it must have seemed very difficult, perhaps almost unthinkable, to suppose that a marriage made without the knowledge and consent of these groups was possible. Only a very strong personality would have been able to resist the pressure to accept the choice made on his or her behalf by the elders and betters, and even so, such a person might not have considered it worthwhile to defy them unless powerfully motivated, as was Christina of Markyate.

For the Church however, marriage was essentially a matter for the individuals most directly concerned. Not that it thought the role of family and social superiors negligible: far from it. Neither was it inevitably ready to defend those whose individual interests were threatened by the pressure exercised by these groups. Again, the example of Christina springs to mind, as does that of the Bishop of London who purchased the right to marry off Alice de Sanford. Nevertheless, the Church did place new emphasis on the importance of the individual and potentially at any rate this could lead to confrontation with secular authorities.

This brief survey of the theory and practice of marriage provides us with the necessary information to judge how far the authors of lays observed custom and how far they condoned it – or chose to set it aside in favour of other codes of behaviour.

11. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
12. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
13. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
14. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
15. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
16. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
17. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
18. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
19. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
20. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
21. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
22. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
23. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.
24. *The Lay of Iwan*, ed. G. R. Jones, *Early English Text Society*, 1909, pp. 1-10.

Notes.

1. Paul Meyer, ed. *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal, comte de Striguil et de Pembroke. Regent d'Angleterre de 1216 à 1219*. (Paris 1901). 3 vols.
2. See ch. I, note 93.
3. On the accuracy of the *Histoire* see Meyer op. cit. vol. III pp. xix-cvii, with particular note to pp. xcix-cvii.
On John of Early, see vol. III pp. xiv-xix.
4. See Marc Bloch, *La Société féodale* (Paris 1982), 2 vols esp. pp. 403-407; 409-34.
5. M. Bloch, op. cit. pp. 209-32.
6. The office of marshal probably dates from the time of the Conquest, and was originally of minor importance. Its later eminence derives in large part from the distinction of its holders. The marshal had charge of the royal stables, kennels and mews. For further information see *The Complete Peerage* (London 1910-40), 13 vols. Vol. X, Appendix G, pp. 91-99.
7. *The Complete Peerage*, vol. IX, Appendix L, pp. 127-29.
8. Amy Kelly, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and her Courts of Love", *Speculum* 12 (1937), pp. 3-19.
9. M. Bloch, op. cit. pp. 299-309.
10. The marshal was an officer of the third rank. The constable, of the first rank, received 5s. a day.
11. There is a problem with the dating. William was born c. 1144 and went to Normandy as a squire in 1154, being knighted by 1164. However in l. 772 he mentions that he had been a squire for "vint" years. This is clearly impossible and Meyer suggests amending *vint* to *vuit* as a variant of *huit*, which makes better sense. See op. cit. vol. III pp. xxv-xxvi and p. 14 note 3 for a fuller discussion of this point.
12. Georges Duby, "Situation de la noblesse en France au début du xiii^e. siècle" *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 82 (1966), pp. 309-15.
13. M. Bloch, op. cit. pp. 445-52; 457-60.
14. Some didactic literature (and even a lay) refers to the sale of fiefs and the subsequent squandering of cash. It was not easy to sell a fief since it was only partially the property of the vassal. See M. Bloch, op. cit. pp. 295-97.
15. Georges Duby, op. cit. p. 314.
16. Georges Duby, *Le Chevalier, la femme et le prêtre* (Paris 1981), p. 23.
17. See George Duby, "Dans la France du Nord-Ouest, au xiii^e. siècle: les "jeunes" dans la Société aristocratique", *AESC* sept.-oct. 1964), pp. 833-46.
18. M. Bloch, op. cit. p. 199.
19. M. Bloch, *ibid.*, p. 199.
20. Sally Burch, *A Study of Some Aspects of Marriage in Selected Octosyllabic Romances of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. Unpub. Ph.D thesis (London 1982).
21. S. Burch, op. cit. pp. 54-59.
22. *Ibid.* p. 58.
23. G. Duby, op. cit. note 15 pp. 96-115.
24. P. Meyer, op. cit. vol. III p. xxii.

25. The attitude of most religious orders towards women was ambivalent, and it was not always easy for a woman's vocation to be recognised. See Brenda M. Bolton, "Mulieres Sanctae" in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (Pennsylvania 1976), pp. 141-58.
- Michel Parisse, *Les Femmes au moyen âge* (Le Puy 1983) writes
- "le plus souvent, le monastère féminin est conçu comme une maison d'accueil pour les jeunes filles non mariées et les veuves qui renoncent à d'autres noces. C'est une affaire de famille, de société, moins souvent de religion" p. 63.
26. *The Complete Peerage*, vol. IX, p. 590.
27. S. Burch, op. cit. p. 62.
28. S. Burch, op. cit. pp. 59-74.
29. Christopher N.L. Brooke, "Aspects of Marriage Law in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries" in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law. Salamanca 21-25 September 1976*, eds Stephen Kuttner and Kenneth Pennington (Vatican 1980), pp. 333-44; p. 341.
30. F.L. Critchlow, "On the Forms of Betrothal and Wedding Ceremonies in the Old French Romans d'Aventure" *MP* (1904-5), pp. 497-537.
31. Georges Duby, *Guillaume le Maréchal ou le meilleur chevalier du monde* (Paris 1984), p. 56.
32. *The Complete Peerage*, vol. V, p. 700.
33. *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris 1923-50), 15 vols; vol. I cols 718-19.
34. P.N. Rapetti, ed. *Li Livres de justice et de plet* (Paris 1850).
35. James Bundage, "Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law" *JMH* 1 (1975), pp. 1-19, p. 4 notes 11 and 12.
36. Concubinage was considered to be an aggravated form of fornication since the couple had decided deliberately to live unwed. On the matter of concubinage, see J. Brundage, op. cit. and A. Esmein, *Le Mariage en droit canonique* (Paris 1891), 2 vols, vol. 2 pp. 103-17.
37. S. Burch, op. cit. p. ~~76~~ 46
38. S. Burch, op. cit. p. 78
39. Jacob Ulrich, ed., *Robert von Blois sämtliche Werke* (Berlin 1895), 3 vols.
40. *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, vol. I, col. 466.
41. S. Burch, op. cit. p. 83.

42. S. Burch, *op. cit.* p. 84.
43. For details, see G. Duby, *op. cit.* note 15 pp. 214-18.
44. See *A History of the Crusades*, gen. ed. Kenneth M. Setton, vol. 2, *The Later Crusades 1189-1311* (Madison 1969), p. 66; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 6 under "Kingdom of Jerusalem"; Gustave Cohen, *Le Roman de la rose* (Paris 1973), pp. 50-51.
45. Amy Kelly, *art. cit.* p. 7.
46. M. Bloch, *op. cit.* p. 319.
47. Sue Sheridan Walker, "The Marrying of Feudal Wards in Medieval England" *SMC* 4 (1973-74), pp. 209-24.
48. Sue Sheridan Walker, "Widow and Ward: the Feudal Law of Child Custody in Medieval England", in *op. cit.* note 24, pp. 159-72.
49. P. Meyer, *op. cit.* vol. III, p. 208, note 2.
50. F.L. Critchlow, *art. cit.* gives some examples from literature.
51. Sue Sheridan Walker, *art. cit.* note 46, p. 211.
52. P. Meyer, *op. cit.* vol. III, p. 118, fn.4
53. P. Meyer, *op. cit.* vol. III, p. 122 note 2.
54. G. Duby, *op. cit.* p. 160.
55. G. Duby, *op. cit.* p. 161 note 30.
56. S. Burch, *op. cit.* p. 85.
57. "Qua aetate possit fieri conjugium. Juvenes ante quatuordecim annos, et puellae ante duodecim (sic) juxta leges matrimonium inire nequerunt. Quod si ante praedicta tempora copulationem inierunt separari possunt, quamvis voluntari et assensu parentum juncti sint". Quoted by Claude Buridant, *André le Chapelain. Traité d'amour courtois* (Paris 1974).
58. S. Burch, *art. cit.* p. 99.
59. Sue Sheridan Walker, *op. cit.* note 46, p. 210.
60. *The Complete Peerage*, vol. IV, pp. 316-18.
61. C.H. Talbot, ed. and trans., *The Life of Christina of Markyate, a Twelfth Century Recluse* (Oxford 1959).
62. C.H. Talbot, *op. cit.* p. 113.

63. C.H. Talbot, *op. cit.* pp. 67-9.
64. S. Burch, *op. cit.* p. 92.
65. G. Duby, *op. cit.* note 15, p. 220.
66. G. Duby, *op. cit.* note 30, p. 166.
67. P. Meyer, *op. cit.* vol. III, p. 123 note 5.
68. S. Burch, *op. cit.* p. 105.
69. G. Duby, *op. cit.* note 15, p. 129.

"Mais qui veut trop ardemment se faire en un subject, si ce n'est la
 gloire d'un tel est une indignité, il est bien plus indigne d'avoir la vie
 (...) Il n'est rien de plus vil que d'avoir un tel sujet pour un
 homme noble"

This became a commonplace of medieval thought, recorded by Peter Lombard as

"dans le mariage sera subordonné au travail de procréation, tout à fait
 ordonné de gauche après de se proposer comme les plantes qui l'on
 prend les fruits et les semences"

It follows that with a wife, sex was to be fertile but not enjoyable and with a concubine,
 pleasurable but sterile. In short, the Church remained suspicious of human sexual relationships
 and lay society must have felt somewhat bewildered at times by the apparent anomalies in the
 Church's teachings. Lay society valued marriage to build up an extensive network of
 relationships between families and nations. For its own reasons, the adversary (after all it is
 that class that we are concerned with) required relationships to be sanctioned by canon law
 and authority. In neither of these interconnected and closely related systems was there much room
 for the spontaneous flowering of love unhampered by thoughts of the demands of authority.

There was however a deep and glowing talent in love which we could define here as
 mutual attraction between a man and a woman unaffected by the recollections of such an event in
 the eyes of society and lay authorities. The work of the Latin poets, notably Ovid, was
 disseminated throughout France and England in translations adapted to the taste of the new
 audience. The poetry of the troubadours expressed new sentiments, the love of a man for a
 lady allegorically of higher rank who scorned marriage and power. Additionally the growing
 interest in love as distinct from marriage (as well as the possibility of combining the two) is
 attested by a number of treatises containing advice on love. It is our intention here to
 examine some of these treatises with a view to deriving what evidence on love was current

3. Love.

It is much more difficult to discuss twelfth and thirteenth century attitudes to love than it is to examine attitudes to marriage. The latter, a matter of public concern and public record, is well documented and it is relatively easy to find out what the official attitude was to most matters concerning matrimony; there is no lack of evidence from both secular and ecclesiastical courts. As we have seen, the Church held strong views on the relationship between the sexes. Only within the strict bounds of betrothal and matrimony were love and sexual relationships permitted. Anything else was a sin, fornication or adultery, possibly complicated by other factors. In addition, the Church was deeply suspicious of too ardent a love within marriage which could also be the occasion for sin, representing the triumph of base animal desires over the higher faculties. To enjoy sex, even within marriage, could be a form of adultery. As St Jerome put it,

“celui qui aime trop ardemment sa femme est un adultère. Si aimer la femme d'autrui est une indignité, il est bien plus indigne d'aimer la sienne (...). Il n'est rien de plus honteux que d'aimer sa femme comme une femme adultère”¹.

This became a commonplace of medieval thought, rendered by Peter Lombard as

“dans le mariage sont autorisées les œuvres de procréation, mais il est condamnable de goûter auprès de sa propre femme les plaisirs que l'on prend aux étreintes des courtisanes”².

It follows that with a wife, sex was to be fertile but not enjoyable and with a courtesan, pleasurable but sterile. In short, the Church remained suspicious of human sexual relationships and lay society must have felt somewhat bewildered at times by the apparent anomalies in the Church's teachings. Lay society utilised marriage to build up an intricate network of relationships between families and nations. For its own reasons, the aristocracy (since it is that class that we are concerned with) required relationships to be sanctioned by custom and authority. In neither of these interconnected and closely related systems was there much room for the spontaneous flowering of love untrammelled by thoughts of the demands of authority.

There was however a deep and abiding interest in love which we could define here as mutual attraction between a man and a woman unaffected by the rectitude of such an event in the eyes of secular and lay authorities. The work of the Latin poets, notably Ovid, was disseminated throughout France and England in translations adapted to the taste of the new audience. The poetry of the troubadours expressed new sentiments, the love of a man for a lady allegedly of higher rank who seemed remote and powerful. Additionally the growing interest in love as distinct from marriage (as well as the feasibility of combining the two) is attested by a number of treatises containing advice on love. It is our intention here to examine some of these treatises with a view to deducing what opinions on love were current

when the lays were composed, that is, in the period c. 1150-1250.

We have chosen the *Livre des Manières* by Étienne de Fougères, an eminent churchman; the *Tractatus de Amore* by Andreas Capellanus, an influential and controversial view of love; the *Chastoiement des Dames* by Robert de Blois, a courtesy book for young women; and the first part of the *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and *Urbain*, a courtesy book for young squires. It will be appreciated that these authors do not necessarily agree with each other; ~~()~~ we should not expect there to be total agreement. Different strands of opinion are represented.

Étienne de Fougères³, former chaplain to Henry II and bishop of Rennes from 1168 to his death ten years later, was a man well acquainted with the upper echelons of Angevin society and with strong opinion of the proper ordering of that society, which he saw as being divided into three estates with their respective duties and privileges:

Li clerz deivent por toz orer,
li chevaler sanz demorer
deivent defendre e ennorer,
et li païsant laborer.

673-76

(we should note that for Étienne, the term "païsant" covered all those not in orders or members of the military classes and it therefore covers a very wide spectrum). A stern critic of even the highest, the bishop pulled few punches in detailing just how far his contemporaries fell short of the ideal and in prescribing what he saw as the correct behaviour to be followed. It is not our intention to examine in detail the whole of this treatise as this would be beyond the scope of the present work. Instead we will confine ourselves to Étienne's comments on the relations between the sexes, and more briefly on his conception of knighthood.

Thanks to his court appointment the bishop was no stranger to the Angevin nobility. However, his interpretation of knighthood was coloured by Christian precepts: and the secular nobility were in a sense subordinate to the Church. The knight's career began in Church:

A l'autel deit l'espee prendre
por le pople Jhesu defendre,
et a l'autel, ce deit entendre,
enceis qu'il meure, l'estuet rendre

617-20

Knights as a class were responsible for the maintenance of justice in society:

[Chevalier] deit espee prendre
por justisier et por defendre
cels qui d'els funt les autres pleindre:
force et ravine deit esteindre

537-40

These were high ideals and not fulfilled. He complained that knights "... trop aiment dance et balerie / et demener bachelerie" (ll. 587-88). He certainly would not have approved of tournaments which were the occasion for much violence and ostentatious display of wealth. Few knights of fiction, let alone those who populated the courts, would have lived up to

Étienne's expectations.

In his dissertation on the duties of the three estates Étienne says little relating to women. They receive brief mentions when he refers to the loose morals of the clergy and very occasionally are cited together with the knights. More is learned when he tackles the third group. A particular vice of this caste is usury, but their representative member is punished when his wife is seduced by his debtor (ll. 841-44). It is the penalty exacted from the woman which is interesting. She is humiliated, made to wear rough cloth, tied up in a stable and forced to drink from a bucket (stanzas 215-17). The punishment is inflicted only on the woman; her lover seemingly escapes. It is left to the husband to decide precisely what to do; he need consult no other authority. The bishop assumes that, given this treatment, "sera il molt grant merueille / si autrement ne se conseil" (ll. 867-68). Only if she remains obdurate is it necessary to involve anyone else:

Si por doner ne por premeitre
ne por battre n'i pout fin metre,
plus ne lo qu'il s'en entremete
– a Iglise la pout tremeitre.

869-72

Unfortunately the precise sense of this stanza is unclear. It could mean either that the Church reserves the right to impose further penalties on an unrepentent sinner or that an adulterous wife can be set aside. However, we have seen that this latter course was not without difficulties and we cannot assume that this is the fate of a guilty wife.

It is in the final stanzas (244-313) that Étienne de Fougères really tackles the place of women in society and the relationship between the sexes. It will be noted that they are seen by him as forming a fourth distinct underclass within society, one defined exclusively by gender. Men may be clerics or knights or burgesses; women are merely women. He follows the same general plan as for the first three groups: stanzas 244-81 detail the negative aspects of women; stanzas 282-313 extol the virtues of good women.

Étienne is chiefly interested in the comportment of noblewomen, doubtless because of his acquaintance with them. The *Livre des Manières* is in fact dedicated to a Countess of Hereford. Noblewomen are accused of being the cause of war and destruction:

Les contesses et les reïnes
funt asez peis que les meschines
quar d'iloc sordent les haïnes,
les meslees et les ravines

Si aucun fol les veolt requere,
de lor amor tos en a erre.
Aste vos semence de guerre
qui gent essille et gent enterre!

977-84

As we have shown, a not uncommon means of social progression for a landless noble was the seizure of an heiress, which left such women prey to any adventurer with little to lose and much to gain from such actions. Étienne castigates the women for the violence and shows no

sympathy for them as the victims, echoing the general attitude of authority unwilling and unable to protect women from this form of knightly enterprise. Naturally noblewomen were more at fault as they possess the fiefs that make them desirable conquests.

But ^{thats} is only one tare. Women are frequently adulteresses as well. An excuse sometimes offered for this is the harshness of the husband, but this is unacceptable:

Ce dit qui le velt blastengier:
de son saignor se veut vengier
qui l'aim trop a leidengier

Mes par ma fei ! vilement se venge
qui sei meïsmes an leidenge

1006-10

No doubt he would have disapproved of the *chansons de mal mariée* in which unhappy women loudly proclaim their intention of taking a lover as compensation, and of much that occurs in the lays. It shows once more an unsympathetic attitude towards women and a misunderstanding of their problems, exonerating men while castigating women. The adulterous woman will then take a lover but refuse her husband, feigning illness (ll. 1067-68). If the lover is unavailable, she will take a servant instead which debases the purity of lineage so important to the nobility: "... tal linei est issi nee / dun la nobleice est afinie" (ll. 1083-84). The fief eventually descends to the servant's offspring:

Dou gentil baron son saignor
a l'avoitron eschiet l'ennor;
por ce sunt or li er menor
que de la gente anciennor.

1085-88

Degeneracy is inevitable because in the understanding of the times, nature is more important than nurture and children reflect the qualities of their parents. No good can come from a servant's child:

Se l'eir est malveis, il qu'en pout?
Qui de chaz est, surgier l'estout
Qui de poirs est, el taier fout
et cil rest bon qui de bons mout.

Li gentil fiz des gentiz peres,
des gentiz et des bones meres,
il ne funt pas les pesanz heires,
ainz ont pitié d'autrui miserres.

1089-96

These are the sentiments so prominent in the marriages of William Marshal's offspring; sentiments explicitly disavowed by the author of the *Queste du Graal*^A but which here reveal the full force of aristocratic prejudice. It can be seen that Étienne is far more worried by the thought of illicit sexual relationships between servants and their mistresses than he is of those between nobles; in fact this possibility, which is the norm in the lays as in all romances, is barely evoked.

Other accusations include the use of cosmetics, a practice leading to the abuse of less innocuous potions employed to procure the deaths of unwanted children and spouses. These

evils spring from idleness, and idleness is the root cause of adultery as an alleviation of boredom: the woman "... dit que mal fut sa jovente, / si en amor ne met entente" (ll. 1059-60). This is precisely the sentiment felt by some heroines in lays and also preached by Equitan. Finally Étienne charges women with lesbian practices (stanzas 277-81). This is unique in literature of this period although accusations of homosexuality are found in the *Roman d'Eneas* and in *Lanval*⁵, accusations perceived as the ultimate insult.

The portrayal of feminine perfidy is dark; husbands would appear to run the risk of being both cuckolded and murdered. Consequently it comes as a shock to read the statement "vilains est qui fam devile" (l. 1137), but it should be understood that this refers to a certain type of women only:

Bone feme est molt haute chose:
de bien feire pas ne repose,
de bien dire partot s'alose,
bien conseilier et bien fere ose.

1133-36

The authority for this retraction is the Gospels and the redemption of humanity. It is assumed that this good, respectable woman is married. Those leading a conventual life (of both sexes) are outside the scope of the *Livre des Manières*, and as we have seen, noblewomen were generally married or waiting to be married. In the domestic context then a good (faithful) wife displeases no one:

... bone fame est ornement
a son saignor, et pas ne ment
quant el l'aime et sert bonement
et le conseille veirement

Si epouse son espous aime,
n'est vers Dé ne vers home en peine. 1161-66

Marriage can be a pleasant state if a woman is obedient and loyal:

Fei que je dei sainte Marie!
Nule joie n'est tant garie
con de mari et de marie
– ja la lor n'ert tolie.

1169-72

The purpose of marriage is to produce children, and only within its sanctified bonds is sex lawful:

Ce qu'est pechie en une tose
qui par folie la golouse,
ce pout faire espous en espouse
sanz penitance trop grejouse.

1177-80

There seems to be a hint here that men too have ^{been} known to stray from the path of virtue, but the point is unfortunately not pursued further. As for the children, they are a mixed blessing. They are a source of pleasure to their parents, but equally they cause worry, hard work and financial embarrassment. Étienne goes as far as to comment on his dedicatee "qui ot effanz, mes tuit sunt mort; / or a o Deu tot son deport" (ll. 1207-8). Childless, she is able to build

and endow chapels, serve the Church and feed the destitute, which Étienne finds preferable to the joys of motherhood.

Women are perceived by the bishop as dangerous, intent on destroying society through a potent combination of disobedience and lasciviousness. When they obey feudal and religious precepts they may be worthy of respect, but it has to be said this appears to be a remote contingency. Women's sphere of activity is severely curtailed. They have no rôle to play outside the home (or if they do, it is ignoble). Interestingly, Étienne seems unsure even of the pleasures of the home. While admitting that conjugal life can be pleasant – and he could hardly deny this, given that marriage is praised in the Gospels – he appears to prefer the childless widowhood of the Countess of Hereford. As far as love is concerned, within marriage it is mandatory for a wife to love her husband, though little is said of any reciprocity. Outside of marriage we cannot really speak of love, but rather of lust, which is condemned outright. Étienne's view of women is very partial. His analysis goes only halfway: he sees for instance that women are the cause of social disorder but fails to understand that this is not of their own volition. Likewise he castigates female infidelity, admits in passing that men may also not be above reproach, but puts the interests of the system before the interests of individuals coerced into marriages to suit other people – not that he even admits the possibility of coercion. The *Livre des Manières* is not a work that appeals much to the modern mind, and in fairness we should emphasise that Étienne was generally attached to the principle of subordination to legitimate authority. Villeins and merchants must obey their overlords who in their turn must obey the monarch; knights have duties to their superiors and also to the Church (though some knights might have disputed this latter point); priests owe obedience ultimately to the pope and all must be mindful of their duty to God. Women are additionally subject to the authority of their husbands. In this scheme, duty does not breed love.

Étienne de Fougères was an important Church functionary with a serious message for all his fellow citizens, only a small part of which was directly relevant to the question of the correct relationship between the sexes. The work of Andreas Capellanus on the other hand lacks the broader social vision of the *Livre des Manières* in that it focuses exclusively on love, and to a lesser extent on marriage, and is addressed to a much more restricted audience. The *Tractatus de Amore*⁶ has been the subject of much controversy since its completion in the latter part of the 12th century. Critics have debated how far it was a product of its author's imagination or a sober record of events at court; the attitude of Andreas towards his work and his patrons; the sense of his recantation in the *Reprobatio* of all he had written in the first two parts of his book. Reception of the work was mixed, but we cannot say what its first audience thought of it. The controversies it aroused belong to the late 13th century; it was formally condemned in 1277 by the archbishop of Paris. Alfred Karnein⁷ believes that the earliest commentators on the work saw it as an example of *concupiscentia* (cf. *caritas*) and as

having relevance only within a restricted framework:

“En dehors de la littérature de cour en langue vulgaire les systèmes éthiques prévalant au xiii^e siècle ne pouvaient accorder une valeur positive au lien d’amour entre l’homme et la femme et que cette relation ne pouvait posséder un tel statut qu’à l’intérieur de formes données, relevant d’un genre précis et s’adressant à un public déterminé: dans la poésie lyrique et dans le roman”⁸.

In view of this statement, *De Amore* would hold an interest for the same audience as that of the lays. The recantation of the third book exists because “l’amour profane, ne peut encore, à ce stade, revendiquer une légitimité morale et éthique sans qu’une correction s’opère automatiquement”⁹. *De Amore* is an extremely varied work, consisting as it does of dialogues, judgements supposedly rendered by courts of love presided over by great ladies such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, Marie de Champagne and Ermengarde de Narbonne, narratives which are purely fictional, and straightforward advice to the lovelorn Gautier on the matter of how he is to conduct himself in love. The heterogeneous nature of *De Amore* makes it more than a simple manual of instruction for beginners and there can be little doubt that, consciously or not, Andreas was influenced by literature as well as by a formal desire to teach. To take but one example, he was evidently acquainted with the legend of Arthur and used it as the background for a dissertation on the rules of love¹⁰. The same story, in its treatment of the deserted palace discovered by the knight, recalls some of the *Débats* such as the *Altercatio Phyllidis et Florae*, *Florence et Blancheflor*, and *Hueline et Aiglentine*¹¹. We would therefore follow Alfred Karnein’s comment to its logical conclusion that notwithstanding the genuine didactic content of *De Amore*, it is quite likely that the Chaplain’s audience considered his work to be largely one of fiction.

As with the *Livre des Manières* it is not our purpose to examine the *De Amore* in detail but to take into account those elements more directly connected with the preoccupations of writers of romance, and of lays in particular. *De Amore* has especial interest with respect to the lays. We have already referred to the heterogeneous nature of the work, and Karnein remarks that its “éléments de base .. ont pu avoir ensuite une existence et une histoire indépendante, en dehors de cet assemblage”¹². One lay at least is firmly based on an episode from *De Amore*; other authors of lays utilise some of Andreas’ precepts.

Love is defined by Andreas, who possesses to a high degree the mania for classification and definition, as

passio = suffering
“une passion naturelle qui naît de la vue de la beauté de l’autre sexe et de la pensée obsédante de cette beauté”¹³

This however only deals with the birth of love. Afterwards, if lovers are to proceed, there are a number of stages through which to pass, the *gradus amoris*. In the classical formulation,

these are the *visus, alloquium, contactus, osculum* and *factum*¹⁴. Andreas lists them somewhat differently as *oris osculum, lacerti amplexus, verecundus amantis nudae contactus* and *extremum solatium*¹⁵. Sight and conversation are omitted because sight is implicit in his definition of love and this catalogue occurs in the context of a conversation. These steps ensure a steady progression, but a would-be lover has much to do before he can so much as open negotiations. He certainly cannot expect to make a bald request to a lady:

“un amoureux avisé et instruit des règles d'Amour ne doit pas solliciter explicitement qu'une dame lui accorde ses faveurs lors de son premier entretien avec elle, alors qu'il ne la connaissait pas auparavant; mais il doit s'ingénier à le lui faire comprendre à mots couverts et, dans toutes ses paroles, il doit se montrer aimable et courtois; ensuite, il doit s'efforcer d'agir de telle sorte que celle qu'il aime ait toute raison de se louer de ses actes en son absence; en troisième lieu enfin, c'est avec plus d'assurance qu'il pourra présenter sa requête”¹⁶.

It will be appreciated that in the lays men do not adhere to this initial programme of action. Guigemar, the most striking example, speaks his mind directly the *meschine* has convinced him there is no impropriety in an affair with the lady; Equitan, Desiré, Graelent and the knight in *Ombre* all make immediate requests, to the consternation of the ladies. In *Conseil* the behaviour of the third knight is however exactly in conformity with Andreas' advice. It is evident that Andreas believed that once a woman had granted the first favour, she was expected to continue. The question is posed:

“une femme a nourri d'espoir l'amour d'un prétendant, ou elle est allée jusqu'à lui accorder les prémices de l'amour en franchissant le second stade ou le troisième, et elle refuse ensuite d'accomplir ses promesses. Peut-on dire qu'elle est infidèle à son amant?”,

to which the reply is

“... quand une femme a donné à un homme l'espoir qu'il sera aimé ou quand elle lui a accordé les premières faveurs, elle commet une faute grave en essayant de lui refuser l'amour qu'il a si longtemps attendu”¹⁷.

This automatic progression from one state to the next is of especial importance when we come to the two sorts of love Andreas defines: *purus amor* and *mixtus amor*. The first unites lovers' hearts and consists of “la contemplation de l'esprit et (...) les sentiments du cœur, il va jusqu'au baiser sur la bouche, à l'étreinte et au contact physique, mais pudique, avec l'amante nue”¹⁸. This kind of love could harm no one, virgin, wife or widow, but is described by Don Monson as a “situation plutôt paradoxale que l'on a quelque difficulté à imaginer”¹⁹. *Mixtus amor* is defined by Claude Buridant as “un amour qui, non acquis par l'argent, cherche sa satisfaction dans les plaisirs des sens et trouve sa fin dans la possession”²⁰. This type of love has risks inherent since it offends secular and religious

sensibilities. It is nevertheless a valid expression of love. In fact the distinction drawn between the two kinds of love is more apparent than real. A lover may claim the *verecundus amantis nudae contactus*, alleging that he has a mind above simple lust, while expecting then to claim the natural and inevitable progression to the *extremum solatium*²¹. Rigid though this order may appear, it may be bent. When upbraided by his lady for speaking out of turn, one man claims

“... si l'on doit respecter la progression dont vous avez parlé, on peut la modifier pour un motif valable. En effet, si je suis poussé par une trop violente passion, et si je porte en moi la blessure d'Amour, je peux, lorsqu'on me reproche cette indignité, alléguer une juste nécessité pour ma défense. Car une nécessité impérieuse ne peut être contrainte par aucune loi”²².

He sounds very much like a man seeking a dispensation from his bishop in order to contract a marriage attended by some minor impediment. It is evident that the rules of love may be circumvented, either by pleading that the force of passion itself dispenses with the need to follow them or because skilled practitioners in love are able to manipulate the rules to their own advantage in order to obtain more than would normally be permissible. An argument put forward in the lays for swift acceptance is that when love is sincere, there is no need for a lover to demonstrate his knowledge of the forms by adhering to a rigid pattern of behaviour.

The effects of love on the individual are dramatic and positive:

“il (love) amène un homme grossier et sans éducation à briller par son éloquence; même à un homme de la plus basse naissance, il peut donner la noblesse de caractère; il remplit l'orgueilleux d'humilité, et grâce à lui, l'amant prend l'habitude de rendre complaisamment à chacun de multiples services ... il pare en quelque sorte l'homme de la vertu de chasteté”²³.

In passing we should note that the improvements are effected in men. While it is true that both sexes discourse in *De Amore* on love, the women remain static while ^{the} men's rôle is dynamic. Reference is made in the above passage to men of low birth and little education. This leads us to examine who, according to Andreas, was capable of love.

Andreas is far more selective with regard to love than was the Church with regard to marriage, although there are some parallels. Some groups are excluded totally. Andreas rejects any form of homosexual love, as did the Church. Only the sane may love, and a madman could not give valid consent to a marriage. With age, there is a minor divergence of opinion. The Justinian Code gave 12 and 14 as the lowest ages at which girls and boys could give their own consent to marriage (though we have seen that this rule was frequently breached). Andreas accepts these ages, but adds that boys under 18 make poor lovers because of the twin disadvantages of inconstancy and modesty: “jusqu'à cet âge, le rouge de la pudeur l'envahit pour des bagatelles et cette pudeur, non seulement lui interdit de mener l'amour à

son terme, mais elle le détruit même s'il est consommé"²⁴. Andreas excludes the elderly from loving and also the blind, since according to his definition of love, those unable to contemplate beauty cannot love. The Church of course saw no impediment to the marriage of the handicapped. Andreas also excludes those whose lives are dominated by lust, seen as the triumph of animal instinct over rational thought. Both sexes may be guilty of sexual excess. Andreas warns against the woman who has several lovers:

“elle ne peut s'attacher l'amour d'aucun homme, elle veut que de multiples amants apaisent ses désirs; c'est en vain que tu voudrais t'en faire aimé, sauf si tu te sais assez vigoureux dans les œuvres de Vénus pour arriver à satisfaire son appétit sexuel, ce qui te serait plus difficile que d'assécher les océans ...”²⁵.

Similarly a man

“... qui est tourmenté par la luxure au point de n'avoir aucun attachement profond pour les étreintes d'aucune femme, mais qui désire impudiquement chaque femme qu'il aperçoit, ne mérite pas le nom d'amant. C'est un faussaire qui feint d'aimer, et il est pire qu'un chien en chaleur”²⁶.

For all this, he is not consistent on infidelity between lovers. If a woman is unfaithful, she is to be ejected from the company of ladies²⁷. Among men, a certain latitude is permitted

“parce que c'est dans leurs habitudes, et parce que c'est un privilège de leur sexe d'accomplir tout ce que, dans ce monde, est déshonnête par nature”²⁸.

In making men the lascivious sex, Andreas inverts normal medieval views on the matter, as witness Étienne de Fougère's opinion.

Social status is also a limiting factor in love, and we have seen that it could play a part in marriage too as far as the selection of a spouse was concerned. In *De Amore* Andreas recognises the aristocracy (divided into the greater and lesser nobles), commoners (i.e. the wealthy but non-noble burgesses), the peasantry and the clergy as distinct social groupings. The peasantry are excluded from love as it is undesirable to take them away from their labours (on which all depend). Andreas does not counsel courting them but advises his pupil Gautier to use force should he find himself attracted by a peasantwoman because “il faut d'abord les contraindre quelque peu pour les guérir de leur pudeur”²⁹. Such behaviour, the result of momentary lust, has no place with other sections of society and Andreas would never, we feel, have condoned the use of force in *Graelent* and *Desiré* in which the ladies are clearly just that.

This raises again the question of the literary influences, acknowledged or not, to which Andreas was subject; that of the “pastorela”, in which a knight attempts to persuade a peasant girl to grant him her favours. The knight was not invariably successful, as Marcabru's

“L’autrier jost’ una sebissa” proves³⁰. The situation of the clergy is paradoxical. Nuns are excluded because of the precept that forbids taking a lover “que nous ne pouvons songer à épouser au regard des lois”³¹. This would obviously appear to apply to men also, but Andreas exercises his talents to prove that a man in orders may love “selon le rang ou la situation sociale de ses parents”³². There is a logic to this. Andreas believes clerics to be elevated above all men by virtue of their ordination and power to absolve sins, but if this was allowed to apply to love, ladies would be obliged to give heed to the pleas of the lowly-born who entered the Church as a means to advancement, a prospect few would have relished. Priestly superiority is then restricted to their professional duties; for the rest, all depends on their original place in society. This leaves the nobles and wealthier town dwellers as full prospective participants in love, and Andreas then demonstrates how members of these groups may approach each other, taking into consideration their various characteristics.

When it comes to winning love, five ways are distinguished:

“un beau physique, une excellente moralité, une extrême facilité d’élocution, une grande richesse et la promptitude avec laquelle on cède à nos désirs” (33).

Beauty alone is insufficient, and it is stated that “l’expert en amour, homme ou femme, ne repousse pas un amant au physique ingrat s’il est riche de qualités”³⁴. This is not infrequently mentioned in the lays. While the women are all surpassingly beautiful, some of the men are said to be less than perfect without this damaging their amorous prospects. Eloquence is also not a certain guide “car le beau parleur a trop l’habitude de décocher les flèches de l’amour et fait croire à tort qu’il possède toutes les vertus”³⁵. One wonders what Andreas would have thought of the tirelessly loquacious knights of *Ombre*³⁶ and *Conseil*. Promptness of response also presents difficulties. We have seen that it was considered important for a lover to observe the correct order in winning love and that those who took too many lovers were rejected. What Andreas appears to mean is that an affirmative response should not be unnecessarily delayed.

The relationship of love and money is an interesting one. Love given in return for money is condemned, and a lady who takes a lover for his wealth alone is worse than a courtesan who is at least open about her activities. A woman who really loves

“repousse et déteste toujours les présents que lui fait son amant; elle s’efforce de faire proliférer ses richesses afin qu’il ait toujours quelque chose à donner et qu’il puisse ainsi rehausser sa propre gloire; elle n’attend de lui rien d’autre que les plus douces étreintes et elle souhaite uniquement qu’en répandant ses louanges, il fortifie la réputation qu’elle a dans le monde.”³⁷

We confess that there might be a conflict here between the secrecy essential for love and the spreading of the lady’s praise. A lady is permitted to accept small gifts of a personal nature

to remind her of her lover³⁸ but she should not wish for anything excessively expensive. If the lady is wealthy, it is preferable for the man to give^{to} the needy for her sake. Obligations are placed on a lover: “c’est une grande honte pour un amant de tolérer que son amante soit pressée par un quelconque besoin alors que lui-même est en pleine opulence”³⁹. It is interesting that on the whole Andreas assumes that it is men who will aid women financially. In the lays, with the possible exception of Fresne, it is men who benefit from female generosity.

In love then

“seul (...) l’excellence des mœurs, (. . .) mérite d’être couronné”⁴⁰.

In love,

“celui qui se montre honnête et sage pourra difficilement se fourvoyer dans les chemins traversiers de l’amour, ou plonger dans la peine l’être qu’il aime”⁴¹.

Always provided, of course, that the lover is of the right social background, of sound mind and body, sufficiently wealthy not to fall into poverty and well enough versed in social graces not to cause embarrassment.

It is the nature of love in the *De Amore* to be dynamic, increasing or decreasing. It is recognised that an affair may be concluded without ill-feeling on either side. Love flourishes when few people know of it and when jealousy exists between lovers. It declines if it becomes too easy, or if poverty intervenes, or if a hidden vice is discovered, especially if the woman finds her partner cowardly, boorish, excessively proud and disrespectful of female modesty. It ceases altogether if one of the lovers “s’écarte de la religion catholique”⁴², which is parallel to the impediment of *cultus disparatus*. It also ceases if the lovers marry, contrary to the experience of lovers in fiction.

The relationship between love and marriage is perhaps the most surprising thing in *De Amore* and it greatly preoccupies Andreas.

We have seen that marriage, as a social institution, was designed to cement alliances between families and provide heirs to fiefs and that individual freedom was severely curtailed by these imperatives, and that the Church, while insisting on marriage as the only legitimate forum for sexual relationships, declared that the latter were only permissible if procreation was intended. It is in this perspective that the dialogue between the great noble and the lady of lesser nobility must be seen⁴³. The lady refuses his offer of love because she is married and her husband “m’aime de tout son cœur et je lui suis attachée avec ferveur”⁴⁴. Her interlocutor admits that her husband is fortunate but expresses his surprise at her use of the term love in connection with marriage, since the sentiment that exists between a married couple is not love, which he defines as “un désir effrené de goûter avec passion des étreintes

furtives et cachées”⁴⁵. This is impossible between spouse^s as “ils s’appartiennent mutuellement et qu’ils ont le loisir d’accomplir leurs désirs sans craindre des reproches”⁴⁶. The lady objects, alleging that nothing prevents spouses from indulging in secret embraces, and redefines the man’s statement:

“ce qui doit avoir notre préférence à tous, c’est cet amour qui se nourrit d’étreintes constantes grâce à la sécurité dont il jouit, ou mieux, celui auquel on peut s’adonner chaque jour sans commettre de faute”⁴⁷.

She seeks a man “qui soit pour moi à la fois un mari et un amant”⁴⁸, and since she believes love to be a matter of physical desire, she does not see that this cannot exist between spouses. The noble changes his approach at this and emphasises the place of jealousy in love. This is defined as

“une véritable passion de l’âme qui nous porte à craindre que notre amour ne s’affaiblisse dans son essence, si l’on manque d’accomplir les désirs de celui ou de celle qu’on aime; c’est la peur que notre amour ne soit point partagé et la suspicion que nous avons à l’égard de l’être aimé, sans laides pensées cependant”⁴⁹.

There are three aspects to this emotion:

“un véritable jaloux craint toujours que ses services ne puissent suffire à lui conserver l’amour de sa bien-aimée, il craint qu’elle l’aime moins que lui, et il imagine quelles affres le tortureraient si elle avait une liaison avec un autre amant, tout en pensant que cela est tout à fait impossible.”⁵⁰.

Jealousy is essential between lovers, but such suspicion between spouses is contemptible. The lady considers it to be shameful in either situation. The noble then resorts to the theological argument already mentioned about the place of pleasure in marriage:

“lorsque les époux s’accordent mutuellement des plaisirs qui, d’une façon ou d’une autre, dépassent ceux que suscite le désir de procréer ou l’accomplissement de leurs devoirs conjugaux, il ne peut manquer d’y avoir faute”⁵¹.

This defilement of a sacred institution will be much more heavily punished than “les excès habituels”⁵². It can hardly have been accepted that a solemn injunction against having sexual relations for anything other than the purpose of procreation could possibly justify an argument in favour of adultery. It does enable the noble to score a point in a debate. Unable to settle the case, the two decide to seek a third opinion and approach Marie de Champagne who delivers the well-known decision “nous disons et nous affirmons comme pleinement établi que l’amour ne peut étendre ses droits entre deux époux”⁵³. Lovers are free of obligations, spouses are not. The merits of spouses are not increased by the caresses they receive from each other

as these can be demanded as of right. Since to win merit in the world a woman must love, she must choose someone other than her husband since she cannot, by definition, love him. Again, since Andreas insists that a woman must not love more than one man at a time, it also follows that she cannot love her husband. As for jealousy, Marie decides that this too can only exist between lovers and is misplaced in marriage.

These points are raised in some of the 21 judgements given by various noblewomen, acting as individuals or as groups. These refine what is implicit in the dialogues. The eighth judgement concerns a lady who has a lover. After a time she marries a worthy man and refuses to grant the lover her favours. Ermengarde de Narbonne's decision is that "le fait de contracter mariage lorsqu'on aime déjà n'exclut point valablement cet amour"⁵⁴. Unless the lady renounces love altogether, she cannot refuse her lover. In the lays, no one is obliged to take a lover. Judgement XVIII, rendered by Alix de Champagne takes another aspect of the question in a sequence of events common in the lays. A knight loves a lady, but she already has a lover and is content with him. However she tells the knight that if she ever loses her lover she will grant him her favour instead. Some time later she marries her lover; the knight asks her to fulfil her promise but she refuses, saying she has not lost the love of her husband. The queen cites the authority of Marie de Champagne and declares that since a woman cannot love her husband, she must carry out her promise and accept the love of the knight. It is also allowed that the opposite holds. A lady is divorced from her husband, who later requests her love. Asked if there is any impropriety in this, Ermengarde de Narbonne replies that there is no impediment since the marriage bond has been broken (Judgement X). Finally, the same lady, asked in Judgement IX if love between spouses is stronger than that between lovers, philosophically answers that "l'amour conjugal et le véritable amour entre amants sont tout à fait différents et ont leur origine dans des mouvements de l'âme radicalement distincts"⁵⁵. Consequently no valid comparison is possible although her use of the "véritable amour" for non-conjugal love permits us to infer that her preference was not for the former.

Andreas provides his readers with sets of rules governing the conduct of love. Apart from the advice scattered throughout the book, there are three summaries. In the first instance, in the dialogue between a commoner and a lady of the higher nobility⁵⁶, the lady instructs her eager suitor on how a man should conduct himself in society if he wishes to gain a good reputation. Much of this is unconcerned with love (only two precepts out of 31), being more concerned with manners. The third codification occurs in Book II, chapter VII, and consists of 31 rules brought back to Brittany from King Arthur's court by a knight after many stirring adventures. These rules offer "the objective principles of the science of love"⁵⁷ which all can observe.⁵⁸

The second codification also forms the conclusion of a narrative and occurs in the conversation between a noble and a lady of the nobility in *The Fifth Dialogue*, as the man attempts to convince the woman that she has nothing to fear from taking a lover, by relating to her a series of stories, in which he claims to have played a rôle. This is especially interesting for the study of the lays as part of his story is used as the basis of the *Lai du Troi*⁵⁹ which however contents itself with warning women against being too proud to love and omits the final part of the story in which the noble receives twelve rules of love from the God of Love himself⁶⁰. Repetition of the story would be superfluous for our purposes. These recapitulations of the rules of love reinforce the disparate teachings of the rest of *De Amore* which are of a very diffuse nature and not always easy to locate.

Many of the precepts found in *De Amore* seem to be calques of marriage. It is assumed to be an exclusive relationship between a man and a woman. There are people between whom love is improper and is condemned. For this to be so, there is a clearly understood and shared set of expectations concerning age, religion, wealth, social rank and previous behaviour. A court exists to which difficult questions may be submitted for adjudication whose decisions are final and whose authority is respected. Obviously there are also differences. The demand for secrecy is understandable given that no churchman or feudal lord would seriously have entertained extra-marital affairs (the husband of Isabelle de Vermandois, one of the ladies credited with giving judgements, is said to have had a man executed for sighing after her in too obvious fashion.⁶¹ Andreas considered jealousy to be misplaced in marriage but essential in love. The place of women within the system also has its similarities to marriage. Women cannot initiate a relationship themselves; in all the dialogues it is the man who broaches the subject of love. Women have to listen to their suitors and cannot refuse without giving a rational reason for it, and the man can always plead that it is the lady's duty to improve him

by taking him as a lover. The question of simple like and dislike is never posed, perhaps because not even the most sophisticated rhetorician can counter this argument. Women have a little more autonomy in that they are approached as individuals and are not obliged to consult any members of their families about taking a lover, but on the whole, men and women alike, while acting as individuals in search of individual gratification and not familial aggrandisement, observe conventions very similar to those prevailing in marriage, and the parallel system of erotic relationships described by Andreas is still rigidly controlled.

Andreas's treatise has been described as "une théorie rigoureuse et figée de pratique amoureuse confondues avec les bonnes manières"⁶², and while the advice specifically on love may have been controversial, he also provides his reader with a guide to behaviour in the highest company. Other authors share this desire to improve their audience's social comportment, and it is to two of these that we now turn: the *Chastoiement des Dames*⁶³ by Robert de Blois and *Urbain*, of which there are several extant versions, as a means of comparison.

Robert de Blois was a prolific author: *Beausdous*, *Floris et Lyriopé*, *L'Enseignement des Princes*, *De la Trinité*, *La Création du Monde*, *L'honneur des Dames* and a *Chanson d'Amours* survive. He appears to have been a cleric (the only class of people not criticised in his works) and wrote in the second half of the 13th century.⁶⁴ There is some evidence to suggest he was a professional author: it seems he altered the dedications of his works if necessary, and the names of his patrons, Hue Tyrel de Foix, Jean de Bruges and Thierry de Forbach, suggest that he was not connected with the high circle⁵ that Étienne de Fougères and Andreas Capellanus moved in. Robert is noticeably more enthusiastic about women than either of his⁷⁷ fellow authors. The *Honneur des Dames* calls for unconditional respect for them and in the *Enseignement des Princes*⁶⁵ ll. 315-464 he stresses that they are the origin of what is good:

Por dames done l'ont maint don,
 Et contrevue mainte chancon,
 Maint fol an sont devenu saige,
 Home bas monte en paraige;
 Hardi en devien[n]t maint coarz
 Et larges qui sot estre eschars;
 Tant bon tournois en sont empris,
 Maint chevalier monte en pris;
 Mainte joie en est demenee
 Et mainte guerre recordere;
 Maint rude vilains et despers
 Est por eles sovent sont apers;
 Eles ont maint dolanz joioux
 Et refreignent maint orgoilloux;

376-90

This unstinting praise is far from Étienne's grudging admission that some women were just about worthy of respect. The *Chastoiement* has been described as a "véritable manuel d'éducation courtoise"⁶⁶ intended to make the user "a Deu et au siegle plus chier" (l. 7). Much of it covers purely social behaviour: correct deportment in the street or in the Church; how to greet people; warnings against drunkenness and revealing too much flesh. This is basic

etiquette and we should remember that the lady to whom the work is addressed is married, but almost certainly very young indeed, since twelve was the age at which girls were permitted to wed. Interesting though this advice is, we must confine to that which has direct bearing on relationships between men and women.

As we have stated, it is assumed that the lady is married; Robert invariably employs the term "dame" rather than "pucelle"⁶⁷, and we recall that unmarried girls were seldom permitted the freedom of action enjoyed by the lady in the *Chastoiement*. All comments must be seen in this light.

Robert is concerned that his young lady should be able to converse politely (ll. 12-26), but he admits that fair speech can bring problems:

Qu'ele fait par sa cortoisie
Solaz et bele compaignie
Et as alanz et as venanz,
Soit chevalier ou franc serjanz,
Et sert chascun selon son pris,
Et cil resont si mal apris,
Que hues s'an ventent li plusor,
Si dient que c'est par amor,
Et ele nes preise un bouton
Se par sa cortoisie non,
N'en cent anz ce ne panseroit. 29-39

These good manners are misinterpreted by the uneducated male. The answer would seem to be for the lady to remain silent, but this is not so:

... s'ele ne bele chiere,
Lors dient il qu'ale est trop fiere
Ou orgueilleuse ou nice ou fole,
Desdoigneuse de parole,
Se li amatent vilain blasme. 41-44

The lady then is judged severely and, we feel, condemned whatever she does. All that Robert can advise, having analysed the difficulty, is caution:

Trop tost puet son pris abaissier,
Qui molt bien garde ne prant
De solacier raignablement. 52-54

and he concludes with a reminder that decent behaviour does not imply loose morals:

Mainte dame par sa franchise
Fait beaul samblant qu'en nule guise
Ne voudroit penser vilonie,
Que qu'ele face ne que die. 63-66

If conversation has its dangers, contact is even more to be feared:

Gardez que nul home sa main
ne laissez matre en votre sain,
Fors celui qui le droit i a. 97-99

This latter is of course her husband who may do as he pleases. The reason for this prohibition

is that it is the first step on the downward path:

A cui femme veit consentir
Ses mameles nues sentir
Et sa char taste sus et jus,
Ne fait dongier du soreplus.

113-16

It is also advised that only the husband's kisses are acceptable and others attract "le soreplus" since

... tant con cele ardour lor dure,
N'i puet avoir point de mesure.
Loiauté, foi ne mariage
N'i garderont jai, ne paraige,

139-42

Robert's view is straightforward. The ties of kinship or marriage will not avail to control wayward sexuality once the first steps have been taken⁶⁸. Moreover, there is no place for the kind of *purus amor* described by Andreas; physical attraction inevitably concludes in a sexual relationship.

Two further areas in which control is required are the exchange of looks and the receiving of gifts. A lady must "son regart amesurer" (l. 149), not gaze too steadily at a man lest he fall "en mal error" (l. 153) and believe he is loved, since "ou est mes cuers, la vont mui eil" (l. 158). Some women, "par cuer volaige" (l. 160), actually employ this tactic; such a woman is compared to a falcon on the lookout for prey.

Gifts pose more problems (ll. 213-54). It is dangerous to accept them from a man who is not a relation; under certain conditions they may be accepted from a relative; but never in private. Gifts (jewels in particular) are dangerous because on both sides there can be malicious intent:

Et bien sachiez, s'ele les prant,
Cil qui li done, chier li vant,
Car tost ostent son honor
Li jouel done par amor;

219-22

This may be exacerbated by "convoitise" (l. 288), which compounds the crime of accepting them.

It is permissible to accept gifts from a relative, e.g.

Bele corroie o bel coutel,
Ausmoniere, esfiche ou euel,

241-42

This may be compared with the list given by Marie de Champagne in Book II, of *De Amore* (Judgement XXI). The countess considers that

"... un mouchoir, des rubans à cheveux, une couronne d'or ou d'argent, une agrafe pectorale, un miroir, une ceinture, une bourse, un cordon de vêtement, un peigne, des manches, des gants, un anneau, un coffret, des parfums, des bassins pour la toilette, des petits vases, des plateaux, un oriflamme qui évoque son amant; d'une manière générale, tous les petits

— cadeaux qui peuvent servir à rappeler le souvenir de l'amant; voilà donc tout ce qu'une amante peut recevoir de son bien-aimé, si du moins l'acceptation du cadeau semble dépourvue de tout soupçon de cupidité".⁶⁹

It is noticeable that mercenary motives are to be excluded; in Judgement XIX a lady accepts the gifts but rejects the man. The queen declares she must either refuse or take the man as a lover. If she does neither, she is to be ranked with the courtesans.⁷⁰ For Robert, there can be no question of a relationship between the lady and the relative. The gift may only be accepted if "... il n'i ait entancion / Entre vos dous ..." (ll. 243-44); "entancion" presumably referring to illicit intentions. As long as this is not a factor, gifts may be accepted out of affection for the donor, rather than for the value of the trinket. Here we should examine briefly the *Lai de l'Ombre*⁷¹ in which a gift presents problems. The lady is furious when she discovers the substitution of her ring since a ring is a common love-token (cf. *Guigemar* and *Equitan*) implying acceptance. She feels a mean trick has been played on her:

Ja n'est il mie mes amis,
et si pens je qu'il le cuide estre.

...
Or dira que c'est mes amis:
ce fera mon, je n'en doute mie!
Dira il voir? sui je s'amie?
Nenil! por noient le diroit!

618-629

Her protests to the knight also raise the question of kinship:

"Comment donques," fet ele, "sire,
avez i vos anui ne honte
de moi, a qui noient ne monte
vers vos d'amor ne de lingage?"

762-65

This being so, she has no intention of keeping the ring, but once she decides to accept the knight's love, it is her gift to him of her own ring that seals the understanding.

Robert stresses that gifts should be openly accepted, as he (almost) sees them as bribes: —

Priveement prendre et doner
Fait bien tost folie panser

251-52

This goes back to earlier strictures on coveting jewels:

De nului jouelz ne prenez,
Se deservi ne les avez
Ou ne baez au deservir

213-15

In general, the attitude taken is that gifts are potentially fraught with peril as they arouse greed and lust. There is no mention of a woman giving gifts to a man as there is in the lays (money and horses are commonly given to men; the former to enable them to display the virtue of largesse to their less well-endowed companions; the latter to enable them to fulfil their knightly profession).

There is in the *Chastoiement* a certain ambiguity about human relationships. We have seen that Robert is quite firm that the lady should not permit any man other than her husband to

take liberties with her person and he is anxious to reduce the opportunities a woman might innocently present that would allow a man to ~~sin~~ sin. Robert is a practical man, as his advice on personal hygiene suggests, and the final part of the treatise is a lesson on how to reject advances, and it is here that the ambiguity is best seen.

Robert devotes ll. 567-757 to this matter, and in a work of 757 lines in total, this is substantial. He begins by noting that many ladies are reduced to silence when they are propositioned as the result of "simpleté" (l. 571). Silence however gives encouragement, which is undesirable for two reasons. The man wrongly believes that he has won love, and the apparent ease with which he has done so makes him devalue that love. This is where the contradiction appears, as he outlines what the lady ought to do if she wishes to accept the man:

Car se bien amer le volez,
Si le davez vos a premier
Faire de vostre amor dongier
Et escondire plainnement,
Qu'amors, qui vient legierement,
N'est si plaisanz, ne tant n'agree
Con cele qui est comparee;
Car con plus est uns maus engres,
Plus est douce saintez apres.

580-88

If love is granted immediately

... li amanz pora cuidier
C'uns autres l'ait si tost con il,
Et por ce la tenra plus vil,
Et ce qu'ale fait tost a un
Feroit ausi tost a chescun.

594-98

Promiscuity (in a woman) is greatly deprecated, so Robert presents his solution:

7 Co man escondire davez
Voſ aprendrai, or m'enteendez.

605-6

This lesson is presented in a dramatic form. The lover makes his request, followed by a "complainte" (always provided "il bone voiz ai" (l. 647); Robert is a careful stage manager and does not want to spoil the effect). The lady's reply is then given and the work terminates with some authorial comment.

The lover's request is presented in lyrical terms. He can no longer rest or eat; he sighs, weeps, becomes thinner and despairs of living if the lady will not yield. He daringly compares her to God:

Quant je vos voi, s'ai si grant joie,
Qu'il m'est avis que je Deu voie.

621-22

In short, he has been reduced to a state of thralldom and is at death's door:

*single
mors* → Vos este ma vie et ma mors,
Et ma dolor et mes confors.

spacing De vos vient tot et de vos muet
Ce qu'aidier et grever me puet.

637-40

Finally he begs

Si con mes cuers est vers vos fins,
Si me doint Dex de vous joïr

644-45

There is nothing original in this speech except perhaps the final abrupt descent into bathos (probably the most truthful part of it). The song that Robert thoughtfully adds to reinforce it repeats many of the same commonplaces, and in fact the metre is unaltered and no music is provided. It is then the lady's turn, and eschewing all lyrical conventions, she goes straight to the heart of the matter:

"Beaux sire, certes a mon vuil
N'avroiz vos joi de par moi duil,
Et si vos por moi vos dolez,
Saichiez bien que fol cuer avez.

688-91

This frank speech throws responsibility for the man's plight back where it belongs, on his own foolish thoughts, an approach not utilised by Andreas. She loves him "tan con je doi amer par droit" (l. 693) and has no intention of loving in any other way; that is, she has for him the usual respect. Her love is reserved for her husband:

Celui aim je que amer doi,
A cui j'ai promise ma foi,
M'amor, mon cuers et mon servise,
Par loiauté de Sainte Yglise.
Ne jai de part moi n'iert fausee
L'amour que Dex m'a comandee;

698-703

Clearly Robert had no time for ^{the} abstruse theorising of the Countess of Champagne. One is commanded to love one's husband and that is all that needs to be said. The lady continues that her husband is worthy of her love and that "A lui soul m'an consoilleraï" (l. 712). She purports not to understand the lover's words and declares he must think her naive and foolish to have spoken as he did. She denies she is as beautiful as he claims and says that if she was "plus natement me garderaie" (l. 721). She then alleges he has mocked her and concludes

Et se vos jamais em parlez,
Mon cuer si desperdu avrez,
Que trop mal gre vos en saurai.
N'en leu ou vos saroiz n'irai;
Ainz m'an plaindrai a mes amis
Par toz les Sainz de Paradis"

732-37

We can almost picture her flouncing away, leaving her dumbstruck suitor in her wake. Robert even advises on the tone to take:

Ne le dites pas en riant,
Mes ausi con par mautalent.

738-39

In this way, the lady should be able to extricate herself from an embarrassing situation with little trouble and so safeguard her honour. If the man persists, she is to obtain the protection of her "amis", in this context almost certainly her relations. The situation seems clearcut, but what if she does desire his love? The odd rebuff will prove his sincerity:

S'il vos aime tant con il dist,
Ne laira por nul escondit
Qu'il reviegne a sa proiere.

750-52

— whereas the lukewarm lover will not persist:

De totes genz est la meniere,
Que plus se plaint destroitement
Cil qui plus grant angoisse sent,
Que ne fait cil qui trop se faint,
Car quant plus giele, plus estraint.

753-57

Robert de Blois intends his *Chastoiment* to provide women with the knowledge they require in order to conduct themselves well in society. Of necessity this includes advice on their conduct vis-à-vis men. As far as marriage is concerned, there is simplicity. The fact of marriage should ensure love, although he has nothing to say on how marriages are made or on the conduct of the husband towards his wife. In society women can quite innocently become the subjects of misdirected love since men misunderstand their behaviour, and women are constantly exposed to temptation, to which they may very well succumb unless they take precautions. Robert clearly expects and prefers fidelity between spouses, and yet he envisages the possibility of a woman taking a lover almost as an inevitability, in which case the man is to be thoroughly tested first. Can we take it that there was widespread unfaithfulness in marriage? On the basis of this one document we cannot say more than that its author exhorts women to be good – but if they cannot be good, at least to be careful.

The *Chastoiment* is of course directed principally at women, although some parts have more universal application:

Tuit et totes communement
Un beaul commun ensoignement
Orrez ...

3-5

Other didactic works were destined to edify young men. These are the so-called "courtesy books", composed in Anglo-Norman and ranging in date from the early 13th to the 15th centuries. We intend to examine briefly the earlier redaction of one of these, *Urbain li Courtois*⁷² to see what the anonymous author had to say on love and marriage.

Urbain is intended for those boys still "d'age tendre" l. 10, and takes the form of a monologue in which Urbain "un sage home de grant valour" (l. 1) instructs his son because "ly home est honiz ke n'est noriz" (l. 12). As in the *Chastoiment* much advice is directed at manners pure and simple, which does not concern us here. Marriage is dealt with rapidly and without sentimentality. It is left to the man to decide when to marry and the choice of a bride rests with him:

Si femme volez esposer,
 Pensez de cei, mon filz chier;
 Pernez nule por sa beaute
 Ne nule ke soit en livre lettrie,
 Car sovent sunt decevables
 Et relement sunt estables, –
 Mes pernez une que soit sage, (sic)
 Ke vous ne poise la mariage.

149-56

The ban on the beautiful and the literate is fascinating. Obviously Urbain does not approve of wives being educated, and “sage” presumably refers to the absence of this vice. The positive virtues are not detailed; possibly he means the ability to run a household without being distracted either by suitors drawn by beauty or the desire for a good read. We note that marriage is not to be burdensome to the man; what the woman’s fate is to be is irrelevant to Urbain. We note also that the boy will not be obliged to consult his family; the choice of a wife is left entirely to him. This may be oversight – *Urbain* is a short work (244 lines), but it may simply be either that it was assumed that the family would be consulted, but this was so common it did not need to be stated, or that a man of full age in charge of a small property had no need to consult anyone. After the marriage there is concise and unambiguous advice:

sentences
too
long

Ta femme demeine amerez
 Et nule autre desirier devez.

158-59

Like Robert, *Urbain's* author has no time for the ratiocinations of Andreas. Further possibilities are envisaged:

exact
marriage?

Si vous enfaunz engendrez,
 Bone mesteres les enpernez,
 Qe il puissent par l'eaute
 Lur vie defendre de poverté.

159-62

Children must be provided for adequately; but unlike Étienne de Fougères, the author does not seem to view them as yet another cause of war and destruction.

Marriage is made for sober reasons and directed towards procreation. It is expected that spouses will love each other but no time is spent analysing their sentiments. The author in fact does not consider ^{love, but paints} a dire picture of the dangers of roistering in taverns with women of ill-repute. In order to do this, money is required which could only be gained by selling one’s birthright:

Car nous veoms mult sovent
 Une grant partie de fole gent,
 Ke vendent tere et tenement
 Et altre chose qe a ceo pent,
 Lour eritage tot enters,
 E mettent tot en deners;

213-18

Once in possession of cash, the road to ruin is easily trod:

Et ro bent seo beau damoyseles
 Que sount en chambre si beales,
 Et achatent lor viaundes ...

219-21

Naturally it is the best, the rarest and the most expensive of delicacies that are purchased with money. The affections of such women are fleeting:

Car taunt come la bourse poet dorer
Amour de feme poez aver,
Et quant la bourse par defaute se close,
De femme ne averez fors un p^glose.

231-34

Whereas marriage means responsibility and careful thought, casual relationships are connected with loss and carelessness. The unwise man is a wastrel who dilapidates his family fortune on venal women.

The final work we are to examine is the *Roman de la Rose*⁷³, or that part of it composed between c. 1230 and 1234 by Guillaume de Lorris (Jean de Meun's continuation, composed between c. 1270 and 1285, postdates the vogue for lays).

Guillaume promises his readers

Ce est li Romaunz de la Rose
ou l'art d'Amors est tote enclose.

They therefore know what to expect. The part of the *Roman de la Rose* most directly concerned with love is that in which Love hunts down the young man as if he were an animal and wounds him with five golden arrows. After this, the man offers himself as a vassal to Love, who accepts his services but thinks a little instruction would not be amiss. The young man (and the reader) therefore learns from an impeccable source about correct conduct in love. Many commands, as in *De Amore* (or even *Urbain* and the *Chastoiement*) have little to do with love specifically, but are concerned with improving the general level of conduct, e.g. advice against foul language and slander; correct forms of address, personal cleanliness and the importance of sartorial elegance:

Hons qui porchace druerie
ne vaut rien sanz cointerie

2123-24

and Love even has suggestion^s on how to achieve chic without expense:

Chapel de flor, qui petit coste,
ou de rouses a Pentecouste,
ice puet bien chascuns avoir,
qu'il ne covient pas grant avoir.

2149-52

Other commands set the general aristocratic tone of the work: the mere ability to enter the garden at all is dependent on age, beauty and birth. The first command is the avoidance of the catch-all of "vilenie":

Vilenie premierement,
ce dist Amours, voel et conmant
que tu gerpisses sanz reprendre,
se tu ne velz vers moi mesprendre.

The common people in fact are excluded from loving because ^{not?} ^{p. 64 a-d} they cannot, by ^{omit the words} their very nature, escape, being "... fel et sanz pitié, / sanz servise et sanz amitié" i-j. This

echoes the sentiments of Andreas on the same subject. Advice on love is practical. A certain level of jollity is expected

A joie et a deduit t'atorne,
Amor n'a cure d'ome mor ne;
c'est maladie mout cortoise,
l'en en joe et rit et envoise.

2165-68

This can be achieved by entertaining others:

se tu sez nul bel deduit fere
par quoi tu puisses a gent plere,
je te comant que tu le faces.

2177-79

Dancing, jousting, duelling, singing and playing an instrument are all recommended. The apprentice lover is also counselled to avoid mercenary acts:

Ne te fai tenir por aver,
que ce te pouroit mout grever.

2199-2200

Lovers should always be ready to give:

Oncques hom rien d'amor ne sot
cui il n'abelist a doner.

2204-5

In order to simplify, these rules can be briefly summarised:

Qui d'Amors veut fere son mestre,
cortois et sanz orgueil doit estre,
cointe se tiegne et envoisiez
et de largesce soit proisiez.

2217-20

Other advice is to keep to one love only ("en un seul leu tot ton cuer mis" l. 2229). The gift of love should be entire and whole-hearted, and the lover is reminded that suffering is inevitable.

Guillaume provided his young man with companions to assist him in his endeavours (Esperance, Doux Regart, Doux Penses, Doux Paler) and is advised to find

un comaign sege et celant
a cui tu dies ton talent
et descuevres tot ton corage.

2673-75

The lover can gain comfort from his confidant, always supposing that he is worthy:

si n'avras peor qu'il muse
a t'amie ne qu'il t'en ruse,

2691-92

Such caution was required. Andreas also permitted each lover to have a confidant and a messenger "auprès de qui il puisse trouver un secret appui dans les affaires du cœur, et qui lui offre sa sympathie dans les moments difficiles"⁷⁴, but relates how one such confidant (or go-between) treacherously pleaded his own case with a lady, who accepted him (she was not bound to the confidant's principle). Marie de Champagne decided that the lady and her lover were to be promptly expelled from polite society (Judgement XVI).⁷⁵

The *Roman de la Rose* lacks the strong social elements of the works already cited. There is no information as to the status of the young man apart from his youth and the fact that he is considered good enough to enter the garden. But the youth is free of the normal restraints imposed by family and overlord. He is alone – not easy in the Middle Ages unless one had a religious vocation for silence. No one in Dedeu's garden poses questions: is he married or single? a cleric or a layman? to what class precisely does he belong? Once in the garden the youth is made aware of "l'étroite conjonction de l'institution sociale et de la loi morale qui contrôle le désir amoureux"⁷⁶. The education he receives "assurera à la vie sociale une qualité, un rayonnement qui donnent son sens à l'institution de la cour"⁷⁷. The virtues and vices proclaimed in *Rose* are a reflection of a choice made by society, or that part of it with enough leisure to indulge in such pastime:⁵

"l'orgueil est l'écueil majeur de l'aristocratie. La haine, la convoitise, l'avarice, l'envie sèment la discorde en menaçant les privilèges acquis. La félonie et l'hypocrisie sont particulièrement graves dans une société féodale, fondée sur le respect de la parole donnée"⁷⁸

In fact, at a time when the nobility was beginning to feel the pressure of economic and social change, "l'œuvre littéraire intervient pour faire désirer les nouvelles lois"⁷⁹.

Perhaps more so than in *De Amore* (and certainly more so than in the *Livre des Manières*, the *Chastoiement* or *Urbain*), the morality expressed in *Rose* runs counter to that expected by the Church. Andreas after all exhorted lovers to observe ecclesiastical ritual and explained away the grosser deviations by his basic assertion that love had authority in its own right that complemented that of marriage, and of course he recanted in the end. The other works are quite orthodox in their approach. The ideology of *Rose* is

"aristocratique et mondaine à la fois, confondant l'étique avec l'esthétique, les marques de la richesse avec les signes de la beauté, les belles manières avec la pureté".⁸⁰

It has – at least as far as the reader can tell – absolutely nothing to do with marriage. The formal relationship is never mentioned, and consequently neither is the relationship between love and marriage.

The garden is a place dedicated to aristocratic pleasure,⁵ of which love is one. The young man is a mere novice when he first enters it, and the strict discipline to which he willingly submits accords with what Daniel Poirion considers the purest ideal of aristocracy: "on ne naît pas excellent, on le devient en se surpassant",⁸¹ although we note that in order to enter, certain noble qualities are attributed to the youth. Love is "l'absolu de la passion qui doit vouer le cœur d'un homme à la beauté d'une seule femme".⁸² In order to win love, the youth refuses to accept the safe course of doing nothing but desires to pursue his quest despite warnings of greater suffering to come. If Guillaume indulges in classification, it is not as in

De Amore, described as

“l'œuvre d'un maniaque de la classification beaucoup plus que d'un théoricien de l'érotisme courtois”,⁸³

but because

“il retient les thèmes, les sentiments, les idées pour les systématiser, les organiser; non pas selon la stratification scolastique et sociologique d'un André le Chapelain, mais selon l'ordre vécu du désir”.⁸⁴

Love is not the marital domesticity praised implicitly in the *Livre des Manières*, *Urbain*, and the *Chastoiement* either.

“Le schéma fondamental, celui vers lequel convergent les symboles, est celui d'une purification, d'un raffinement que le jeune homme doit réaliser dans son corps et dans son âme. Il ne s'agit pas là du conseil pratique dont doit tirer profit un séducteur pour plaire aux dames. Ce n'est pas un moyen pour conquérir, c'est le but lui-même de la quête amoureuse”,⁸⁵

and while we would point out that it is perfectly possible to use parts of *Rose* as a courtesy book, we would agree that *Rose* differs from the other works cited in this chapter in its manner of cutting loose the reality of social situations.

The interest shown in love seems to us to flow directly from the very restricted rôle allotted to it in life by ecclesiastical and feudal authorities; the former being basically concerned that couples were legally able to marry and having severe doubts on the acceptability of the manifestations of love within marriage; the latter concerned with obtaining the best deal possible. *Urbain*, the *Livre des Manières* and the *Chastoiement des Dames* assume a preference for marriage and imply that by an act of will it is possible to love one's spouse, for there is little to suggest that it is possible to select a spouse at least for a woman, and if this should be the case, it must be done with due regard for practicalities, not passion. Although the *Chastoiement* admits a woman may take a lover, much of it is devoted to avoiding this by the careful use of stratagems by the woman. Robert does not tackle men for attempting seduction. The greater complexity of *De Amore* and the *Roman de la Rose* permits their authors to examine more deeply the place of love in society. Both consider it essential. In neither is it anarchic. There are rules to be observed, obtained from a god of Love. There are people who, from greater knowledge and experience, are allowed to direct the activities of novices and pass judgement on those who have broken the rules; this rôle may be held by a woman. Indiscriminate relationships based on nothing more than lust are banned. Lovers are expected to chose each other with regard to reason and to be faithful.

What all reject is the unrestrained and inexplicable passion exemplified in the Tristan story which cut across all feudal and ecclesiastical obligations.

As author and reader alike attempted to come to terms with the increasing control exercised by the Church in the realm of marriage, we should not be surprised at the wide variation in attitudes we find. The reception of these works is difficult to judge. The debates and quarrels over *De Amore* and the *Roman de la Rose* belong to a later period. What we can say is that despite the ferment of theorising on love, marriage remained the only fully valid form of association between men and women, and was undergoing its own upheavals. Love took many tenets from marriage as the dominant form and incorporated them into its own system which paralleled that of its model and which did not presume to replace. Love provided a freer form of association between the sexes insofar as in love if nowhere else, individual action was possible. It also allotted a more prestigious rôle to the woman, though it was hardly as eminent as some critics have suggested in the past. Women could not be ordered to love, but in Andreas in particular very strong pressure could be brought to bear on them in order to secure their consent. "Courtly" love remained

"un jeu conçu une fois de plus dans l'intérêt des hommes, habilités de la sorte durant leur jeunesse, à jeter leur gourme quitte à serrer le vis à leurs épouses au moment venu de leur propre établissement assorti du mariage".⁸⁶

If the institutions of a complex and universally accepted model of marriage and the codification of acceptable forms of extra-marital love show anything, it is the importance attached at this time to imposing regulation on human emotion: "la raison d'être de toute société n'est-elle pas d'abord de donner une loi aux pulsions de l'instinct sexuel?".⁸⁷ It remains to see how such ideas were incorporated into fiction.

Notes

1. André le Chapelain, *Traité de l'amour courtois*. Traduction, introduction et notes par Claude Buridant (Paris 1974), p. 233.
2. C. Buridant, op. cit. p. 234.
3. Étienne de Fougère, *Le Livre des Manières*, ed. R. Anthony Lodge (Geneva 1979), "The literary Interest of the 'Livre des Manières' of Étienne de Fougères", *Rom* 93 (1972), pp. 479-97.
4. Albert Pauphilet, ed., *La Queste del Saint Graal* (Paris 1972), pp. 164-65. A priest has remarked to Bors that he is an excellent knight because he comes of a good family. Bors disagrees:

"Sire, fet Boors, tout soit li hons estrez de mauvés arbre, ce est de mauves pére et de mauvesse mere, est il muez d'amertume en dolçor si tos come il reçoit le saint cresse, la sainte onction; por ce m'est il avis qu'il ne vet pas as peres ne as meres qu'il soit bons ou mauvés, mes au cuer de l'ome".

The priest accepts the correction.

5. See *Lanval* 277-86; *Enéas* l. 8567 and ff.
6. André le Chapelain, *Traité de l'amour courtois*.
7. Alfred Karnein, "La Réception du 'De Amore' d'André le Chapelain au xiii^e. siècle", *Rom* (1981), pp. 324-51 and 501-42.
8. A. Karnein, *ibid.* p. 351.
9. A. Karnein, *ibid.* pp. 540-41.
10. C. Buridan, op. cit. pp. 176-83.
11. Charles Oulmont, *Les Débats du clerc et du chevalier* (Paris 1911). Most of these short narrative poems are concerned with the choice of a cleric or a knight as lover; the verdict usually being given in favour of the clergy. The theme was popular in Northern France and England, and date from the 1170's.
12. A. Karnein, op. cit. p. 329.
13. Op. cit. note 3 p. 47. *undead reference*
14. These had their roots in the Latin tradition. See Lionel J. Friedman, "Gradus Amoris", *Romance Philology* 19 (1965-66), pp. 167-77.
15. For a discussion of Andreas' views, see Don A. Monson, "L'amour pur d'André le Chapelain et la poésie des troubadours". In *Chrétien de Troyes and the Troubadours. Essays in Memory of the Late Leslie Topsfield* (St Catharin's College, Cambridge) 1984, pp. 78-89.
16. Op. cit. note 1, p. 104.
17. Op. cit. note 1, p. 164. *- not quote! Note 1? Buridant's transl? - Monson?*
18. Claude Buridant, op. cit. p. 125.

19. Don A. Monson, op. cit. p. 82.
20. C. Buridant, op. cit. p. 240, fn. 96.
21. This is clearly stated by Don Monson:

“Il est implicite dans le topique des étapes de l’amour que chaque étape mène plus ou moins inévitablement à l’étape suivante. En particulier, la tradition veut que la transition entre le baiser et le “fait” soit rapide. (...). Voici ce qu’en dit André le Chapelain lui-même, dans le Livre III de son *Traité*:

On peut aussi à juste titre poser la question suivante: une femme a nourri d’espoir l’amour d’un prétendant, ou elle est allée jusqu’à lui accorder les prémices de l’amour en franchissant le second stade ou le troisième, et elle refuse ensuite d’accomplir ses promesses. Peut-on dire qu’elle est infidèle à son amant? Il faut soutenir fermement, pensons-nous, que, quand une femme a donné à un homme l’espoir qu’il sera aimé ou quand elle lui a accordé les premières faveurs, elle commet une faute grave en essayant de lui refuser l’amour qu’il a si longtemps attendu ...

(...). La distinction entre amour pur et amour mixte que l’homme veut lui faire admettre est fautive, puisque la dernière étape qui seule distinguerait les deux amours, est déjà impliquée dans les trois premières.”

Op. cit. p. 83.

22. Claude Buridant, op. cit. p. 104.
23. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 50.
24. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 51.
25. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 147.
26. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 148.
27. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 161.
28. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 161.
29. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 148.
30. The girl has the last word, as the last two stanzas and *tornadas* show:

Toza, tota creatura
 Revertis a sa natura:
 Pareillar pareilladura 73
 Devem, ieu e vos, vilana,
 Al’abric lonc la pastura,
 Car plus n’estaretz segura
 per far la cauza doussana. 77

Don, oc; mas segon dreitura
 Cerca fols sa follatura,
 Cortes cortez’aventura, 80

E.il vilans ab la vilana;
En tal loc fai sens fraitura
On hom non garda mezura,
So ditz la gens anciana 84

Toza, de votre figura
Non vi outra plus tafura
Ni de son cor plus trefana. 87

Don, lo cavecs vos ahura,
Que tals bad'en la pintura
Qu'autre n'espera la mana. 90

L.T. Topsfield, *Troubadours and Love* (Cambridge 1978), pp. 88-91.

31. C. Buridant, op. cit. p. 142. This is also rendered in a different fashion elsewhere as "Ne recherche pas l'amour d'une femme qu'un sentiment naturel de honte t'empêcherait de marier", which brings us back to the endogamous principles of the nobility.

32. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 141.

33. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 52.

34. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 53.

35. *Ibid.*, op. cit. pp. 53-4.

36. Barbara Nelson Sargent, "The 'lai de l'Ombre' and the 'De Amore'" *RoN VI* (1964-68), pp. 73-9, finds considerable similarities between the arguments advanced by the lady in *Ombre* and the conversation between the two nobles in the seventh dialogue (pp. 99-112) and concludes that the "frequency of points common to both works is suggestive of influence, particularly in view of the fact that the *Lai's* departures from its author's usual practice are departures in the direction of the *De Amore*".

Ewa Kurkiewicz, "La Conversation galante dans le 'Lai de l'Ombre' de Jean Renart", *Zeszyty naukowe im. Adama Mickiewicza w. Poznaniu Filologia 5* (1964), pp. 3-8 believes that *Ombre* was intended as a lesson in conversation but that "Jean Renart n'est pas, comme André le Chapelain, un simple théoricien (sic)" and was not interested in abstractions.

There is no obvious influence of *De Amore* on *Conseil* which resembles the *Chastoiement des Dames* in its concern for the observation of social niceties (not that these are absent from *De Amore*). Its author might have borne in mind the advice of the lady of the higher nobility to the *bourgeois*: "qu'il évite de tenir des discours sans fin" p. 71.

37. Claude Buridant, op. cit. p. 144.

38. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 144.

39. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 144.

40. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 53.

41. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 53.

42. *Ibid.*, op. cit. p. 155.

43. *Ibid.* pp. 99-112
44. *Ibid.* p. 106.
45. *Ibid.* p. 106.
46. *Ibid.* p. 106.
47. *Ibid.* pp. 107-8.
48. *Ibid.* p. 108.
49. *Ibid.* p. 108.
50. *Ibid.* p. 108.
51. *Ibid.* p. 109.
52. *Ibid.* p. 109.
53. *Ibid.* p. 111.
54. *Ibid.* p. 169.
55. *Ibid.* p. 169.
56. Claude Buridant, op. cit. pp. 68-75.
 Analysis reveals that three advise on the correct attitude towards the Church (2. not to blaspheme against God and His saints; 23. honour churchmen; 24. attend church regularly and listen with attention to the service). One only deals with conduct in war (13. be courageous in combat – but the lady is addressing a townsman, not a knight, and her pupil would not be accustomed to fighting). Two refer directly to love (14. he must love only one woman at a time; 9. he must prove his talents in love). Four develop the qualities expected of a lover (3. he must be humble; 1. he must not be avaricious; 5. he must correct those who lead an evil life or forswear their company; 25. he must demonstrate sincerity and lack of envy). His way of speaking merits six strictures (4. he should only laugh with moderation; 17. he should be wise in speech and avoid immoderate jokes; 17. he should not lie and not speak endlessly; 20. gross language is forbidden). Further counsel concerns social life (7. he should not seek quarrels; 10. he should frequent the courts; 11. he should play dice moderately; 12. he should remember the deeds of the ancients; 15. he should not spend too much time at his *toilette*; 18. he should not make rash promises; 19. he should be gracious in refusing and accepting gifts; 21. he should not make false promises and should return good for evil; 22. he should be hospitable to all).
57. The word used by Andreas in the original Latin is “*regulae*” which implies a standard of judgement. See Don A. Monson, “‘Ars’, ‘scientia’, ‘sapientia’: Description versus prescription in Andreas Capellanus’ ‘De Amore’” Conference paper given at the ICLS conference in Cambridge, 1982.
58. Claude Buridant, op. cit. pp. 82-83.
- I. Le mariage n'est pas une excuse valable pour ne pas aimer.
- II. Qui n'est pas jaloux ne peut aimer.
- III. Personne ne peut être lié par deux amours à la fois.
- IV. Il est certain que toujours l'amour augmente ou diminue.
- V. Ce que l'amant obtient sans le gré de son amante n'a pas de saveur.
- VI. L'homme ne peut aimer qu'après la puberté.
- VII. À la mort de son amant, le survivant doit attendre deux ans.

- VIII. Personne ne doit être privé de l'objet de son amour sans la meilleure des raisons.
- IX. Personne ne peut aimer vraiment sans y être incité par l'amour.
- X. L'amour déserte toujours le domicile de l'avarice.
- XI. Il ne convient pas d'aimer une femme qu'on aurait honte à marier.
- XII. Le véritable amant ne désire pas d'autres étreintes que celles de son amante.
- XIII. Quand l'amour est divulgué, il dure rarement.
- XIV. Une conquête facile rend l'amour sans valeur; une conquête difficile lui donne du prix.
- XV. Tout amant doit pâlir en présence de son amante.
- XVI. Quand un amant aperçoit brusquement celle qu'il aime, son cœur doit commencer à tressaillir.
- XVII. Amour nouveau chasse l'ancien.
- XVIII. Seule la vertu rend quelqu'un digne d'être aimé.
- XIX. Si l'amour diminue, il disparaît rapidement, et il est bien rare qu'il reprenne vigueur.
- XX. L'amoureux est toujours craintif.
- XXI. La vraie jalousie fait toujours croître l'amour.
- XXII. Soupçonne-t-on son amante, la jalousie et la passion augmentent.
- XXIII. Celui que tourmente le souci d'amour mange moins et dort peu.
- XXIV. Tout acte de l'amant a sa fin dans la pensée de celle qu'il aime.
- XXV. Le véritable amant ne trouve rien de bien en dehors de ce qu'il pense plaire à son amante.
- XXVI. L'amant ne saurait rien refuser à son amante.
- XXVII. L'amant ne peut se rassasier des plaisirs qu'il trouve auprès de celle qu'il aime.
- XXVIII. Le plus petit soupçon pousse l'amant à suspecter le pire chez sa bien-aimée.
- XXIX. Celui que tourment trop la luxure n'aime pas vraiment.
- XXX. Le véritable amant est obsédé sans relâche par l'image de celle qu'il aime.
- XXXI. Rien n'empêche une femme d'être aimée par deux hommes et un homme d'être aimé par deux femmes.

59. See E.M. Grimes, "Le Lay du Trot", *RR* 26 (1935), pp. 313-21.

60. The Latin term used to designate these 12 statements is "praeceptum" which according to Don Monson (op. cit. p. 15) "implies an admonition to be followed"; this code thus offers "Practical advice on the art of loving". Claude Buridant, op. cit. pp. 80-92.

- I. Fuis l'avarice comme un fléau funeste et embrasse son contraire.
- II. Garde-toi chaste pour celle que tu aimes
- III. N'essaie pas de briser l'amour d'une dame qui est parfaitement unie
← à un autre.
- IV. Ne recherche pas l'amour d'une femme qu'un sentiment naturel de
← honte t'empêcherait de marier.
- V. Souviens-toi d'éviter absolument le mensonge.
- VI. Évite de livrer à plusieurs confidents les secrets de ton amour.
- VII. En obéissant en tout point aux commandements des dames, efforce-toi

- toujours d'appartenir à la chevalerie d'Amour.
- VIII. En donnant et en recevant les plaisirs d'amour, prends garde de toujours respecter la pudeur.
- IX. Ne sois pas médisant.
- X. Ne trahis pas les secrets des amants.
- XI. En toute circonstance, montre-toi poli et courtois.
- XII. En t'adonnant aux plaisirs de l'amour, n'excède pas le désir de ton amante.
61. See Amy Kelly, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and her Courts of Love", *Speculum* 12 (1937), pp. 3-19, esp. p. 18.
62. Daniel Poirion, *Le Roman de la Rose* (Paris 1973), p. 81.
63. J.H. Fox ed., *Robert de Blois, son œuvre didactique et narrative* (Paris 1950), pp. 132-55.
64. Fox op. cit. ch. 4, pp. 435-7.
65. Jacob Ulrich ed., *Robert von Blois sämtliche Werke* vol. 3 (Berlin 1895).
66. Robert Bossuat, *Le Moyen Âge* (Paris 1941), p. 239.
67. For information on this matter, see A. Grisay, G. Lavis, M. Dubois-Strasse, *Les Dénominations de la femme dans les anciens textes littéraires français* (Liège 1969).
68. "En général, la moralité de la femme est jugée principalement en fonction de son comportement comme épouse ou amoureuse". Appearances are what matter. Op. cit. note 62, p. xiv.
69. Claude Buridant, op. cit. p. 175.
70. Claude Buridant, op. cit. p. 174.
71. B.J. Levy, H. Hindley, F.W. Langley, C.E. Pickford eds, *Le Lay de l'Ombre* (Hull 1977).
72. H. Rosamund Parsons, "Anglo-Norman Books of Courtesy", *PMLA* 44 (1929), pp. 383-455.
There are five types of courtesy books intended for the use of young men extant: *Bon Enfant*; *Edward*; *Apprise de Nurture* and *Petit Treatise de Nurture* which are independent works and *Urbain li Courtois* of which there are eight extant redactions. Parsons has produced two versions of *Urbain*, an earlier one which Vising dates from the first half of the 13th century and a later one. We are using the earlier redaction. Johan Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature* (London 1923), p. 63.
73. F. Lecoy ed., Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose* (Paris 1965); 3 vols.
74. Claude Buridant, op. cit. pp. 163-64.
75. Claude Buridant, op. cit. p. 172.
76. Daniel Poirion, op. cit. , p. 81.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 83.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

- 80. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 81. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 82. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 83. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 84. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 85. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8.
- 86. George Duby, *Le Chevalier, la femme et le prêtre* (Paris 1981), p. 130.
- 87. Daniel Poirion, op. cit. p. 83

4. Marriage, the Aristocracy and the Lays.

The characters in whom the authors of lays are chiefly interested belong to the nobility. This affiliation may be shown in a number of ways: a title denoting membership of this caste may be used (eg. *vassal*, *seigneur*, *dame*, *bachelor*, *pucelle* or *chevalier*); the ability to concede land as a gift or as a reward for services and the possession of land or money held in return for service, together with the capacity to command others. When considering the social status of characters, any or all of these features should be present.

At the head of the list must be placed the kings: Alixandres, "Li bons reis de Grece et d'Egipte" 85, conqueror of India, although in *Aristote* Henri is more interested in him as a lover than a soldier. King Arthur features in several lays. In *Haveloc* he is mentioned as the invader of Denmark, responsible for Hoðulf's usurpation of the kingdom. He does not however appear in the lay and it seems probable that the author wished only to attach the story of Haveloc to the Arthurian legend by means of this ploy. In *Melion* and *Tyolet* he acts as a good feudal lord, assisting those who come to his court. It is his role as king which predominates in these two lays. In *Lanval* however it is clear he has failed as a king and is potentially a cuckold as well, whereas in *Cor* and *Mantel* his conjugal misfortunes become evident to the court. In *Graelent* and *Guingamor* also, kings would be cuckolded were it not for the loyalty of their knights but the king of Brittany in *Tydorel* is less fortunate in that he is not only deceived (of which he remains ignorant), but he is succeeded by his wife's bastard. In *Desiré* and *Bisclavret* the kings of Scotland and Brittany are patrons and avengers of their vassals, a rôle partially shared by the Irish king in *Melion*. In *Haveloc* Hoðulf and Edelsi unjustly deprive orphans of their inheritances in order to rule themselves and the virtuous king Achebrit tries but fails to secure his kingdom for his daughter. Haveloc himself grows in stature as he advances through his marriage to eventual control of three kingdoms. Muldumarec rules the beautiful and mysterious kingdom reached through the hillside. In *Deus Amanz* the old king is an obstacle to his daughter's desires; in *Eliduc* Guilliadun's father, rather like Achebrit, is unable to protect her from being a victim of feudal machinations. Eliduc's two overlords in England and Brittany cause complications for the hero without being aware of the fact. Equitan is defined by his position, "Sire de Nauns, jostis' e reis" 12, a rôle in which he fails. *Chevrefoil* evokes briefly the conflict that exists between Mark and Tristan and Marie defines Guigemar's status through that of his father to their overlord Hoilas. We have then a fair number of monarchs in the lays, but it is less common for them to be directly implicated in the intricacies of marriage, or indeed of love.

After those who rule are those descended from them. Lanval "fiz a rei fu de haut parage" 27, but any advantage that may accrue to him from the relationship is cancelled by his absence from his native land. The young hero of *Épine*, "nes de soignant e fiex de roi" 17 is therefore illegitimate, although this does not seem to have any bearing on events, and there is no indication that he (or Lanval) is to be considered in the light of heir to the throne. This is

however true of Guingamor, nephew of the king and his chosen successor, and also possibly true of Tristan.

There is a gap after royalty and its close relations. There are no dukes or marquesses in the lays, and the role of earls is limited. The legal expertise of "li quens de Cornwaille" 433 elucidates the charges Lanval must face and in *Cor Arthur's* chagrin is mitigated by the fact that thirty earls also fail to drink from the horn. The hero of *Deus Amanz* is "fiz a un cunte" 50 and is actively involved in an attempt to win a bride.

Occasionally more nebulous titles are used. In *Amours* there is the "haute home". Girarz always refers to his patron in this manner (12 times in all). Taken with the author's habitual flattery of his employer, it seems to indicate that the hero is indeed of distinguished rank:

Hauz er honors, hauz en richesces,
Hauz en lignage, hauz d'amis;

15-16

but for understandable motives of security, Girarz is wary of revealing anything more specific about him with the result that it is not possible to place the "haute home" precisely within his society. There is also the "prince vaillant" 83 of *Vair Palefroi*. He is more commonly referred to as "li anciens" 106 or "li chevaliers anciens" 141. The old man is obviously a person of wealth and influence but he is not of royal blood. When he speaks of his daughter's marital prospects he excludes counts and kings (ll. 338-41). Gougenheim¹ believes that the use of this term is ironic and not descriptive, although it could be used with its sense of "oben auf".² It is not in common use in the lays, and there are certainly no grounds for supposing that it suggests anything other than wealth in *Vair Palefroi*.

The next two categories overlap to a very large extent. First there are those who possess fiefs or castles, the castellans, and those who have specific offices.³ They almost invariably are additionally referred to as knights, the largest single group within the lays. Guigemar's father Oridials is "sire de Liün" 30, described as a "barun" 29 and as a "chivaliers ... pruz et vaillanz" 33. As his only son, Guigemar should inherit the fief and its duties and we know him to be already an accomplished knight. Gurun is the "bon seignur" 243 of Dol, possessor of a fine castle (l. 292) and influential enough to number an archbishop among his vassals. Marie also calls him a knight. Desiré's father is "un vavasur" 13, the lowest rank among the nobility since such men had no vassals of their own. However he has a fief, Calatir, and holds it "del rei d'Eschoce en chef" 16 ie. without intermediaries, which may explain the close relationship that later develops between Desiré and the king. The term is also used of the old father in *Vair Palefroi*. Lorois is ".I. molt riche chevalier" 7, lord of the castle of Morois and its extensive lands. Yonec's putative father is the "avouez" 13 or acknowledged lord of Caerwent⁴ and the lady's husband in *Guigemar* is a powerful man:

Ceste cité est mun seignur
E la cuntre[e] tut entur;

339-40

Its importance is stressed by its position as "chief de cel regné" 208. He himself is a "riches hum ... de haut parage" 341, but is not said to be a knight, in which he resembles Yonec's stepfather. In *Milun* the girl's father is "un barun" 21 and her first husband is "un mut riche humme del pais" 127. Bisclavret is a "beaus chevalers e bons" 17 but is most commonly called "li Bisclavret" which is after all his distinguishing feature. When restored to human form, his king "tute sa tere li rendi" 303, so he soon returns to the position he held before his

exile among the beasts. His wife's lover, the "chevaler de la cuntree" 103 is evidently from the same social class, although it is worth noting that after his marriage he lives on Bisclavret's former fief which seems to be the richer of the two. Melion is initially called ".I. bacheler" 5, a knight who does not yet possess his own fief and who is unmarried. This is amended when Arthur bestows a fief on him (ll. 45-60). He then becomes the "lieges sire" 75 of a hundred knights and is later referred to by Arthur as "mon baron" 523. In *Cor* Arthur bestows Cirencester on Garadue as a reward for his success. Meriadus is lord of "un chastel vaillant e fort" 690 and of the town which in typical medieval fashion is built nearby. Possession of dwellings is also mentioned in *Laüstic*: the knights of St Malo "Deus forz maisuns [i] aveient" 10. The architecture and proximity of these houses is instrumental in the furtherance of the love affair which is Marie's main interest. In *Épervier* we know that one knight possesses a house or castle and Ventilas does not seem to be less well-off than his companion. The lovelorn heroes of *Chaitivel* are equals, first referred to as the "quatre baruns" 33:

Il n'aveient gueres de eē,
 Mes mout erent de grant beauté
 E chevalers pruz e vaillanz,
 Larges, curteis e despendanz;
 Mut [par] esteint de grant pris
 E gentiz hummes del país.

35-40

Being equal there is no way in which their common love could select one of them on purely rational grounds. This equality does not exist in *Conseil*. The lady here confides that "troi chevalier d'amors me proient" 37 but there follow three sharply delineated portraits of her suitors which reveal that the only thing they have in common, and which they share with their eventual supplanter, is the accolade of knighthood. Ignaure is a knight "de grant renon" 20 and the "douse pers" 39 who are the victims of his philandering "chevaler erent preu et sage" 40. One is superior, described as "li sires ki d'iaus tous fu maistres" 485, but Renaus gives no information on the details or consequences of this dominance, whether it is owed to birth or experience; neither does he say how the twelve come to be sharing the castle of Riol or their feudal relationship with Ignaure.

The nobles cited above all enjoy possession of land and a suitable dwelling, but it will be noted that frequently they are not characters in whom the author has a great deal of interest. Many serve to shed light on the antecedents of more favoured men. Some nobles perform certain specified duties for their overlords. Perhaps the most celebrated instance is "Kez li seneshaus" 287 who appears in *Cor* in the role of butler and in *Mantel* as the gadfly of the court and more unusually as a disappointed lover. Haveloc owes his restoration to the powerful seneschal Sigar. One reason Kelloc has for sending her foster brother to him is that the two are linked by marriage: Sigar

... ad une tue parente,
 Ki sovent est pur tei dolente,
 K'ele ne poet novele oïr.
 Si desk's els poez venir,
 Uncore avrez vos heritez.

629-33

This makes him in her eyes especially trustworthy as an ally. In *Equitan* we are told that the seneschal is "bon chevaler, pruz e leal" 22, who is ranked among the castellans (l. 46). It is evident in this lay that much of the care of the kingdom falls upon the seneschal:

Tute sa tere li gardoit

E meintenôit e justisoit

23-4

In fact, Equitan is notably negligent as a ruler, which bodes ill for his future. Eliduc is not a seneschal but he is a remarkably efficient retainer, demonstrated by the permission he receives to hunt unchallenged in the royal forests. His role in Brittany is more limited than is the case in *Equitan*:

U que li reis deüst errer,
Il aveit la tere a garder;

33-4

Evidently the Breton king is more conscientious than Equitan. The old king of Exeter makes him "de sa tere gardein" 270, but we know that he is in no position to carry out this duty himself. Eliduc overcomes an enemy force in good style in Devon and when recalled is able to pacify the country when it suits him to do so.

Those who hold these special positions are however uncommon in the lays. What marks out most of the men is the fact that they are knights, a fact which underlines their nobility of birth, for by this time "the constant genealogical interests of the aristocracy were promoted through patronage and neither training in the skills of warfare nor the quality of being *dives et potens* was sufficient to confer *nobilitas*".⁵ Those not of noble birth simply did not become knights. Thus Graellent is a "biax cevaliers" 14, Guingamor "chevalier ert, preuz e senez" 12. Messire Guillaume in *Vair Palefroi* is "uns chevaliers preus, / Cortois et bien chevalereus" 35-6. The hero of *Ombre* is enthusiastic in his pursuit of knightly excellence (ll. 53-9). Some are knights of the Round Table: Lorois in *Trot* (although he appears in no other Arthurian works); Caradoc, the victor in both *Cor* and *Mantel*; Melion, Tyolet, Lanval. Other better-known knights such as Gauvain, Yvain, Cador, Kay, Percival, Tors, Bedoer, Yder, Lodoer, Urien, Guivret and Girflet also appear (but not Lancelot even though he is the hero of one version of the mantle test). However, their rôles are subsidiary and they usually serve to cast lustre on the knights whose adventures are recounted in the lays. Doon is

... .I. chevalier ...,
qui molt estoit preuz e vaillanz,
sage e cortois e enprenanz:

68-70

The company described in *Lecheor* is mixed in its composition:

.... clercs e chevaliers
e plusors gens d'autres meestiers,

41-2

but the comments made by the lady are aimed squarely at the knights and she begins her critique of courtly motivation

Molt oi ces chevaliers parler
de tornoier et de joster

63-4

With regard to clerics, it should be noted that in the lays they are of no importance whatsoever, being mentioned only in *Lecheor* and in *Oiselet*, in both cases figuring among those entitled to speak of love but not of any interest to the authors.

When Tydorel's mother tells him of his origins she recalls how her lover first appeared to her:

la vint .I. chevalier a moi;
molt estoit biaux a desmesure,

382-3

In this lay it is a wounded knight seeking assistance who unwittingly discovers the couple rather than the ill-disposed servant who normally takes this rôle, as in *Guigemar*. Tyolet's

father was a knight and his own latent militaristic leanings are stirred by his encounter with the "Chevalier beste" 155 who initiates him into the mysteries of the knight's accoutrements which swiftly convinces the young man of his new goal

Car pleust or Dieu a sa fest
que je fusse chevalier beste!"

217-8

This desire is powerful and innate, and the ambition is granted by Arthur who receives him as a knight despite his lack of training and the absence of any ceremony to admit the candidate to the rank of knighthood, to which he belongs by birth (as shown by his use of his father's arms). In other lays, notably *Guigemar*, *Milun*, *Épine*, *Doon*, *Yonec* and *Haveloc* we learn something of the arduous training the young men had to undergo before they were knighted, a point which will be examined more fully in discussing the rôle of the family and its substitutes.

Few male characters of importance do not possess the title of knight. Alixandre and Tristan do not have it, but there may be reasons for this. In the case of the former its use would be anachronistic (not that this would have concerned a medieval author unduly. Alexander was widely known as one of the Nine Worthies and is here endowed with the trappings expected of a medieval soldier, including barons to complicate his life.) Tristan was very well known and no explanation of his circumstances is necessary. Equitan does not have the title of knight either although he is an enthusiast for certain chivalric values;

Deduit amout e drüerie:
Pur ceo maintint chevalerie.

15-6

He has a superficial appreciation only of his duties as king. It is not unreasonable to assume that the superior rank of king has absorbed the lesser dignity. This may also be true of Tydorel whose superiority over other members of the group is predicted:

Molt ert vaillanz e molt ert prouz,
de biauté sormontera touz
les chevaliers de ceste terre,

115-17

Nevertheless, knighthood is important even for kings. Muldumarec is first perceived as a "chevaler bel e gent" 115 and only later do we find him to have been a king as well (l. 517). Possibly this is due to the fact that as a lover Muldumarec feels himself to be distanced somewhat from social conventions. Haveloc on the other hand conforms to expectations, being knighted as soon as the dissident nobles have acknowledged him as the rightful king (ll. 925-28), a scene reminiscent of the dubbings of both Henry the Young King and Henry III. It is necessary for Haveloc, a king *de jure* if not *de facto*, to be knighted. Done
bracket?

In addition, the hero of *Deus Amanz* has not been dubbed, but this is the result of his youth. Old enough to love (at 14 according to Andreas), he is as yet too young to be a knight (normally the transition was made at about the age of 20). Similarly, in the instances of some of the husbands mentioned by Marie (eg. in *Guigemar* and *Yonec*), the lack of the title of knight is probably due to an understanding that men of such influence would be knights. ?

The predominance of the nobility may be judged by the infrequent appearance of non-nobles. There are members of the clergy such as the chaplains in *Cor*, *Yonec* and *Vair Palefroi*, the eunuch priest in *Guigemar*, the hermits in *Haveloc* (also a priest) and *Desiré*, the archbishop of Dol and the abbess in *Fresne*. These characters provide services to the more important characters. The chaplain in *Cor* for example is apparently the only person able to

read the inscription on the horn; the abbess provides Fresne with a suitable upbringing. Otherwise their actions are connected with guard duties and with the creation and annulment of marriages. They do not engage in affairs of the heart themselves. The only major characters to become part of the Church establishment are Eliduc, Guildeluëc and Guiliadun and this is the conclusion of a long story. It would be incorrect to assume that those characters who belong to the Church in an official capacity become divorced as a result from their social background. In the lays this aspect is unimportant, and is really only evident in the case of Guildeluëc, who becomes the first abbess of the convent she founds, an office she surely owes to this fact and to her noble birth.

There are also a number of servants, the chamberlain in *Haveloc*, *Eliduc*, *Guigemar* and *Graelent*, messengers in *Milun*, *Graelent*, *Cor* and *Mantel*. However, many servants share in the nobility of their masters. This is true of the last two messengers, one of whom is offered knighthood by Arthur, and also of the enterprising young squire in *Épervier* who is a junior member of the aristocracy. The same seems to be true of the women. The *meschine* who advises Guigemar is his lady's niece and the one who saves the reputation of Fresne's mother "mut esteit de franche orine" 248. Lanval (enraged, it is true), compares Guinevere unfavourably to his lady's servants:

Une de celes ke la sert.
Tute la plus povre meschine,
Vaut meuz de vus, dame reïne,
De cors, de vis e de beauté,
D'enseignement e de bunté.

298-302

In *Graelent* and *Guingamor* also the servants who accompany or herald their ladies are beautiful, richly dressed and well-spoken, which is also true of the *peucele* who leads Desiré to her lady.

Little is said of the *bourgeoisie*. Eliduc lodges with a member of this class (ll. 133-34) as does Graelent whose host is described as "molt vaillans comme borgois" 378 and whose daughter aids the destitute knight. Kelloc's husband, a merchant, ensures Haveloc's arrival in Denmark suitably clad and advised (ll. 641-60). The young goldsmith in *Tydorel* is also a town-dweller. Peasants are even less well represented. There is the *charbonier* in *Guingamor* who ensures that the hero's story reaches the court, the porter who discovers Fresne (perhaps a servant rather than a peasant) and his daughter; the wet-nurse hired by Milun and the *losengier* in *Ignoure*.

In fact the only characters of importance not to belong to the nobility (apart from Fresne and Haveloc, and the reader always knows they are in fact noble) are the *riches vilains* of *Oiselet* and Maistre Aristote. The former has purchased his manor from an unworthy heir and is unable to appreciate the value of his possession because of his lowly birth. The latter, "tot le meillor clerc du mont" 449, is destined for discomfiture as well, defeated by the power of love.

It is evident, then, that the men are of noble status and that, as Burgess writes, "the conflicts which occur in the *Lais* between male protagonists are (...) normally between a respectable and highly respected member of the community and a man or men of equal or higher social status".⁶

The women are equally noble. However this does not appear so marked as there is no feminine title equivalent to that of knight to indicate status⁷ and there is less emphasis on women holding fiefs, which was the exception rather than the rule. The heroines of *Deus*

Amanz, *Eliduc*, *Haveloc* and *Tyolet* are however specifically stated to be heiresses to their father's kingdoms, and this is highly relevant to their futures. Argentille and the princess of Logres make dynastic marriages, the heroine of *Deus Amanz* seeks a husband of her choice, and Eliduc laments that love has deprived Guilliadun of her due:

... ja fuissiez vus reïne,
Ne fust l'amur leale e fine
Dunt vus m'amastes lëaument 943-45

Other women of royal status include Melion's wife who announces

je sui assez de haut parage
e nee de gentil lignage. 106-7

and we learn later that her father is the king of Ireland. The heroine of *Épine* is "fille de roi e de roïne" 25 and in *Cor* Garadue's wife is "ser le roi Galahal" 508 (no indication of her rank is given in *Mantel*). There are also a number of queens, Iseut who appears (unnamed) in *Chevrefoil*, Guinevere in *Cor*, *Mantel* and *Lanval* and her substitutes in *Graelent* and *Guingamor*. Tydorel's mother is "fille a .I. duc" 8 and the heroine of *Doon* is an independent ruler:

Le païs ot en heritage,
n'i orent autre seignorage,
e a Daneborc conversoit: 10-13

Intending to remain in control, her energies are concentrated on staying unwed. The twelve ladies in *Ignare* are "de haut linage, de grant gent" 43; Nabaret's wife is "de mut haut parage" 6. Guigemar's *amie* is "une dame de haut parage" 211; Guildeluëc is "de haute gent, de grant parage" 10, as is Yonec's mother. Bisclavret's wife is "mut vaillant" 21 as is the woman in *Épervier*. This term is used also to describe Isabel de Clare and the Countess of Norfolk in the ^{Westoore} *de Guillaume le Maréchal* (Chapter II.) The heroine of *Amours* is

Une haute dame molt noble
...: dusqu'en Costentinoble
N'ot plus haute dame de li; 31-33

In *Lecheor* the assembly is composed of

les plus nobles e les plus beles
du païs, dames e puceles, 5-6

and the composers of the notorious lay are "de Bretaigne la flors" 57 which argues a certain precedence. Messire Guillaume seeks the love of

... une tres haute damoisele,
Fille ert a un prince vaillant; 82-3

who is described by her father as a "pucele de grant linage" 34. In *Milun* the lady is the daughter of a baron and the wife of "un ^v riche humme" 127. Fresne and Codre are the daughters of a knight described as Gurun's *per* and Codre at least conforms to the ideal of the "gentil femme" 317 sought by Gurun's vassals.

In *Equitan*, *Chaitivel* and *Laüstic* nothing is said of the women's origins ^{but} they are consistently called "la dame", a term reserved for the nobility. These women probably belong to the "petite noblesse" described by Andreas Capellanus as "celle qui descend d'un vavasseur ou d'un seigneur".⁸ In *Trot* the lady who instructs Lorois says nothing about her antecedents either but since the lay derives from the *Dialogue entre un noble et une femme de*

*la noblesse*⁹ it is reasonable to assume nobility, especially given the strictures in *De Amore* on the necessity of love. In *Aristote* the "pucele estrange" 169 is evidently of suitable status. The one misdeemeanour *Aristote* does not tax his pupil with is that of having chosen an *amie* of low birth. This may be compared with the situation in *Galeran de Bretagne*.¹⁰ The abbess who raises *Fresne* does not consider her a suitable wife for her nephew or even as an *amie* although she would have no objection to an aristocratic mistress:

Ne vos blamasse pas, par m'ame,
S'amissiez une haulte dame

3015-16

A nobleman owes it to his social situation to be selective in love as well as in marriage, a view shared by *Andreas*, who proscribed relationships with women one would not marry (see Chapter III). All these women move in the world of the aristocracy and are depicted as having a place in it. In some lays however characters display marked supernatural traits. This is true of *Muldumarec* and *Tydorel's* father, and also of the women in *Graelent*, *Lanval*, *Guingamor* and *Desiré*. Pride of rank is obvious. *Graelent's amie* is most indignant that he should approach her:

Durement me doi merveillier
que m'oses de çou araisonner.
Tu ne dois estre si hardis,
t'en seroies tost malbailis;
ja n'afiert pas a ton parage
nule fenme de mon linage".

271-76

Quite clearly she considers herself superior to *Graelent*, and she soon gains ascendancy over him. Similarly in *Desiré* the lady demands the king's assistance in establishing her children:

Volunterz devez conseiller
enfanz a si bon chevaler
e a tel dame cum jo sui.
Mut grant honor vus ai fet hui
ke de ma tere sui meüe
e ci a vostre curt venue."

705-10

We see that the honour comes from her, and the king carries out her wishes meekly enough, and is quite happy to marry the girl himself. In *Lanval* too the lady is able to give commands to *Arthur* and also to *Lanval*, and *Guingamor's amie* is mistress of a fine castle and many knights. These women are quite prepared to make the first moves in approaching a man, or to dictate the terms of their relationship, and do not suffer any qualms at doing so.

In the lays then the world is overwhelmingly that of the nobility. There are degrees within the nobility though, from the very powerful such as *Alixandre* to the relatively humble like the third knight in *Conseil*; from the regal ladies of the Otherworld to the daughters of knights. All however share the basic attribute of noble blood for which there was no possible substitute and from which other virtues naturally spring.

Closely connected with rank is wealth, and the economic status of characters may impinge on their lives, especially when marriage or an inheritance is at stake. Moreover knights had standards to maintain, since they were expected to be generous, and they had to maintain their equipment and their horses, without which they were nothing. The foundation of wealth was land. Those who had it had stability. Those without depended, like *William Marshal*, on the booty they could win and the generosity of patrons, which led *Georges Duby* to comment on the economic state of such men: "par sa condition même, un bachelier était toujours "pauvre", pauvreté signifiant en ce temps, ne l'oublions pas, non pas dénuement mais

impuissance".¹¹ Examination of the lays reveals variations of power and wealth, but success in love and marriage is not necessarily linked to the possession of either.

Precise information on revenue is rare. Lorois has ".VC. livres de terre" 15, but this has no bearing on subsequent events. Guillaume is frankly "povres d'avoir" 37 according to Huon le Roi, who is specific as to figures:

Plus de deus cenz livres de fors
Ne valoit pas par an sa terre; 74-5

It has to be said that Guillaume does not seem to be on the breadline; he has a fortified manor and retinue of servants. His love's father is much better placed though: "mil livres valoit bien sa terre / chascun an" 87-8. Guillaume does have expectations from his uncle, however, whose wealth equals that of the old knight. Most of the men are not excessively rich though. *Ombre's* hero "n'estoit pas de grant richesce" 70; Ignaure "n'avoit c'un poi de rente" 60; the third knight in *Conseil* is the poorest who finds it difficult to procure the equipment he needs:

Ainz a a maint tornoiement
Este a pie, dont li pesoit,
Que sa terre pas ne devoit
Qu'il peust cheuaus achater; 114-17

Nevertheless he is successful:

Si ai souent oi conter
Qu'il a sor maint poure ronci
Souent au vespre eu le cri,
Qu'il auoit passee la route
Auoec qui il estoit trestoute. 118-22

Finally what matters more than mere income is the use made of it, which is what this third knight is praised for:

Si s'en maintint mout belement
Et s'en deduit plus cointement
Que teus en a .III. tans de lui. 97-99

In *Ombre* too the hero

bien sot prandre en un leu l'avoir
et metre la ou point n'en ot. 72-3

He is a one-man system for redistributing wealth, always ready to surrender what he has to others:

Ne ja riens ne tenist as mains,
s'en le vosist, qu'en ne l'eüst. 100-1

Even Haveloc/Cuaran, a lowly kitchenhand, shows the typical noble generosity:

... quant il poeit purchacier
Piece de char ou pain enter,
Mult par le dona volunters
As vallez e as esquiers. 251-54

Men such as these, with few resources, depended on gifts from patrons and the booty of war and tournament to supplement any basic income. In some cases it may have been their entire income. William Marshal once commented that

Si n'aveit il reie de tere

Ne rien fors sa chevalerie

2102-3

He of course made more from tournaments than most.¹² Obviously this was a precarious source of income, which is perhaps why in *Vair Palefroi* Guillaume is referred to disdainfully as a "chevalier qui vit de proie" 320. The economics of war are demonstrated in *Eliduc*. After the ambush Marie comments

Del herneis pristrent a espleit,
Merveilles gaain i unt feit.

223-24

Eliduc is generous with this booty, handing over the prisoners (and hence their ransoms) to the king, the equipment and valuable horses to the knights. He also feeds "les chevaliers mesaeisez" 139. This last act of generosity is common to others. Graellent entertains "les prisons e les croisiés" 382 and Lanval succours the needy knights of Carlisle. There is a certain solidarity between the nobles. Those who receive knightly largesse are knights themselves or those connected with the court. Lanval for example

... aquitout les prisuns,
Lanval vesteit les juleürs,

219 - 11
210-11

Guingamor

biau sot promestre, et bien doner,
molt ennoirait les chevaliers,
les serjanz et les escuiers;

18-20

There is no indication of money being given to the indigent peasants and only rarely to the Church (apart from the foundation of the two abbeys in *Eliduc* and the endowment of the convent in *Fresne*, and these acts benefit directly those who give).

The main source of money should be the lord. In *Mantel* for example Arthur

... fist aus chevaliers doner
Robes mout riches et mot beles,
Et grant plenté d'armes noveles,
Et mout riches chevaus d'Espaigne,
De Lombardie et d'Alemaigne.
N'i out si povre chevalier
Qui n'eüst armes et destrier
Et robes, se prendre les vout.

48-55

Essentially he is providing the knights with the means to serve him. More blatantly in *Lanval* the king "femmes e tere departi" 17, exactly as Richard I did when he rewarded those whose support he required, and with as little consideration for the women. Alixandre is praised for his generosity rather than his prowess:

Recuilli por partout espandre:
Tot ot, tot prist et tot dona,
Quar a Largece abandona
Le frain por mielz son voloir faire.

80-83

This kind of financial support is vital for those who have no land or who are far from it. Once Lanval has spent the money he brings with him he is unable to participate fully in the life of the court and this causes him sorrow, though we wonder why he does not follow the precedent of *asking* Arthur for help. Graellent's poverty on the other hand is due to the queen's intervention:

Au roi disoit e conseilloit
ke nule rien ne li donast

fors le conroi, qu'il n'en alast;
povre le tenist entor lui,
qu'il ne peüst servir autrui.

148-52

By these underhand tactics the king retains a valuable knight cheaply, Graelent is punished for his rejection of the queen, who still has him close to her. Graelent is soon faced with the ultimate degradation for a knight:

ni li remest que engagier
fors un ronci, nest gaires cier.
Il ne puet de la vile aler,
car il n'avoit sor quoi monter

155-59

In both these lays it is clear that ready cash is a necessity. Without money or goods a knight cannot demonstrate generosity and may become a laughing stock himself, the fate of Graelent:

Cil e celes qui l'esgarderent,
l'escamirent molt e gaberent.
Tex est costume de borgois,
n'en verrés gaires de cortois.

189-92

A knight without adequate means of support excites derision, not pity.

The queen's revenge is cunning, but women may also be a source of wealth. Graelent's *amie* provides him with a fine horse, clothes, a servant, decorations for his lodgings, money to pay his debts and entertain in style. Lanval's lady is perceived from the onset as a woman of great wealth, which can be seen from the description of her magnificent tent in ll. 80-92. This wealth and her generosity give Lanval the chance that many must have dreamed of:

Cum plus despendra richement,
[E] plus avrat or e argent.

141-42

His generosity may be compared to Desiré's who also receives money from his lady:

plus dona il en un sul meis
K'en demi an ne fit li reis

151-52

Guinevere can also be generous; in *Mantel* she distributes robes and gems to the ladies of the court, actions which parallel her husband's. Ignaure receives gifts from his unsuspecting *amies* "les dames trop li donnoient, / qui plainnes ierent de reviaus" 62-3. This allows him to participate in tournaments, to the surprise of others since he is known not to be wealthy. In *Conseil* the lady assists her lover:

Maint cheual, palefroi, lorain
Donoit au chevalier souent

792-93

As a result he becomes a popular and generous travelling companion and she completely approves of his actions:

... biau trouoit
Ce qu'il despendoit par reson.

804-5

The generosity of these women reminds us of Andreas's dictum "... c'est une grande honte pour un amant de tolérer que son amante soit pressée par un quelconque besoin alors que lui-même est en pleine opulence".¹³ They freely give their men whatever is needed if they are to shine in the company of their peers, and are more reliable in this rôle than men. It is interesting to note that women do not seem to require such aid; no man aids a woman. This may be a reflection of the wish-fulfilment aspect of literature. The *bachelers* described by Georges Duby needed this type of help and they would have enjoyed its fictional

representation.

Wealth is considered an attractive characteristic in the lays, not so much in itself but because it enables characters to exercise the virtue of generosity and poorer members of the nobility to keep up the standards expected of them. To possess riches but seek for more as do Guillaume's uncle and the girl's father in *Vair Palefroi* is reprehensible. In most instances the men have sufficient for their needs without being excessively wealthy. Women share their husbands' fortunes (and men had to possess stable assets to be married at all), or are of higher status than their men (eg, Guilliadun or the lady in *Doon*), or have connections with the Otherworld and owe their wealth to this affiliation.

Having established that characters of importance in the lays belong to the nobility in its varying degrees, we may now turn to the particular question of marriage in the lays. Dietmar Rieger says of Marie that "... on puet tenir pour acqui que le grand succès de ses contes en vers resulta également de son talent à présenter à la société chevaleresque de son époque non seulement des *contes de fées* divertissants et dans ce sens "intemporels" (...) mais aussi, en se référant à l'actualité, sa propre vérité, son *sens* à elle, les *problèmes* existentiels de cette société qu'elle a dévoilés en leur donnant une forme poétique",¹⁴ and the remark is applicable to the other lays too. One aspect of this society can be seen by examining one particular type of marriage in the lays: those of the parents of heroes and heroines. Such marriages enable the audience to situate such characters within society and to endow them with the expected qualities of nobles. Lays which are particularly revealing are *Guigemar*, *Desiré*, *Doon*, *Milun* and *Haveloc* which concern the *enfances* of heroes, and *Le Fresne*. Reference may also be made to the *Vie de Guillaume le Maréchal* as a standard of comparison for the actions of men.

In *Guigemar* Marie begins with the future hero's father:

Li reis aveit un sun barun
Ki esteit sire de Liün;
Oridials esteit apelez,
De sun seignur fu mult privez.
Chivaliers ert pruz e vaillanz; 29-33

A tried warrior then and wise counsellor, qualities which his son shares as much as his fief. Oridials is married:

De sa moiller out deus enfanz,
Un fiz e une fille belle.
Noguent ot nun la damaisele;
Guigeimar noment le dancel, 34-37

Marie is silent as to the name and origins of this woman though both her children are named (very like the reference to John Marshal's anonymous first wife whose sons, Gilbert and Walter, are important enough to merit their names). We must infer that the woman was a suitable match for Oridials; anything else would have been worthy of comment. She and Noguent are of no importance in the lay and are only mentioned once after this. As the only son Guigemar is in a privileged position. He needs to prove his worth but not to find a fief for himself.

In *Desiré* a similar pattern is followed: first details of the father and then of the mother:

Un vavasur i out jadis,
mut fu preisez en sun païs;
tant de terre cum il aveit
del rei d'Eschoce en chief teneit.

Feme aveit sulunc sun parage...

13-17

Specific information about the father is given, and the fact that the mother equals him. She possesses in addition the quality of wisdom, shown in her request that they should undertake a pilgrimage to remedy their childlessness. The connection between financial security and marriage is also evident in *Fresne*:

Riche humme furent e manant
E chevalers pruz e vaillant.
Prochein furent, de une cuntree;
Chescun femme aveit espusee.

5-8

Again, nothing is said of the women except that one of them is less than perfect, "... feinte e orgüilluse / E mesdisante e envüuse" 27-8. To have a frankly unpleasant character is unusual in the lays (unless of course there is an aged and jealous husband), but these vices adequately explain why *Fresne* is abandoned.

Haveloc involves two families, and two royal orphans. *Haveloc*'s father Gunter takes the precaution of securing his wife and child from the invading army led by Arthur and Hodulf and leaves instructions with Grim

K'a sun poeir le garantist
E fors del país s'en fuïst,

65-66

Grim is suitable for the task, being one of Gunter's nobles (in the English version he is a fisherman). His rôle is simple; "le dreit eir de mort garir" 92. Gunter is very concerned about his son and less so for his queen. It is Grim who takes her with him and his family when they flee; Gunter leaves no instructions as to her safety. In the event, the queen dies in the escape and *Haveloc* is raised by Grim and Seburc, unaware that they are not his true parents and unaware that Grim has taken to fishing and salt-making only to save his family from anticipated destruction.

Argentille's father Achebrit rules "le realme vers les Sureis" 203 and her mother is Orwein the sister of Edelsi who governs

Nichole e tote Lindesie,
Cele partie vers le north,
E Rotelande e Estanfort
Ot cit alsì en heritage;

198-201

This marriage was evidently arranged to suit the two men who "Compaignun furent e ami" 208, exactly like William Marshal and Roger Bigod. When illness strikes, Achebrit takes steps to preserve his daughter's heritage by confiding her to his brother-in-law:

Sa nece li ad comandée
E sa terre tote livrée.
Premerement le fist jurer,
Veant sa gent, e afier
Ke lealement la norrireit,
E sa terre li gardereit,

217-22

No doubt he thought this sufficient; but we will see later how Edelsi acquits himself in the rôle of guardian.

Relations between parents and children are good, and there is evidence of thought and affection.¹⁵ In *Milun* for example the girl provides her son with rich and warm covers and a letter and *Milun* himself travels with a nurse to care for the child. The maid who takes *Fresne* places her carefully in a tree out of harm's way knowing that she will be cared for well when

discovered. Under normal circumstances the birth of a child is an occasion for rejoicing, as in *Doon*:

Au terme que son filz fu nez,
grant joie en orent si ami. 190-91

Parents care for their offspring. Desiré's parents

Lur fiz nurirent e garderent
cum celui quë il mut amerent; 59-60

Guigemar is also much loved by his family as is shown when he returns

Veer sun pere e sun seignur,
Sa bone mere e sa sorur,
Ki mult l'aveient desiré. 71-73

The education received by these boys is based on the skills they need as knights. It begins at home but after a certain stage it is continued in another household. *Doon* for example has this progression. First in his mother's castle

Tant le garda, tant le cheri,
que li enfés pot chevauchier,
aler em bois e rivoier. 192-94

At this point his father's earlier instructions are invoked:

Au roi de France l'envoiez,
la soit norriz e enseingniez. 183-84

The child is dispatched, well provided with money, until he is knighted. Guigemar too is sent away "quant il le pout partir de sei" 41 to serve a king, one presumes Hoilas. What he did there is not reported, beyond the fact that he makes himself generally popular, as do Desiré and Doon's son. Their apprenticeship completed, they are knighted and given weapons by those in whose houses they have acquired their skills eg. in *Guigemar*

Quant fu venu termes e tens
Kë il aveit eage e sens,
Li reis le adube richement,
Armes li dune a sun talent. 45-48

The parallels with the career of William Marshal are striking. John Marshal sent his son away when he was some ten years of age:

Li Mareschals se porpensa
Que Guillaume en envarra
E[n] Normandie a Tankarville
Al Chamberlenc kui pas n'avile
Son lignage ne jor ne ore,
Einz l'eime & essauce & enore;
Et il ert lor cosins germains
Esi com il out pris en mains
Il fist atorer son afaire
Comme a gentil home estuet feire
Qui s'en vet en estrange terre
Por pris e por onor conquere. 743-54

In this case the surrogate parent is a relation and not the overlord, although Guillaume de Tancarville was powerful, which probably influenced John's choice. The principle is identical however and in the *Lais* there is one example of familial fostering; Sanz Per is brought up by

his aunt although admittedly this is dictated by the necessity of concealing an illegitimate birth. However, the pattern of Sanz Per's life is identical to his fellows. As for William, he felt regret at leaving home, but was anxious to set off:

Villeaume ne volt plus atendre,
E quant il vint al congié prendre
De pitié em plura sa mere
E les serors & tuit li frère:
Ce fait nature; tote voie
Si se mist tantost en la voie, 755-60

Sentiment is accorded only a small rôle before adventure takes over. The biographer has little to say about William's years as a squire except to mention the rather unflattering opinion widely held of him

Que poi veillout & trop dormeit
E molt menjout & mol[t] bevoit 775-76

which earned him the nickname "Guillaume gaste-viande" 780. William's début as a knight was not auspicious because he lacked the necessary finances:

Mult li fist petit de bonté
Li Chamberlens, s'en out grant hunte. 1182-83

His horse was killed under him in his first skirmish and he failed to retain the valuable harness and horses he had captured. He was obliged to sell his cloak "por .xx.ij. sols de deniers / De la moneie as Angevins" 1192-93 to obtain money and he only got another horse by breaking one himself, the Chamberlain having omitted him from a distribution of the captured mounts. The men in the lays have an easier entry into adulthood; there is no indication of difficulties with cash. Once William has overcome his financial embarrassments he prospers. : *sequence of tests*

Pu[i]s mena si très bele vie
Que plusors en orent envie
En tornei[e]menz & en guerres,
Et erra par totes [les] terres
Ou chevalier[s] deit pris conquerre.
En France e en Avauterre,
Parmi Hiennau & parmi Flandres
Fu de son bien fait granz esclandres.
En Brutaigne e en Normandie
N'a prodome qui bien no'n die;
N'en tot Anjou, n'en tot le Mai[n]e,
N'en la duchée d'Aquitaine,
Ne quenoisse son vasselaige. 1513-25

In *Desiré*, *Guigemar*, *Milun* and *Doon* all the men embark on the same round of glory-seeking in foreign lands, and the boy in *Épine* wants to follow suit. Guigemar finds "estриф e guerre" 53 in Flanders, Lorraine, Burgundy, Anjou and Gascony. *Desiré*

hastivement est mer passez;
en Normendie conversa
e en Bretaine turneia.
Des Franceis fu mut alosez
e de tuz altres gens amez; 70-74

Milun operates in the northern lands, Ireland, Norway, Scotland, England and Gothland; his son choses Normandy and Brittany. England, it will be noted, was not a popular destination

for knights, simply because her kings had long banned tournaments.¹⁶ Consequently it was not a land where young knights could shine, a fact noted by the Chamberlain when William proposed a visit to England:

il n'i aveit nul bon sejour
Se ce n'esteit a vavasor
Ou a gent qui d'esrer n'ont cure,
Mais ki volt mettre peine & cure
En esrer ne en tornier
Si le soleit l'om enveier
En Brutaigne ou en Normendie
Por hanter la chevalerie,
O par tut la ou l'om turnei[e];

1537-45

A country at peace provided no scope for soldiers.

As Bloch and Duby report, it was normal for the bachelor to return home after a while. William went to his uncle the Earl of Salisbury; after all he needed a patron and Patrick was his most powerful relative. Guigemar returns to his immediate family and Desiré is eventually summoned by the king. The progress of Sanz Per and the boy in *Épine* is not much different despite their illegitimacy. Sanz Per has already been mentioned (and the subsequent marriage of his parents may in any case legitimise him, although this could not have been predicted at the time). In *Milun* and *Desiré* also the children suffer no ill effects. The king of Scotland is happy to knight Desiré's son and two other kings have no objection to fastening on his spurs. The king is moreover content to marry Desiré's daughter. In these lays of course the status of the children may be altered by the eventual marriage of their parents, making them "mantel-children" and legitimate,¹⁷ at least in English law, but it does seem that as long as children can be connected with a known family, they do not suffer unduly from their marginal status. Tydorel and Yonec are of course generally supposed to be the sons of their putative fathers, the situation Étienne de Fougères rails about (see Chapter III), although in the lays the fathers are nobles and not servants. As the author of Tydorel wryly comments,

Li vilains dit a son voisin
par mal respit en son latin:
"tex cuide norrir son enfant
ni li partient ne tant ne qant."

165-68

Any confusion, actual or potential, in the bloodlines of Brittany and Caerwent, is minimised when both sons desert the lands of their upbringing in favour of their fathers' domains. In *Épine* the boy remains in his father's household, perhaps because it is a royal one and also because the plot requires the boy and girl to remain in proximity. He does however ask to be made a knight so that he can leave the country "en saudees por pris conquerre" 146. The king concurs but imposes a year's sojourn at home during which time

entretant sive les tornois
e gart les pas e les destrois

153-4

Defence of the realm for him then, but in any case he finds adventure at home.

Misfortunes stem from the disturbance of this stable and known pattern. Haveloc grows up "... forz e vertuus / E enpermant e aïrus ..." 157-58, skilled in wrestling and unaware of his heritage. Grim feels this to be insufficient

K'il n'ert norri entre tel gent
Ou il p[e]just alques entendre

Afetement e sens aprendre;

162-4

This motivates his suggestion that Haveloc and his foster-brothers should seek their fortunes elsewhere, albeit in humble ways:

En la curt a un riche rei
Te met, bel fiz, suz les servanz.
Tu es mult forz, creuz e granz
Si poras ben grant fes porter.

178-81

Grim believes Haveloc can still regain his heritage; perhaps it is surprising that he does not tell Haveloc the truth before he leaves. Haveloc obtains employment in the kitchens, hardly suitable for a king – one thinks of Gareth's time under Sir Kay's guidance – but Haveloc belongs to the tradition of non-courtly heroes of the epic. The audience's sympathy must surely have been stirred by royalty in such an anomalous position. Equally they must have shuddered at Edelsi's villainy in marrying his niece to a man he supposes to be of such low status.

Fresne's misfortunes are not the result of political struggles but of slander. Her mother is desperate to maintain the appearance (as well as the reality) of innocence:

Pur mei defendre de hunir,
Un des enanz m'estuet murdrir:
Meuz le voil vers Deu amender
Que mei hunir e vergunder.

91-94

In supposing that it is easier to placate God for infanticide than public opinion for non-existent adultery, she surely presumes too much on the Lord's goodwill. Interestingly, her maid shares her analysis of her predicament, if not her solution. The maid's plan is less final in that the child's life is preserved, but although Fresne is provided with tokens of wealth so that

Bien sachent tuit vereiement
Que ele est nee de bone gent

133-34

they are worthless. In this respect we cannot agree with Jeanne Wathelet-Willem when she states that no child is ever abandoned without the means of identification. Fresne's ring and silk have no value unless they can link her with a known family, and her mother never intended them to serve as a means of reunification, which takes place as a result of a chain of unforeseen circumstances. Admittedly they prove to be of use, but they are insufficient in themselves to prove her nobility of blood and permit her to marry Gurun. In *Doon* and *Milun* the tokens are of secondary importance since the sons know who their parents are and where they are to be found and the rings bring about more rapidly reunions that would have taken place anyway. For Fresne the situation is more precarious. Deprived of her family, she has no place in the world and cannot make her way alone.

As Wathelet-Willem rightly says, the lays are realistic in supposing that sexual relationships will result in the birth of children, in marriage or out of it. Parents are represented as loving their offspring and as doing all they can to protect and provide for them so that they acquire the skills expected of them if they are to take their place in society. In this respect marriage in particular is truly, as Duby says, the foundation of society (see chapter II). This being so, we may now turn to how and why marriages are made in the lays.

The first question is that of control: who in the lays possesses the ability to arrange a marriage; individuals or those invested with authority over others? And what are the reactions of those faced with marriage?

Examination of historical evidence ^{has} revealed that marriages are almost invariably conceived by the male heads of families or their substitutes with a view to furthering the political, social and economic interests of the lineage as a whole, or of the overlord. Thus junior members of a family were likely to have marriages arranged for them and they would not be consulted. Opposition was difficult to express. Girls were especially vulnerable to this pressure, given the means they represented of extending the influence of their families and their inability to support themselves independently.

As might be expected, marriages in the lays are frequently arranged. In *Milun* and *Vair Palefroi* fathers are responsible for choosing husbands for their daughters. In both cases the complicating factor is a pre-existing relationship of which the fathers are unaware. In *Milun* there is the additional problem of a child born to the lovers. In this lay the clandestine affair is carried on for some considerable time without either lover suggesting marriage as desirable or possible even when faced with the possibility of an illegitimate birth. And yet *Milun* is not ineligible; he is noble, brave, with an excellent reputation and there seems no reason for him to be unacceptable as a son-in-law. The girl is shocked when she learns

Sis peres li duna barun,
Un mut riche humme del païs,
Mut esforcible e de grant pris.

126-28

In doing this, he is only fulfilling normal expectations in finding his child a powerful husband, but it evidently does not occur to him to consult her, any more than William Marshal seems to have asked any of his daughters what they thought, and the girl does not oppose his wishes. As Fenice says, — make source of quotation clear.

Quant mes peres autrui me done
Ne je ne li os contredire

Clezes 3128-29

Both girls therefore do not dispute their fathers' choices and marry against their own wishes.

In *Vair Palefroi* the prospective bride is more assertive. She too has a clandestine lover (although they are unable to enjoy any physical contact) and fears the consequences of discovery:

Ele estoit son pere cremanz,
Quar, s'il lor couvine seüst,
Plus tost mariee l'eüst;

222-24

And not to Guillaume, whose bravery is no compensation in her father's eyes for his comparative poverty. *Vair Palefroi* is unusual in that two men make formal proposals of marriage which are narrated fully (in *Deus Amanz* one is reported). In both cases it is the man who makes the request — the girl would scarcely have been competent to do so.

Guillaume has reason to expect a rebuff and employs tact. He begins by asking for a gift:

Je sui en la vostre meson
Venuz requerre tel afer
Dont Dieus vous lest vers moi don fere.

258-60

The old man agrees, but with a prudent reservation:

— Si ferai je, se il me siet;
Et, se riens nule me messiet,
Bien i savrai contredit metre;

269-70

He is not as easily ensnared as others, notably Arthur or Mark. Guillaume's actual request (ll. 275-307) falls into four main parts. He commences by reminding the old man of some

pertinent facts:

Vous savez auques de mon estre;
Bien conneüstes mon ancestre
Et mon recet et ma meson,
Et bien savez en quel seson
Et en quel point je me deduit; 278-81

Guillaume is no stranger, on the contrary he and his family are well known in the district. He has no need to elaborate on this matter and can proceed directly to his purpose:

En guerredon, sire, vous ruis
Vostre fille, se il vous plest. 282-83

adding to this a plea that the request should not be considered presumptuous (ll. 284-287), presumably because he is aware that the inequality of fortune is a potential obstacle. Thirdly, and most interestingly, he praises the girl (ll. 288-99) but on the basis of hearsay only, denying strongly any acquaintance with her:

Et si vueil bien que vous sachiez
C'onques ne fui jor ses acointes;
Quar molt en fusse baus et cointes
Se ja a li parlé eüsse
Et les granz biens aperceüsse
De qoi ele a grant renommee. 288-93

This denial is to be understood in the light of the fears already expressed that he is not favoured by the father; nevertheless we can only speculate on the possible effect of an avowal of mutual love! Guillaume concludes by reiterating his apology for having made a daring request and expresses his hopes of an affirmative answer (ll. 300-307).

The father replies "... sanz conseil qu'en vousist prendre" 309, proof of the relative standing of the two men. He is not offended, but refuses to consider such a marriage. There appear to be two factors influencing him. One is pride in his family; Guillaume is of less exalted rank:

Ma fille est bele et jone et sage
Et pucele de grant lignage,
Et je sui riches vavassors,
Estrais de nobles ancissors,
.....
...; ne sui pas si yvres
Que je ma fille doner doie
A chevalier qui vit de proie, 313-20

His daughter can do much better – only the very highest are excluded:

Le plus haut homme de lignage
Qui en trestout ces païs maingne,
Ne de ci jusqu'en Alemaigne,
Puet bien avoir, fors roi ou conte." 338-41

The other factor is money. His daughter is heiress to a fortune and does not need to marry immediately:

... ma fille puet bien attendre,
Que je sui tant d'avoir seurpris,
Qu'ele ne puet perdre son pris
Ne le fuer de son mariage." 334-37

In addition, he himself expects some financial benefit from her marriage:

Tels la me requist avant ier,
N'a pas encore un mois entier,
Qui de terre a cinc cenz livres,
Qui or me fusse^{ent} delivrees
Se je a ce vousisse entendre.

329-32

Guillaume is defeated on both fronts and can only return home disconsolate. His *amie's* solution is to improve his financial situation by enlisting the aid of his uncle and employing him as a broker in the affair. The two old men respect each other – “li uns l'autre pseudome claime” 424 – and the temporary gift of land increases his worth to the mercenary old man.

The uncle who decides to woo on his own behalf begins by announcing that he has come with a request that he hopes will be granted (ll. 537-45). The father is more encouraging to his old crony and the uncle is virtually assured of winning. He asks for the girl:

“Venuz sui demander, biaux sire,
Vostre fille qui molt est sage,
Prendre la vueil par mariage;

556-58

Once this is done, he continues, the girl will receive a share in his riches (ll. 539-61). He says that he has no heir “de ma char” 563 and promises to be faithful to the girl for the sake of the father. Finally, he produces an argument which must surely appeal to the father:

Quand je vostre fille avrai prise,
Ja ne me quier de vous partir
Ne ma richece departir
De la vostre, ainçois soit tout un;
Ensamble serons de commun
De ce que Dieus nous a doné.”

566-71

The father does not consult anyone about this proposal either but accepts it immediately (ll. 574-84), basically because of the respect he has for his colleague.

The attitudes of the daughters are identical in one respect. Huon writes

Lors a fiancie et plevie
Celi qui n'a de lui envie,
Et qui cuidoit autrui avoir.

585-87

Her monologue (ll. 594-644) expresses her opposition to the marriage and her detestation of the treacherous bridegroom, but she feels she has no choice but to accept:

Or me couvendra remanoir
Et souffrir ce que veut mes pere,
Mes la souffrance est trop amere.

616-18

It is clear though that it is circumstance that dictates her agreement rather than inner conviction:

Se je ne fusse en tel prison,
Bien achevaise cest afere,

612-14

Once she realises she has eluded her escort's vigilance, she is ready to give her palfrey its head even though this means entering the forest with all its perils. Danger is preferable to the marriage. In *Milun* the girl fears shame and punishment if her non-virgin state is discovered (although this apparently never occurs) and her thoughts sprint immediately to the thought of her future life:

Ainz ai asez sur mei gardeins
Veuz e jeofnes, mes chamberlains,
Que tuz jurz heent bone amur
E se delitent en tristur.

145-48

This must refer to the future; hitherto she has experienced no difficulty in eluding servants whenever it suits her. Unlike the girl in *Vair Palefroi* she accepts her fate completely "or m'estuvrat issi souffrir" 149 and there is no prospect of rebellion.

In *Deus Amanz* the father's aim is to prevent his daughter from marrying, hence the institution of the test whose redoubtable nature is shown by the failure of many suitors (ll. 39-46), and he remains confident of success. When the boy asks for the girl's hand,

... mut le tint a grant folie,
Pur ceo qu'il iert de jeofne eage:
Tant produm[e] vaillant e sage
Unt asaaié icel affaire
Ki n'en purent a nul chief traire.

150-54

The girl feels bound to accept her father's wishes and refuses to elope. But if the boy can succeed, her father must consent. By enlisting the aid of science – and it is science, not magic – she believes they can win. As in *Vair Palefroi*, her plan is perfectly feasible and it is not her fault that it comes to nothing.

In these lays, fathers dictate their daughters' futures, or try to. It is as well to recall here the case of Christina of Markyate (Chapter II) who was placed in an identical situation, although it was the religious life she sought and not a husband. Christina protested vigorously against her parents' plans for her but was unable to overcome their fierce opposition to her plans. As we saw, her family did not hesitate to employ forceful means to obtain her consent (and this is so in *Haveloc*) and the clergy's representatives were unwilling to aid her against her father (in the case of Fredebert) or actually corrupt (the case of Robert Bloet). For Christina the only solution was a form of elopement, albeit with the purest of motives, in order to escape the coercive power of family and Church. In all cases decisions are made without the girls being consulted. ~~Not~~[^] indeed are their mothers mentioned (they might as well all be dead; in *Deus Amanz* at least we know this to be the case). No doubt all three men believe they are acting with the best of intentions and do not intend to thwart their daughters out of spite. The girls themselves never take the initiative in asking their fathers if they can marry and perhaps this is because they feel their fathers' actions are legitimate even if the results are personally distasteful. Their agreement is not total though. Within the confines of their particular situations they are ready to find a solution that is more in keeping with their desires.

Female authority to make marriages is very much rarer. In *Fresne* the lady thinks of it as a means of disposing of the dangerous concubine:

A sun gendre conseilera
Quë a un produm la marit;

370-71

It is clear though that the final decision rests with Gurun who alone has any form of authority over *Fresne*. It is more of a suggestion than an initiative and the lady can do nothing apart from this.

In *Desiré* the lady has two marriages in mind; her own and her daughter's. Again, despite her powers, both commands are passed through a man. "Ceste meschine conseillez" 701, she orders the king (who marries her himself), before making her second demand:

Mun ami me fait espuser
ke jo l'en voil od mei mener

719-20

She is totally confident of his co-operation and equally certain that Desiré will consent, as indeed he does:

... durement li esteit tart
k'il eüst s'amie espusee,
e k'ele fut illuec donee

740-42

Men obey her commands, but they are still mediated through regal, masculine authority.

Melion has some parallels with *Desiré* in this respect. The Lady, whose supernatural affinities are softened by the author, offers Melion her love, but it is he who takes her to his castle where "a grant richoise l'espousa" 127.

Widows are the only category of women who have some freedom to manoeuvre. In *Milun* the lady who was unable to refuse her father's choice is as a widow able to manipulate matters, sending Milun a message "morz est sis sire, or s'en hastast!" 518. Even so, a man is deeply involved. Sanz Per has already declared his intention of reuniting his parents, even at the cost of murder. This is unnecessary, but he still has the main rôle in the subsequent wedding:

Unc ne demanderent parent:
Sanz conseil de tut' autre gent
Lur fiz amdeus les assembla,
La mere a sun pere dona.

527-30

Burgess sees this as the son, the fruit of their relationship, bringing the couple officially together.¹⁸ Sanz Per in fact acts as if he were her father (and he is now her closest male relative in any case) and bestows her where he will, albeit in a manner she desires.

Conseil is similar, except that the lady has no son: she

Asembla trestot son lignage,
Son ami prist et espousa.

826-29

The initiative here rests entirely with the lady. She gathers her family but does not feel it incumbent upon her to consult them. She pleases herself, possibly because of her high social position.

In other lays women dream of being able to chose. Initially Milun's *amie* relates

Ainz quidoue avoir mun ami;
Entre nus celisum l'afaire,
Ja ne l'oïsse aillurs retraire.

140-42

Given that her father does not know of her situation, we may be permitted to doubt the reality of this wish. In *Eliduc* Guilliadun begins by thinking in terms of marriage as a natural consequence of love:

Si par amur me veut amer
E de sun cors asseürer,
Jeo ferai trestut sun pleisir,
Si l'en peot grant bien avenir:
De cest tere serat reis.

343-47

Eliduc could not be king if he did not marry her. But she makes no direct request for marriage, remaining satisfied with the promise of his love, because she hopes that there will eventually be a marriage:

Ceo fu s'entente e sun espeir:
El le quidot del tut avoir
E retenir, s'ele peüst;
Ne saveit pas que femme eüst.

581-84

Neither does the king make the request. He offers Eliduc the contents of his treasury as an inducement to stay but not Guilliadun's hand. It must be remembered that any explicit proposal of this kind would place Eliduc in a deeply embarrassing situation. He would either have to confess to being married or lie directly instead of by omission. Marie settles for an elopement instead and postpones the revelation to achieve the greatest possible impact on the lovers.

Women then do not enjoy much freedom in marriage. They obey their fathers, and only impose their own wishes if their circumstances change, through widowhood. The other choice they have is, like Guilliadun, to throw caution to the winds. For men the situation is easier. Sons are not pressed to marry by their parents. Furthermore, if a man possesses a certain status in society he is usually able to please himself, although some are exposed to the dictates of feudal wisdom. Most men who have attained stability eg. the father of Desiré, the putative father of Tydorel, Nabaret and the old *avoué* of Caerwent; the knights in *Épervier* and *Laüstic*, take wives when it suits them. Melion also does. Established in his fief, when the lady offers him love, he quite naturally marries her (ll. 125-27). This occurs in *Desiré* too. The king, asked to find a husband for Desiré's daughter, chooses the most obvious candidate for such a distinguished young woman:

li reis, oiant tote sa gent,
lur dit qu'il prendrat la meschine
e si ferat de lui reïne;
a suen oes tendrat la pucele,
kë unkes mes ne vit tant bele.

734-38

Being the highest power in the land, obviously no one is going to contradict him, given that the girl is so eminently suitable. Duby writes that "... le seul vrai pouvoir appartient aux hommes mariés".¹⁹ This means that in order to marry in the first place, a man must possess already a certain degree of power and/or land, or, like William Marshal, be so highly regarded as to receive an heiress as a gift. Those lacking this influence – young knights, women, daughters – lack the autonomy to impose their wishes. Only widows enjoy any comparable freedom, and in their case it is suggested that speed is of the essence if they are not to be balked.

There is however a set of forces that operates on both sexes and which receives more prominence in the lays than any other form of constraint operating. These are the pressures exerted by feudal expectations. These are varied and certainly do not always involve the same aims or have the same outcome. Initially we would like to examine the position of women stated to be heiresses to fiefs or kingdoms.

In *Yvain* Laudine's seneschal reminds her vassals of a fact of feudal life. She is without doubt the legitimate holder of the fief but

Fame ne set porter escu,
Ne ne set de lance ferir.
Mout amander et ancherir
Se puet de prandre un buen seignor.

2096-99

A woman cannot render the necessary military service, so she must have a husband acceptable to her overlord, if there is one, and to her vassals since he will command them by

virtue of his marriage. We remember that William Marshal stressed the loyalty owed to his wife rather than that owed to him (see Chapter III). An heiress therefore required a husband, and swiftly. Laudine's men, knowing for example that Arthur is on his way, can be relied on to give her the necessary formal permission she seeks to marry Yvain:

“De ci nos an ions
An cele sale, où mes janz sont,
Qui loé et conseil^{le} m'ont
Por le besoing qu' il i voient;
Que mari a prandre m'otroient.
Et jel ferai por le besoing:
Ci meïsmes a vos me doing;
Qu'a seignor refuser ne doi
Buen chevalier et fil de roi.”

2040-48

In this *roman* Laudine makes feudal conventions work for her. Yvain of course does not seek an heiress, but many knights did so as a means to advancement. Doon for example undertakes the test set by his lady for such a motive, which does credit to his sporting instincts if not to his heart:

Por l'afiance du destrier
voudra cele oeuvre commencier
por la meschine e por la terre,
savoir s'il le porra conquerre.

75-78

When he succeeds and the lady is unable to demur further, the feudal aspect comes to the fore:

Cele nu pot avant mener,
toz ses barons a fet mander.
Par lor conseil a Doon pris,
seignor l'a fet de son país.

157-60

This is exactly like *Yvain*: the women know that marriage is inevitable (Laudine because she wants Yvain; in *Doon* because the hero has completed the tasks set), but both need the formal consent of their men. It is doubtful that a man would have needed to seek his vassals' approbation for a marriage.

A task is also relevant in *Tyolet*. The king and queen of Logres send their daughter to Arthur's court in search of a spouse. In this lay the bargain is concluded between the girl herself and Arthur, acting in her parents' place:

- Par foi, fet li rois, vos creant
que iltel soit le covenant
que cil a fame vos aura
que le pie du cerf vous donra.
- Et je, dan rois, si le creant
que iltel soit le covenant.”

357-62

Evidently, as in *Doon*, no knight is obliged to undertake the task unless he is willing and able to marry, although *Tyolet* never mentions this as motivation for his attempt. The princess is indifferent as to the outcome, and the oath proves unexpectedly ambiguous, at least as far as the felonious knight is concerned. He demands the fulfilment of the oath since he has indeed obtained the hoof. What the princess thinks is not recorded (in identical circumstances, Iseut and her mother were both horrified). When *Tyolet* eventually returns, the letter as well as the spirit of the oath can be respected:

Li chevaliers le pié li rent
e Tyolet le prent
si l'a donné a la pucele.

693-5

Gestures are important and Tyolet must give the trophy to the princess. The conclusion reveals the mechanics of forming a marriage in the same way:

Tyolet l'a donc demande^e
li rois Artur li a donnee,^k
e la pucele l'otroia;

699-701

The man makes the request to the parents' substitute who signals his consent by conceding her; she in turn signifies her acceptance of the man. Unusually in *Tyolet* the girl has a chance to refuse, but as Tyolet has completed the task, there is no reason for this and so they can become in due course king and queen.

Guilliadun's situation demonstrates the kind of feudal difficulty experienced by some heiresses, and which Étienne de Fougères comments on. Marie states that her father

... ne la volt doner
A sun per, cil le guerriot,
Tute sa tere si gastot.

96-98

Here we see again that the father has complete control; it is entirely his decision whether or not to give Guilliadun to the *per*, who for his part does not accept the refusal and feels able to force the issue through violence. We must assume that his aim in waging war is to obtain Guilliadun by any possible means. The unfairness of Étienne's judgement is evident here. ^{which} Guilliadun is never given an opportunity to express her wishes and would doubtless prefer not to be the object of such attention. Guigemar's lady suffers in a similar way; Meriadus seizes her and this action apparently gives him some rights over her, although he does not force her to marry him, accepting unwillingly the protection she receives from her knotted girdle.

The position, or rather the plight of heiresses is most evident in *Haveloc*. Achebrit, as we have seen, confides the care of his kingdom and daughter to Edelsi, but this control is not permanent. When she reaches a suitable age (ie. puberty) a choice of husband is to be made "par le conseil de ses tenanz" 226 who have a legitimate interest. That her vassals regard Edelsi as a stop-gap can be seen from their request to him:

Le rei en unt a reisun mis
E de sa nece l'unt requis
K'a tel home la mariast
Kis maintenist e conseillast.

291-94

Edelsi, luckily for him, is bound, or so he claims, by the words of his oath:

Al plus fort home la doreit
K'en la terre trover poreit

227-28

Achebrit intended "plus fort" to be understood in the sense of "most powerful". Edelsi's interpretation of "physically strongest" enabled him to fulfil the letter of his promise, but in so doing he disparaged Argentille to the point where she could not hold the land herself. This is a well planned strategy; Edelsi has consulted his men because he does not wish to lose control of the kingdom (ll. 306-14). There is no doubt that he is aware of the effect of his actions:

A Cuaran la voil doner
Celui ki est en ma quisine.
De chalderes serra reïne.

330-32

This is even clearer in the English version:²⁰

Ð þought [he] with trechery
With trayson, and with felony;
For he wende, þat Havelok wore
Sum cherles sone, and no more;
Ne schulde he hauen of Engellond
Onlepi forw in his hond
With hire, þat was þer-of [þ] eyr, 1089-95

The difference between Argentille's position and Laudine's is obvious. Haveloc/Cuaran is a churl not a prince and unacceptable to the vassals:

Quant li barun unt escuté
K'il ot dite sa volonté,
Entr'els d[ise]jient en apert
Ke co n'ert ja par els suffert 375-80

They are unable to enforce their wishes because Edelsi out-generals them – he has no illusions as to the effect his announcement will cause:

Si nuls i ad kil cuntredie
Ne kil m'aturt a vilainie,
Dedenz ma prisun le mettrai 339-41

Argentille's humiliation is completed when Edelsi forces the couple to share a bed

Pur li avilir e honir
La fet la nuit lez lui gisir. 383-84

Doubtless he also wishes to ensure that the marriage will be consummated and so put his own position beyond question. And there is no doubt that both Argentille and Haveloc feel humiliated, albeit for different motives:

Celë ot grant hunte de lui
E il assez greinur de li. 386-87

(he is ashamed of the flame). Argentille cannot lead her men herself, and in fact, having failed to protect her, they vanish, and Haveloc is in no position to impose himself as a respectable king. Edelsi has won, and Argentille is aware of her powerlessness:

Si delivrum al rei la terre
Dunt il m'ad exile [e] a tort; 548-49

Realistically, no other option is open. Only when Haveloc has regained his own kingdom can she reclaim her land through him:

Argentille li conseilla
K'il passast [mer] en Engleterre
Pur sun heritage conquere
Dunt si uncles l'aveit jetée
E a grant tort desheritée 984-88

With regard to Haveloc/Cuaran, it should be noted that his employer can coerce hm into marriage too. Cuaran always protests ignorance of Edelsi's motives. He says to Sigar ^

Il me dona ceste meschine,
Sa parente ert; ne sai pur quei
Il assembla e li e mei 800-02

He must have been the only one not to comprehend, but then he is not distinguished by his

intellectual acuity.

In this lay Edelsi uses the powers granted to him as guardian to disinherit his niece, an act of villainy in the eyes of contemporaries.

Argentille is dependent on her guardian who has total control over her future. She can do nothing to protect herself or her interests and permanent exile would have been her fate had it not been for the revelation of Haveloc's true identity. But although women suffer more from feudal pressures, men are not exempt. Equitan's people urge him to marry and are unamused when he refuses. Guigemar too is pressed to marry but refuses "ne pur aveir ne pur amur" 648 and is able to do so because of the supernatural protection he enjoys. Gurun however is exposed to the full force of feudal necessity.

In considering the conjugal problems of Gurun, it is first essential to say something about his relationship with Fresne. When he encourages her to leave the abbey he promises

... jamés ne vus faudrai,
Richement vus conseilleraï.'

287-88

"Cunseiler" can certainly have the sense "to arrange a marriage" and is often used in this way, but in *Fresne* this is not intended. The heroine settles happily into Gurun's home, is honoured by his household and even gives orders about its running, but the two do not marry, neither is this ever suggested as a possibility. There is no ecclesiastical impediment to marriage so their failure to marry may be ascribed to the social difference between them, effectively the impediment of *error fortunae vel qualitatis* (see Chapter II). She is therefore a *suinant* and not a wife, but such relationships were not uncommon – the boy in *Épine* is the offspring of such a union. They were unstable though, which is the case here. Gurun is not entirely his own master and is vulnerable on two points. His vassals are concerned about the future of the fief and the fortunes of their overlord: the provision of an heir and the extension of the fief through marriage.

We may compare this with the more moralistic attitude taken in the *Roman de Galeran de Bretagne* which is based on the lay. Here the two lovers, Galeran and Fresne, are brought up together in the abbey by Galeran's aunt, the abbess, which obviates the necessity of the hero's gaining access to Fresne. And their relationship remains chaste. Thoughts in *Galeran* are always focused on marriage. Fresne's godfather, the chaplain Lohier offers her his savings so that she can find a husband; he does not consider it possible for her to marry Galeran.²¹

Je vous donray tout mon avoir,
Plus de cent mars d'esterlins blancs,
S'il est si haulx hons et si frans
Que espousee doiez estre.
Est ce nul homme de ceste estre,
Sergens, varlez ou escuiers?
– Sire, promesse ne loyers,
Ne rien qu'on me feist entendre
Ne me feroit ou cuer descendre
Voulemente que tel gent amasse;
Ne suis mie de cuer si basse
Com vous cuidez, ne si villaine

1570-81

She states quite firmly that Galeran is the man she loves and that

Dame seray de sa maison,
Sa femme et sa loyal espousee

1590-91

There is no question of this Fresne agreeing to be a concubine. Lohier is delighted at the

nature of Fresne's reply, which for him proves the nobility of her lineage, but he fears that this will be insufficient to satisfy Galeran's father, the duke of Brittany:

Mes de ce a le cuer amer,
N'il ne l'en puet avoir seür
Qu'elle ja puisse avoir l'eür
Que Galeran la voulsist prendre;
Car il ne voudrait si bas tendre,
Ou ses peres ni li lairoit.

1610-15

Indeed, there is considerable opposition when their love becomes known, particularly from the abbess.

In *Fresne* only one group appears worried by Gurun's bachelor state: the *chevaler fiufé* 314, distinguished from other sections of the household:

Li chevaler de la meisun
E li vadlet e li garçon

355-56

This distinction is probably due to two factors. The first is that it is stressed in the lay that those who know Fresne appreciate her. Obviously members of Gurun's household, including the *chevaler de la meisun* (probably dependent on seigneurial largesse) are in a better position than knights living on their own fiefs to realise her worth. The *chevaler fiufé*, minds unclouded by acquaintance, perceive her as a threat to Gurun and thence to themselves. This may be compared with the attitude of the vassals in *Galeran de Bretagne*, who declare

Ce puet nostre païs grever
Et ses parens et ses amys,
Quant il a si tout son cuer mis
En une garce povre estrange."

2932-35

In *Fresne* an informal alliance is considered unsatisfactory. Gurun should marry, and marry "une gentil femme" 317 at that. They want from him an heir:

Lié serei[en]t s'il eüst heir,
Quë après lui puïst aveir
Sa terë e sun heritage;

319-21

Failure to produce an heir is harmful:

Trop il avrei[en]t grant damage,
Si il laissast pur sa suinant
Que de espuse n'eüst enfant;

322-24

Fresne's existence prevents Gurun from marrying; she herself is unsuitable as a wife. They are prepared to use coercion if necessary to gain their objective:

Jamés pur seinur nel tendrunt
Ne volenters nel servirunt,
Si il ne fait lur volönté

325-27

The ability of vassals to influence the lord's choice of spouse when the lord was of full age was limited and it is highly improbable that it would have constituted a valid reason for the serious step of abandoning the lord. Bloch makes it clear that this contract could only be broken in the event of some dire insult, and normally blows were struck before a vassal could count himself free of the obligations imposed on him by the system.²² Nevertheless, the threat is substantial, sufficiently grave to explain why Gurun concedes the point without any appearance of great personal sorrow. The choice is stark: loss of Fresne or loss of power.

The vassals for their part have a candidate to propose whose attractions derive from her birth and certain concomitant advantages:

... 'ci pres de nus
Ad un produm, per est a vus;
Une fille ad, quë est suen heir:
Mut poëz tere od li aveir. 331-34

Birth and wealth; of known lineage and prospects; also beauty and the promise of fertility. Gurun leaves the arrangements to the knights after signifying his consent and it is apparent that very little sentiment^s is involved, as we might expect:

Cel mariage unt purchacié
E de tutes parz otrié. 343-44

The confession of Fresne's mother leads to her re-integration ^{- to} in society. Her father happily receives her (ll. 485-90) and having done so naturally gives her "par mi li part sun heritage" 508, the part of the family property that by custom belongs to her. Thus provided with a respectable background and with her rightful share of her parents' estate, there is no obstacle to her marriage with Gurun once the Church has solved the problems posed by Gurun's marriage to Codre. ~~Nor~~ is Codre forgotten:

Mut richement en lur cuntree
Fu puis la meschine donee. 513-14

This is only equitable after all. Codre still has a future, despite her halved fortune, even though she has to make a second "feudal" marriage. Marriage for love is not available to all.

In all the lays cited so far, third parties – individuals or groups – play a rôle in the formation of marriages and while it may be resented, it is accepted. To refuse a marriage desired by one's parents or feudal connections is not a realistic option unless there is some major change in one's circumstances eg. sudden widowhood or discovery of one's real identity. What then can the individual do when faced with the prospect of a disagreeable marriage? Is it possible to avoid?

In *Vair Palefroi* we have said the girl is assertive and her agreement derives only from her circumstances. As long as she is in her father's house, she accepts his decrees, but it is explicit that if she could escape, she would not hesitate to thwart him. However she does nothing active to avoid marriage eg. she complains that her father "... ne veut pas ce que je vueil" 387 but in fairness it must be remembered that she does not tell him what she wants. Neither does she herself make any plan to escape. However, once she realises that a sequence of outrageous coincidences – the fact that the wedding party, aged and befuddled by excess celebration believes it to be dawn when it is only the moon rising; the fact that her escort falls asleep and the palfrey's determination to take the path it knows – has enabled her to elude her escort's vigilance, she lets the horse have its head since

Mieus aime a morir el boscage
Que recevoir tel mariage. 1095-96

We should not underrate the force of this statement. The forest was notoriously perilous, and since few people in the Middle Ages were accustomed to being alone, the experience is doubly terrifying and her determination not to retreat the more praiseworthy. Once she is so fortuitously reunited with Guillaume she does not hesitate to marry him without the knowledge or consent of her father, and despite the fact that she has been officially betrothed to another man. This is the nearest instance in the lays to a clandestine marriage, although

this is not a totally accurate description of it since it is celebrated *in facie ecclesiae*. Unauthorised might be a preferable adjective.

The two most determined efforts to avoid marriage are to be found in *Deus Amanz* and *Doon*; both involve the use of a test to dispose of suitors.

In the former, as already stated, it is the father who wishes to prevent his daughter's marriage owing to his excessive love for the girl. He is reproached for this by his vassals – either because they object to the nature of his sentiments for her or because he is preventing the marriage of the heiress – and hence institutes the test. His daughter accepts his decision and refuses to contemplate any solution that by-passes the test:

Certes, tant l'eim e si l'ai chier,
Jeo nel vodreie curucier.

91-92

This does not mean she is prepared to submit herself to spinsterhood, simply that a way must be found to fulfil the conditions set by her father. This is achieved by procuring the strengthening potion from Salerno, undertaking a diet and dressing lightly for the ordeal itself. Her consent is mitigated; she intends to have her own way in the end.

In *Doon* we have a woman attempting to dispose of all suitors (permanently if necessary) on principle. Two reasons are given for her attitude: pride and fear of servitude:

La pucele dont je vos di,
por sa richesce s'orgueilli,
toz desdaignoit ceus du país.
N'en i ot nul de si haut pris
qu'ele vousist amer ne prendre,
ne se voloit metre en servage < ne de li fere a li entendre;
por achoison de mariage.

17-24

She is totally committed to remaining single, and although the author does not say how she manages it, those who do succeed die mysteriously during the night – there is a hint here of the lady's possible affiliation with a supernatural tradition.²³ Her feelings on the other hand when the corpses are discovered are quite open:

... cele en ert durement lie
por ce que d'eus estoit vengie

63-64

But as the author says, "ne pot remanoir ensi" 37. Eventually she is unable to ward off the evil moment any further, but she puts up a valiant and sustained defence and it is a pity that the author does not delve more deeply into his first insight into the nature of marriage.

Avoidance of marriage is difficult and depends on more or less supernatural means or the enjoyment of extensive power. For most people it is not an option. Two other imperatives are the provision of an heir and the extension of the lineage's wealth, the two being frequently connected.

The natural consequence of possession of land is to marry eg. in *Tydorel*

Li sires qui Bretagne tint
e rois fu par heritage
après plusors de son lignage,
en sa jovente, fame prist,

4-7

But the marriage remains barren, or at least until the intervention of the water-knight. It has been seen that Gurun's vassals want an heir (and the alternative reason is that he himself would be glad to have one). In *Yonec* it is the mainspring:

Pur ceo k'il ^{ot} bon heritage,

Femme prist pur enfanz aveir,
Quë après lui fuissent si heir.

18-20

As it turns out, this marriage, based on lust and the desire for an heir, is also barren, and Caerwent never has an heir (it presumably escheated to the overlord). Yonec inherits Muldumarec's kingdom as the abbot says

Ainz avum atendu meint jor
Un fiz que en la dame engendra,
Si cum il dist e cumanda.

522-24

His illegitimacy is no bar to his advancement. In *Tyolet* the girl voluntarily offers herself as a prize and Tyolet is able to win a kingdom. In *Conseil* marriage greatly increases the fortunes of the knight who wins the lady's heart, although here a fief is the prize, not a kingdom.

Recent history in England and Normandy provided authors and readers with a vivid picture of the dangers of a disputed succession. In the lays Guilliadun's situation is analagous to that of Eleanor of Aquitaine: a great prize for the man fortunate enough to capture her. In *Haveloc* it is repeatedly stressed that the hero is "dreiz eir ... de linage / Sur les Daneis par heritage" 49-50 and this determines the efforts of Grim to save him as a child and Sigar's pleasure in finding him:

"Seignur, pur co vus ai mandez
Ke Deus nus ad revisitez.
Veez ici nostre dreit eir.
Mult en devez grant joie aveir."

911-14

This concern is also present in *Equitan*.

The emphasis on the fief passing to the next generation should not blind us to the possibility that an heir might not be the equal of his parents, as Étienne de Fougères states (see Chapter III). In *Oiselet* this explains why the beautiful garden is in the hands of a villein who does not appreciate it. It was the creation of a knight, but subsequently

Après le pere l'ot li filz,
Qui le vendi a cel vilain.
Ainsi ala de main en main.
Bien savez que par mauvès oir
Dechiéent viles et manoir.

24-28

A similar complaint is found in *Urbain* (see Chapter III) with the additional information that the money obtained from the sale is used to finance a life of debauchery.

In *Haveloc* we have already seen how marriages can be used to enrich a guardian at the expense of a ward who cannot defend her rights. Argentille is obliged to resort to arms to win her kingdom back and Edelsi is eventually forced to cease his resistance:

Par le conseil de ses privez
Al rei Daneis s'est acordez,
Par fiance l'aseura
E salfs ostages li bailla,
Tote la tere li rendi
K'Achebrit tint quant il vesqui.

1091-92

Haveloc and Argentille seek only what is theirs, not territorial aggrandisement. Haveloc then acts in a perfectly normal feudal manner:

Des baruns recut les homages
Si lur rendi lur heritages

1097-98

He does this as Argentille's husband. But inheritance has a further rôle to play. Edelsi dies (doubtless of rage) and

Il n'ot nul eir si dreiturier
Cum Aveloc e sa muiller.
Li barun les unt receuz
E citez e chastels renduz;

1101-4

Haveloc is given precedence, but it is through Argentille that he comes to rule three kingdoms.

Inheritance is naturally linked to wealth. Codre is due to inherit her father's lands which increases her desirability as a wife. In *Vair Palefroi* the girl's potential wealth prevents a marriage she wants. Guillaume is not wealthy enough to satisfy her father. However, the girl is aware that this is a temporary condition because the rigid functioning of the system means that Guillaume is his uncle's heir:

Il n'a enfant, fame ne frere,
Ne nul plus prochain oir de vous.
Ce set on bien tout a estrous
Que tout ert vostre après sa fin;
Plus de soisante mars d'or fin
Vaut ses tresors avoec sa rente

408-13

Mention of wives in the first line quoted above reminds us that they were entitled to support from their late husband's estate even if they were not the heir. After Bisclavret's disappearance it is obvious that his wife inherits his fief, which is later restored to him by the king. This inevitability of the system enables Guillaume to make his request for a loan:

Trois cenz livrees de vo terre,
Je vous creanterai sanz guerre
Et fiancerai maintenant,
Ma main en la vostre tenant,
Que, lues que l'aurai espousee
Cele c'on m'a or refusee,
Que vous ravrez vo terre quite
Por guerredon et por merite;

467-74

The fact that Guillaume is ineluctably the heir makes this "conseil honest et sage" 454 easier to understand. He is simply borrowing what will be his anyway. It should be noted that this loan is only a ruse to overcome the father's mercenary inclinations. It will be returned once the lovers have gained his consent; they do not consider it essential to their future establishment as a couple. Both the father and the uncle are susceptible to the lure of increased riches, as we have seen is the case with the father. The girl complains of his avarice:

Quar mes pere aime couvoitise
Qui trop le semont et atise.

635-36

and makes the general point that wealth can prevent marriage:

Ja mes ne porra nus avoir
Fame qui soit haute ne riche,
Se granz avoires en lui ne nice.

638-40

She sees that marriage is restricted to those who already possess more than sufficient, evidence of the centralising tendency evident in the marriages of the nobility made to consolidate wealth (eg. The marriage of one of William Marshal's daughters to her cousin,

Gilbert de Clare, earl of Hereford and Gloucester, made to reunite the family lands split in an inheritance some years before). Guillaume is not penniless, but cannot match the father's possessions:

Mar acointai la grant ricoise
Dont vostre peres si se proise;
Mieus vous amaïsse a mains de pris,
Quar vostre pere eüst bien pris
En gré ce que je puis avoir,
S'il ne fust si riches d'avoir.

369-74

The girl wishes she could have less since it obstructs her desires, but for her, Guillaume's main attraction is not his economic status at all:

S'il contrepesast vo richece
Encontre vostre grant proece
Bien deüst graer le marchié;

383-85

In preferring Guillaume's intrinsic prowess, the girl gives the primacy, as Glyn S. Burgess says of *Milun*, to chivalric ideals.²⁴

As for the uncle, Huon later speaks of the girl's deliverance from a man

Qui en cuidot son bon avoir
Por son meuble et por son avoir

1239-40

It would be interesting to know at what point the uncle decides to plead his own cause rather than Guillaume's. When he leaves his house we have no reason to suspect that he will not keep faith with his nephew. Consequently his treachery seems unmotivated; he is not suddenly persuaded by her beauty to betray Guillaume and his sudden announcement that he wishes to marry the girl somewhat shocks the reader. In the end though natural events take their course:

Ainz le tiers ans, ce dist li contes,
Morut li anciens, sanz faille;
Tout son avoir li rent et baille;
Toute sa terre ot en baillie,
Qui molt ert riche et bien garnie.
Mil livrees tint bien de terre.
Aprés ala la mort requerre
Son oncle, qui molt estoit riches,
Et cil, qui n'estoit mie nices,
Ne de cuer povres ne frarins,
Ne blastengiers de ses voisins,
En tint la terre toute cuite

1328-39

As in *Haveloc* then, a young couple eventually inherits lands from relatives, this being what the feudal system promoted: the transfer of lands between generations with the minimum of fuss and uncertainty.

The use of marriage as a means to power, or at least to social elevation, is also evoked, but more briefly, in *Eliduc* and *Conseil*. The former has already been discussed; a medieval audience would readily have understood Guilliadun's predicament and appreciated Eliduc's timely intervention. He in fact makes much of Guilliadun's regal status and this is especially marked as he laments her "death":

Bele, ja fuissiez vus reïne,
Ne fust l'amur leale e fine
Dunt vus m'amastes læaument.

943-45

Oddly, Guilliadun never regains her place in England after her resurrection but remains in Brittany. Eliduc gains no territorial advantage through his marriage, Ille, who becomes Emperor of Rome when he marries Ganor); neither does he seek it. In *Conseil*, when the poor knight marries his rich love, the author refers approvingly to

... cel marriage,
Que lui et trestout son lignage
Amonta et tint a honor. –

831-33

Note that the benefits do not accrue to the bridegroom alone. We have only to contemplate the rise of the Marshals to appreciate just what a fortunate marriage could do for a family's position. When authors discuss the marriages of couples, wealth is an important issue. Perhaps the most blatant instance is found in *Fresne*, although Gurun does not seek the marriage. In *Doon* on the contrary the hero undertakes the test specifically to conquer the land. Tyolet also rises socially thanks to his wife, but there is no indication as to why he decides to hunt the stag. Certainly love for the girl is not in his thoughts. There is a hint in *Vair Palefroi* that Guillaume's attentions at the onset are not entirely altruistic. Huon devotes ll. 35-79 to a description of Guillaume's circumstances, dwelling on his relative poverty, and then continues

Li chevaliers adonc pensoit
A une amor vaillant et bele
D'une tres haute damoisele,

80-82

before divulging the existence of the old man and his daughter, which might indicate that in his mind love and money are not unconnected. However, given the depiction of love between the couple, it would be invidious to accuse Guillaume of fortune-hunting.

It is evident that in the lays the realities of marriage among the nobility are respected, although they are not necessarily liked. They form the background against which characters move. Deviations from the norm are uncommon and can cause great complications to men and women. However much trouble they may cause, they are rarely ignored. Respect for the conventions holds good, even if privately they are transgressed. The sentiments of characters who attempt to bend the system by asserting their own desires against those of family ties must also involve a discussion of the influence in the lays of the attitudes formed by the Church on which marriage was based.

As far as the formation of marriages is concerned, we have seen that the authority of parents is respected. No girl refuses to comply with her father's wishes although she may try to arrange matters to suit herself; this is clearly felt to be reasonable. Only in *Vair Palefroi* is there an effective alternative to accepting a father's decision, and it is based on substituting the power of the Church.

When the girl breaks away she places herself unreservedly in the hands of God: "la damoisele ne convoie / nus, se Dieus non;" 1052-53. Her reward is to be taken directly to Guillaume by the quickest route. The reunited lovers find themselves in the most favourable conditions, safe in Guillaume's manor, able to kiss for the first time (when no one is looking). They limit their transports though as Huon emphasises:

... molt bien asisier
Se sorent d'aus entrebesier;
Mes je vous dit qu'autre mesfet
A icele eure n'i ot fet.

1229-32

The feeling here seems to be that liberties before marriage, if not sinful, are not to be encouraged (an attitude that runs counter to the experience of couples in other lays). In any

case, this couple does not have long to wait, only a few hours before they can marry. Huon's description of the event is unusually full:

Dedenz sa cort est sa chapele,
Venir i fet la damoisele;
Son chapelain sanz arester
A fet maintenant apeler;
Li chevaliers sanz trestorner
Se fet maintenant espouser
Et par bon mariage ajoindre:
Ne sont pas legier a desjoindre.
Et quant la messe fu chantee,
Grant joie ont el palais menee
Serjant, puceles, escuier.

1243-53

This is a marriage celebrated *in facie ecclesiae* (see Chapter II). A priest officiates; it takes place in a consecrated building and a mass is said. There are apparently witnesses, Guillaume's household. The non-standard factor is the absence of paternal approbation and perhaps for this reason Huon insists on the legitimacy of the wedding itself: free consent expressed in the present and blessed by the Church. This stamp of approval compensates for the lack of paternal permission and

Graer covint le mariage
A l'ancien, vousist ou non,

1316-17

As Guillaume is well aware, it will not be possible in any case for the marriage to be dissolved. Just as important is Huon's comment on the essential rightness of the marriage:

Seignor, ainsi Damedieu plot
Que ces noces eurent estables,
Qui a Dieu furent couvenables.

1320-22

The alternative marriage would have lacked divine approval even if it had taken place. However, neither Guillaume nor the girl state any distinctly religious motivation for their actions, either in trying to gain the father's permission initially, or in going through the ceremony. What they seek, and what the Church gives, is unchallengeable legitimacy to their union.

The issue of consent is relevant in *Vair Palefroi*, as it is when the marriages of women, especially girls and heiresses, is concerned. We have already seen that girls are rarely called upon to signify their consent to marriages arranged for them and never express their dissatisfaction to their parents or guardians. In this sense they may be said to consent, but under constraint. In *Eliduc* and *Haveloc* there is more blatant use of force. Guiliadun is fortunate in escaping, but Argentille and Haveloc are forced into marriage after a pitched battle in Edelsi's counsel chamber. Nothing is said by the author of the marriage itself, so we cannot say whether or not a priest officiated. If so, he would have been colluding with Edelsi in an act of which the Church deeply disapproved. The validity of their marriage is therefore questionable. The author solves this predicament by having the spouses become reconciled to their situation:

Mes pus s'asseurere tant,
E de parole e de semblant,
Ke [c]il l'ama e od li jut
Cum od s'epuse fere dut.

391-94

They give consent after the fact, and this is confirmed by consummation. The author

expresses no point of view about the validity of forced marriage – neither does Marie, either with reference to *Eliduc* or to the more subtle constraints employed in *Fresne*. A degree of constraint is accepted by authors, reflecting the type of attitude expressed more directly by Étienne de Fougères. No author of lays expresses openly the view that use of force, moral or physical, is wrong in itself, although Gautier d'Arras does so in *Ille et Galeron* when referring to the attempts of Ganor's vassals to force her to marry²⁵

Grans pecciés est, si con moi samble
 De metre feme et ome ensamble
 Des que on set qu'ils s'entreheent.
 Grant peciét font, qui a ça beent.
 Tels ne het point al commencer
 Qui puis ne fine de tencier
 Et het sa feme mortelment
 Et ele lui tot ensemment,
 Ne pais ne bien n'ont puis entr'aus.

5340-48

In the lays authority is not seriously contested; this is true of feudal authority as well as that exercised by parents. The Church is seemingly uninvolved in these matters. No one thinks of seeking help from the clergy when faced with the prospect of an unwelcome match. *Fresne* shows the feudal establishment as having the determining influence on events – the archbishop being conveniently present to put matters beyond doubt. Even in *Vair Palefroi* the chaplain might be seen as carrying out the wishes of his lord rather than as insisting on the right of the girl not to be married against her wishes.

Consent was a question that greatly exercised the minds of lawyers and theologians. In the lays what is displayed is a more secular right; that of certain people to dispose of others in marriage according to certain principles. This right is not challenged and no one thinks of approaching the Church or one of its representatives as a means of upholding individual rights.

It is not inevitable that the first thoughts of a young couple are to marry. Certainly this is true of *Vair Palefroi* and also of *Deus Amanz* in which all the acts of the lovers (chaste in these lays) are directed towards securing recognition through matrimony. In other lays marriage concludes events, but only after a couple has enjoyed a relationship for some considerable time. This is so in *Fresne* and is no secret to anyone. In *Desiré* the relationship is concealed despite the birth of two children (not that *Desiré* is aware of his fatherhood), before it is regularly concluded. In this lay there is no apparent reason for the marriage not to take place immediately; why this is not so will be discussed in the following chapter. In *Épine* and *Milun* young couples eventually marry, though in the latter an adulterous relationship lasting twenty years intervenes between the start of the relationship and the conclusion of the lay. *Eliduc* also is of interest here since Guilliadun is unaware of the actual complexities of the situation. It will be noted that love is often expressed physically. Children are born in *Milun* and *Desiré*; the possibility is broached in *Fresne*. In *Vair Palefroi* love remains chaste because of simple lack of opportunity:

Je vous di bien, si l'une bouche
 Touchast a l'autre, molt fust douce
 De l'acointance de ces deus;
 Par estoit molt ardanz li feus,
 Qu'il ne pooit por riens estaindre;
 Quar, s'il se peüssent estraindre
 Et acoler e embrachier,

Et l'uns l'autre ses braz lacier
Entor les cols si coucement
Com volentez et pensement
Avaient e grant desirrier,
Nus hom ne les peüst irier,
Et fust lor joie auques parfete

201-13

However, when they are finally brought together, we have seen that they restrict themselves to acceptable manifestations of love, and indeed Huon does not suggest that their wishes go beyond this, perhaps because he wishes to remove any possible taint that might affect the validity of their marriage. In *Eliduc* the particular circumstances of the hero impose chastity on him, and Guilliadun is content to bide her time, at least initially. The lovers in *Deus Amanz* gamble on the probability that marriage will become possible. *Épine* is different in that it seems that only the queen's timely intervention prevents an escalation in the lovers' acts:

Icele qui riens ne douta
apries lui el lit se coucha,
.C. fois le baise par douçour.

87-89

No wonder the queen is so displeased. This raises two questions. One is the lack of guilt felt by lovers whose relationship is sexual and who are thus guilty of the sin of fornication. None suffers any pangs of conscience about this and it is never suggested that they should. In *Fresne* the vassals tax Gurun with dereliction of feudal duty but not with sins of the flesh. This will be treated more fully in the following chapter. More obvious and more feared is the punishment meted out by the family. The queen's reaction is instant and probably not untypical:

Mout fu dolante la roïne,
par le poing saisit la meschine
qu'ele laidist a cele fois,
apriés la mist en grant effrais,
e la tint en grant desepline,
mout sueffre painne la meschine

101-6

Punishment is directed only at the girl; the boy suffers vicariously:

Li damoisiaus remest dolens,
qant il oï les batemens,
la desepline e le casti
que sa mere fasoit por li.

...

De s'amie fu anguissous
e de l'uevre plus vergoignous;
de la cambre n'ose issir fors,
a duel faire livre sen cors.

107-18

He does not cut a very valiant figure in this episode. We cannot say why the boy enjoys indemnity. Perhaps it is because his stepmother has no authority over him; perhaps we see here evidence of a double standard of morality which gave males more freedom of action. The upshot is separation. Although the pair have previously been permitted great freedom, this is not interpreted as permitting sexual licence. In *Milun* matters are much further advanced. The couple have never shown any concern about their relationship and when the girl becomes pregnant her preoccupation is what will happen to her if the fact should become known, not with the pregnancy itself:

S'onur e sun bien ad perdu,
 Quant de tel fet s'est entremise;
 De li ert fait[e] grant justice:
 A glaive serat turmentee,
 [U] vendue en autre cuntree;

57-62

These are severe penalties, doubtless meted out by the family since we cannot suppose the Church was involved either in judicial torture or the sale of young girls. Possibly the question of who is to administer the punishment is less relevant than the certainty of its existence. Such regrets as she has are connected with this grim prospect rather than with the feeling that she has done anything wrong. If she can find a way to conceal the event, she has no regrets at all. She is successful in parrying this first threat to her well-being, employing Milun to take the child to her sister. It is not unreasonable after all that he should assist her in the matter, the more so since, as in *Épine*, there is no indication that he faces any retribution. It is interesting that the girl does not fear her sister's knowledge of her affairs. There is a certain sympathy here which older members of the lineage might not share. The second threat to the girl comes with her marriage to another man, something she had not anticipated. This again raises fears, this time of social derogation:

Ja ne sui jeo mie pucele;
 A tuz jurs mes serai ancele.

137-38

Her husband expects to marry a virgin, as all suppose her to be. How she parries this menace is not elucidated, but we must assume she succeeds as she does not suffer any greater degree of confinement than other women in Marie's *Lais* and she is not relegated to a menial position. Only in *Desiré* does anyone reveal sentiments of shame and they are not endorsed by events. *Desiré* is easily convinced by the lady that he has not sinned, so only the hermit can be said to view his actions as undesirable.

A similar attitude exists in lays in which one of the lovers is married (there are none where both are). Adultery automatically increases the need for secrecy since it could not be construed by any stretch of the imagination as permissible (cf. the concubinage in *Fresne*). This will be discussed at a later stage. Guilt about adultery is rare, or so we may judge from the scarcity of characters who propose that the fact that they are married debars them from loving. In *Milun* for example the lovers simply continue as before. Communication is more problematical, now effected by means of the swan, and meetings are infrequent, but neither renounces the other because of the marriage. Admittedly in this lay we are speaking of the continuation of an affair, but it is symptomatic of an attitude of mind that does not permit marriage to stand in the way of love. In *Yonec* the lady prays for love, which she does not enjoy with her husband, love which must come from outside marriage:

Mut ai sovent oï cunter
 Que l'em suleit jadis trover
 Aventures en cest païs,
 Ki rechatouent les pensis:
 Chevalers trovoënt gentes et beles,
 E dames truvoënt amanz
 Beaus e curteis, [pruz] e vaillanz,
 Si que blamees n'en esteient,
 Ne nul fors eles nes veeient.
 Si ceo peot estrë e ceo fu,
 Si unc a nul est avenu,
 Deu, ki de tut ad poësté,
 Il en face ma volenté!

é

91-104

Given this promise of rebellion, it is unlikely that she will reject a suitor simply because she is married. In *Ombre*, as we have seen, the lady takes the opposite view, offering the fact of marriage as an obstacle to her acceptance of any other man. She is no *mal-mariée*, seeking solace elsewhere. However, the knight does not accept her argument. In this, he echoes the conversation of the two nobles in Andreas Capellanus who debate at length the connection between love and marriage before receiving judgement from Marie de Champagne that the two are of their nature incompatible (see chapter III). In *De Amore* it is probable that the lady advances this point simply to permit Andreas to discuss it thoroughly. Certainly although the matter is settled, it gives rise to many other questions of interest, some of which are utilised in *Trot*. The Church and secular society would have agreed with the lady's words: that she should not love another man since her own husband is quite adequate. The knight ignores this reasoning just as it is dismissed in Andreas. Her husband is to be congratulated on his good fortune, declares the knight, but no one would blame the lady for taking a lover:

ainz feriez au siecle honeur
se vos me voliez amer – 502-3

Evidently he has to appeal to worldly doctrines, just as Equitan does; taking a lover cannot be construed as being pleasing to God (despite the evidence of the contrary in lays such as *Yonec*). But the knight finds redemptive value in the prospect of an affair:

a une voie d'outremer
porriez l'aumosne aatir!" 504-5

This displeases her, recalling Andreas' dictum that blasphemy – however mild – is to be deprecated in a lover. The fact of marriage certainly seems to be important to the lady, who later muses

Dont n'ai gë ore esté grant piece
o mon seignor sanz vilanie? 698-99

but at this point her sentiments are not engaged. Once she is definitively touched by the knight's gesture, such arguments cease to have any weight. They appear therefore as part of the debate, a position from which to offer rhetorical arguments which neither party accepts as conclusive or unanswerable.

If the lady's scruples are overcome fairly quickly, Eliduc is less easily convinced. Guilliadun, as mentioned, has no scruples about her actions and does not need them. She intends to marry Eliduc, believes this to be possible, and she and Eliduc practise what Andreas would term *amor purus* which does not harm her reputation. Eliduc's position is more complex because of the oath sworn to Guildeluëc:

Mes il l'aseürat de sei
Qu'il li porterat bone fei. 83-84

This might seem superfluous in the context of a happily married couple were it not for the fact that such vows are of little consequence in the lays. This additional reassurance, untainted by any element of pressure is perhaps required to explain Eliduc's continued fidelity, for it is to this oath that he later refers eg.

Mut se teneit a maubailli;
Kar a sa femme aveit premis,
Ainz qu'il turnast de sun país,
Quë il n'amereit si li nun. 462-65

The implication is surely that otherwise he would not have hesitated to accept Guilliadun's

love fully. As it is, he is in a dilemma. He loves Guilliadun and fears separation but

S'a m'amie esteie espusez,
Nel suff[e]reit crestientez

601-2

He cannot put his wife away and he cannot have two wives. Neither would he want two, for from the moment he sets eyes on Guilliadun his desires are centred entirely on her. This is the problem, apparently unsolvable. The answer depends on the readership accepting Guildeluëc's answer, namely that by taking the veil she frees Eliduc. Historically, this practice was not uncommon. It had been a standard device in the Merovingian and Carolingian times for dissolving irksome marriages, and had been approved at the Council of Verberie (see Chapter II). However, it was always contentious. The Council of Compiègne revoked the permission granted by Verberie. In 1072 the Council of Rouen declared that "Nullus, cujus velata fuerit, ipsa vivente nunquam aliam accipiat".²⁶ However, while the higher clergy, and especially the popes, protested vigorously, the practice continued. Anthime Fourrier notes at least six cases taking place between 1105 and 1177, all concerning people belonging to the higher nobility. Alexander III clarified the position by finally deciding that if a spouse entered the religious life after the betrothal but before consummation, the marriage could be annulled: "Verum post consensum legitimum de praesenti, licitum est alteri, altero etiam repugnante, eligere monasterium (sicut sancti quidam de nuptias vocati fuerunt) dummodo carnalis commixtio non intervenerit inter eos, et alteri remanenti (si continentiam servare noluit) licitum est ad secunda vota transire. Quia cum non fuissent una caro simul effecti, satis potest unus ad Deum transire et alter in saeculo remanere".²⁷ As Esmein stresses though, if the marriage had been consummated (and there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that this is not the case in *Eliduc*), the spouse who wished to enter religion required the consent of the other spouse. In this case the marriage still existed, and so it was not possible to form a second marriage and the spouse was exhorted to enter the cloister as well.²⁸ So when Guildeluëc decides to leave Eliduc, she requests permission from him:

Cungé li ad rové e quis
Que ele puisse de lui partir,
Nunein volt estre, Deu servir;

1122-24

she is initiating a process which was well known at the time, and was acceptable to the Church. What would have been less appreciated is her advice to Eliduc:

Cele prenge qu'il eime tant,
Kar n'est pas bien nē avenant
De deus espuses meintenir,
Ne la lei nel deit cunsentir.

1127-30

The Church would have deprecated this, but precedents certainly existed for such actions. In this lay Guildeluëc uses the Church to give Eliduc a chance of happiness in the world with his second wife. If she makes the sacrifice willingly, he is not slow to accept it and neither is Guilliadun. Equity is restored later with the conversion of the couple and their entry into religious life, the only truly satisfactory response to the type of triangular situation that exists in *Eliduc*.²⁹

It is rare for any comment to be made about the religious aspect of adultery. Eliduc, as we have seen, is concerned, although it is true to say he is equally worried about his feudal duties. However, even his scruples are overcome when he assents to an elopement. In *Eliduc* the spokesman of Christian orthodoxy is the sailor who very neatly summarises Eliduc's fault:

Femme leale espuse avez
E sur celë autre en menez
Cuntre Deu e cuntre la lei,
Cuntre dreiture e cuntre fei.

835-38

Dissent with his analysis is not possible, so why should he be killed? He proposes throwing Guilliadun overboard to relieve the ship of its guilty burden (although in strict logic Eliduc is the guilty party since he is married and has concealed the truth). This is bad enough, but his revelation is worse as it strips away Guilliadun's dreams and reduces her to a state akin to death, and it is this that makes Eliduc throw the sailor overboard. The unfortunate finds himself in the company of the *avouez* in *Milun* or *Equitan*: responsible for causing death, for which he pays with his own. That Eliduc brings the ship safely ashore is to be attributed to Marie's sympathy for a lover and the sense that once love has ceased to exist, God is under no necessity to uphold a marriage that has no *raison d'être*. But Guilliadun feels the disenchantment that knowledge has brought:

Peché ad fet k'il m'enginna:
Femme ot espuse; nel me dist
Në unques semblant ne m'en fist.
Quant de sa femme oï parler,
De duel kë oi m'estuet, paumer.
Vileinement descunseil]ee
M'ad en autre tere laissee;
Trahi[e] m'ad, ne sai quei deit.
Mut est fole quë humme creit.'

1076-84

There is no ambiguity. She knows that Eliduc has committed a sin and sees his marriage as an immutable fact. He has behaved, in her eyes, thoroughly dishonourably, leaving her unable to see a way forward. Luckily Guildeluëc retains the ability to think creatively. Her generosity is fully revealed by her insistence on taking the veil and so leaving the way clear for the lovers. The difficulties of such a course of action have been noted, but are obviously of little interest to Marie. It is interesting to compare Guildeluëc's reasons for founding an abbey with those initially expressed by Eliduc in the first flush of despair over Guilliadun's demise. She wishes to serve God; his motives are negative and even ignoble:

Le jur que jeo vus enfuirai
Ordre de moigne recevrai;
Sur vostre tumbre chescun jur
Feraï refreindre ma dolor.'

947-50

He seeks not the love of God, or to serve and pray, but to commemorate his own sorrow. It is moreover a course of action that disregards the legitimate interests of his wife, who is omitted from his thoughts. She enters religion in order to help her husband, little though he may deserve it.

Guildeluëc and Guilliadun both enter the abbey voluntarily. The Church can however serve as a repository for unwanted and superfluous women. Thus Edelsi's counsellors advise him to make the politically embarrassing *Argentille* a nun:

"[Or] fetes la loinz enveier
En Bretagne dela la mer
E a vos parenz comander,
Nonain seit en une abeie
Si serve Deu tote sa vie."

316-20

Once dead to the world for all practical purposes, Edelsi as her heir would enjoy unfettered

possession of her lands. It is a means to deprive her of her inheritance and nothing more that the vassals propose. Once more, it can be seen that Argentille is to be given no voice in her future, which is at the disposition of men. And as the Church apparently accepts her forced marriage to Cuaran/Haveloc, the vassals do not fear that either she or the Church will protest at an enforced vocation, which is the alternative. *Haveloc* demonstrates starkly what noblewomen could expect from life: Marriage or the cloister at the whim of their menfolk. That Argentille should rule alone is never contemplated by anyone, not even herself.

signif? That forcing a girl into a convent against her will ^{was a known problem} is indicated by the existence of the *chansons de nonne malgré elle* in which a young woman laments her fate as does the *mal-mariée*: "Ki nonne me fist, Jesus lou maldie", exclaims one of them. These nuns revenge themselves in the same way as unhappy wives; by taking a lover.³⁰

Eliduc has other difficulties of course, connected with his feudal duties. So does Equitan, and these will be discussed in the next chapter. What Marie never mentions in either lay is that marriage alone constitutes a reason for abstaining from pursuing a course of action considered sinful by the Church and disruptive by society. *Equitan* is one of the very few lays in which lovers are punished for their actions, not because Marie disapproves of a decent man like the seneschal being cuckolded, but because she dislikes the lovers' attempts to dispose of him. Nothing in *Equitan* permits us to believe that there is love between the seneschal and his wife; this is rare enough to merit a special mention which we do not have. For the lovers the difficulty is in integrating their love with their duties. *Equitan*, it is suggested, cannot refuse to marry forever. If he could marry his mistress though, all would be well:

Sacez de veir e si creez:
Si vostre sire fust finez,
Reïne e dame vus fereie;

225-27

The difficulty is of course that there is no immediate prospect of the seneschal dying, so there is no immediate prospect of a wedding. *Equitan* merely states a desire, tinged by wishful thinking. The lady takes it a step further:

u ... si de ceo l'as eürast
Que pur autre nē la lessast,
Hastivement purchacereit
A sun seignar que mort sereit;

231-41

This clearly points to intervention by the lady actively to procure the death of her husband which constitutes the impediment of *crimen*. *Equitan* then signifies his consent:

Ja cele rien ne li dirrat
Quē il ne face a sun poeir,
Turt a folie u a saveir;

238-40

This series of events: a promise of marriage exchanged between an adulterous couple together with an attempt to bring about the early demise of the legitimate spouse makes *Equitan* a text-book example of *crimen* and would have invalidated any subsequent marriage made by the pair. Not that this worries either of them. In the event matters never reach the point at which the principle might be tested. In seeking to conceal his infidelity, *Equitan* perishes in his own trap and the seneschal, realising the truth, metes out summary justice to his wife as custom permitted.

Bisclavret has certain affinities with *Equitan* in this respect. The marriage is specifically stated to be happy (not so in *Equitan*), yet a change comes about due not to love for someone

else but because of the lady's discovery of the truth of Bisclavret's periodic disappearances:

De poür fu tute vermeille;
De l'aventure se esfrea.
E[n] maint endroit se purpensa
Cum ele s'en puïst partir,
Ne voleit mes lez lui gisir.

99-103

At a critical moment love fails. A more helpful response might have been to ask whether anything could be done to break the cycle of metamorphoses. The reputation of the werewolf does not inspire great confidence:

Garualf, c[eo] est beste salvage:
Tant cum il est en cele rage,
Hummes devure, grant mal fait,
Es granz forez converse e vait

9-12

However, Bisclavret has always treated his wife well and as a wolf his behaviour is exemplary. He retains, as the king realises, "sen de hume" 153, which undermines the unflattering portrait Marie gives initially. The lady and her accomplice dispose of Bisclavret by forcing him to remain a wolf, "killing" the human part of him. After his disappearance

Asez fu quis e demandez,
Mes n'en porent mie trover;
Si lur estuit lesser ester

130-32

A search was required when a spouse vanished. After it has failed, nothing prevents the widow from marrying again. Indeed, since we may gather from later events that she has inherited the fief, there is every reason for her to seek an early remarriage in order to render the services due, and her knight is obviously able to carry them out. It is however, as the pair know, a bigamous marriage as Bisclavret is still alive, albeit in his lupine incarnation, and in a sense there is also a case of *crimen* since the lovers have conspired to rid themselves of Bisclavret.

On one level it is easy to understand the relationship between the lady and her second husband. She needs help to rid herself of Bisclavret and so seduces the knight. His sincerity has never been questioned. Marie relates

Que lungement l'aveit amee
E mult preié e mut requisite
E mut duné en sun servise –

104-6

He has acted in the past without expecting any recompense since

Ele ne l'aveit unc amé
Ne de s'amur aseüré –

107-8

This has led to the lady being accused of insincerity, of seeking only an accomplice when she writes to him

M'amur e mun cors vus otrei,
Vostre drue fetes de mei!

115-16

Marie makes it clear though that the lady has been deeply shocked by Bisclavret's revelations and her distress is very real. It is perhaps not so surprising that she turns to a man she knows to be devoted to her – and not a werewolf; neither is it surprising that he should agree to assist her and then to marry her. And he remains constant. After Bisclavret's restoration he voluntarily joins her in exile despite her mutilation. In this the marriage is recognised. No

attempt is made to force the lady to return to *Bisclavret*, to separate them or to oblige them to live out their days in penitence. Their lineage is even perpetuated: “enfanz en ad asés eüz” 309, although they share their mother’s mutilation. This procedure presents undeniable problems. We cannot suppose that *Bisclavret* would want to take his wife back, but the solution Marie imposes evades the difficulty by ignoring it. Society – feudal society, for the Church is not mentioned – validates the second relationship and presumably leaves *Bisclavret* free to re-marry should he wish.

Melion has some similarities with *Bisclavret* but is less satisfactory. Again, the marriage is happy and there are even children. *Melion*, as it turns out, is a voluntary werewolf who needs the assistance of an artefact to effect his transformation, and this ring would work on other people. Nothing explains why his wife should be so suddenly and violently overcome by the need for venison (ll. 147-48). Nothing indicates that she is revolted or scared by his transformation. Only her calm words and actions are reported:

“Or le laissons assés chacier.”
Montee est, plus ne se targa,
e l’escuier o lui mena.

190-92

Nothing suggests that the lady has already taken the squire as a lover or that this is her intention, though when *Melion* later encounters him she thinks of him as “celui ki sa feme enmena” 488 – a little unfair given the nature of the lady’s commands to her servant. The confusions are evident.

The punishments suggested for the wife are far more violent than in *Bisclavret*. Her father is for burning her, *Melion* for using his ring on her and it is only Arthur’s intervention that saves her:

... “Non ferés!
por vos beaus enfans le lairés.”

571-72

This is granted – a royal command – and *Melion* returns to Britain with the king:

sa feme en Yrlande laissa,
e deables l’a commandee;
jamais n’iert jor de li amee,
por ce qu’ele l’ot si bailli
con vos avés el conte oï;
ne le volt il onques reprendre,
ains le laissast ardoir u pendre.

580-86

Separation then, with no indication as to the future of either protagonist. What is striking in all three lays is that the Church, which alone had the power to dissolve a marriage, a power it upheld fiercely, is nowhere present, ^{not} even as the rubber stamp. Secular powers alone are mentioned and they alone appear able to take decisions and implement them on their own authority.

This is also so in *Guigemar*. It concludes with the hero finally gaining possession through arms of his beloved. *Meriadus* is killed and they are free to begin anew:

A grant joie s’amie en meine;
Ore ad trespassee sa peine.

881-82

But what form is this relationship to take? *Meriadus* may be dead, but what of the lady’s husband across the sea? Absence never permitted remarriage in Marie’s time unless there was a reasonable cause to assume death, and this does not exist here. Are we to accept that Marie was endorsing a bigamous marriage? *Guigemar* has been pressed to marry, we remember, has

won in battle a woman he loves and who has completed the task he has imposed for any prospective bride, and marriage would be the natural conclusion, were it not for the existence of the husband. We have to suppose either that Guigemar does not intend to marry or that Marie has once again decided to ignore the problem, treating it as though it did not exist, or that she considered the marriage to be void. If this is so, it is in her estimation only. Alternatively, she is satisfied simply to reunite the lovers and prepared to leave the future to others.

In the lays, concern about adultery is connected more with social niceties than with a sense of guilt. As a recompense for an unsatisfactory marriage it is the normal response. In *Tydorel* for example the flaw is childlessness. Aid comes not from the Church as it does in *Desiré*, but from the Otherworld, and unexpectedly. There are hints in the lay of the latent violence of this Otherworld. The knight has the power to compel the queen's actions and is responsible for the death of the unfortunate man who discovers his affair with the queen. Tydorel himself is feared by the goldsmith and does not scruple to attack his own mother. This aura of menace may be related to the similar legend of Robert le Diable, son of the Devil himself, which has many parallels with that of Tydorel. As in *Yonec* the father prophesies the birth of children; Tydorel with his disturbing gifts and a daughter to continue the line:

.II. filz avra preuz e vaillanz

...
e si ravront assez anfanz,
mes par lignage dormiront
molt mieux que autre gent ne font.
De ceus istra li quens Alains,
e puis après ses filz Conains."

137-48

However, this prophecy is made before the commencement of the relationship rather than at its end. Yonec's destiny is to avenge his father and comfort his mother. Tydorel's official father is delighted to have an heir; we must suppose this is also the case in *Yonec* since it was for this reason the *avouez* married. The queen is totally content with her situation, presumably having the joy the knight promised her. She expresses no objections to taking a lover despite her happy marriage. Muldumarec's lady fears only disclosure:

Meüz voil ensemble od vus murir
Que od mun seignur peine souffrir.
S'a lui revois, il me ocira.'

411-12

This is circumvented by the ring of forgetfulness. For a time at least, in both lays, women live happily with their lovers without the authors feeling the necessity of explaining or apologising for their infringements of conjugal obligations. In fact, in *Yonec* they are praised — the author's sympathies are with the *mal mariée* in her predicament. What matters is to protect lovers, as far as possible, from the consequences of their actions should they become known.

This attitude prevails in *Laiüstic* as well. The *bachelor* has wooed the lady who finally accepts him. The lovers lead a pleasant enough life

Fors tant k'il ne poëent venir
Del tut ensemble a lur pleisir;

47-48

The precise nature of their relationship, whether chaste or unchaste, has been disputed, especially in the light of the couplet

Delit aveient al veer,

Quant plus ne poient avoir.

77-78

This has been taken as meaning that the lovers were never able to meet and had to content themselves with looking, or that they were occasionally able to meet.³¹ Certainly the lady is more closely guarded when the knight is present. What is more important about this is that it reveals that the husband is already suspicious and his wife's constant watch at the window does little to allay his fears. When the husband captures the nightingale, the lady realises that her ruse has been discovered and the bird's death prevents her from having any further contact with the knight:

Ne purrai mes la nuit lever
Ne aler a la fenestre ester,
U jeo suil mun ami veer.

127-29

The knight's reaction suggests that he understands and concurs. Discovery automatically brings about a cessation of the manifestations of love although love itself may survive, symbolised by the casket and the embroidery. *Laüstic* is a melancholy lay, expressing little hope of happiness in the world.

Épervier is quite different although the initial premise is the same as *Laüstic*'s: two men are companions; one of them marries. In this lay however the husband's jealousy is misplaced and is the cause of his own downfall, for as the author remarks of the illicit love affair

Ja se desfendi ne lor fust,
Put estre entr'eus amor n'eust;

82-84

In the analagous tales from the *Disciplina Clericalis* and *Chastoiement* the affair also exists when the tale opens and they are intended to teach a lesson about female perfidy and infidelity. In *Épervier* this is not so; the situation is light and amusing and the lady's jeopardy, doubled by the need to preserve her credit vis-à-vis her lover as well as her husband as a result of the squire's importunate wooing.

The reactions of Ventilas and the lady when faced with imminent discovery by the husband are sharply differentiated. Ventilas despairs:

"Dame," dist il, "que porrons fère?
Ne sai a quel chief puissons trère.
Je ne sai nul conseil de nos;
De moi ne me chaut fors de vos.

147-50

He can afford to despair; he faces lesser penalties than the lady. She is more inventive and extracts both from a situation more embarrassing than even Ventilas suspects. The husband's reactions on seeing Ventilas leave are only to be expected after his impetuous act in banning him from his home. We note though that he makes no attempt to stop Ventilas although he is armed, preferring instead to tackle his wife:

Quand il vit qu'alez s'en estoit,
A sa fame vint lors tot droit,
L'espee trète, toz irez:
"Par le cuer beu! or i morrez!"

171-74

His attack on his wife places him more in the tradition of the cuckolded husband of the *fabliaux*, beating his wife, or Étienne de Fougère's *bourgeois* tethering an erring wife in the stable than in the tradition of the hero of romance. Luckily for the lady, so is her ability to make a fool of her spouse. And she succeeds in winning her husband's approbation for protecting the squire, because this shows Ventilas in a poor light; Ventilas wins a valuable

hawk from his former friend and everyone is satisfied.

The consequences of discovery, potentially tragic, are also turned aside in *Nabaret*. Here the husband suspects and objects to his wife's elegance:

e dit ke n'esteit pur lui,
ke ententë ot vers autrui. 19-20

Believing this to be the case, he punishes her several times and finally resorts to a type of domestic trial:

de ses parenz plusurs manda;
la plainte lur mustra e dit,
a sa femme parler les fit.
Parenz manda ço ke desplout,
ke durement li enuiout
k'ele se demonot issi. 26-31

His expectation is that the kinsmen will be able to compel the lady to conform to his wishes. He is unsuccessful; when the lady replies to the charges she turns him into a figure of ridicule:

Ço li dites, ke jo li mand
k'il face crestre sa barbe grant
e ses gemuns face trescher:
issi se dedit gelus venger." 37-40

The precise meaning of this barb is disputed and certainly it lacks the immediacy it once possessed.³² However, the effect is obvious. Nabaret suffers the indignity of seeing himself labelled a *gelus* and becomes the laughing-stock of the district, the butt of a lay composed "pur le deduit de la parole" 45. The joke is so good that everyone should be able to share it. Nabaret resembles in this the low-born but wealthy men of the *fabliaux* who marry above their station and prove incapable of controlling their wives (eg. the stories of *Berenger au long cul*). However, Nabaret is himself a knight of high degree and the conclusion we draw is that nobles too have their domestic crises and are not immune from mockery.

Trials of this variety are evoked in other lays as well. Guildeluëc voluntarily offers to undergo one. Concerned by Eliduc's coldness she asks him

S'il ot oï de nule gent
Que ele eüst mesfet u mespris,
Tant cum il fu hors del païs;
Volenters s'en esdrescera
Devant sa gent, quand li plarra. 722-26

"Nent ne vus ret / De mesprisun ne de mesfet" 728, replies Eliduc – the boot is on the other foot – and Guildeluëc is not obliged to defend herself. This seems to be the fate Fresne's mother fears:

Mis sire e tut si parentez,
Certes, jamés ne me crerrunt,
Desque ceste aventure orrunt; 77-79

Mere suspicion brings unmerited hardship on her neighbour and it is in order to avoid a similar fate that the lady decides to murder one of her embarrassing twins.

Discovery always precipitates a crisis, fairly naturally, but the results are not identical. In *Laüstic* it causes the end of an affair but no other punishment. Bisclavret's wife suffers mutilation and exile; in *Guigemar* the husband is advised by one of his men to imprison his

wife closely. In some cases retribution may fall on the discoverer as well. In *Tydorel* for instance the love affair ends as the knight had predicted:

– Longuement nos entrameron,
desi qu'aparceü seron. 111-12

as soon as the lovers are found, by a man who had no suspicions of the fact and had no idea of what he was going to find when he went to ask the queen for aid. Despite his lack of malice, the consequences of his discovery are fatal:

E cil amaladi le jor
e empoira de sa dolor,
l'endemain a l'eure fina
que il les vit e esgarda. 215-18

For Muldumarec the result of discovery is death. The husband is neither duped by the lovers, nor does he vacillate, swift to plan his revenge. But this causes the husband's own death years later. Both Muldumarec and the lady believe the husband to be in the wrong; as she says to Yonec

C'est vostre pere que ici gist,
Que cest villarz a tort ocist. 529-30

"A tort": events and the author bear out her interpretation. Yonec kills his stepfather – in an abbey, in the presence of many clergymen – and is promptly acclaimed king in Muldumarec's place.

In *Equitan* on the contrary it is the adulterers who perish. The king leaps into the bath "pur sa vileinie covrir" 294, attempting to conceal his tracks. The seneschal after all expects to bathe with the king. It is the choice of cauldron that is so unfortunate, but accidental. We do not believe that guilt forces him to take on himself the fate planned for the seneschal. The latter's actions are deliberate. Seeing what has happened to *Equitan* we must assume he draws the correct conclusions and takes revenge:

Sa femme prent demeintenant,
El bain la met la chief avant 303-4

It is laudable in *Equitan* to exact vengeance on a faithless wife and to fulfil the proverb

Tel purcace le mal d'autrui
Dunt le mals [tut] revert sur lui 309-10

Why is this acceptable, when in *Yonec* the husband – who, like the seneschal was protecting his own interests – is killed with the approbation of all present? Probably because he and the lovers in *Equitan* have one thing in common: they intend murder. Marie is generally indulgent towards sinners, but resolutely sets herself against murder.

The most gruesome example of discovery and vengeance however is in *Ignoure*. The agent through whom discovery is effected is a *losengier* 378 with an established reputation, as the husbands know:

Bien sai de coi tu t'entremis:
Auchun mesdit [nos] apparelles." 394-95

He is a paid informer who expects and receives a reward for his efforts (ll. 402-3; l. 446). In view of his information he wisely extracts a promise of indemnity from the men before making the revelation "D'un seul homme estes tout huihot!" 412. Their reaction is predictable:

De mautalent chascun fremirent
Car chou est vilains reproviers.

416-17

This is based on two factors: the *honte* 448 they experience and fears for their futures if the insult passes unavenged:

– “De cest chastel auront dangier
Se nous ne nous poons vengier:
Dont sommes nous enfin recreant.”

449-51

The lead in this enterprise is taken by the husband whose wife Ignaure has chosen – an honour he does not appreciate. Capturing Ignaure is easy as he now lacks the safety he previously found in numbers and “... aloit

spouse

trop souvent, / A s’amie, pour son deduit”

478-79. We note that in an

attempt to limit knowledge of the shameful event, the capture is made by the chief acting with those he can trust (like Eliduc). True to form, Ignaure attempts to talk his way out of his predicament:

spouse

“Durement sui vers vous mesfais:
N’i vaut escondis ne celers.”

496-97

but his audience this time has no reason to be mollified. Their quest is to decide what form vengeance should take, and their decision rather distasteful:

... [prendons] le vassal
Tout le daerrain membre aval
Dont li delis lor soloit plaire,
Si en fache on un mangier faire;
Le cuer avoec nous meterons.

541-45

Renaus describes gleefully the ladies’ reaction to their meal

[Chascune ot le cuer asasé,
Tant qu’eles en ont mise arriere
Douche saveur et bonne et biele.]

554-56

Ignaure is an extravagant work and Renaus exaggerates as a matter of course. In the *Châtelain de Couci* for example the husband comes accidentally into possession of the embalmed heart of the lover which he serves to his wife. Apprised of the content of her meal, the Dame de Fayel promptly dies of chagrin. Renaus has his ladies die, but they punish their husbands. True, some retribution is expected, but the view expressed is that the husbands have gone too far: “Trop se sont cruelement vengié / Li jalous...” 600-1. The peers may be said to fail since the mass suicide of their wives by hunger strike gives them ample time to compose a lay extolling *Ignaure*, which surely completes the discomfiture of their spouses.

So far, discovery has been attended by dire consequences, but this is not inevitable. *Cor* and *Mantel* both revolve round the question of fidelity in love and marriage but utilise comedy. The differences lie in the tone and attitude of the authors. In Robert Biket’s lay, the whole court greets the messenger and is aware that his gift is not without its perils: “que gré ne l’en sachez” 135. The horn’s chief property is only discovered after the messenger’s precipitate departure, and it is something the chaplain, apparently the only literate person present, would like to conceal from everyone:

Que ja houn n’i bevra
Taunt soit sages ne fous,
S’il est cous ne gelous,
Ne ki nule femme heit

Qui heit fol pensé feit
Vers autre kë a lui.
Ja li corns a celui
Beivre ne soffira
Mes sour lui espaundra
Ceo k'oun i avra mis.

232-41

The test is designed for married men, but female infidelity alone is not an issue. The men's behaviour is also relevant. This amuses the *puceles* of the court:

... 'Ore ui verrez
Les gelous esprovez.
Hui verrez les gelous,
Les suffrauns e les cous.'

277-80

The reactions of the men reveal that most harbour doubts about their chances:

Ounk n'i out si leal
Qui ne brounsa[s]t aval.
Meime la reine
En tint la teste encline,
E treitout li baroun
Entour e enviroun
Qui les femmes avaient
Dout se rencon[oi]ss[oient].

265-72

There is no certainty of success here, and the court does not acquit itself gloriously. Arthur attacks Guinevere and has to be restrained by Yvain and Girflet. Yvain's attitude towards female frailty reveals a certain indulgence (but there is no indication in this lay of Yvain's being married, so he can afford it):

'Ne seiez si vilains,
Kar n'i est femme nee
[Quei que soit espousee
Qui n'eyt pensé folie!

307-10

Arthur is rebuked, albeit gently, for taking no account of this. Not that Guinevere needs much assistance. She believes in attack as the best form of defence, denying the imputation of infidelity and accusing Arthur of jealousy over a gift she quite reasonably made to retain and reward a knight (ll. 323-56), after which she demands vengeance on Maugounz de Moraine:

Mout m'ad cil fest grant hounte
Qui ceste corn enveia,
Ounkes dame n'ama.

368-70

She then enunciates as a general principle that

Mout par fet grant outrage
Dame de haut parage,
Quant ele ad bon mari,
Qui d'autre fest ami.

391-94

What this implies for those not of high degree and those whose husbands do not meet the standard is left unsaid. But if ladies are enjoined not to take lovers, husbands are advised not to enquire too closely into their wives' behaviour:

Ja a fraunc chevaler
Ne deüst oum bailler
Icest corn a tenir
Pur sa mulier honir.'

407-10

Again, honour is linked to disclosure. As long as there is no revelation there is no shame. However, it is not in Arthur's interests to be the only man openly disgraced: "Ja soul n'i aurai honte!" 414, insisting that those present should also attempt to drink from the horn. Their failure restores his good humour, to the point where he can forgive Guinevere, while the barons come to share her interpretation of the test. As for Garadue (Caradoc), the eventual victor, he remains calm under pressure and not unduly concerned by the consequences of failure. In any case, his wife reassures him, particularising Guinevere's more general comment

Ne prendroie a seingnor
 Houme taunt soit puissaunt,
 S'il estoit amiraunt,
 Pur vous lesser, ami;

526-29

and also praising fidelity (without Guinevere's reservations):

... checune femele
 Deüst estre turtrele,
 Pus ke male prendra
 Jammés autre n'avra.
 Iceo deit dame fere
 Si ele est deboneire.'

533-38

Reassured, Garadue triumphantly drains the horn and is rewarded for his wife's fidelity with the fief of Cirencester for himself and his children, while his wife receives the horn. Love bestows concrete benefits on the couple.

Cor is a light-hearted work, and Robert Biket claims to know many such jests. There is no occasion for bad feeling. All are aware of the horn's nature and are suitably aware of the human frailty which is, they suspect, going to make success difficult to achieve. Blame can be attributed to both sexes and no distinction is made between those who drink from the horn. Spilled wine is spilled wine. No one is humiliated – Arthur is certainly angry at his failure and his attack on Guinevere is vicious, but he is condemned for it and his wrath evaporates when it becomes obvious he is not alone. He can be generous to the victors and the reader is left feeling that the court has recovered its collective composure.

Mantel is much gloomier in tone. There is a certain irritability present from the start, underlined by the knights' hunger and Arthur's unwillingness to eat until he learns of some adventure. The messenger seems the answer to this impasse, even though it is predicted that his tidings will not please everyone (ll.148-51). The *fée's* gift has one very specific property which is revealed to the men only (the sexes are, so it seems, dining apart):

...Ja dame qui l'ait afublé,
 Se ele a de riens meserré
 Vers son seignor, se ele l'a,
 Li manteaus bien ni li serra;
 Ne aus puceles autresi:
 Cele qui vers son bon ami
 Avra mespris en nul endreit,
 Ja puis ne li serra a dreit,
 Que ne seit trop lonc o trop cort.

202-11

Moreover, the messenger insists on the nature of the mantle remaining unknown to the ladies:

"Facies le mantel afubler,
 "Et si ne direz ces noveles
 "Aus dames et aus dameiseles

218-20

Gifts of clothing were much appreciated, and given the beauty and richness of the cloak, the women are eager to try it on. The men are, to begin with, sanguine about the test: "Ci a don bel / Et mout regnable a demander" 226-27 declares Gauvain. They are certain of success, even when knights have witnessed failures. Kei, making an unusual appearance as a lover, is totally confident that Androëte will succeed:

"Oiant ces chevaliers me vant,
"Vos le poez bien afubler.
"N'i avez compaigne ne per
"De leiauté ne de valor. 386-89

Yvain is equally cocksure:

"Bele," fait il, "icist manteaus
"Deut estre vostres par reson;
"Nus ne set en vos acheison
"Que vos nou deiez bien avoir. 500-3

Only Guivret advises caution:

"N'afichiez mie si vos diz
"Devant que vos aiez veü
"Comment il li'n iert avenu." 505-8

The ladies, once they know the cloak's properties, rightly fear their approaching ordeal:

Quant les dames ont entendu
Coment li manteaus fu teissu[z]
Et l'uevre que la fée i fist,
N'i a cele qui ne vousist
Estre a honor en sa contrée:
Quar n'i a dame si osée
Ne dameisele qui l'ost prendre. 357-61

and the reluctance is repeatedly stressed as the ladies are asked to don the mantle eg. Androëte's words to Kei:

"Sire", fait el, "s'il vos pleüst,
"Je vousisse qu'autre l'eüst
"Afublé premerainement,
"Quar je vei ceenz plus de cent
"[Dont] nule ne l'ose afubler. 393-97

An additional humiliation imposed on the women is the fact that unlike the horn the cloak differentiates between those who wear it. On Androëte for example

... li manteaus plus acorça:
Aus jarrez [vint], neiant avant;
Et li dui acor de devant
Ne porent les genouz passer. 410-13

On Venelas, Gauvain's *amie*,

Derriere li atteint a terre,
Si que pié li traïna;
Li destres acorz se leva
Si que le genoil descovri,
Et li senestres se fomi,
Tot entor[z] a l'autre mantel 466-71

This property is discovered when Guinevere and the *amie* of Tor, who are the same height,

try it. Yvain's *amie* suffers similar humiliation. When Perceval's love tries, it falls off completely.

These distinctions are enhanced by the running commentary provided by the knights eager to avenge their own deceptions, led by Kei, the court's traditional malcontent. He compares Guinevere favourably (just) with Tor's *amie*:

"... plus leiaus n'est vos mie,
"Mes mains a en vos tricherie." 325-26

He is even more explicit about Venelas:

"Or vos en dirai mon avis.
"La dameisele o le cler vis
"Out la destre jambe levée,
"Si fu desuz cele corbée,
"Et l'autre remest en estant.
"Et si crei je que en [glaçant]
"Li avint ce a un trespas.
"Ensi seut en lever les dras
"A tel besoigne que je dii." 481-89

This wealth of physical detail is also present in his mocking words to Yder:

"Vos cuidiez jehui saveir
"Le leiauté qui en li ert:
"Mal est coverz cui li culs pert!
"Or vos en dirai la maniere:
"El se fait cengler par derriere,
"Si com li manteaus nos devise." 660-65

Guvret also fulfils the rôle of commentator, vying with Kei as far as detail goes (ll. 526-33). As for the women, they are led fuming and humiliated by Kei to a bench. Unlike *Cor* none attempts to turn the blame elsewhere, but given the terms of the test, this would not be possible. As for the men, there is a certain comfort in common adversity. Gauvain remarks that at least "Li uns ne puet l'autre gaber" 710. Kei also waxes philosophical:

"Veritez est qu'il fait mains maus
"Por ce que mainz bons chevaliers
"Est de cest mesfait parçoniers,
"Et mout en a aillors que ci." 730-33

What he has touched on is the fact that the women alone cannot be guilty; they require partners – but masculine infidelity is not an issue. The court's atmosphere is fairly sultry by this point. Arthur, disgruntled in spite of the mild nature of Guinevere's indiscretion, would like to call a halt while everyone eats; Girflet would like to stop altogether, believing enough damage has been done to the ladies:

"Volez les vos plus que honir?
"Quant eles ci mantel veient
"Eles creantent et otreient,
"Oiant seignors, oiant amis,
"Qu'eles ont mesfait et mespris;
"Volez les vos chacier avant?" 604-9

but the messenger insists on everyone trying. Caradoc, the eventual victor, maintains a stolid silence during proceedings. His *amie* is not present and he is content with this. For him, ignorance is bliss:

... s'ele eüst de riens mesfait
Il n'en queüst oïr le plait
Que il n'en perdist son solaz.

794-97

As he says, "... qui sa bone amie pert / Mout a perdu..." 814-15. The understanding is that knowledge of infidelity automatically ends a relationship, which is why Caradoc would rather not know. Kei disagrees:

"Et cil qui pert sa desloial
"Dont ne deit il estre mout liez?"

820-21

This does not bode well for his future with Androëte.

Summoned by Girflet, the lady reveals a quality of modesty, unwilling to claim any superiority to those who have already failed and unwilling to try the cloak without Caradoc's permission, which he has to give – public opinion will not allow him alone to escape. But the lady succeeds, and two pieces of information are revealed. The messenger makes it known that Arthur's court is not the first that has tried the test and she is the only successful candidate. It is right that she should have the cloak. Gauvain praises the justice of the gift but concludes wryly that "... li plusor en sont dolent" 881. Victory brings no pleasure to the court which remains thoroughly ill-tempered. Caradoc and his lady soon leave it, unrewarded by Arthur.

In the formation of marriages the preceding analysis shows that the lays reflect feudal practice with fidelity. Control is vested in those who enjoy security and prestige, mostly male heads of lineages, able to select wives both for themselves and for women in their lineages. Men are less subject to this form of influence; however they cannot avoid pressures emanating from their feudal connections any more than women can. Marriages are arranged with due regard paid to the niceties of rank and wealth, and possibly the beauty of a future spouse. To avoid such a marriage requires determination and luck and characters generally conform to expectations even though resentment may be fierce.

In such a system emotion can easily play a secondary rôle, and reference to affection between spouses is not common, particularly when marriages which are not the main focus of the author's attention are concerned. In *Desiré* for example it is said of the husband's relationship with his wife that "asez l'amot" 18 – hardly an encomium, but unusual enough to merit attention since nothing is confided in *Épine*, *Guigemar*, or *Fresne* of the state of conjugal affections. In *Haveloc* Gunter is seemingly unconcerned with his wife's welfare. It may be simply of course that authors, basically interested in other matters, did not think it relevant to delve further into these marriages and so ignored them. In other lays there is no such indifference, but here we are concerned with more important characters. In *Yonec* there is anger:

Malëeit seient mi parent
E li autre communalment
Ki a cest gelus me donerent
E a sun cors me marierent!

81-84

exclaims the lady, contemplating what for her is both a solace and revenge, taking a lover. Guigemar's lady sums up her spouse succinctly:

Riches hum est de haut parage,
Mes mut par est de grant eage;
Anguissusement est gelus.

341-43

Muldumarec's lady is equally unflattering about her aged and jealous spouse and in *Conseil*

the husband is dismissed as a “baron mauues et niche” 790. Here we perceive from the start that, as in *Yonec*, the lady has decided to seek consolation elsewhere. The picture is not encouraging, but other lays reveal more reason to feel optimistic about the personal experience of marriage. In *Deus Amanz* we may infer the existence of love between the king and his wife, which is later focused on the daughter. The couple in *Tydorel* are content: - why?

molt la chieri e ennora,
e ele durement l'ama.
Onques ne fu jalous de li
e cele onques nu deservi. 11-14

There is understanding in *Bisclavret*: “Il amot li e ele lui” 23: in *Eliduc*:

Ensemble furent lungement,
Mut s'entr'amerent læaument; 11-12
in *Épervier*:

Ses sire ot vers li grant amor,
Por sa biauté, por sa valor; 41-42

In *Melion* events begin well:

A grant richoise l'espousa,
e molt grant joie en demena;
...
.III. ans le tint en grant chierté,
.II. fiex en ot en ces .III. ans,
molt par en fu lies e joians. 127-32

In *Ombre* the lady actually expresses satisfaction with her situation:

... “n'est pas droiz
que j'ainme vos nē autrē home,
que j'ai mon seignor molt preudome
qui molt me sert bien et enneure.” 492-95

And yet all of these marriages may be said to fail. In each case one spouse, the wife (except *Eliduc*) eventually takes a lover. In *Melion*, *Eliduc* and *Bisclavret* marriages are destroyed, although in the last two new couples are formed. In *Tydorel* and *Épervier* the marriages remain undisturbed but there is long-standing adultery. Failure is not the result of the same cause. Some are rebellious from the start; the fear of *Bisclavret*'s wife; the sudden and unexpected love *Eliduc* feels for *Guilliadun*; contrariness in *Épervier* and an unexplained and unmotivated change in *Melion* are not strictly comparable.

Marriage then does not appear terribly attractive. And yet it is eagerly sought (not by everyone, it is true). As *Guinevere* admonishes *Alexander* and *Soredamors*,

Par mariage et par enor
Vos antraconpaigniez ansamble.
Einsi porra, si con moi sanble,
Vostre amors longuement durer. 2304-7

It is evident that some authors of lays shared this conception. There is no indication that any of them conceived love and marriage as being fundamentally incompatible, as does *Andreas Capellanus*. Some couples therefore want to marry, either from the onset of their relationship, as in *Vair Palefroi*, *Deus Amanz* and perhaps *Épine*, or as a logical culmination of a relationship, as in *Desiré*, *Milun*, *Conseil*, *Fresne*, possibly *Guigemar*. This sentiment exists despite the existence of impediments, and is particularly marked in *Equitan* and *Eliduc*. There

is no indication that authors took seriously the Church's imprecations forbidding the marriage of couples who had committed adultery, or that they believed the nature of love would change in any way, which Andreas certainly does. Neither do authors take the view that a lover is a necessity. What marriage means is that love can be seen to exist and may be freely endorsed by the community – not the case if love is illicit or marginal. Such stability is praised as a basis for a life in the community: Glyn S. Burgess writes of the *Lais* (and the remark is applicable to other authors) that Marie's "... concern is manifestly to create for them, where possible, a successful marriage as a basis for harmony in personal and social relationships"³³. This is far more satisfactory than the existence of unhappy wives and marauding young men in search of a chance of establishing themselves.

A successful marriage depends on the suitability of the spouse, in terms of rank, age, beauty, and all-importantly on the one element that cannot be calculated and which is not subject to external pressure: love. Such contentment is not easily obtained; the system did not encourage displays of individual choice, and Dafydd Evans comments that "a happy marriage would appear to be the rarest of possibilities, the result of a chain of coincidences and the reward for self-sacrifice"³⁴. There is much truth in this. One thinks of Fresne and Guildeluëc, ready to surrender their own happiness to the well-being of their men, or of Guillaume, prepared to offer his one valuable possession, his horse, so that his *amie* may ride in style to her wedding with another man. We should not forget that sometimes plans go awry, in *Deus Amanz* for example, or in *Equitan*, because there is a flaw either in one of the lovers or in the nature of their plans. Neither can we forget the improbabilities that aid lovers: Guigemar's wonderful ship; the magic knots that preserve him and his *amie*, the fortuitous deaths of husbands (*Conseil* and *Milun*); the discovery of true identities (*Haveloc* and *Fresne*); the unexpected sagacity of a horse; the bending of canon law, to mention but a few. Dafydd Evans sees magic as a compensation for "... the incompatibility of love with the feudal concept of marriage" which can be overcome in what he terms the 'wish-fulfilment romance' through adventure, the supernatural (and the intervention of God) which brings about "a reconciliation between personal desire and social exigency". However, as he notes, the improbability of the solutions betrays their unreality.³⁵ For who could count on the sudden arrival of a discreet lover, a trained animal to relay messages, magical gifts that might enable lovers to overcome the obstacles between themselves and legitimacy? Few indeed, and for the vast majority of the audience the lays might have been a powerful compensation for actuality, but no threat to reality.

The stance taken in the lays indicates a critical attitude, but it is not directed on the whole at the existence of marriage itself or even necessarily at the control exerted by those who derive their authority from their seniority within a family or from their position within the Church. Criticism – which certainly exists – is directed by individuals against those they feel to be immediately responsible for their unhappiness rather than against the functioning of an institution that permits such abuses. Neither, in the lays, do characters protest openly to those who possess power (as did Christina of Markyate). Private lamentation is more prevalent than public protest. What happens is that those who are dissatisfied exact vengeance by stealth, by creating for themselves a private world in which they find the happiness denied in society. They have no reservations about taking a course of action contrary to social and religious norms. It is recognised that this is dangerous, hence the need for discretion and self-control. Retribution comes from the community rather than from the Church; "social guilt" rather than "religious sin"³⁶ is likely to influence the behaviour of lovers, who specifically do not fear

see Equator

punishment from God, who supports lovers against doctrines expounded in His name, so it is not surprising that there is no sense of moral outrage in the lays (cf. the sentiments expressed by Étienne de Fougères, or the indignation of Denis Piramus). Society is less forgiving and more alert, far more likely to persecute its erring members. In this respect, Fresne's mother is right to suspect that her temporal punishment will be severe. Authors then are rarely critical of love or lovers and will support them in what society would consider deviant behaviour. This does not mean they permit lovers to please themselves at the expense of others, but they are accorded rights that conflict with social expectations.

In conclusion then, the lays are faithful to the realities of marriage. Children respect their parents' wishes; lords and vassals conform to expectations and so authority is respected. Individuals may protest privately but rarely consider rebellion or withdrawal as viable alternatives. The Church's presence is more subdued. It appears occasionally to make decisions about a marriage or to authenticate a couple's legitimacy and so give them a place in the community. It does not oppose those who approach it for this purpose even when the proposed marriage leaves much to be desired by the Church's own standards. What is less orthodox is the criticism expressed by characters who demand personal happiness in a relationship and who will pursue it even at risk to their own lives.

10. *Les Lais de Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

11. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

12. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

13. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

14. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

15. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

16. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

17. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

18. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

19. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

20. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

21. *Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by J. Langlois, Paris, 1904.

Notes.

1. Georges Gougenheim, "Étude stylistique sur quelques termes désignant des personnes dans le Vair Palefroi" in *Mélanges de philologie romane offerts à M. Karl Michaëlsson par ses amis et ses élèves* (Göteborg 1952) pp. 190-97; esp. pp. 196-97.
2. See Tobler-Lommatzsch vol VII col. 1862; l. 38.
3. As we have seen the nobility was becoming more homogenous in its outlook at this time. What mattered was to be of noble birth. See Tony Hunt, "The Emergence of the Knight in France and England 1000-1200", *FMLS* 17 (1981) pp. 93-114.
4. Glyn S. Burgess, "Chivalry and Prowess in the 'Lais' of Marie de France" *FS* 37 (1983) pp. 129-42; p. 130.
5. T. Hunt, op. cit. p. 94.
6. G. Burgess, op. cit. p. 131.
7. For a detailed discussion on the terms used to refer to women, see A. Grisay, G. Lavis, M. Dubois-Stasse, *Les Dénominations de la femme dans les anciens textes littéraires français* (Liège 1969).
8. Claude Buridant, *André le Chapelain. Traité de l'amour courtois* (Paris 1974), p. 54. ?
9. For more information on the relationship of *Trot* and *De Amore* see E.M. Grimes, "Le Lay du Trot" *RR* 26 (1935) pp. 313-21; W.A. Neilsen, "The Purgatory of Cruel Beauties", *Rom* 29 (1909) pp. 85-93; Alfred Karnein, "The Mythological Origin of the 'Lai du Trot' and its Arthurian Superstructure" *BBSIA* 24 (1972). Summary only.
10. Lucien Foulet ed. *Jean Renart (Renaus) Galeran de Bretagne, roman du xiii. siècle* (Paris 1925).
11. George Duby, *Guillaume le Maréchal ou le meilleur chevalier du monde* (Paris 1984), p. 160.
12. Paul Meyer, ed. *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* (Paris 1901) 3 vols.; vol. I pp. 30-344 give extensive details of William's career as a landless knight.
13. Claude Buridant, *André le Chapelain. Traité de l'amour courtois* (Paris 1974), p. 144.
14. Dietmar Rieger, "Évasion et conscience des problèmes dans les 'Lais' de Marie de France" *SpMod* 12 (1979) pp. 49-69; pp. 59-60.
15. Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, "L'Enfant dans les 'Lais' de Marie de France" in *L'Enfant au moyen âge (Senefiance 9)* (Aix-en-Provence and Paris 1980) pp. 299-313. The author believes that Marie accords respect to children but that childhood is less interesting to her than adult preoccupations.
16. N. Denholm-Young, "The Tournament in the 13th Century" in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke* (Oxford 1948) pp. 240-64.
17. An illegitimate child could be legitimated by the subsequent marriage of its parents provided they would have been free to marry at the time of its conception. A marriage contracted by one of the parents to a third party between the birth of such a child and their eventual marriage did not impede legitimisation. The marriage alone was sufficient to do this but they were often present at the ceremony. It will be appreciated that these conditions are precisely fulfilled in *Milun* and *Desiré*. For further information on mantle-children, see A. Esmein, *Le Mariage en droit canonique* (Paris 1891) 2 vols., vol. II pp. 29-44.
18. G.S. Burgess op. cit. pp. 132-33.
19. G. Duby, op. cit. p. 160.
20. W.W. Skeat ed. *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*. 2nd ed. rev. K. Sisam (Oxford 1967).
21. Lucien Foulet ed. *Galeran de Bretagne. Roman du xiii. siècle* (Paris 1925).

22. M. Bloch, *La Société féodale* (Paris 1982) pp. 320-23.
23. See Prudence Tobin, *Les Lais anonymes des xiie et xiiie. siècles* (Geneva 1976) pp. 319-24.
24. G.S. Burgess, op. cit. pp. 142 fn. 9.
25. F.A.G. Cowper ed. *Ille et Galeron par Gautier d'Arras* (Paris 1956).
26. See Anthime Fourier, *Le Courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au moyen âge* (Paris 1960) pp. 299-300; note 417.
27. A. Esmein, op. cit. vol. I., p. 130.
28. A. Esmein, op. cit. vol. I., pp. 130-33; see also the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* vol. I (Paris 1923) cols. 718-19.
29. In the analogous *Ille et Galeron*, Ille does not love Ganor until freed to do so when Galeron enters a convent after the birth of a daughter which has endangered her life. Only then does he fall in love and marry her (although he had been on the point of doing so earlier from duty). Ganor and Galeron are never rivals and Ille is never torn by thoughts of conflicting loyalties. Similarly in the later prose romance *Gillion de Trasignyes* Gillion discovers his wife Dame Marie is still alive (he has falsely been informed of her death) when he has just married the Saracen princess Gracienne. As *Gillion* is more insistent on Christian values, this presents the trio with a delicate problem of conscience, resolved by the renunciation of both women: "Sire, ce dist la dame de Trasignyes, puis que ainsi est que vous dist, que cest dame avez espousee et que par elle avez eu sauve la vie, ja dieu ne plaise que jamais avec vous jaye actouchement ne compaignie. Ains me voudray rendre au plaisir de nostre seigneur en une abbaye de nonnains et tout le temps de ma vie prieray dieu pour vous. Dame, ce dis Gracyenne, ja dieu ne plaise, que ja jour de ma vie vous face tort de vostre loyal seigneur. Si furent les dames tout dun consentement et dun accord que toutes deux le lendemain se rendirent et misdrent a servir dieu en labbaye de Lolive ou elles demourent tout le temps de leur vie sans enyssidre. Et dautrepart Gillion de Trasignyes par le consentement du conte de Haynnau et des barons depparti en donna a ses deux enfans toutes ses terres et seigneuries. Puis se parti de Trasignyes et sen ala a labbaye de Cambroy servir nostre seigneur..."
- O.L.B. Wolff ed. *Histoire de Gillion de Trasignyes et de Dame Marie sa femme* (Leipzig 1839) pp. 212-14. The triple renunciation avoids the injustices and practical problems of Marie's solution in *Eliduc*. The ladies predecease Gillion, who builds a tomb for all three of them before he sets out to the East to fulfil an earlier promise to Gracienne's father to aid him in his wars. In this respect also, Gillion is a revised and improved version of *Eliduc*.
30. D. Evans, op. cit. p. 164. It has been generally remarked that Marie's tolerance of illicit love is notable, especially if the woman is a *mal-mariée*, but there are limits she will not pass. As Dafydd Evans notes "The complacent acceptance of adultery is not sustained when confronted with lack of *mesure* and with the unjustified disloyalty that goes to the lengths of plotting misery and murder in *Bisclavret* and *Equitan*".
31. See Robert D. Cottrell "Le Lai de Laüstic: From Physicality to Spirituality" in *P.Q.* 47, (1968), pp. 499-505.

32. G. Schoepperle, "The Old French 'Lai de Nabaret'", *RR* 13 (1922) pp. 285-91 shows that at the time *Nabaret* was composed, beards were out of fashion and were worn only by the elderly and venerable. She sees Nabaret as a man who wants to retain the appearance of youth while still lecturing his elegant wife whose words are interpreted as "If you disapprove so much of being in the fashion, go and look like a doddering old patriarch yourself. Don't expect *me* to" p. 219. P. Skarup, "Le lai de Nabaret" *Rev R* 8 (1973) p. 271 interprets the retort differently, seeing it as a call by the woman to the husband to make himself more elegant. P. Tobin op. cit. pp. 360-62 opts for the first solution. It is interesting to note that the sense of the barb seems to have become obscure fairly rapidly. There is a mistake in the Norwegian translation at this point.
33. G.S. Burgess, op. cit. p. 132.
34. D. Evans, "Wishfulfilment: the Social Function and Classification of French Romances" in *Court and Poet* ed. Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool 1981), pp. 129-35.
35. D. Evans, op. cit. note 36; p. 132.
36. D. Evans, op. cit. p. 132. *p. 132* *writing we need page ref.!*

5. Love in the Lays.

We have seen that in the lays marriage is not something that can be lightly undertaken and is subject to numerous restrictions which deny the individual control of his or her own destiny. Society considered this to be a reasonable restriction, conducive to the peaceful ordering of life in general. The effects on the individual were of secondary importance, but we cannot doubt that they were resented. This resentment must have been worsened by a new factor in the equation:

“... the irruption into this leisured society of a new factor, heterosexual love, which this young élite came to consider essential to round off the character of the young nobleman and noblewoman, and yet for which there was, historically, no socially acceptable place”.¹

In Chapter 3 it has been shown how various authors responded to the challenge of integrating love into society through acceptance of love in marriage, rejection of the doctrine that love and marriage derive from differing authorities. From the discussion on adultery in the lays, we can appreciate that such considerations also preoccupied those who wrote the lays. In most lays it is related how a couple met, fell in love, the vicissitudes they faced and the eventual outcome, tragic or triumphant. This may be reduced to skeletal dimensions e.g. in *Tyolet* the author is chiefly interested in his hero's acquisition of knightly status and proof of his worth; marriage completes his integration into noble society but it is scarcely possible to speak of love being relevant. *Haveloc* is more of a chronicle, relating how dispossessed heirs regain their rightful places, but here the author finds a place, however minuscule, for love. It is because Haveloc and Argentille rapidly come to love each other that Argentille is able to perceive the flame that sets her on the road to discovery of her husband's true identity, even though this is mentioned very briefly, and Haveloc's spirited defence of his wife brings him to the attention of the one man in a position to ensure his restoration. In other lays love is the pivot of the action. *Guigemar*, *Graelent*, *Tydorel*, *Laüstic* and many others would have little interest were it not for love. And in some lays there is very little but love. *Ombre* for example is a prolonged courtship conversation, *Amours* traces the anguished musings of a couple through their first meeting, admission of love, separation and subsequent literary outpourings. *Conseil* consists almost entirely, as the title indicates, of information essential to the correct conduct of a love affair and its theological basis. *Trot* warns of the perils of rejecting love while *Lecheor* provides a welcome counterbalance with its cynical analysis of motivation in love.

Many passages from the lays show an interest in love as a subject in its own right. Of the briefer examples, we may consider Graelent's opinions. These are particularly interesting as the author chooses to put a lengthy apology of love into Graelent's mouth (ll. 73-106; the lay is 732 lines long). This retards the progression of the narrative, is irrelevant, especially in the

light of his later behaviour, and is absent from the analogous tales of *Lanval* and *Guingamor*. The author seems to have thought the lay a suitable vehicle for such an exposition (a view shared by the author of *Oiselet*, who takes an overtly Christian line).

Graelent is serious about love:

d'amors tenir n'est mie *gas*.
Cil doit estre de mout grant pris
qui s'entremet qu'il soit amis, 74-6

and on these grounds has excluded himself: "ne m'en os entremetre" (l. 106). Many talk of love, but few understand what is involved:

Amors demande caasté
en fais, en dis e en pensé. 83-4

The need for mutuality in love is stressed and an authority cited:

Tulles, qui parla d'amistié,
dist assés bien en son ditie
que veut amis, ce veu l'amie,
dont est boine la conpaignie;

s'ele le veut e il l'otroit,
dont est la druerie a droit;
puisque li uns l'autre desdit,
ni a d'amors fors c'un despit. 93-100

There is nothing unusual in these statements. Andreas makes the same points in *De Amore* after all (see Chapter 3). It is more uncommon to find an authority given, whoever "Tulles" may be,² but it is not unique. Marie de France cited Priscian, although not about love, and Henri employs the same stratagem in *Aristote*³:

Or vueil une demande faire
En cest dit et en cest affaire,
Dont ge trai Chaton a garant,
Qui fait l'autorité parant,
Car bons clers fu et sages hoim:

Turpe est doctori cum culpa redarguit ipsum.

Chato dit, et cist vers le glose,
Que quant hom est repris de chose
Com u blasmee a faire autrui
Puis qu'il i a mal et anui,
C'est vilonnie, et qui ce fait
Son sens amenuise et desfait. 517-27

Henri, a good cleric himself, provides his own gloss to the verse, which Graelent does not, and it provides a conclusion to the tale of Aristote, and therefore fits into the lay. Graelent's words seem superfluous. They reinforce his desirability in the queen's eyes, but she had already decided to take a lover in any event. Graelent singularly fails to follow his own precepts, which might lead us to conclude that his initial analysis is correct; he is not worthy of love, but this irony escapes the author.

Guigemar is notoriously impervious to love despite many opportunities and generally held to be a lost cause by all who know him (ll. 67-8). This indifference is a major flaw. According to Marie, love is an inherent part of life, described through its effects:

Ceo est un mal que lunges tient,
Pur ceo que de nature vient.

Gui. 485-86

This increases Guigemar's plight since his inability to love comes from the same source

De tant i out mespris nature
Kë unc de nul'amur n'out cure.

57-8

Consequently it requires the intervention of the supernatural to remedy the fault. Other knights do not suffer from this "natural" flaw. Melion for instance voluntarily takes a vow that excludes him from loving except under certain very restricted conditions; Guingamor has never loved before, but this is chance (ll. 494-96). In *Ombre* the knight is on the contrary an experienced seducer:

De maintes s'en estoit parti
son cuer, que nule n'en amoit;

134-35

Like Guigemar, he is forced to love by a power acting independently:

? → Amors, qui est et dame et mestre,
en ce point li corut seur,
quë ele en velt estre au deseur,
et si veut avoir le treü
du grant deduit qu'il ot eü
de maint dame en son aage.

112-18

Love demands tribute, Jean Renart says, and distinguishes between elegant dalliance (nevertheless it is acceptable) and love. The knight goes so far as to identify love with divine power:

Or velt Dex par cesti vengier
celes qui m'ont seules amé.
Certes, mar ai desaamé!

154-56

God and Love are not seen as separate entities, even though the knight's target is married.

Not to love reduces the reputation and worth of a person. When this knight confesses to the lady that he has not loved before, she is astonished:

"Certes, sire, je ne croi mie
que si biaux hon soit sanz amie
con vos estes; nus nu creroit.
Vostre pris en abesseroit,
et si en variez molt mains –

371-75

Seen in this light, we can understand better the seriousness of Guigemar's plight, and Guinevere's accusation to Lanval (ll. 277-82) seems more plausible than the bitter words of a disappointed woman.⁴ Public disquiet is the fate of those who do not conform to the expectation.

What is more, under certain circumstances, society is prepared to make its displeasure at uncourtly conduct painfully clear to the offender. Melion finds this out, making a vow at a court feast:

Il dist: Ja n'amerait pucele
que tant seroit gentil ne bele,
que nul autre home eüst amé,
ne que de nul eüst parlé.

19-22

Melion seeks exclusivity and absoluteness in love, which is not in itself unworthy. In the lays, love tends to these qualities, but in this, it may clash with what society expects, i.e. that nobles should love. In demanding such high standards from women before he is prepared even to consider them, the ladies of the court think Melion has overstepped the bounds of acceptability:

Celes ki es canbres estoient
et ki la roïne servoient,
dont il en i ot plus de cent,
en ont tenu .I. parlement:
dient jamais ne l'ameront,
n'encontrent lui ne parleront,
dame nel voloit regarder,
ne pucelë a lui parler.

29-36

This recalls irresistably the courts of ladies who render judgement in *De Amore*. For this insult, for so the vow is perceived, Melion is deprived of the court's company. The punishment is effective in one sense; Melion certainly suffers, losing his desire to distinguish himself and becoming generally depressed. From this unhappy state he is rescued by Arthur's grant of a fief away from the court, and by the discovery of a woman who claims to fit his demands. There is no doubt however that by placing himself apart from his peers by demanding too much, Melion is made to feel the court's intense disapprobation.

Some, as we know, do not love, normally because they have yet to meet their destined partner – in *Guigemar* it is implicit in the hind's prophecy that such a woman exists. Others are wilful and negligent, and for them the consequences of disdain can be painful. Guigemar has to undergo penance for his indifference, but emerges triumphant. In *Trot* the penalties are eternal. Those who refuse love are condemned to dress in rags, ride on broken-down nags and suffer permanent winter:

Sor eles tonoit e negoit,
e si grant orage faisoit
que nus ne le peust endurer
fors seulement de l'esgarder
la grant paine ne la dolor
qu'eles sueffrent e nuit e jor.

187-92

This results from their disdain:

ce sont celes, ce sachiés bien,
c'ainc por Amor ne fisent rien;
ne ainc ne daignierent amer.

265-67

These women (and the men accompanying them) could have loved but did not. They made a deliberate choice and pay dearly for it. Moreover, pity would be misplaced:

... ce sachiés molt bien de fi
qu'eles l'avoient deservi, 157-58

They merit their suffering. Some of course are incapable of love, or of appreciating it, like the villein in *Oiselet*, but the lays have little to say on the class basis of love, unlike Andreas or Guillaume de Lorris. It is obvious that some characters are opposed to certain manifestations of love, e.g. those who report on illicit love to their masters. Others do not comprehend love, as Graelent says,

Tel .VC. parolent d'amor,
n'en sevent pas le pior tor,
ne que est loiax drueries.
Ains lor ragë e lor folie,
perece, wisseuse e faintise
empire amor en mainte guise. 77-82

Why this should be, he does not reveal, but these people are in a position to do much harm to lovers. *Conseil* provides a specific instance of this factor applied to women who are the object of gallantry:

Et li mesdisant qui ce voient
Li ont mout tost a mal tome,
S'en dit chascun sa volente:
Li uns dit qu'ele n'est pas sage,
Li autres la tient a volage,
Li tiers dist qu'ele est noveliere,
Li quars la tesmoigne a doubliere.
Ainsi en dient lor bufois
Cil qui ne seuent pas .ii. nois
du siecle, ainz vivent d'aventure. 294-303

This recalls Robert de Blois's strictures on the misapprehension of courtesy (see Chapter 3).

It is however a part of noble life. Marie does not feel it unreasonable that Guigemar should be the centre of amorous attentions; Jean Renart does not condemn his knight for his previous gallantries. In *Ignare* the priestess, expounding on the qualities she and her companion possess, concludes quite naturally that

N'i a cheli n'aint par amurs,
Et molt est envoisiés cis jours. 85-6

The question they pose themselves is not whether or not they should love – on this, their decision is already made – but “li quele aime plus hautement” (l. 94), with the obvious implication that it is possible on rational grounds to establish a hierarchy among lovers. In *Conseil* the lady is more inexperienced, seeking advice on her suitors “li quels doit estre miex amez” (l. 42), which also implies the use of rational criteria. In both lays love is seen as a suitable topic of entertainment, as the lady in *Conseil* says:

Et nous avons mout bon loisir
De festoier enuers amors 226-27

Love's place as part of aristocratic life is stressed in *Oiselet* and it is this that sets it apart from the didactic tradition of the *Disciplina Clericalis* and *Chastoiement d'un père à son fils*. The author inserts praise of love intimately connected with the virtues most valued by the nobility e.g.

Mes sens, cortoisie et honor
Et leauté maintient amor, 153-54

The bird is unique in the lays in explicitly linking love and nobility and excluding those of low birth. Thus he is contemptuous of the use the villein makes of the orchard he has purchased:

Or m'ot cil vilains plains d'envie,
Qui mieus aime assez le denier
Qu'il ne face le desnoier.
Puis que mon chant li est faillis,
Est il au covoitier sougis 174-78

Not only does he have base preoccupations – gluttony and avarice – but he is constitutionally incapable of appreciating the song. The bird is most indignant about this:

Cil me soloient escouter
Por deduire et por mieus amer,
Et por lor cors mieus rehaitier.
Et cis i vient por mieus mengier! 179-82

The villein has supplanted those who have the right to enter the orchard

Ci me soloient escouter
Clerc et dames et chevalier,
Qui la fontaine avoient chier,
Qui plus longuement en vivoient
Et mieus par amors en amoient,
Si en fesoient les largueces,
Les cortoisies, les proeces,
Maintenoient chevalerie. 166-73

This aristocratic colouring is maintained in *Trot* in which the description of the pleasures enjoyed by Love's faithful servants includes talk of love and chivalry:

Entr'eus n'en avoit point d'envie,
car cascuns i avoit s'amie,
si se deduisoit sans anui,
ces a celui, cele a cestui;
li un baisent, li autre acolent,
e de tex i a ki parolent
d'amors e de chevalerie.
La ot molt delitouse vie. 127-34

There is then a pre-disposition in the lays to accept love as an integral part of life notwithstanding the dangers this may involve. This is evident from the eagerness with which love is sought. Andreas believed that no one could love unless impelled to do so by Love itself.⁵ This force is easily recognised. In *Ombre* the knight admits that he has never loved, but once Love intervenes to exact tribute, he acts on the principle that “qui ne trueve ne

prent" (l. 184) and sets off to win the lady if he can. Guigemar's situation is similar. His destiny is announced to him and does not sound very promising:

N'avras tu jamés garisun
De la plaie ke as en la quisse,
De s[i] ke cele te guarisse
Ki souffera pur tue amur
Issi grant peine e tel dolur
Ke unkes femme taunt ne suffri;
E tu ref[e]ras taunt pur li,
Dunt tut cil s'esmerveillerunt
Ki aiment e amé avrunt
U ki pois amerunt après.

112-21

This forced awareness obliges Guigemar to make practical plans. He has no wish to die but also knows he loves no one in his own country (ll. 129-32). Therefore he must seek love elsewhere.

*circular
argument*

→ Given this interest, it is not surprising to find love itself as the subject of lays. Girarz praises his own material:

Mes s'onques fu d'amors biau dit,
Je devroie d'amors biau dire:
Car j'en ai si bele matire
Conme ot nus plus.

4-7

Girarz is not detailing the progress of his own love affair, but according to his own words he is faithfully following that made by his patron who wants a record of his courtship. In *Conseil* and *Ignare* the personal element is greater. Renaus is entirely happy with his lot:

Sachiés que par ceste caïne
La u la dame velt me mainne.
Molt sui en tres douche prison,
Issir n'en quier par raenchon.

653-56

The knight who composed *Conseil* is less fortunate, unable to follow his own highly rational advice, and not apparently enjoying much success:

Mes mout se puet esmerueillier
Que il ne se set conseillier
D'une amor dont il est surpris,
Ainz dit qu'il est autressi pris
Con cil qui en la bee maint.
Or prions dieu que il l'amaint
A droit port et a droit passage,
Qu'en la fin se tiegne por sage.

861-68

This type of statement is not confined to the lays, it exists, for example, in *Le Bel Inconnu* and for Dafydd Evans "the dramatized narrator speaking in the first person and claiming, naturally, to have undertaken his romance for his lady"⁶ demonstrates the centrality of love and marriage to 'courtly romance'.

But if the lays are favourable to love, what can be said of its nature? Is it constant or do authors have differing conceptions, and how are these related to other theories current at the

time?

The commonest type of relationship is one in which a man and a woman freely choose each other and seek to enjoy their love within the confines of their own particular situation in society. Love is exclusive; loving one person, it is impossible to love another. In this the prejudice^s of the times are observed. However, whereas Andreas held that only one love was possible at any given time, and debarred spouses from loving, the lays differ in that very often the reader knows that the wife dislikes her husband already and there is no question of her loving him. The question of loving two men is consequently irrelevant. In other lays it is made clear that one love ceases before another begins; this is so in *Bisclavret* and *Eliduc*. Only in *Chaitivel* and *Ignoure* is there any possibility of a plurality of loves.

Mogical

The exclusivity of love is expounded in various lays. When Alixandre is upbraided for neglecting his men "por l'amor d'une seule fame" (l. 144), he replies

"Quantes en i couient il donques?
Ge croi que cil n'amerent onques
Qui fol m'en vorroient clamer,
C'on n'en peut c'une seule amer,
Ne n'en doit par droit plaie qu'une.
Et qui de ce home rancune
Qu'il maint la ou ses cuers li rueve,
Petit d'amor dedenz lui trueve!"

147-54

It is not said why the barons object so much to this affair apart from the aspect of negligence, and Aristote is not proposing that Alixandre should remedy matters by setting up a harem. It is the exclusivity of the relationship that annoys him. In *Ombre* the knight abandons his numerous mistresses once true love intervenes:

Or li estuet ageter puer
toutes les autres por cestui.

123-33

Not that he is unwilling; indeed he sees the necessity of changing his ways:

... or set il sanz doute et voit
qu'il li covient tot mestre ensemble
por ceste servir, ...

136-38

This rule of singularity in love is elucidated by the knight in *Conseil*. The lady's problem is to select one of her three suitors; it is never hinted that it would be desirable to take all of them. The learned knight is very firm about the importance of mutuality:

S'il est .I. hon costumiers
D'amer et n'aint qu'en .I. seul leu,
Quant il ont tant loisir et leu,
Entr'aus .II. doit estre tout .I.,
Solaz et ioie de commun,
Sanz contredit, sanz couverture,
Ce commande amors et droiture.

686-92

Evidently he disapproves of deviations from this ideal, warning the lady of "l'escharmir d'amor" (l. 240), which signifies

... cil qui prie
Par tout sanz talent ou il vient,
Et l'endemain ne l'en souient,
Ainz samble que c'ait este songes,

242-45

The austere theoretician does not approve of such flirting. This parallels Andreas's strictures on the same subject (see Chapter 3). This does not mean that a woman cannot be loved by more than one man at a time – Andreas also says this – but at this point, ^{the knight} becomes, as is his wont, excessively diffuse, launching into a long digression (ll. 253-353). He relates that a lady may be courted in different ways by different men, and this leads to confusion:

Qu'en puet ele, s'ele a espoir
Que chascuns l'aint, puis qu'il l'en proie
Et d'amors li moustre la voie?

282-84

This is precisely the situation the lady finds herself in. Naturally, the knight continues, she will show more favour to her suitors than to others (ll. 285-93), which may lead, as we have seen, to slander by those less well-versed in the subject (ll. 294-303), but this should not affect her as women are the source of good in the world (ll. 304-8). Granted the complexity of this matter, it is almost inevitable that a woman should make a mistake (ll. 341-52). This is also the natural consequence of inequality among women, as he concludes, "l'une set plus et l'autre moins" (l. 353). This long response appears to fascinate the lady but as an answer to the question

... or me dites vostre espoir,
Se les dames font autressi:
Fet chascune plus d'un ami?"

250-52

it leaves much to be desired. We must take it that the knight prefers women (and men) to have only one love at a time.

The attitude in *Ignoure* is more ambiguous, if not contradictory. Renaus does not take umbrage at his hero's comportment in ingratiating himself with twelve women, indeed he states admiringly "molt estoit Ignoures dansiaus!" (l. 641). One of the ["]lads ["] in fact. But the ladies disagree, calling him a "fol outrecuidier" (l. 220), and are furious at the consequences to themselves: "molt nous a fait avillier" (l. 206) says the priestess. ^{Nor} can he escape the consequences of his acts. He must answer for his conduct at a court of love (as in *De Amore*):

Ignoures a esmut tel plait,
Il le comperra sans [targier]

210-11

And the strength of her language to him should have warned Ignoure about his danger:

Drois est que vostre outrage paie;
Anchois K'issies de cest repaire,
Aves guerredon d'omme faus,
Con trahitres et desloiaus."

281-84

The penalty the ladies have in mind is death. His defence is that he does in fact love all

twelve (ll. 285-315), and his "biaus parlers" (l. 336) somewhat mollifies them, though not to the extent of letting him continue as before. They demand that he should choose one lady and be faithful to her (ll. 340-47). Ignaure is initially unwilling to comply:

"Nel feroie pour nul avoir,
Ains amerai toutes encore
Si que j'ai fait descî a ore."

348-50

This is not permitted and Ignaure selects the priestess. It is interesting that the women are prepared to accept this solution as it means eleven will be deprived of their *ami*. Both sides have to make a sacrifice. The ladies put a high value on the principle of one man, one woman. Even Ignaure's now exclusive love could not have known she would be chosen. After admiring Ignaure's address, Renaus brings him into line with expectations. However, the restriction on Ignaure's amorous proclivities, far from improving him, leads to his downfall and violent death:

Or sachiés bien k'il li couvient
Aler maintes fois a s'amie.
S'a toutes fust, n'i alast mie,
Mais or n'a c'une seule voie.
Souvent i va, ki ke le voie.
Par le trop aler fu dechus
Et engigniés et percheüs:
Soris ki n'a c'un trou poi dure.

366-73

He is not only over-sexed but incapable of exercising the necessary discretion and is easy prey for the watchful husbands. In this lay Renaus inverts the convention of love, initially with comic, then with tragic effect. As long as Ignaure shares his favours among twelve women, he is safe and they are happy. Fidelity to one woman brings disaster.

Refusal to choose can also bring ruin. In *Chaitivel* the lady has four suitors of equal merit (not the case in *Conseil*, in which two are definitely unadvisable) and the lady does not really want to make a decision: "nes voil tuz perdre pur l'un prendre" (l. 156), sentiments Ignaure might have shared. Instead, she distributes limited favours impartially:

Tuz la teneient pur amie,
Tuz portouent sa drüerie,
Anel u mance u gu^manun, ~~~~~
E chescun escriot sun nun.

67-70

67-72

Each has reason to hope he will be chosen but her pride intervenes, as she explains to Le Chaitivel:

Jamés dame de mun parage –
[Ja] tant n'iert bele, pruz ne sage –
Teus quatre ensemble n'amera

195-97

She thinks of them as a group, and the fact that one has survived makes little difference to her feeling that she has lost all. Le Chaitivel accepts that he no longer has any claim to hope:

Ceo que al secle puis plus amer
Vei sovent venir e aler,

Parler od mei matin e seir,
Si n'en puis nule joie avoir
Ne de baisier ne d'acoler
Ne d'autre bien fors de parler.

217-22

There has long been a debate on why Le Chaitivel does not receive the lady's love and it has been suggested that his wounds have made him impotent.⁷ It is our belief that the lady is so strongly motivated by the pride she has in her collection that she would never have made a choice freely before the tournament and prefers to lose them all than to accept the one that fate leaves for her.

Apart from these lays, it is assumed that love is a bilateral business, involving a couple who may have to face opposition. It is also a force that intervenes in human life in an arbitrary fashion. There is no rational explanation behind its sudden irruption into the affairs of Guigemar and the hero of *Ombre*. Its power is likened to a natural force. In *Lanval*, this is fire:

- refer to Ombre ?

Amurs le puint de l'estencele,
Que sun quor alume e esprent.

118-19⁸

Girarz devotes much attention to the matter, and the *haut home* develops the theme at length. In a natural vein, he relates

... Il m'est avis
Que dui ruissel de deus pais
Vient bien, li uns douz et clers,
Li autres obscurs et amers;
Mes quant ce vient que l'eve assamble
Que li dui ru corent ensemble,
Il n'ont andui c'un color,
Ne c'un nom ne c'une savor.
Einsi puet estre qu'il avint
Que quant mes cuers a son cuer vint
Que li dui cuer s'entracoirent.
Et au corre ensemble coirent,
Com li dui ru qui assemblerent:
Onc pus no cuers ne dessemblerent,
Ne ne pensèrent s'amor non,
Si n'ont c'un penser et c'un non,
Et sunt une maisme chose.

233-49

This is extended to cover two vessels filled with the stream's water, that he and the lady are "dui cors a un cuer" (l. 276). Love is also a weapon:

Darz d'amors, ce n'est pas merueille
Se tu les desarmez esmaies,
Deus plaies? Comment? Qu'ai ge dit?
Ces deus plaies, ci con je cuit,
Sont une plaie, non pas deus.
Por quoi? Por ce c'uns cops toz seus
Fist les deus a un trait
N'es deus ne covient c'un entrait,
Et toute lor enfermeté
Covient garir d'une santé,
Qu'autre santé valoir n'i puet;
Et por ce que par force estuet

Que tu faz a un cop deus plaies

C'une santé lor soit commune,
Ne font les deus plaies que une."

422-36

Barad in
+ some

It is not surprising that a weapon causes a wound that needs healing. Marie makes the same comparison more economically in *Guigemar*:

Amur est plai[e de]denz cors,
E si ne piert niënt defors.

d. Dind

483-84

But here the hero has a real wound to contend with as well as the more metaphorical one he receives from Love. Equitan has a similar complaint to make (ll. 54-7) which includes the fact that "Amurs l'ad mis a sa maisnie" (l. 54), that is, accepted his service, as also occurs in the *Roman de la Rose* (see Chapter 3). The knight in *Ombre* retains his sense of humour when obliged to love:

+ Oind's
mills amois

"Or m'a Amors en tel point pris
qu'ele veut que son pooir sache;
c'onques vilains cui barbiers sache
les denz ne fu si angoisseus!"

158-61

spacing
spacing →

Love is inextricably linked with suffering. The lady in *Conseil* is aware of this:

Mes ie resoing mout les dolors
Que i'oi dire qu'en en trait."

228-29

Guigemar must endure the pain of his wound until he can find a woman

Ki souffera pur tue amur
Issi grant peine e tel dolur
Ke unkes femme taunt ne suffri;
E tu ref[e]ras taunt pur li,

115-18

That he should suffer, given his past actions, is perhaps only fair, but one feels sympathy for the lady, already unhappy. It only proves that a certain amount of suffering is inherent in love. Once Guigemar meets her, the ^{mutual} exchange of agony is made explicit:

Mes l'amur l'ot feru al vif;
Ja ert sis quors en grant estrif,
Kar la dame l'ad si nafré,
Tut ad sun país ublié.
De sa plaie nu mal ne sent;

379-83

← ?
This applies only to
Guigemar

The distress he feels is caused by uncertainty. If he is refused, his death will inevitably follow (ll. 405-6). Once this fear has been removed, there is no pain and the lovers enjoy a very pleasant life together until they are discovered. It is their separation that causes sorrow and almost leads to suicide by the lady (ll. 668-73).⁹ It is a fact that in the lays there is never any question of love feeding off jealousy as there is in *Andreas* (see Chapter 3). Once love has been revealed, there is harmony and accord, and lovers have complete confidence in each other (with the possible exception of *Equitan*). Jealousy and suspicion in the lays are confined

to married couples e.g. in *Cor* where the test is designed to show the world those who suffer from this defect. In *Tydorel* the author refers approvingly to its absence between the hero's parents (ll. 13-14). Andreas of course considered it was misplaced in a married couple.

In the lays it is uncertainty that causes pain, the fear of rejection by the loved one, linked to the determination to end the suffering by putting it to the test, as Equitan does:

Uncor ne sai ne n'ai seti
S'ele fereit de mei sun dru;
Mes jeo savrai hastivement.
S'ele sentist ceo ke jeo sent,
Jeo perdre[e] ceste dolor.

93-97

Revelation is necessary if matters are to proceed beyond mutual anguish. Guigemar fears the consequences of a refusal:

S'ele refuse ma priere
E tant seit orgoilluse e fiere,
Dunc m'estuet [il] a doel murir
E de cest mal tuz jurs languir.'

403-6

He is warned by the astute serving maid that revelation is required "vuz amez; / Gardez que trop ne vus celez." (ll. 445-46). In her opinion there is no need to fear since such love would be eminently suitable (ll. 447-53). Once agreement has been secured, it is the loss of love that brings pain. Guigemar's lady seeks reassurance that in the event of separation, he will remain faithful (ll. 546-67). Graellent is reduced to a pitiful state; Lanval's friends have to persuade him to eat. Desiré is

... dolenz de grant manere,
del dul qu'il ad s'en pesanti,
en poi de tens en enmaladi;
sa grant joie met en tristur,
e sis chanz est turnez a plur.

340-44

Not that this display of frantic grief impresses his lady overmuch:

Purquei morez tut a essient?
Efforce tei; ne vaut neent.

367-68

she says briskly, revealing her distaste for this form of suicide.

Suffering is implicit in love because of the element of doubt, but love brings joy as well; this is the paradox, well expressed by Henri:

Por celi mal bien plere doivent,
Qu'après les maus les biens reçoivent
Par maintes foiz li maltraiant
C'ausi amors ~~vo~~ esmaiant; ~~vo~~
Si fait ele raséurer
Qui puet en loialté durer
Et atendre, et soffrir martire,
Car a joie revient s'ire.

554-61

After a probationary period involving pain, pleasure is assured. This is not always evident to the novice. In *Conseil* the lady's fears about the pains of love lead her mentor to inform her

of a salient point of doctrine:

De bone amor ne vient nus maus,
Mes des felons, faus desloiaus
Qui amors veulent escharmier
Et toz iors sont prest de mentir
Plus qu'esperuiers n'est de voler

231-35

It is a question of being able to distinguish those who lack the requisite qualities:

– “Dame, amors ne se daigne prendre
A ces faus cointes orguillex,
Ces mesdisanz, ces enuiex
Qui amors ne seuent auoir.
Tex cuide, dame, mout sauoir
Du siecle, n'en set mie assez.”

674-79

If this can be done, there is no need to fear, and he goes on, in an immensely lengthy passage (ll. 567-655) to compare the joys of love to the pleasure of owning land (which would rejoice the heart of any poor bachelor), concluding

Je di qu'il (a poor knight) ne porroit auoir
Ne por terre ne por auoir
Ne por quanques ie vous ai dit
Tant de ioie ne de delit,
Ne tot ce ne contreuant mie,
Dame, le deduit de s'amie,
Quant on l'a sage et bien pleasant
P⁷ auoir cuer lie et ioiant.

643-50

It is interesting to note that only land can even begin to compare in the knight's mind with love.

This theme is also found in *Lanval*, in which the *fée* promises

Emperere ne quens ne reis
N'ot unkes tant joie ne bien;

114-15

as the hero will have if he proves worthy of her, and in *Ombre*, when the lady finally cedes, the knight comments

“De l'onor,” fet il, “de l'Empire
ne me fesist on pas si lié!”

940-41

Trot paints a graphic picture of the pleasant conditions enjoyed by the first cavalcade of women and their attendants (ll. 75-134) which is explained to Lorois by the unfortunate woman from the third party:

Celes li la devant s'en vont
entr'eles se grant joie font,
car cascune solonc lui a
l'omme el monde que plus ama;
si le puet tot a son plaisir
baisier, acoler e sentir.
Ce sont celes ki en lor vie
ont Amor loialment servie
ki les amoient durement;
bien fisent son comandement.

Or lor en rent le guerredon
Amor, k'il n'or se joie non.
Certès, eles sont a grant aise,
eles n'ont riens qui lor desplaise,
ne por yver, ne por oré
n'ierent eles la sans esté;
si se poent a lor plaisir
colchier, reposer e dormir.

241-58

In *Trot* love's pleasures endure even after death, forming a counterpoint to the eternal punishment that afflicts the third group of women. There would be little point in suffering for love if there was not the promise of happiness to come, and the latter outweighs the former. This is no doubt why the lady in *Conseil* concludes

Mout est fols qui ne quiert amie
Por si plenièrre ioie atendre." 672-73

Love then can bring pain, rapidly ^{dissipated} by the discovery that it is shared, and pleasure. It is a force that cannot be resisted, and that no one wishes to resist; on the contrary, it is desired by the individual as an essential part of his or her life, although the collectivity is less indulgent. This sentiment is linked to another quality of love: its absolute nature which may well bring it into conflict with other imperatives. Love can make characters very self-centred. Graelent tells the queen

Amors n'a song de compaignon;
boin amors n'est si de dex non,
de cors en cors, de cuer en cuer,
autrement n'est prex a nul fuer.

89-92

Guigemar completely forgets his country (l. 382); Lanval despises the courtly entertainment devised by Guinevere (ll. 253-58) and continues to figure as an outsider at court. He abdicates his will to his lady totally:

Ne savrïez rien comander
Que jeo ne face a mien po er,
Turt a folie u a saveir.
Jeo f[e]rai voz comandemanz,
Pur vus guerpirai tutes genz

124-28

and Equitan does the same (ll. 237-40). Nothing counts for these men except their ladies. As a result they are, in terms of social expectations, recreant. Lanval finally escapes to Avalon, thus fulfilling his promises to leave all for her sake; Equitan becomes a criminal.

Alixandre is reprimanded for neglecting his other duties and Aristote's learning crumbles in the face of a determined onslaught. Lovers can also be very selfish. Eliduc is concerned that separation will be his death or Guilliadun's; he never considers Guildeluëc's feelings, and treats her coldly on his return to Brittany, much to her distress.

A further point to be made about love in the lays is that it is almost inevitably physical in nature. Once the avowal of mutual love has been made, couples fairly rapidly pass to the final step recorded by Andreas, the *factum*, without there being any necessity for a long trial period

while the lady assesses the merits of the man. The event is normally indicated by a brief phrase e.g. "el sun cors li otria" (*Eq.* 180); "m'amur e mun cors vus otrei" (*Bis.* 115). In *Guigemar* Marie employs more detail:

Ensemble gisent e parolent
E sovent baisent e acolent;
Bien lor coviegne del surplus,
De ceo que li autre unt en us!

531-34

In *Tydorel*, *Milun* and *Desiré* the birth of children shows amply what is involved, and this is what Gurun fears for Fresne – but only if this should occur within the abbey. In *Conseil* there is no question of the relationship between the lady and the knight being anything other than carnal in nature and the knight is very informative on reconciling this form of love with more conventional Christian demands. *Ombre* concludes with Jean discreetly drawing a veil over the final agreement between the lady and the knight:

N'i covient mes penser [de] rien
Jehan Renart a lor afere!
S'il a nule autre chose e fere,
bien puet son penser metre aillors;
que puis que lor sens et Amors
ont mis andeus lor cuers enseñble,
du geu qui remaint, ce me semble
venront il bien a chief andui;
et or s'en taise a tant meshui!

952-60

Jean stresses the element of consent here. There is no question of the knight having employed coercion in any way to achieve his ends. In most lays this is the norm and love is shared. Occasionally, it is not so much love as brief lust. This is true of the squire in *Épervier*, acting as a messenger. He is, it seems, overcome by the sight of the lady at her toilette:

Bèle la vit, si l'esgarda
Que plus l'esgarde plus s'esprist;
La biauté de li le surprist
Que plus près de li s'aproucha,
La dame prist, si l'enbraça:

116-20

The lady protests at this, and indeed there is an element of frank force: the author continues

Einsi con la dame tenoit
Et si fiérement la menoit,

127-28

It is perhaps fortunate for her that the squire is prevented from continuing by the arrival of his master, necessitating concealment. The author maintains the comic element by the setting (the squire aiding the lady to dress for her assignation, because there is no maid present) and the farcical result of his precipitous declaration.

There are distinct parallels with *Aristote*, although here the lady has set out with the intention of ensnaring the old philosopher and all her acts are directed towards this end – the light clothing and the soft songs. The effect of this spectacle is immediate, obliging *Aristote* to close his books. As in *Épervier*, it is sight which is the cause of his sudden change of

heart:

... Ce n'avint onques
Que ge, qui tant sai et tant puis,
Tant de folie en mon cuer truis
C'uns sels veoirs tot mon cuer oste.

330-33

His actions are very like those of the young squire:

Quant ele ot ce dit, si pres passe
De la large fenestre basse
Que cil par le bliaut l'aert,
Qui cuide trop avoir soffert,
Tant par la desire a merveille.

390-94

It has to be said that his suffering has been of very short duration, and he intends not to prolong it. And he is quite candid about what he wants:

Mais, por Dieu, çaienz vos traiez
Et mon desirier m'apaiez
De vostre cors gent et poli."

424-26

He is so besotted he is ready to agree to the lady's bizarre stipulations in order to get his way. Again, there is nothing in *Aristote* that is particularly courtly in its orientation:

"le *Lai* (...) reflète les doctrines amoureuses d'Ovide bien plus que les conceptions sentimentales de la courtoisie médiévale, qu'elle fût du Nord ou du Midi: rien de plus naïvement naturel et de plus simple en son essence que la passion d'Alexandre et son amie; rien de moins "courtois" (...) que le désir auquel succombe Aristote".¹⁰

The emphasis on sexuality receives its most outspoken expression in *Lecheor*, in the words of the cynical but observant lady whose opinions shocked nineteenth century critics. The spokeswoman sees love as irrelevant; she speaks in sexual terms only since she sees this as the main force motivating men:

La moie foi vos em plevis,
nule fame n'a si bel vis
par qu'ele eüst le con perdu,
ja mes eüst ami ne dru.
Qant fait li bien sont fet por lui,
nu metons mie sor autrui;

91-6

Lecheor is most often considered as something of a burlesque, a parody of the other lays which always stress more respectable love¹¹, but it is not an idle or frivolous point the author makes through the lady. It is evident from reading the didactic works that an ill-intentioned man could bend the precepts found there. Hope of a reward in the form of sexual favours must have motivated the less elevated spirits far more than the distant hopes and casuistry of Andreas, and in *Conseil* the knight is definite that such men exist (ll. 242-49).

In *Aristote* and *Épervier*, lust is linked, albeit comically, to the possibility of coercion. This disturbing factor is much more to the fore in *Graelent*, *Desiré* and *Guigemar*. Graelent

seizes the lady's clothes so that he can retain her in conversation, already showing a certain lack of respect. Guingamor's lady chides him severely for the same act:

Ja Deu ne place ne ne voille
qu'entre chevalier soit retret
que vos faciez si grant mesfet
d'emblem les dras d'une meschine
en l'espoisse de la gaudine.

447-52

Graelent remains immune to the criticism (unlike Guingamor) but pledges his word as to her safety if she will come out of the water and talk with him. Smitten with love for her, he requests her love and is refused. Rather than using words to convince her, he resorts to violence:

Graelens le trove si fiere,
e bien entent que par proiere
ne fera point de son plaisir,
n'il ne s'en veut ensi partir.
En l'espece de la forest
a fait de li ce que li plest.

277-82

By "fiere" he simply means that the lady has not complied instantly with his desires. Since for him these are paramount, he seems to feel no qualms about gaining his ends through violence; it is presented as logical and justified. Graelent seeks more than instant gratification though:

Quant il en ot fet son talent,
merci li prie dolcement,
que vers lui ne soit trop iree,
mais or soit e france et senee;
si li otroit sa druerie,
e il fera de li s'amie,
loialment e bien l'amera,
jamais de li ne partira.

283-90

- In this respect he is not like the knight in *De Amore* who, having had his way with the peasant, can ride on without a second thought. As in most lays, Graelent wants love, however odd his acts may seem. It is even more peculiar that after the event, the lady announces that she had come to the spring specifically to meet Graelent – so why did she initially reject him? It is likely that the author, less skilful than others, has not seen the contradictions apparent in his hero's acts, contradictions which must have been obvious to his contemporaries. It is probably the confusion in the author's sources that has led to this confusion in his characters' behaviour.

Desiré has the same confusion, with the bonus of fickleness on the man's part. *Desiré* sees a lady by the spring, but does not even bother to salute her:

Li chevalers n'ert pas vileins;
a pié desent, si l'a saisie,
il en vodra fere s'amie;
sur la freche herbe l'ad cochee,
jo quid qu'il l'eüst asprivee
quant ele li cria merci:

144-49

He seeks instant gratification of his desires, and does so without any thought of the rightness of his actions. For this he is condemned by the girl:

– Chevalers, tollez vus de ci;
ne serrez gairez avancez (sic)
si de mun cors me honitez.

150-52

However, it is not on these grounds that she demands to be freed. She proposes in exchange her mistress:

Je sui od une damaisele,
el secle n'at nule si bele.
Jo la vus ferai ja veer;
si vus estes de tel poer
gardez qu'el ne vus eschap mie
pur nule ren k'ele vus die.

155-60

adding that if *Desiré* is not satisfied when he sees her mistress, she will be happy to grant what he wishes. *Desiré* is more tactful with the mistress than he is with the maid, and the lady accepts his offer of service, after which events flow smoothly. As in *Graelent* and *Lanval*, the lady is accompanied by other women, and in all probability the maid *Desiré* first accosted was originally a messenger sent to bring the knight to the woman who already knows what to expect.¹²

Guigemar employs a similar device with the white deer which predicts *Guigemar's* future: no cure unless he can find a woman who loves him. There is nothing coercive about *Guigemar's* attitude to the lady, nor is there any need for it since the lady already loves him. The coercion is transferred to *Meriadus*.

Meriadus is perceived from the outset as a warrior. He discovers the lady on his shores because he has risen early, not to admire birdsong as *Lorois* does but because he is planning a sortie against his neighbour – in which he is merely acting as many medieval knight, pursuing a private war. He loves the lady:

A li [a]turnat tel amur,
Unques a femme n'ot greinur.

711-12

and cares well for her. The crisis comes when he requests her love and is rebuffed, during which the lady shows him her knotted belt and reveals its significance. *Meriadus* in his turn replies “par maltalent” (l. 726) and reveals the existence of *Guigemar*, at which the lady swoons. *Meriadus* tries to take advantage of this:

Il la receipt entre ses braz;
De sun bliant trenche les laz:
La ceinture voleit ouvrir,
Mes [n'en] poeit a chief venir.

737-40

The degree of force employed is not inconsiderable and it is fortunate for the lady that her protection is supernatural. Nevertheless, *Meriadus* acts not out of caprice so much as circumstance. He loves the lady, has some claim on her since he found her, has treated her

with honour, and only loses his self-control when provoked by the sudden knowledge that she will only love the man, whoever he may be, who can unknot the belt. Although he takes advantage of the lady's swoon, it is understandable in the context of their relationship. His more serious offence is that, having engineered the reunion of Guigemar and the lady, he refuses to release her, attempting to retain her despite his certain knowledge that this is not what she wants. It is a form of feudal control he attempts to exercise over her, claiming a right to her love, or at least to hold her. His distress at the knowledge Guigemar has won is real: he has lost his gamble and knows it (l. 806). His obstinacy ends in his own death and the destruction of his castle. He is a tragic character, not without his good points, but unable to renounce the lady he believes he owns.

Since the lays accord love respect and admiration it is not surprising that this attitude is also applied to the principals who suffer its ravages. This accounts for the attitude most authors take towards women in particular. The lays are notable, compared with the *fabliaux* for example, or with the strictures of Étienne de Fougères, for their lack of misogyny, and the manner in which ^{women} are normally treated as individuals rather than as representatives of a despised sex. The libidinous impulses of the queens in certain lays for example receive no general comment from the authors, whereas Étienne de Fougères considered such behaviour typical of noblewomen. This does not mean that all women are pleasant. Fresne's mother for instance spreads calumny and is capable of contemplating murder if it suits her, but this is an individual trait and is treated as such. Some women are condemned for actions which seem to be the fault of other people. This is so with Guilliadun, who faces the prospect of being thrown overboard in a storm because the sailor sees her as a threat to the safety of others on board because she is guilty, in his eyes, of adultery. In fact, the only guilty party is Eliduc who alone knows the complete truth. Marie also writes of the seneschal's wife that from her "vient el país granz mal[s]" (l. 30), thus putting all the responsibility on her shoulders although Equitan is, one would have thought, equally culpable. Bisclavret's wife also commits crimes, "détournement de l'amour conjugal, détournement de l'amour courtois, et usurpation du pouvoir, mâle et royal".¹³ This judgement is severe in that it ascribes to the lady the blackest of motivations^S for acts that are comprehensible if not praiseworthy, but again, her faults are seen as individual faults and not the result of a naturally perverse female nature.

It is true that not all lays maintain this positive image of women as a sex. We have already seen that *Mantel* is notably sour with regard to female fidelity, but it must be said that *Mantel* is on the margins of the genre (see Chapter 1). In *Cor Yvain* reveals doubts about fidelity as well, but in so doing, he pleads for indulgence from Arthur and does not consider this general propensity to be a matter of great scandal. *Melion* and *Bisclavret* are alike in maintaining a more severe attitude towards women. In *Bisclavret* the lady is punished for her attempt to dispose of her husband by mutilation and exile, and it is certain that judgement is harsher for her than it is for her second husband and accomplice who voluntarily shares her

tribulations. Nevertheless, in the context of the lay, while her behaviour towards Bisclavret cannot be condoned, it is at least understandable. Fear overcomes love. In *Melion* matters are more obscure. In this lay, the knight is not a werewolf by nature and needs the aid of an artefact to effect this transformation. Bisclavret was obliged to undergo his metamorphosis whether he wanted to or not. The occasion for Melion using his ring is his wife's sudden overwhelming desire for venison, which is totally unexplained by the author. Melion evidently feels he has a better chance of catching the stag in lupine form and his wife observes his transformation. Her reaction is not detailed and we do not know why she immediately decides to return to Ireland with her squire, nor the extent of any relationship between them. Melion refers later to "celui ki sa feme enmena" (l. 488), but this is unfair. As a servant, he was bound to follow his mistress, and there is no indication in the text that she is his mistress in any other sense of the word. As in *Bisclavret*, the punishments proposed are severe. Arthur is offered the possibility of burning or hanging her; Melion suggests turning her into a wolf, showing that the ring is effective on other people. Arthur desists: "por vos beaux enfans le lairés" (l. 572), and Melion concurs, albeit reluctantly – after all, he has undergone a most unpleasant experience, which explains his refusal to take her back again. This attitude becomes generalised:

... "Ja ne faldra
que de tot sa feme kerra,
qu'en la fin ne soit malbaillis;
ne doit pas croire tos ses dis."

587-90

but this type of common application is not found in other lays. We must conclude that authors had certain expectations of behaviour from women – that they should be sincere and steadfast in their affections and also not harm anyone else. If they do so, they can expect to be judged severely, more so than any men who may also be implicated, but there is no systematic mysogyny in the lays.

The power of love to effect improvements in the behaviour and value of men is not often mentioned in the lays. It is certainly stated that some transformations are possible, but these usually refer to young men acquiring the necessary discretion in love (e.g. *Conseil* ll. 704-24). There is no parallel with the work of improvement entrusted to women in the *De Amore*. Love in the lays demands high standards from the beginning. In *Conseil* the knight notes

Qui veut dire reson et voir,
En bone amor ne doit auoir
Ne mauuesties ne contredit;

737-39

Graelent also expounds on the necessary qualities:

Assés puet on amors trover,
mais sens estuel al bien garder
douçor e francise e mesure,
– amors n'a de grand forfait cure –
loialté tenir e promettre;

101-5

repetition
of earlier
chapter!
see 150

-5 on
p 150!

not do
do not do so

More cynically, in *Lecheor*, love is credited with beneficial effects by the lady, but it is love of a very particular variety:

d'ice vienent les granz douçors
por coi sont fetes les honors;
maint homme i sont si amendé
e mis en pris, e em bonté,
qui ne vaussissent .I. bouton
si par l'entente du con non.

85-90

Mixtus amor, as Andreas noted, could also produce good effects, and this is the view taken in *Lecheor*. The lays present no example of love as the direct and only cause of improvement in either sex. Characters involved in love are of a high calibre and require only the experience of love to complete their lives. It is not necessary for them to improve themselves as a precondition of obtaining love.

In the lays love is represented as a powerful force, sought after by most people or at the very least welcomed when it arrives. It is conceived as a necessary part of life, but feared because of its capacity to interrupt and even overturn established conventions deriving from secular and ecclesiastical authority. This power derives from what some authors see as the ability of love to overpower all other considerations, which necessarily involves us in examining how lovers respond to a force that may compel them to commit acts of which various authorities would have disapproved. Aristote declares:

Quant que g'ai apri e lëu
M'a desfait Nature en une eure,
Qui tote science deveure
Puis qu'ele s'en velt entremetre.

489-92

Henri confirms this view in his epilogue to the lay, although he specifies Love as the motivating force rather than Nature (but the two are inextricably joined together):

Si puet on par cest dit aprendre
C'on ne doit basmer ne rebrandre
Les amantes n'è les amanz,
Puis qu'ele a pooir et commanz
Et force sor touz et sor totes
Et desfait les volentez totes
Et trait a honor toz les faiz.
Et puis que cil en sostin faiz
Qui fu maistre en tote science,
Bien devoñs prendre en pacience,
Selonc ce que nos mains savons,
L'anui que por amor avons;
Quar qui por amor sueffre maus,
Bien li set merir ses travaus
Que loiaument sueffre por li.
Veritez est, et ge le di,
Qu'amors vaint tout et tout vaincra
Tant com cis siecles durera.

562-79

No one has the ability to stand against love, and in the lays no one tries to do so, although Eliduc attempts to limit its manifestations,¹⁴ at least initially. The problem is that love

can easily overcome the scruples inculcated by respect for other codes of conduct. To overcome these, it is necessary for lovers to exercise the primordial quality of *mesure*, that is of moderation and discretion in their actions so that they will not be discovered by those inimical to their love. To do this requires the exercise of reason and caution. In *Deus Amanz* for example the lovers conceal their affection, although in their case there is nothing society could reproach them with: they do this in the hope of achieving success in the future:

La suffrance mut lur greva;
 Mes li vallez se purpensa
 Que meuz en volt les maus souffrir
 Que trop haster e dunc faillir.

67-70

By exercising a degree of voluntary restraint they are able to enjoy love, if only in a limited way, and to make their plans. But as Marie remarks in *Equitan*

Cil met[ent] lur vie en nu[n]cure
 Que d'amur n'unt sen e mesure;
 Tels est la mesure de amer
 Que nul n'i deit reisun garder.

17-20

It is the paradox of love that it requires reason to succeed, yet almost inevitably pushes lovers to excesses which lead to their downfall. In *Deus Amanz* for instance the boy's initial resolution breaks down under the weight of suffering he feels and he is soon suggesting elopement. As Marie comments later: "n'ot en lui point de mesure" (l. 179), and he overestimates his own ability to succeed in the ordeal he faces. By refusing the effective aid available, he brings about his demise and that of his *amie* as well. Muldumarec warns his lady "... tel mesure esgardez / Que nus ne seium encumbrez:" (ll. 201-2), but she proves unable to resist calling on him at every possible moment and recovers her beauty and pleasure in living to such an extent that the suspicions of her husband are aroused, with tragic results. In *Laüstic* it is also possible that the husband becomes aware of his wife's liaison because she does not trouble to conceal her insomnia. *Equitan* and his *amie* fail to carry out their plot against the seneschal because they are unable to wait until they have dispatched him to enjoy the fruits of love. A similar pattern exists in *Eliduc*. The knight seeks from the beginning to contain the expression of his love within what he considers to be acceptable bounds:

Mes ja ne li querra amur
 Ke li [a]turt a deshonor,

473-74

Faced with the prospect of separation this resolution melts away as passion gains the ascendant:

Mes jeo ferai vostre pleisir,
 Que ke me deivë avenir.'

677-78

The same process is evident in *Guilliadun*, who was initially prepared to accept the limitations of her relationship with *Eliduc* in the hope of marrying later. She later demands an

colloquial

elopement, precisely what the girl in *Deus Amanz* refused. Eliduc agrees, but is not so far gone that he agrees to breach his oath of fealty to her father. The result (were it not for Guildeluec) is "death" and sorrow. Similarly in *Chaitivel* disaster is precipitated because the lovers are impelled to commit acts in a tournament which kill and maim. In these lays it is seen that

?? "the nature of love itself, the love so often personified in medieval literature, so often treated as a natural force, formidable and powerful precisely because it does subvert the reason and cause man to react in a way ^{which} ultimately causes him suffering and grief".¹⁵

This does not mean that love, even though it has "a totally independent nature",¹⁶ does not recognise social constraints. Lovers are well aware that society will defend its own interests. If this were not so, they would not trouble to conceal their affairs. Moreover, lovers are not infrequently respectful of such conventions, even in the *Lais*. Gurun does not outrage public opinion by insisting on marrying Fresne. In *Milun* the exemplary caution and moderation of the lovers is eventually rewarded by marriage (this is true in *Conseil* as well). In *Chevrefoil* Tristram returns to Cornwall willingly, despite the danger of death (ll. 19-20) because

... ki eime léalment,
Mut est dolenz e trespensez,
Quant il nen ad ses volentez.

22-4

Nevertheless, Marie makes it clear that he observes every possible precaution, travelling at night, lodging with peasants, and employing the device of the hazel and honeysuckle to draw Iseut's attention to his presence. Marie does not write about the ultimate death of the lovers as a direct result of love, but it is presaged in her opening lines:

De Tristram e de la reïne,
De lur amour que tant fu fine,
Dunt il eurent meinte dolur,
Puis en mururent en un jur.

7-10

On this occasion however the outcome is successful and results, so we are led to believe, in Tristram's eventual return to court.

Passion and reason are often put in conflict, and few lovers manage to maintain consistency. Passion frequently wins over prudence. This is allowed for even in the highly rational word of *Conseil*. The knight appears unequivocally to select the third knight as a lover for the lady, both for his own excellence and the distinctly unpleasant characteristics of the other two candidates. But when the lady remarks that he has made the choice inevitable, the knight denies it:

Je ne vous faz nul iugement,
Mes trestout a vostre talent
Fetes ami, que ce est drois.

185-87

The responsibility of making a wise choice lies with the individual, but it is admitted that a

lover who is less than ideal may be chosen.

Conseil also sounds an interesting warning against misapprehension in love. We have seen that frequently love is opposed by other forces operating in society. Consequently it may be not unnatural to assume that if society disapproves, there must be love. The knight issues a firm denial that this is so: ? Logic?

Douce dame, ne creez mie
Que ce soit voirs, qoi que nus die,
Qu'amors contredite soit vraie.

731-33

He is categorical that any love must be judged solely on its merits:

Sachiez, c'est seruirs en manais,
C'est vne amor si vaut si vaille,
Qui n'i puet auenir, s'i faille.

734-36

This demands a great deal of ^{??}intelligence from the participants, but this after all is what *Conseil* is about.

The imperative need for measure in love as a means to concealment until a moment favourable to its revelation (if that moment ever comes – in *Épervier*, *Amours* and *Ombre* for example this is not appropriate) must entail some discussion of the need for secrecy and how it may be achieved, and of those who seek to uncover love. In comparatively few lays is love openly acknowledged from the beginning (e.g. in *Guingamor*, *Le Fresne*, *Melion*, *Doon*, *Aristote*, *Cor*, *Mantel*, *Haveloc*; also *Tyolet* and *Bisclavret* in the sense that marriage need not be hidden). In these lays there is no need for concealment. Lovers are free to act as they please and in many cases, marriage rapidly follows the initial meeting. Reasons for concealment vary. Prosaically, since many relationships are illicit, revelation may be expected to bring about some form of punishment (e.g. the torture feared by Milun's lady). In *Épine* and *Vair Palefroi* the ladies fear marriage to other men. In *Deus Amanz* the princess is spared this worry, but given the particular circumstances, the boy could not expect to remain at court. Secrecy is even more important when one of the protagonists is married. For *Eliduc* it is a simple matter ^{to} ~~of~~ ^{-ing} maintain the illusion of his bachelor status. He is in a foreign country and is the only person in a position to reveal this information (we may assume that he can rely on his ten knights to keep silence, if indeed they know of his situation, and this is doubtful. No one in *Eliduc* suspects his illicit love). In *Laiüstic* it is domestic architecture that permits a certain degree of contact:

Preceines furent lur maisuns
E lur sales e lur dunguns;
N'i aveit bare ne devise
Fors un haut mur de pierre bise.
Des chambres u la dame jut,
Quant a fenestre s'estut,
Poeit parler a sun ami
De l'autre part, e il a li.

5 2
3542

This works well enough until it is abused by over frequent use. Equitan employs medical

methods; the excuse of being bled:

Les us des chambres furent clos;
Ne tro^yveissez humme si os,
Si li rei pur lui n'enveiaist
Ja une feiz dedenz entrast.

191-96

-191-96 ?

It is also true that the lovers post a young girl at the door, but she is unable to prevent the seneschal from entering. In these lays communication results from common events in life. *Milun* presents a certain latitude. The concept of a carrier swan seems unlikely at first sight, but Marie presents its training as a sober, scientific fact:

Primes le face bien garder,
Puis si l[e] laist tant jeüner
Treis jurs, quë il ne seit petüz;
Le brief li seit al col penduz;
Laist l'en aler: il volera
La u il primes conversa.

243-48

Moreover, the swan's very acceptability as a gift means the lady will not reject it on its first appearance, and it cannot talk – an advantage in a messenger.¹⁷

In a lover such discretion is a valued trait. Muldumarec reproaches his lady:

Bien le vus dis qu'en avendreit:
Vostre semblant nus ocireit.'

321-22

Ombre's knight is able to keep his own counsel. He rides out with his companions with the intention of visiting the lady, but

ses conpaingnons oste et desvoie
de la voie et de son penser,
qu'il ne se puissent apenser
a la reson de son voiage.

218-21

A modern reader may well wonder why, in these circumstances, he should go in company, but it is already known that the knight is sociable by nature – a good mark – and that it was rare for anyone at this time to spend time alone. In any event, by his careful speech (ll. 261-67) he succeeds in ensuring that the suggestion of a visit comes from his friends, and this enhances his own discretion.¹⁸

The lay that most emphasises the value of discretion is *Conseil*. This covers two main points. The first is that (of) a lover who boasts. The second suitor for the lady's hand is a braggart, a most undesirable trait:

Je di que vanterres n'a droit
En bone amor ne ia n'aura

132-33

"Amors veut estre bien celee" (l. 149), the mentor declares, echoing the sentiments of Andreas, and praising stealth:

Tout autresi con la rousee
Monte a larron deseure l'arbre
Et el moustier deseur l'arbre
Ou ne puet plouoir ne venter:

Tout autressi doit trespasser
La bone amor entre la gent
Qu'on ne s'en parcoive noient;
Quar puis qu'amors est aparceute,
Est ele trahie et deceute. –

150-58

Anyone “qui fera / S'amor crier a la bretesche” (ll. 134-35) is obviously an unlikely candidate as a lover. It is implicit here that the uncovering of love figures as a disaster. The third knight is more knowledgeable. He has not even spoken directly to the lady:

N'onques ne fu regehissanz
Sa bouche, certes, a la moie;
Ausi se cuevre toute voie
Comme se riens ne l'en estoit.”

164-67

generally or in particular He employs literary means to attract her attention, “par lais, par escriz, par romanz” (l. 163), which tends to prove a certain level of education among the nobility, and which pleases the lady. His prudence receives the approbation of the mentor as well. The “fole gent” (l. 171) cannot reproach his behaviour and he has proved his discretion should the lady wish to retain him. If not, his politeness is so exquisite that

... se vous nel volez amer,
Il s'en puet couvrir et celer
Et mout belement trere arriere
Et fere samblant que priere
N'eust onques a vous de lui.”

177-81

thus sparing both parties any embarrassment. This links up with the need for women to observe closely their suitors before accepting them:

spacing Au commencer se doit vers lui
Couvrir, por connoistre celui
De qui veut fere son ami.

695-97

This enables them to withdraw should he prove unacceptable. The stress on discretion is such that it is not surprising that one of the lady's questions is:

Aprenez moi que ie doi fere
Por plus bel couvrir mon afere.”

359-60

Most of what follows is practical. The lady should serve God (as Robert de Blois says, this cannot do any harm) (ll. 362-64); turn a deaf ear to those who are “plain de vilonie” (ll. 365-67); ~~do~~ not despise the poor and ignorant but honour them according to the “sens et le savoir” (l. 370) they possess (ll. 378-81). She should be friendly to other ladies, which will enhance her reputation, and not reveal any secrets they may confide to her. She may instruct them tactfully but ensure that her own affairs remain hidden (ll. 372-83). Secrecy is preferable, but should assistance be needed – a confidant perhaps – she should be chosen for her ability to further the affair and not shown any special favour in company (ll. 384-91). Matters requiring attention should be dealt with privately so that none know of them, and ^{avoidance}

of
those who try to trap lovers *Logic!* is advised (ll. 392-98). Finally the lady should eschew disdain, "la bee" (l. 399), this leads the knight to digress lengthily on this question. Unusually for *Conseil* the knight gives advice that is practical and succinct and refrains, at least until the end, from going off at a tangent.

He also addresses separately the different problem of a young lover who requires education in discretion, which comes from the lady:

Et si se doit fere douter
Por l'enfant aprendre a celer:
Qu'enfant sont de parler volage,
Se bien ne sont apris d'usage

721-24

This accords well with the teaching of Andreas that youths are indiscreet by nature but the defect is not irreparable according to the pragmatic knight.

In some lays secrecy appears to be the remnant of ^{the} more ancient *geis* of Celtic tradition, the demand for silence imposed on a mortal by a lover from the Otherworld. This exists in *Lanval*, *Graelent* and *Desiré*, *Tydorel* and *Yonec*, and also in *Guingamor*, although here the injunction is not directed towards the revelation of love but towards the consumption of forbidden fruits.

In the first three lays the men are warned about the dangers of love becoming common knowledge. Lanval is told

A tuz jurs m'avriéz perdue,
Se ceste amur esteit seüe;

147-48

Graelent is warned about boasting, and Desiré is instructed generally

or vus gardez de meserrer,
si vus penez de ben amer;

231-32

Since secrecy is a commonplace, there can be little doubt that any mention of "ben amer" would call it to mind. All three knights then are aware that secrecy is a condition of love and that they have transgressed through careless speech, after which they fall into lethargy and are only saved by the indulgence displayed by the ladies, despite the apparent finality of their warnings. There is no doubt though that the men are first made to suffer for their involuntary misdeeds. *Guingamor* differs in that the knight is warned not to eat when he returns to his own land, but this is not linked to a threat concerning the withdrawal of his *amie's* affections. It is instead a law of nature that cannot be flouted. The difficulty here is not in knowing whether or not *Guingamor* will be restored to his lady's good graces (as it is in *Lanval*), for this is not at issue, but whether he will recover his youth.¹⁹

Yonec and *Tydorel* present similarities in the sudden arrival of a supernatural man who remedies unhappiness for a woman, but they are not identical. *Muldumarec* knows that betrayal will come from the old woman and the consequence will be:

Ne m'en puis mie departir,
Que mei nen estuce murir.'

209-10

In this he shows the foreknowledge of the otherworldly character (also demonstrated by the prediction of the birth of a son, a trait shared by Doon and the water-knight). Tydorel's father also sets a limit on the duration of his affair:

– Longuement nos entrameron,
desi qu'aperceü seron. 111-12

Once they are found, he vanishes, never to return. In both these lays the discoverers are punished, the *avouez* after a lengthy period, and at least partially for his murderous act; the wounded knight almost instantly and rather unfairly as he never sought to harm the lovers, being the unsuspecting agent of destiny.

Secrecy then is often a pre-condition of love. In *Guigemar* the hero suddenly and rather unexpectedly reveals some knowledge of the mechanics of love, telling the lady that if a woman finds a suitable lover

Ainz l'amerat, si'n avrat joie;
Ainz que nul le sachet u oie,
Avrunt il mut de lur pruz fait. 523-25

It is the lovers' misfortune here to be discovered by "un chamberlenc mal veisié" (l. 579). However, this qualifying statement is probably due to the function he fulfils in the lay rather than to his innate disposition. Unlike Frocin for example, the chamberlain is not seeking deliberately to uncover discreditable facts long suspected. His presence is purely fortuitous and in informing his lord of his discovery, he is only fulfilling his obligations to him, unpleasant as this may be for *Guigemar*. At least the chamberlain survives to tell the story, unlike the wounded knight. In *Yonec* the lady is closely guarded by her ancient sister-in-law to prevent the appearance of any lovers, and she and her brother are not slow to undertake the surveillance necessary to discover the truth. Ultimately the husband's suspicions here are aroused by the improvement in his wife's looks and spirits. She must bear some of the responsibility of discovery and this is true of *Laiüstic* as well. In only one lay, *Ignauze*, is there a *losengier* of traditional malevolence (although *Conseil* suggests the existence of those ill-disposed towards lovers). *Renaus* states that the tale of *Ignauze's* conquests becomes known to the *losengier*, but not how:

Ne sai par con faite aventure
Vinrent en avant les paroles
Qu'a confiesses disent les foles. 374-76

This points a discreet finger at the ladies, whose actions are seen as not entirely sensible. As for the *losengier* himself, he seems to be a professional informer, well-known to the husbands, who sells his knowledge for a reward. He has no personal axe to grind in the matter.

Revelation is feared by lovers with good reason. The results can be fatal (*Yonec*, *Ignauze* for example), or lead to separation (e.g. *Guigemar*, *Laiüstic*). We should not assume however

that love cannot exist without concealment, for this is manifestly untrue. It is quite possible for love to flourish openly, as it does in *Fresne* or *Aristote*. Concealment depends on circumstances: the existence of an inconvenient father, spouse or *geis* is the determining factor. If this is removed or amended, as in *Eliduc*, *Milun*, *Conseil* or *Desiré*, there is no further need for elaborate stratagems to conceal love. But even if disaster does follow, as in *Deus Amanz*, *Laüstic*, *Yonec* and *Equitan*, lovers can still gain some other forms of recognition, in a common death or tomb, or a reliquary, or through the medium of literature itself. There is no indication in the lays that love revealed automatically ends.

For Andreas, love is always increasing or decreasing and an affair could be ended if it became common knowledge or if the lovers consented. Most lays are concerned with one love only and this lasts, or so we may deduce from the fact that lays frequently end with lovers re-united or able to acknowledge their liaisons publicly. At this point, the author presages a happy life for them and concludes his work. However, love is not always eternal. In *Bisclavret* it turns to fear and the lady bestows her affection on another man. Love cannot overcome the distress experienced when the lady learns the truth about her husband. There is no indication that the second relationship falters in any way. In *Eliduc* the knight, who has only recently reaffirmed his love for his wife quite simply finds he loves another woman more. Marie expresses no disapproval at the change in his sentiments which is baldly presented as a fact requiring no explanation or excuse. Eliduc himself is not overmuch concerned with the fact of change either but in how he can conduct himself so as to obtain Guilliadun while retaining as much as possible of the loyalty he owes to Guildeluëc and his two overlords.

After examining the nature of love, it is logical to consider how individuals come to form relationships. For Andreas, love is essentially rooted in the appreciation of physical beauty.²⁰ In the lays this is only one of several possibilities, albeit an important one. There is also a certain variety in the ways authors introduce their lovers. One method is to utilise hearsay to explain how a couple come to form an understanding. By this, we refer to knowledge gained by one person of the merits of the second which determines the former to love, even though the two may never have met. The merits most frequently invoked are beauty (for both sexes, but in this context especially women), prowess and a reputation for the good qualities associated with noble life.

Such beginning⁵ may be dismissed briefly by the author. Marie presents Milun's valour (ll. 9-20); introduces her heroine (ll. 21-4) and then relates

Ele ot oi Milun nomer;
Mut le cumençat a amer.

25-6

The juxtaposition suggests strongly that it is his reputation for bravery that persuades the girl. *Fresne* shows a similar pattern. The heroine's upbringing and perfection are outlined (ll. 231-42); Gurun is introduced (ll. 243-46) and then Marie states

De la pucele oï parler;
Si la cumença a amer.

247-48

After this point there is a distinction. Milun is approached by the girl's messenger with an unequivocal offer of love, to which he responds immediately:

Milun fu liez de la novele,
Si'n merciât la dameisele;
Volenters otriat l'amur,
N'en partira jamés nul jur.

29-32

There is no delay and no reflection on either side. Gurun is obliged to use cunning in order to gain access to Fresne, better guarded in the abbey,²¹ and even so, her compliance is not immediate:

Soventefeiz i repeira
A la dameisele parla;
Tant li pria, tant li premist
Que ele otria ceo kë il quist.

271-74

No indication of the arguments employed by Gurun to gain his ends is supplied and nothing is said why Fresne resisted, any more than Marie explains why in *Milun* there is instant compliance. This injects a little variety in the *Lais*. This trait of love from afar is often connected with characters whose antecedents seem to be in myth. In *Melion* the princess of Ireland is presented as a grand lady from a land not too distant:

sachiés que je sui molt vo drue,
Onques home fors vos n'amai,
ne jamais plus n'en amerai.
Forment vos ai oï loer,
onques ne voloie altre amer
fors vos tot sul; ne jamais jor
vers nul autre n'avrai amor."

110-16

Melion is celebrated as a knight and notorious for his oath, so it is not beyond belief that the princess should have heard of him in the normal manner. However, she appears suddenly during the middle of a hunt in uninhabited lands, beautifully dressed, unaccompanied but not in any way distressed, and offers the knight what he lacks in view of his rash vow. This is common where supernatural characters are concerned. Lanval's *amie* informs him

Pur vus vienc jeo fors de ma tere;
De luinz vus sui venu[e] quere.

111-12

She gives him everything he requires in order to live comfortably at court and to fulfil the obligations of a noble. Traces of the same traditions are found in *Graelent*, but there is some confusion here. This woman unlike the two previous ladies, is naked. Graelent discourteously steals her clothes, cajoles her into leaving her spring – rapes her – but then, after appearing very much as the victim, it is the lady who lays down the rules which will govern their future relationship, claims to have known all along what would happen, and that she had indeed planned it!

por vos ving jou a la fontainne
por vos souferai jou grant painne,
bien savoie ceste aventure.

315-27

The contradictions are manifest and certainly due to the conflation of two motifs: the imperious *fée* of Celtic tradition (exemplified by Lanval's lady) who easily dominates her partner, and the submissive swan^{maiden} of Germanic provenance, obliged to stay with any man who obtained her cloak of feathers (which became in due course ordinary clothing).²² A similar situation exists in *Guingamor* in which the hero also encounters a maiden bathing in a forest pool, although he proves more courteous. This lady has foreknowledge and the ability to help Guingamor:

— Amis, tuit cil qui sont el mont
nu porroient hui mes trover,
Eant ne s'en savroient pener,
se de moi n'avoient aïe.

464-67

It is however only after he has accepted her offer of hospitality that Guingamor is struck by love, requests it and is accepted. She never claims any prescience or intent in coming to the spring. *Desiré* also retains some indication of this myth, the hero being led to the lady by a messenger (as in *Lanval*) associated with water. As in *Graelent* the knight is inclined to use violence, prefiguring a comment from the *Échecs amoureux* on force:

“Ains prenderoit indifferement celle qu'il trouverait de premiere vue et en feroit s'amie s'il povoit. Laquelle amour ne seroit pas raisonnable ne pro pre. Ains seroit mieulx amour de bestes que ce ne seroit amour d'homme”.²³

Desiré certainly lacks fixity of purpose, first menacing the maid, then easily persuaded to take her mistress instead. These incidents are distasteful to the modern reader; as to the original audience, one cannot know their reaction, but the use of force on noblewomen – and there can be no doubt that this^{is} what these women are – was deplored in love.

It is not just women who have these affiliations with the Otherworld and come to claim their loves. Muldumarec declares to his lady:

Si fetes de mei vostre ami!
Pur ceo,' fet it, 'vienc jeo [i]ci.
Jeo vus ai lungement amé
E en mun quor mut desiré;
Unques femme fors vus n'amai
Ne jamés autre ne amerai.

125-30

There is no reason given for this love, any more than there is in *Melion*. Muldumarec suffers from what seems like a further *geis*: his inability to approach the lady:

Mes ne poeie a vus venir
Ne fors de mun país eissir,
Si vus ne me eüssez requis.

131-33

No explanation is given for this constraint (and in truth Muldumarec interprets the lady's desire for a lover in its broadest possible sense; she has no idea he exists and cannot call on him by name). It adds to the agreeable aura of mystery surrounding him. Equally, the water-knight in *Tydorel* erupts unexpectedly into the life of the queen of Brittany, also alleging a love of long standing (ll. 58-68).

Hearsay is balanced by acquaintance. We have seen that *Fresne* combines both; Gurun has to win *Fresne* gradually. In *Deus Amanz* proximity is most important. The boy, living at court, has many opportunities of approaching the princess (ll. 54-8) and love can grow slowly, prompted by the girl's respect for his excellence and the fact that he enjoys her father's esteem. In *Laüstic* it is an essential part of the bachelor's charm that as well as being handsome and brave, "il ier^e pres de li" (l. 28). This is not a negligible advantage and is dear to the heart of *Conseil's* author, for whom love is absurd if it cannot be fulfilled. Consequently he is hostile to unavowed desire (ll. 414-29) and to disdain which leads perfectly adequate lovers to be rejected, to the detriment of those who reject (ll. 452-503), and also to love that cannot be fulfilled:

Dame, par autretel reson
 Vous di s'il est uns chevaliers
 Hardiz e corageus et fiers,
 Qui par le pais soit erranz,
 Dames i aura abeanz
 Qui ia ior n'en aaround deduit:
 Celes plantent iardin sanz fruit.

430-36

It is wasted effort to sigh over a man one cannot have. *Unshared* love can only be harmful in *Conseil*. Acquaintance can develop into love over a period of time, as in *Épine*, which also raises the matter of age. The two children are brought up together and are inseparable from an early age. Love comes later:

Tantost con furent de l'aé
 k'en soi le puist souffrir Nature,
 en bien amer misent lor cure,

46-8

As in marriage, there is a proper age for love and this convention is observed. In *Épervier* friendship turns into love as the result of a domestic quarrel. Ventilas, his companion and his companion's wife are on amicable terms until the husband becomes unreasonably jealous and refuses to permit Ventilas into the house. It is repeatedly stressed up to this point that he and the lady enjoy a platonic relationship based on mutual esteem and nothing more. But at this insult Ventilas

... a la dame pensa,
 E èle a lui; mainte fiée,
 Tant qu'amurs li a aliée.
 A une liue menant érent;
 Par tel achoison s'entramérent:
 Ja se desfendu ne lor fust,
 Puet estre entr'eus amor n'eust;

78-84

The husband's suspicions are seen to bring about the very fate he feared. This is the kind of situation Étienne de Fougères deprecates (see Chapter 3).

Love may be prompted by more usual means, beauty and prowess. Beauty is expected of nobles and is linked to rank. Meriadus finds Guigemar's lady "bele .. a desmesure" (l. 708) and so "bien seit que ele est de grant parage" (l. 710). Authors seldom fail to indicate that their heroines are beautiful. Comparisons are made with the Otherworld: Garadue's wife "si ressemble ben fée" (l. 512) and the sentry to whom Guillaume's *amie* appeals for shelter tells his master he believes a fairy is at the gates. Guiliadun "de beuté ressemble gemme" (l. 1022), according to Guildeluëc, providing a rare example of feminine appreciation. In *Ombre* the knight considers the lady to be "li reubiz de toutes biautez" (l. 139). Women also surpass the flowers. The *haute dame* of *Amours* is described as the "rose d'amor" (l. 366). As for

Alixandre's *amie*

Bien li ot Nature floré
Son cler vis de lis et de rose 288-89

There is a dominant type of beauty which may be deduced from more detailed portraits. Graelent's *amie* is

... graisle e escavie,
blancë e gente e colorie,
les ex rians e bel le front;
il n'a si bele en tot le mont. 219-22

Guingamor's lady "biaus membres ot, et lons et plains" (l. 430). Equitan's *amie*

Gent cors out e bele faiture;
En li former uvrat nature:
Les oilz out veirs e bel le vis,
Bele buche, neis ben asis. 33-6

Slender, well-formed, with pale complexions, they are also blonde. Garadue's wife has "les crins luns et sors" (l. 514). Lanval's *amie*, all remark approvingly, "n'est pas fave ne brune" (l. 590) but has "le chef cresp e aukes blunt" (l. 568). Alixandre's love has a "tresce grosse, longue et blonde" (l. 295). The most appreciative portrait of feminine beauty is not of one of the heroines but of the *amie* of an author. Renaus describes the "chains" that bind him to his lady

Ele a lonc col, et blanc, et gras,
Et si ne pert fronche ne os;
Elle est simple, et bien polie.
Et plus blanche que nois negie.
...
... voi souslever
Des mameletes son bliaut,
Si que un poi lievent en haut,
Car eles sanlent bien duretes.
Bieles espales, mains longetes,
Grailes dois, et biaux bras en mances.
S'[est] un poi largete par hances,
Et s'est gente par la chainture,

Et s'est de molt bieie aleüre,
N'est pas petite, ne trop grans

631-49

There is a vein of eroticism in this description, in the manner in which the clothes reveal the attraction of the body. A display of rich garments is attractive. In *Lanval* the knight first perceives the lady in a setting implying both wealth and seduction:

Ele jut sur un lit mut bel –
Li drap valeient un chastel –
En sa chemise senglement.
Mut ot le cors bien fait e gent;
Un cher mantel de blanc hermine,
Covert de purpre alexandrine,
Ot pur le chaut sur li geté;
Tut ot descouvert le costé
Le vis, le col e la peitrine;
Plus ert blanche que flur d'espine.

97-106

In *Graelent* and *Guingamor* the ladies are even less hampered by clothing, being naked. *Aristote* also employs the device of scanty clothing to influence a man. The girl enters the orchard "en pure sa chemise" (l. 281), "nuz piez, desloïée, deschainte" (l. 300), appearing to her best advantage in order to seduce *Aristote* from his books, a task she achieves with rapidity.

Beauty and fine clothing are indissolubly linked with the ideas of nobility and love. *Trot*, in describing the joys of Love's faithful servants, does not omit their dress:

totes estoient desfublees,
ensi sans moelekins estoient,
mais capeaus de roses avoient
en lor chiés mis, e d'aiglentier,
por le plus doucement flairier.
Totes estoient en bliäus
sengles, por le tans ki ert chaus.
S'en i ot de teles asez
ki orent estrains les costes
de çaintures; s'en i ot maintes
que por le chaut erent desçaintes;
e si orent por miex seïr
lor treces fait defors issir
de lor ceveus, ki sor l'oreille
pendent, les li face vermeille.

82-96

This informal but attractive elegance emphasises their carefree way of life, attended by every pleasure. The fate of the third group is also illustrated by

← their apparel:

Cascune sans estrif seoit,
e si n'orent solliers ne chaucés,
ains estoient totes deschaucés.
Les piés orent mal atornés,
car eles les orent crevés,
e de noir fros erent vestues,
si avoient les ganbes nues
dusc'as genols, e tos les bras
avoient desnues des dras
dusc'as coutes molt laidement.

177-85

Their clothing is inadequate, but not attractively so. It is unsuitable to women of rank and marks them out for desolation and humiliation. As for its influence on love itself, the servant in *Guigemar* expresses this best:

Cest' amur sereit covenable,
Si vus amdui feussez estable.
Vus estes bels e ele est bele.'

451-53

This shows that authors are not indifferent to the claims of masculine beauty. It can be an advantage. The four suitors in *Chaitivel* are "mut ... de grant beauté" (l. 36), and so is Desiré (l. 89). Tyolet is "biaus e granz" (l. 56), the hero of *Deus Amanz* is "gent et bel" (l. 50), in *Épine* he is "forment bel" (l. 16). Lanval is envied "pur sa beauté" (l. 22) among other things and Guigemar is more handsome than his compatriots: "El rëaulme nen out plus bel" (l. 38). In *Amours* the lady states her desire to hold "vostre cors, le plus biau du mont" (l. 348). These are very brief descriptions and say little specific about what makes a man attractive. Some are fuller. In *Haveloc* Sigar sees the young man

... creu e grant,
Gent cors ot e bele estature,
Lung braz [ot] e grand furcheure.

738-40

This is the physique of a warrior, suitable since at this moment Haveloc is engaged in defending the tower in which he and his wife have taken refuge. Sigar is also struck by Haveloc's resemblance to the late Gunter, which partially influences his decision to find out more about Haveloc (ll. 741-48). We may use as a comparison part of the description of the young William Marshal:

S'out brune la chevel[e]üre,
Et le vis, mais de la faiture
Resemblout il asez haut home
Por estre e[m]perere de Rome.
Si out large la forcheüre,
E fu de si bele estature
Comme nuls gentiz hom puet estre.

729-35 (full description 717-35)

The author dwells on William's stature and figure because both are irreproachable and thoroughly suited to his profession, whereas his hair, being brown, does not conform to the ideal any more than does his tanned skin, although this must have been the natural and common result of a life spent in the open. The men, like the women, are often praised for fairness. Garadue

... out les chevés blouns
E rosez les gernouns,
Les oilz veirs e riaunz,
Sis cors ert avenaunz,
Les pez voutez e droiz:

499-503

However, it is not necessary for a man to be a second Adonis. The hero of *Ombre* for example

... ert de cors et biaux et genz
et frans et legiers et isniaus,
et si estoit plus preuz que beaus
et tot ce doit chevaliers estre.

108-11

His courage is valued more than his handsomeness. This is not an isolated example. The third suitor in *Conseil* is "li moins biaux" (l. 106), but this is a small defect when set against his other virtues. He is preferred to the second knight who is outstandingly handsome:

... de son cors
Si est si biaux, si granz, si fors,
Que mout bien semble une merueille,

75-7

This is because the second knight's beauty is offset by the fundamental flaw of cowardice. The third knight is also preferred to the first, "de son cors mal acesmanz" (l. 62). Masculine elegance is not without its relevance. The lady in *Lecheor* observes

Po qui s'atorment li danzel?
Por qui se vestent de novel?

71-2

before answering her own question: to make seduction easier. The hero of *Ombre* "n'estoit pas de grant richesce" (l. 70) but he and his companions take care to present an attractive picture:

Li sire avoit devant son piz
torné son mantel en chancel
et seurecot d'ermine molt bel
de soie en graine et d'escureus.
Autretel avoit chascun d'eus
e chemise ridee et blanche,
et chapel de flors et de vanche,
et esperons a or vermaus.

276-83

The wreaths of flowers are also found in Guillaume de Lorris, who cites them as being cheap (see Chapter 3) although it has to be said that the knight is scarcely dressed in rags. The most dashing figure in the lays is Lorois, whose clothing is described in great detail as he too sets out on a ride (ll. 29-40), although Lorois is merely an observer of events and not a participant. The author of *Trot* is however genuinely interested in dress as we know, and this extends to the men. Those accompanying the first group of ladies for instance wear

cote e mantel d'un chier bofu,
forrés d'ermine e haut coés,
esperons d'or es pies fermés;

120-22

While it is not essential to be very handsome, no truly ugly men are heroes in lays. Ugliness is associated with old age. The description of Guillaume's uncle is one example

... molt est vieus, de grant aage,
Si a froncié tout le visage,
Et ieus rouges et mauvais.

655-57

Aristote is described as "chenu et pale" (l. 244) by Alixandre's *amie* and he sees himself in even less flattering terms:

Ge sui toz vielz et toz chenuz,

When seeking the girl's compliance, he stresses not his physical charms (he knows he has none) but his ability to reconcile her with Alixandre as a means of gaining her agreement. This recalls the bar on age: Andreas states that men over the age of sixty cannot love.

For women then, it may be freely assumed that beauty is their outstanding characteristic. For men, this is not necessarily so. Other qualities predominate. But beauty is not always mere decoration. It can have importance in the progress of the narrative. This is true of *Aristote*: the girl consciously uses her beauty to force Aristote away from his work:

... Ce n'avint onques
Que ge, qui tant sai et tant puis,
Tant de folie en mon cuer truis
C'uns sels veoirs tot mon cuer oste.

330-33

This is very simple, as Delbouille comments "rien de moins "courtois", (...), que le désir auquel succ^ob^e Aristote".²⁴ Sex wins an easy victory over learning and Aristote is made to look ridiculous:

Bien fait Amors d'un viel rados
Puis que Nature le semont
Quant tot le meillor clerc du mont
Fait comme roncin enseler
Et puis a quatre piez aler
Tot chatonant par desor l'erbe.

447-52

In *Haveloc* beauty is also instrumental in changing fortunes. It is Argentille's beauty that leads Kelloc to enquire about her origins (ll. 573-76) and Kelloc's husband advises Haveloc to take his wife to Sigar:

"Pur la belté k'en li verrunt
Assez tost te demanderunt
Ki tu es e quel cuntrée
E ki tel feme t'ad donée."

657-60

In the event the stratagem is successful although not in the way the merchant might have hoped. It is the violent attack on Argentille and Haveloc's defence of her that bring Sigar to see who is causing such chaos in his town.

Beauty is also linked to sight in the arousal of love. Andreas believed the two were inseparable. In the lays this is not invariably the case – we have seen that love can exist solely on the basis of hearsay – but hearsay can be based on beauty, and sight is not unimportant. In *Equitan* both operate. The king has heard of the seneschal's wife and "sanz veüe la coveita" (l. 41) (*not* love). Once he has engineered a meeting, his sentiments undergo a rapid change:

Mut la trova curteise e sage,
Bele de cors e de visage,
De bel semblant e enveisie:
Amurs l'ad mis a sa maisnie.

51-4

Beauty (and other, socially desirable traits) change the nature of Equitan's response to the lady and determine him on an ultimately disastrous course of action as an intended flirtation develops into unexpected passion. This type of response is prominent with supernatural characters; Graellent and Desiré are both exceptionally susceptible to female beauty (like Aristote), but employ force to obtain their ends (Aristote, we must grant, uses his intelligence). Guingamor is more punctilious. For him, love blossoms only when the lady is dressed:

De bon cuer l'esgarde sovent,
molt la vit bele et longue et gente,
volentiers i metoit s'entente
qu'ele l'amast de druerie; 488-91

Lanval also falls victim to the lady's beauty:

... l'esgarda, si la vit bele;
Amurs le puint de l'estencele,
Que son quor alume e espren. 117-19

This trait is not confined to women. In *Yonec* and *Tydorel* the swift response of the women is determined essentially by good looks. Muldumarec

... mut esteit de grant beauté:
Unkes nul jur de sun ee
Si beals chevaler ne esgarda
Ne jamés si bel ne verra. 141-44

and it is this that influences the lady. The same is true in *Tydorel*:

La dame l'a molt esgardé,
e son semblant, e sa biauté,
angoisseusement l'aama;
otroie li qu'el l'amera. 69-72

Although this may be particularly marked in the case of Otherworld characters, humans, as we have seen with Equitan, are not exempt. Girarz describes the first meeting of his lovers and stresses the rôle of sight:

Aussi tost conme il s'entrevirent,
Les cuers, les cors, o les elz mirent
Por esgarder: si s'entresgardent;
Mes en l'esgart qu'il se regardent
S'i fiert amors, ... 54-8

Sight is also primordial in *Eliduc*. Marie details the development in Guilliadun's thoughts once she has sent for and met Eliduc:

Icele l'ad mut esgardé,
Sun vis, sun cors e sun semblant;
Dit en lui n'at mesavenant,
Forment le prise en sun curage.
Amurs i lance sun message,
Que la somunt de lui amer; 300-5

Although Eliduc's handsomeness is understated, it indisputedly changes Guilliadun's opinion

of him. There is nothing that indicates that she sends for him *because* she already loves him. Curiosity is certainly present, but nothing more. As for Eliduc, he is smitten by love on the same occasion, but this is not dwelt on. In *Guigemar* the rôles are reversed and Marie stresses the effects of sight on Guigemar (ll. 379-82) before mentioning, briefly, that the lady suffers in the same way (ll. 390-92).

In these lays, love is mutual and almost always instantaneous. The ladies in *Yonec* and *Tydorel* may seek reassurances on certain points; Guigemar's lady does not wish to be thought a flirt, but only the seneschal's wife demurs before granting her love. This response is not invariable. Guingamor for example is the victim of an unwelcome declaration as his aunt the queen sees him literally in a new light:

Contre une fenestre seoit,
 .I. rai de soleil li venoit
 el vis, que tout l'enluminoit
 et bone color li donnoit.
 Tant l'a la roïne esgardé
 que tout en change son pensé,
 por sa biauté, por sa franchise,
 de l'amor de lui ert esprise.

47-54

There is nothing premeditated about her response. She never expected to be in this position, unlike *Graelent* and *Lanval* in which the queens seem to do some planning before approaching their would-be lovers.

The linking of beauty and sight with the instant onset of love is very pervasive. It presents certain advantages in a short narrative, enabling the author to establish quickly the relationship between his couple before proceeding to other matters. Beauty may also serve to explain certain behaviour. This is especially true of *Lanval* and *Graelent*, whose feudal difficulties are caused by their claims on behalf of their ladies, claims which are held to denigrate the queen and thus insult the king, a point which will be considered in conjunction with the feudal impact of love. While beauty may be important, especially for women – together with their rank, it is often the only trait mentioned by authors – it is not the only influence on lovers. Eloquence is sometimes cited (Andreas found it slightly suspect). In *Ombre* Jean remarks that the knight is “ne trop emparlé ne trop cointe” (l. 68). *Graelent*, when called on to entertain the queen, does so in style,

A lui parla cortoisement,
 e il li respont simplement,
 ne li dist rien qui bien ne siece.

63-5

and his speech on love increases the queen's fervour. The teacher in *Conseil* praises fluency in speech as he condemns slander:

... cil a trop le cuer aver
 Qui est eschars de biau parler,
 Por qu'il ne soit sours ou muiaus,
 Mesdiz est couoitous morsiaus
 Et si ne fet a nului bien.

847-51

In fact, it is the knight's remarkable loquacity which turns the lady's thoughts towards him:

La dame l'ot si bel parler
Qu'il li couient a oublier
La requeste des autres .III.

745-47

It is to his eloquence that he owes his ultimate elevation:

Ainsi li biaux parlers dona
Au chevalier cel mariage,
Que lui et trestot son langage
Amonta e tint a honor. –

830-33

And this could bring concrete material benefits to a family.

Ignare is also an exponent of eloquence and succeeds in calming his outraged

← mistresses:

Molt les a faites amolliier
Li biaux parlers dou chevalier.

335-36

Not that he is able to convince them to let him continue as before, but he saves his life. He is less successful with their husbands. Apologies (ll. 494-97) do not appease them in the least. Eloquence alone may not succeed. In *Ombre* the lady is well-armoured against such attacks:

mes la gentil, la debonnere,
li set bien rendre par parole
reson de quanqu'il l'aparole,
qu'ele estoit molt cortoise et sage

338-41

Indeed, she defends herself against his onslaught and sends him away. Obligated to recall him, she is nevertheless resolved to reject him, and ultimately it is not his words that convince her but his actions (ll. 908-9; 921-23; 926-29). As she exclaims after he has given his ring to her reflection,

“Orainz ert de m'amor si loing,
cil non, et or en est si prés!
Onques mes devant n'après
n'avint, puis que Adanz mort la pome,
si bele cortoisie a home!

916-20

Although she refers to “cil doz mot et cil plesant fet” (l. 933), prominence in the lay is given to actions.

This lady wonders why the knight has not spoken earlier (ll. 55-67) and is determined not to take him as her lover (her first) too hastily:

... cist, par sa chevalerie
et par soupirer devant mi,
veut ja que je tiegne a ami
a cest premerain parlement,
il avroit ainçois durement
deservi, se je devoie estre!”

700-5

This recalls the *gradus amoris* of *De Amore*, discussed in Chapter 3. Such formulae have little currency in the lays. The men ignore them (pleading that the strength of their feelings

exempts them from the obligation to follow the kind of progression Andreas outlines). The women are shocked at the presumption displayed but do not in the end hold them rigorously to a pre-ordained plan. Some women express their concern at going too fast, as they see it, as the lady in *Ombre* suggests. Guigemar makes a bald request to his lady: "Jo vus requeor de drüerie" (l. 505), omitting any preliminaries. The lady replies, says Marie, laughingly but fittingly

... 'Amis,
Cest conseil sereit trop hastis,
De otrier vus ceste priere:
Jeo ne sui mie acustumere.'

509-12

Her own inexperience and possibly a sense that Guigemar is taking too much for granted lie behind her response. His reply ^{belies} his supposed ingenuousness in love

Femme jolive de mestier
Se deit lunc tens faire preier
Pur sei cherir, que cil ne quit
Quë ele eit usé cel deduit;
Mes la dame de bon purpens,
Ki en sei eit valur ne sens,
S'ele treve hume a sa manere,
Ne se ferat vers lui trop fiere;

5
515-22

Guigemar contrasts the flirt (so it seems) with the "dame de bon purpens". He has no time for the caution advised in *Conseil*, in which conversation can be seen as part of the testing process that allows a lady to judge the advisability of taking any particular man as a lover, a course of action specifically commended by the author through his knight (ll. 693-99). Robert de Blois also recommends repulsing a suitor to test his sincerity (see Chapter 3). In *Guigemar* there is no need for the suppliant to rise gradually through a recognised hierarchy of positions before becoming the recognised lover. Guigemar seeks more spontaneity in love and decries the need for any form of test, either of valour or of tenacity. The lady concedes this point rapidly, and in fact the reader is already aware that she loves Guigemar. There is no question of him needing to persuade her. In *Equitan* the lady is also reluctant to surrender immediately, and in this lay there is an element of doubt. Equitan, despite his specious reasoning, cannot assume the lady will agree to his proposition any more than Guigemar can. The lady asks for time to think:

'De ceo m'estuet avoir respit:
A ceste primere feiee
Ne sui jeo mie conseillee'

8-20
118-20

At this point it cannot be assumed that the lady will yield; unlike Guigemar's lady we are unaware of the nature of her sentiments (if any) towards Equitan. Her protestations are grounded not in points of amorous doctrine but in her fear of the inherently unequal partnership between a king and the wife of his vassal, something that will be discussed in more detail later.

Before we examine how lovers broach the matter of their sentiments, we should state something on the nature of love in the lays. In *De Amore* lovers are offered a choice between *purus* and *mixtus amor* (although we have seen that this was not a real choice). In the lays this distinction does not exist. Unless there is an impediment – a physical obstacle (in *Laiüstic* or *Vair Palefroi*); or great respect on the part of the lovers for a father, or the hope of a marriage in the immediate future – lovers do not hesitate to enter into a physical relationship, the *extremum solatium*, once they are assured of the sincerity and reciprocity of their feelings. Thus in *Equitan*, *Guigemar*, *Ombre*, *Yonec*, *Guingamor*, *Tydorel* to name a few examples, consummation immediately follows the revelation and acceptance of love. There is no need for a lengthy period of probation; the lays are direct in seeing that unless some factor dictates otherwise, lovers will head directly to bed. As Jean Renart hints heavily in *Ombre*: once the knight and the lady have exchanged rings and kisses, they waste no time:

De tel geu conme on fet des mains
 estoit ele dame et il mestre,
 fors de celui qui ne peut estre,
 dont il lor covendra molt bien!
 ? → (512) N'i covient mes penser (de) rien
 Jehan Renart a lor afere!
 S'il a nule autre chose a fere,
 bien puet son penser metre aillors;
 que puis que lor sens et Amors
 ont mis andeus lor cuers ensemble,
 du geu qui remaint, ce me semble,
 venront il bien a chief andui;

948-59

There is a heavy presumption in favour of carnal love in the lays and they should be read with this in mind. It should also be remembered that there is very little condemnation of carnal love in the lays; indeed we shall see that condemnation is reserved for those who obstruct lovers and for lovers who, in their desire to have their own way regardless of others, become destructive.

Men may be reluctant to reveal their love, for fear of rejection, but^t as Guigemar is advised, “vus amez; / Gardez que trop ne vus celez!” (ll. 445-46). Eventually this is overcome and a declaration is made. If not, it would scarcely be possible for the narrative to continue. Men do not hold a monopoly on revelation in the lays, although didactic writers counsel women against making such declarations. In the case of those women with supernatural antecedents – in *Lanval*, *Graelent* and *Melion* for example – the fact that canons of accepted taste are violated is understandable. They are not bound by human conventions and freely offer love without agonising over the propriety of their actions. Similarly women of the highest rank – the queens in *Lanval*, *Graelent* and *Guingamor* – may be excused for approaching knights in the service of their husbands as such men might be expected not to break the contract that links them to their overlord. Andreas addresses the difficulties inherent in unequal relationships but not that posed by the existence of a feudal relationship. It is true that Milun’s *amie* makes the first, very unambiguous approach, but this is exceptional. In

Eliduc Guilliadun fulfils this office. At first she refrains: “nel volt mettrè a reisun, / Qu’il ne li turt mesprisun” (ll. 307-8). The solution proposed by her chamberlain is to send a gift and observe his reaction, which is acceptable to Guilliadun. However, Eliduc, as the chamberlain notes, is discreet; “bien seit celer sun curage” (l. 424), and so Guilliadun is obliged to be more forthright on their next encounter (ll. 508-18). There are good reasons why Guilliadun should declare herself first. She is unmarried, the heiress to the man Eliduc serves. Coming from him, a declaration would be misplaced, especially since he has only recently reaffirmed his fidelity to his wife, which effectively prevents him from taking any initiative in the matter.

Other lays do not resort to such devices to excuse women’s initiatives. In *Amours* the man is unwilling to act:

Ja ne dirai. Dirai. Comment?
Trop feroie fol hardement
Se ge disoie si haut dit.” 99-101

The lady also feels some constraint:

... “Dex! comment diroie?
Contre toutes dames feroie.
Nu dirai pas; tere m’estuet.
Ne cis maus lessier ne me puet
S’il ne le set. Et bien le sache.” 115-19

It is evident that she feels it would be unseemly for her to make the first move; she also knows that unless she does, she will remain in sorrow, hence her decision to speak. Love, says Girarz, has made her “*hastive*” (l. 124), and no doubt Andreas would have condemned her actions as forward. Her actual words seem clear enough:

“Sire, sachiez bien sanz doutance,
Vostre amor et vostre acointance
En cest pais voudroie avoir,
S’il vos plet, et sachiez de voir
Que vostre sui, n’en doutez point.” 127-31

Not the limitation “*en cest pais*”, suggesting her appreciation that he may have other ties elsewhere (legitimate or not) which cannot be overset and also a hint that while in a foreign country he may regard himself as being freed of his other obligations. It seems from his reply that he is rather stunned by such frankness, and answers

Con cil qui n’ose mie entendre,
Croire ne cuidier ne atendre
Qu’elle entente d’amors li die. 133-35

It could be modesty of course that causes this reaction since no man could expect love as of right, hence his measured reply:

... “Dame, sanz demor
De moi l’acointance et l’amor
Vos otroi ge, car je feroie
Por vos quanque fere porroie.” 137-40

He offers socially acceptable service, but the lady clarifies her earlier statement to remove any ~~mis-~~ understanding:

“Ce que pens n’i pensez vos pas;
Einz est einsint, que tot a cors
Vos di que je vos aing d’amors.”

142-44

The man comprehends completely and happily assents (ll. 148-57). Girarz presents the lady’s behaviour as being unusual, but it is undeniably flattering to the “haut home” to be the object of such passion and it enhances the portrayal of love as a force that cannot be resisted. Guigemar would surely have approved! *hardly a literary comment*

In *Amours* it is correct to say that the declaration is perceived as somewhat abnormal though not unattractive. In *Conseil* women are accorded greater freedom of action. It is the lady who approaches the knight for advice on love, because in the particular problem that faces her, he is neutral. There is no reason to suppose she engages him in conversation with the object of seeking his love, although in many ways he resembles the third knight who is preferred, being relatively poor but skilled with words. The lady is finally overwhelmed by the spontaneous desire to take him as her lover. Her new problem is to make this known:

... se veut a lui descourir
Le grant talent et le desir
Qu’ele a de lui s’amor doner.

755-57

The ruse she finds, as with *Guigemar*, somewhat negates her status as a novice in love. She gives her belt to the knight and promises her love to whomever he chooses, the choice being signified by the gift of the belt. He correctly interprets this gesture and keeps it for himself. This method is effective and relies greatly on the perspicacity of the knight – but by this time we are well aware of his inexhaustible knowledge of love.

The knight assumes, in the course of his instruction, that women may take the initiative. This is implicit in some of his teaching:

... s’il est dame ou damoisele
Qui commence vne amor nouele,
Au commencier se doit vers lui
Courir, por connoistre celui
De qui veut fere son ami.

693-97

It is obvious that the lady has already made a decision and the knight is recommending a period of observation to enable her to decide whether or not to continue:

Se fol le trueve et esbahi,
Partir s’en doit, s’ele onques puet,
Et s’adont amer li estuet,
Qu’ele n’en puist son cuer partir,
Quanqu’ele puet, se doit courir,
Selonc ce qu’amors li consent.

698-703

The knight would evidently prefer the lady not to take an unworthy lover but recognises that

love may be irrational. There is one further case in which a woman might be expected to take the initiative; this is when the prospective lover is a young man who "... commenst... de novel / A amer, et que rien n'en sache" (ll. 706-7). Such a one requires assistance, hence the knight's advice:

Droiz est qu'ele vers l[u]i le sache
Par biau samblant et par atreze;
Douce doit estre et debonere
Tant que cil soit si enhardis
Qu'il soit de li amer espris.

708-12

By dint of such encouragement she can bring him to the point ^{where} his education can really begin:

Et quant il est chaus et boillanz
Et talentiz et desiranz,
Adonc si le doit chastoier
Et doctriener et enseigner
Au point qu'ele le veut auoir,
Et li desir et li voloir
Font donc celui d'amors esprendre,
Se iames ior i doit entendre;

713-20

He is now putty in the hands of his mistress and she can inculcate the final lesson on discretion (ll. 721-24). The knight never expresses the opinion that it is unwise or impossible to take a young man as a lover, merely that such an exercise requires caution and the zeal to educate. Under these circumstances, it is not realistic to expect the young man to approach the lady. This being said, in *Épervier* the squire does so with complete confidence and in *Épine* and *Deus Amanz* the young men are not noticeably reserved.

Beauty and eloquence are common to both sexes in the lays. Unique to men is prowess, the ability adequately to fulfil the duties expected of a knight and lord, and it is to this aspect that we now turn.

In most lays it is assumed that knights are valiant, but most win their reputations before the authors commence to relate the events which are central to the narrative. Milun for example is praised for his exploits:

Mut par esteit bons chevaliers
Francs [e] hardiz, curteis e fiers,
Mut fu conetüz en Irlande,
En Norweië e en Guhtlande;
- En Loëngre e en Albanie
Eurent plusurs de lui envie:
Pur sa priëse iert mut amez
- E de mut² princes honurez.

13-20

Doon is "... preuz e vaillanz / sage e cortois e emprenanz" (ll. 69-70); Nabaret is "pruz e curteis, hardi e fer" (ll. 3-4); Lorois is "hardi e coragous e fier" (l. 8). Melion is "molt... de grant chevalerie" (l. 9); Guigamor is praised "por sa valor" (l. 12). The "haut hom" of *Amours* is celebrated for "les mors, les proescs" (l. 13) as well as his looks and Ignaure for his "grant barnage" (l. 593). These descriptions are brief and stereotyped compared with that

of Milun, but cover the same ground. Others are lengthier. Garadue is brave:

E quant il est armez
Qui plus estoit doutez;
Kar en la court Artu
N'aveit meillor escu
Ne plus face ad sa main
Fors moun seingnour Gawein.

493-98

His success is qualified by Gauvain's just as his wife's beauty is less than
← Guinevere's. The valour of the hero of *Ombre* is unmatched. He is

... et ireus et hardi
Quant il avoit l'eaume en son chief.
Bien sot un renc de chief en chief
cercier por une joste fere.
A cè ot torne son afere.
Li chevaliers dont je vos di,
qu'il vosist que chescun lundi
qu[è] il estoit qu'il en fust deus!
Onques chevalier ne fist Deus
si preu d'armes comme il estoit

84-93

Equitan sees fighting as the supreme diversion, surpassing all other courtly entertainments:

Ja, se pur ostier ne fust,
Pur nul busuin ki li creüst
Li reis ne laissast sun chacier,
Sun deduire, sun riveier.

odd way of interpreting this quotation

25-8

Meanwhile, it is the seneschal who busies himself with the administration of the kingdom. — 20
Other knights are vassals in service. Graelent responds to the king's appeal for soldiers: — 15?

Li rois le retint volentiers
por çou qu'il ert biax cevaliers.
Mout le ceri e honera,
e Graelens molt se pena
de tornoier e de joster
e de ses anemis grever.

13-8

In this he resembles Eliduc. The mark of his superiority in Brittany is permission to hunt unchallenged in the royal forests. As in *Lanval*, being successful, he is envied, but while *Lanval* is the victim of neglect, *Eliduc* is the target of malice which obliges him to leave his home temporarily. Such events were not unknown in reality. William Marshal, outstandingly successful in the service of Henry the Young King, was falsely accused by a cabal of jealous knights fearful of his influence and eminence of being unduly intimate with Henry's wife, Marguerite de France. When the conspirators swore an oath to this effect, Henry withdrew his countenance from William by refusing to speak to him, much as the king does in *Eliduc*: "Mes li rei ne li respundi" (l. 51). Just as *Eliduc* was unable to secure a hearing at court, William was unable to defend himself against the accusation. He offered trial by combat and even proposed a serious handicap for himself; even so, no one was willing to accept. Eventually he sought and obtained permission from Henry II to make a pilgrimage to Cologne

as a means of retiring with honour. The breach was healed some months later. The Young King was at war with his father and discovered that William's traducers were unwilling to fulfil their obligation to fight, alleging homage made to Henry II. The Young King became suspicious and sent messengers to recall William, very much as Eliduc's lord does (ll. 550-70). Calumny, as Marie says, was a constant threat to those whose talents set them above their fellows:

... quant il ad en un país
 Hummè u femme de grant pris,
 Cil ki de sun bien unt envie
 Sovent en diënt vileinie;
 Sun pris li volent abeisser:

Guingemar 7-11

The vassal can do little if he does not have an opportunity to defend himself and withdrawal – to another country or internal – may be his only option. In contrast, a knight may choose to travel, as in *Amours*:

Au haut homme avint, comme avient
 Qu'a main haut homme besoinz vient
 D'errer

23-5

The decision he takes seems the result of a sudden but not unexpected caprice. It is natural for a man to travel, and there is no indication here that there is any suggestion of a dispute with a superior or any pressing need to win renown or money that motivates him.

Bravery is expected from a knight, and its lack is severely criticised. In *Conseil* the lady remarks of the second knight "petit est preus. / Riens ne vaut d'armes" (ll. 74-5). This appears to be at the root of much discontent:

Hauz hom est et de bons amis,
 Grant terre a et grant chasement,
 Mes mout le tien mauuesement.
 Laidure li font si voisin
 Si que si homme et si acilin
 Ont par sa defaute damage.
 Il est de mout lasche corage,

80-6

This outweighs his wealth and his beauty, which contrast strikingly with this flaw. This knight is however an exception. In other lays, there is no question that the men are courageous.

It is only infrequently that the lays display martial prowess. In *Aristote* the fighting in India is concluded as the lay opens and serves only to mention, almost in passing, that Alixandre has conquered the nation and is now enjoying a respite with his *amie*, the "pucele estrange". Henri is more concerned with his hero in the less familiar rôle of a "fins amanz". In *Lanval* Arthur's war against the Picts and Scots is mentioned, but the knights are feasting, not fighting, and the same is true of *Cor* and *Mantel*. Tristram does not fight. In *Melion* Arthur seeks assistance in his wars from the king of Ireland but there is as yet no fighting. Only in *Haveloc* is there a report of one of his wars, and we suspect an unjust cause since the dispossessed heir is eventually restored.

Haveloc, as a dispossessed noble, is an interesting case in point. Grim is unable to provide him with the training appropriate to his rank, and indeed Grim never informs him of his true origins. Nevertheless, from childhood he is noted for physical precocity and prowess:

Ainz k'il eust gueres d'ée,
Ne trovast il home bargé,
S'encuntre lui lute volsist,
Ke li enfes nel abatist

153-56

His abilities then are already evident even though they are circumscribed in their expression. Grim is pleased at his foster-son's skill which he takes as a sign that he may yet regain his kingdom. At Edelsi's court though Haveloc's abilities becomes a source not of advancement for him but of entertainment for the knights:

Pus k'il sorent sa grant vertu,
Devant els luter le feseient
As plus forz homes k'il saveit
E il trestuz les abateit

266-69

Edelsi is well aware of Haveloc's great strength as demonstrated by his ability to carry heavy weights in the kitchen and to overcome his opponents at wrestling. These are not courtly accomplishments, but *Haveloc* does not share the courtly ethos of most other lays.

Haveloc's strength is not incidental but central to the narrative, as it is this that makes Edelsi choose him as a husband for Argentille. As he explains unctuously to her barons, Achebrit made him swear to give Argentille to the strongest man in the realm, and after much searching this man has been found: Cuaran/Haveloc

Li dis plus fort de ma meisun
Ne se poent a lui tenir,
Sun giu ne sa lute suffrir.
Veritez est desi k'a Rome
De corsage n'ad si fort home.
Si garder voil mum serement
Ne la puis doner autrement."

368-74

We are left in no doubt that it suits Edelsi to have found a physically strong man whose political influence is non-existent and that it is to this that Haveloc's involuntary marriage must be attributed.

Up to this point Haveloc's strength is employed in menial service and for the amusement of his superiors, a marginal use of his abilities. Once in Denmark however his skills begin to blossom in a more orthodox direction. He is able to seize an axe from one of his five attackers with which he defends Argentille (ll. 695-703) and to ward off the enraged citizens of the town:

Asailli l'unt mult durement
Il se defent mult asprement,
Les quarels de la tur lur rue,
Mulz en mahaigne e plus en tue.

725-28

Haveloc has a fondness for the axe as a weapon. He takes one from the wall when he fears

Sigar is about to sentence him to death (ll. 854-76). Once his true identity is revealed Haveloc is knighted (ll. 925-28), a tribute to his birth rather than his non-existent military education. But Haveloc has the instincts of a king, offering to settle the matter of sovereignty in single combat against Odulf (again using the axe):

Aveloc vit la gent menue,
K'en s'aie esteint venue,
Ne volt [pas] k'il seient oscis.
Al rei Odulf par ses amis
Manda k'a lui se cumbatist,
Cors cunte cors, e s'il venquist,
La gent a lui tuit se tenissent
E cum seignur [tuit] le servissent.

943-50

This shows an unusual concern for the welfare of the common people rarely found in other medieval works in which in any case war is normally treated as the exclusive concern of the nobility. Haveloc at any rate is competent enough to dispatch the usurper with ease (ll. 961-70).

Once Denmark has been reconquered, Haveloc seems content to rest on his laurels and only undertakes the invasion of England at Argentille's direct request. As we know, Haveloc is generally inclined towards passivity and rarely does anything unless prompted to it by someone else or by circumstance. Argentille also displays more tactical finesse than her husband. Haveloc seems ready to give up and go home after meeting a reverse, and it is Argentille's idea of propping up the Danish dead to make their army seem larger that convinces Edelsi's counsellors that their foes have overwhelming numerical superiority (ll. 1005-95).

In *Haveloc* military and related skills are accorded a rôle not found in other lays, even in *Eliduc* or *Guigemar* in which demonstration of martial abilities, particularly that of being able to direct other men, is given some prominence. Without his strength Haveloc would not have become Argentille's husband and he would not have regained his own place in society or won back Argentille's inheritance. There is however no connection between Haveloc's abilities and the winning of love itself. He does not wrestle to win Argentille's affections and as far as we know, she has never seen or heard of him before the marriage takes place.

Gurun and the heroes of *Ombre* and *Vair Palefroi* enjoy tournaments but their skills are irrelevant to the lay (except as a means of removing Guillaume at a critical point). We know nothing of Muldumarec's capacities as a knight until we hear the abbot praise him:

... c'iert le meudre chevalier
E le plus fort e le plus fier,
Le plus beaus [e] le plus amez
Que jamés seit el secle nez.

513-16

By this time of course he is dead. In *Tydorel* we know that the water-knight can perform strange acts, but these are part of his nature and not concerned with any military exploits. *Tydorel* himself becomes a successful monarch (ll. 222-26), but the only exercise of his skill

is to threaten his mother, as the husband in *Épervier* menaces his wife. Ignaure may be a knight "de grant renom" (l. 20), but this does not save him from an ignominious end. In brief, it is rare for a knight to have to demonstrate his prowess. It is sufficient for the author to report that he possesses it.

Knights are not immune to the attractions of increasing their reputations. The boy in *Épine* is warned by one of his opponents

... se vous estiés malmis
e par mesaventure ocis,
vostre pris ariés vous perdu,
ja ne seriés amenteü.
Nus ne saroit vostre aventure,
ains seroit a tous jors obscure; 409-14

A certain amount of caution in the tournament is therefore indicated. In *Guingamor* the hero is delighted to find he has stumbled across an adventure he can relate at court (ll. 394-96) in his discovery of the deserted palace. He also knows that

... s'il puet prandre le sengler
et sainz ariere retourner,
parlé en ert mes a toz dis,
et molt en acuidra grant pris. 347-50

The stress^{is} placed on others knowing, hence his insistence on returning to court (ll. 535-38) and the care he takes to relate his story to the charcoal maker (ll. 613-29) who disseminates the tale. An adventure that no one else knows about does nothing to enhance a reputation. Great deeds are not their own rewards. This links with the emphasis placed on enjoying the approbation of one's peers, e.g. in *Bisclavet* (ll. 19-20); *Milun*, *Vair Palefroi*. In *Conseil* the lady places a high value on this with regard to the third knight:

C'est li mains biaux et le mains a
De garison et d'eritage,
Mes mout le tesmoignent a sage
Cil et celes qui l'ont acointe) ? (sic) 106-9

The anxiety of knights to win a reputation is sometimes evident in reports of their *enfances*. This established, authors pass on to other matters. The connections between love and courage are made obvious in some lays. In *Milun* it has been stated that the juxtaposition of reports of Milun's bravery and the girl's offer of love seem to function as cause and effect. In *Lecheor* also the lady suggests a connection:

Por cui sont li bon chevalier?
Por qoi aimment a tornoier? 69-70

Lust if not love is the reason given. However, linking love too closely to prowess is demonstrably dangerous. In *Chaitivel* the four knights vie for the lady's affections:

Icil quatres la dame amoënt
E de bien fere se penoënt:
Pur li e pur s'amur aveir
I meteit chescun sun poeir. 41-4

Since they are nobles, the natural outlet for their unconscious rivalry is the tournament:

- A l'assembler des chevaliers
Voleit chescun estre primers
- De bien fere, si il peüst,
Pur ceo que a la dame pleüst.

63-6

This approach, natural to the noble, constantly obliged to surpass himself, is not without peril. Since Marie stresses repeatedly the equality of the knights, such an approach cannot prove the superiority of any one over his colleagues. Furthermore, although it is suggested that their efforts please the lady, it is also true that she does not seem interested in making a choice. In any case, she cannot make such a choice on rational grounds since all four are equal (not the case in *Conseil*). Thirdly, as Marie states in *Equitan*, love can lead the most reasonable of people to commit extreme acts. This is so in *Chaitivel*:

- Trop folement s'abaundonerent
Luinz de lur gent, sil cumpèrent;
- Kar li tres [i] furent ocis
E li quart nafrez e malmis

119-22

The knights underestimate the extent to which their desire to distinguish themselves can safely be taken.²⁵ The result of courage unrestrained by good sense is catastrophe.

It is however comparatively rare in the lays for love to be linked directly with prowess. This may be so in *Milun*, but in *Eliduc* there is more nuance. Most unusually Eliduc is portrayed carrying out his duties as a mercenary in leading the ambush that routs the *per* (ll. 145-264). This exploit (a routine one for a competent knight, requiring no special expertise) brings him into the king's service as the mainstay of the kingdom – *gardein* – and hence to the notice of Guilliadun, the innocent cause of the dissension, who is curious about him:

- La fille al rei l'oï numer
E les biens de lui recunter.
Par un suen chamberlenc privé
L'ad requis, prié e mandé
- Que a li venist esbarter
- E parler e bien acuint;
- Mut durement s'esmerveillot
- Qué il a li ne repeirot.

273-80

Her anxiety to meet him is underlined by the triple verb in l. 276, but it cannot be assumed that her anxiety is due to anything other than mild pique that her father's new and valued retainer has not paid a visit of ceremony to the heiress to the kingdom. Love only develops when they meet. Equally we should be wary of ascribing any efforts to win a good reputation as being motivated by a desire to win the regard of a loved one. This is certainly false where *enfances* are involved. Only in *Épine* does the acquisition of a reputation follow the winning of love. After the lovers have been separated the boy begs to be made a knight:

- car aler veul en autre terre
en soudees por pris conquerre.
Trop ai gaitié la cheminee,

s'en sait mout mains ferir d'espee."

145-48

This desire for military exploits is the compensation for the loss of love. Consequently, when he learns of the ford's peculiarities he eagerly accepts them as "his" adventure:

sor cho que puis qu'il çaint l'espee,
n'ot il aventure trouee;
or li estuet par hardieche
faire malvaistie ne proeche.

197-200

His motivation is purely military. As he explains later to his *amie*, whom he did not expect to be present, "faire vieut chevalerie" (l. 318). In view of these facts we cannot agree with Prudence Tobin's statement "c'est pour mériter la jeune fille que le chevalier va combattre"²⁶. This was not his intention when he set out. Her presence there as a witness does spur him on. When unhorsed

Li damoisiax ot honte eüe
qu'a tiere vint devant sa drue
a cele jouste premerainne.

327-29

but it is the desire not to lose face in front of her rather than love that drives him onwards, although admittedly the two emotions are related. As for the girl, she is extremely anxious as joust succeeds joust and eventually halts the series (ll. 457-62), and is not reprimanded by either combatant for her action. She also figures as a prize, although this is unknown to both her and the boy when the jousting starts. The knight comments that had the boy lost, "menee en seroit la pucele" (l. 415). There is little tension because of this possibility – how could there be when the principals are ignorant of it? – compared with a similar situation in *Guigemar*, in which the hero is committed to obtaining his *amie* through fighting as the only recourse left to him.

— Melion presents certain similarity with *Épine* in that work is seen to be a remedy for an emotional crisis. Deprived of female company by his oath, Melion is reduced to a pitiful state:

molt durement s'en asopli;
ne voloit mais querre aventure,
ne d'armes porter n'avoit cure;
mult fu dolans, molt asopli;
e de son pris alques perdi.

38-42

This resembles the fate of *Desiré* and *Lanval*, although Melion has not offended against a command imposed by his lady but against good taste. The result is the same: loss of appetite for life, and with it the pursuit of glory. He is rescued from his lethargy not by forgiveness from a woman but by Arthur's gift of a fief. This elevates Melion, removes him from the oppressive atmosphere at court and provides him with plenty of activity to divert his thoughts. In other lays the continued exercise of knightly skills is expected. In *Desiré* the lady warns her lover about love-induced idleness:

Ainz ke vus eüssez m'amur

futes vus de mut grant valor.
N'est mie dreiz a chevaler
ke pur amur deives enpeirier."

241-44

Desiré therefore continues to fight for his king – his confession is occasioned by his imminent departure for a war – because his lady demands certain standards from a knight, including the use of his skills. What happens after he joins the lady in her own land is not revealed. Graelent is not requested by his lady to fight, but he does so:

el pais n'a tornoiement
dont il ne soit tos li premiers;

402-3

Lanval on the other hand does nothing after his meeting with the *fée* in the way of fighting. Instead he is seen to be exercising other virtues, notably that of generosity, which is lacking at Arthur's court. In *Milun* on the contrary the hero, like Guillaume, is absent at a vital moment because of his enthusiastic search for glory, and this desire never leaves him. He is determined to defeat Sanz Per before seeking his son (ll. 343-57) because he is deeply disturbed at the loss of his own pre-eminence:

— Mut et dolent, mut se pleigneit
Del chevaler que tant valeit,
Que, tant cum il peüst errer
+e Ne turner ne armes porter,
Ne deüst nul del païs nez
Estre preisez nē alosez.

345-50

Interestingly the lady shares this conception:

... si li sot gre,
Quant pur lur fiz trover e quere
Voleit eissir fors de la tere
[E] pur le bien de lui mustrer,
Nel voleit mie desturber.

368-72

and does not stand in his way when he requests absence.

On the whole love and prowess are kept apart in the lays as cause and effect. It is expected that men will be valiant, so the point is mentioned, but it is rarely relevant to the progress of a love affair, and knights are not required to demonstrate their abilities as a pre-condition of obtaining love.

Love can also bring financial benefits. We have seen that the Marshal family gained immeasurably through William's marriage, and in *Doon* and *Tyolet* the heroes both win feudal influence and power through their ability to perform certain tasks. In *Conseil* the knight chosen wins the means to shine in his profession from his lady:

Maint cheual, palefroi, lorain
Donoit au chevalier souent,
E cil a maint tornoiement
Et loing et pres par tot aloit.

792-95

In *Desiré* the maiden accosted by the hero speaks not only of her mistress's beauty but also of her ability to enrich her lover:

Si de li estes bien amez,
pur neent seriez esgarrez;
assez avrez or e argent
tut a vostre comandement

161-64

Like Lanval and Graellent, Desiré becomes notable for his generosity, more so than his king. Unlike them though, he was never in serious need of money. The plight of Lanval and Graellent proves that money was very necessary for a knight, particularly in *Graellent* in which the hero becomes a laughing-stock because of his lack of cash, and is unable to remedy the situation himself since he cannot even afford to leave the service of his king. Guillaume in *Vair Palefroi*, the knight in *Ombre* and *Conseil* are not wealthy either, compared with other members of their caste, but are not in such dire straits as Graellent. It is never found in the lays however that the sole motive a man has for seeking the love of a woman is the financial benefit he believes he can obtain with her, except possibly for *Doon* and *Tyolet*. *compare with monna?*

Both beauty and prowess can cause complications in a love affair, especially when prowess is considered not as an individual quality but as the expression of feudal values in general. In *Lanval*, *Graellent*, *Aristote* and *Haveloc* beauty is more than ornamental. It is the bedrock of the cases against the knights of the first two lays. As Arthur says,

Trop par est noble vostre amie,
Quant plus est bele sa meschine
E plus vaillanz que la reine.'

368-70

This is the "vantance" (l. 622) which Lanval cannot deny and which he must make good in court or suffer the consequences. In *Graellent* the court case is brought about by the king's insistence on displaying his wife in public. Graellent reprimands him for this:

Conques mais hom de ton parage
ne fist tel fait, ne tel folage;
de ta femme fais mostroson,
qu'il n'a çaiens un seul baron
qui tu ne le faces loer;
dient qu'il n'a sous siel sa per.
Por voir vos di une novele:
on puet assés trover plus belle.

451-59

These are very strong words; it was no part of a vassal's duty to criticise his lord's action in such a forthright fashion. The comment, we should note, insults the king:

Ne m'aime pas de boine amor
qui ma femme dist deshonor.

545-46

Graellent has failed as a vassal by making this remark. His lady, when he appears, agrees that he has been unwise:

Verités est il mesparla,
puisque lu rois s'en coreça.

well after?

but he is not incorrect either:

Mai de ce dist il verité:
n'est nule de si grant biauté,

que autre si bele ne soit.

This is the nub of the matter, and Graelent is acquitted in due form. In *Haveloc* and *Aristote*, as we have seen, beauty is a means to an end; discovery in the first, revenge (in a comic sense) in the second.

Feudalism itself can have a more powerful impact on a love affair, even though that affair may be informal and outside the norms of the formal institution of marriage. In *Aristote* Alixandre, like Gurun, is faced by his disapproving barons. Gurun puts his duties first. Alixandre is persuaded to do likewise. The great conqueror is entirely wrapped up in the pursuance of his love. As a result, he neglects his barons, but they dare not approach him and the task falls to Aristote who upbraids his pupil with verve, accusing him of dereliction of duty:

... "Mar avez deguerpis
Toz les barons de vo reame
Por l'amor d'une seule fame!"

142-44

He patiently explains to Alixandre why this is damaging:

C'on li atomoit a grant honte
De ce qu'en tel point se demaine
Que tote entiere la semaine
Est avec s'amie et arreste,
Ne ne fait ne soulaz ne feste
A sa chevalerie toute:

158-63

Why his men should be so disturbed by a lack of entertainment is not elucidated. However, since the monarch was the sun around whom the system turned, the source of pleasure and profit, it may be deduced that Alixandre is depriving them of their expected benefits and their personal relationship with the king, which was essential in a society founded on face-to-face relationships. Aristote is also disturbed by what he perceives as his pupil's instability:

Trop avez le sens destanpré
Quant por une pucele estrange
Voz cuers si malement se change
Qu'on n'i puet mesure trover.

168-71

Alixandre's behaviour is considered extravagant. Like many lovers, he fails to observe the necessary balance. Aristote objects, not on philosophical grounds, but because Alixandre's neglect of his men is socially disruptive. And what does Alixandre think of these comments? He concedes the point to his tutor (ll. 177-80), but with regret: "... com a grant meschief / Velt tote ma gent que se vive!" (ll. 200-1), again revealing the egoism of the lover. Like the girl in *Vair Palefroi* he privately laments that he is misunderstood:

Mes maistres et mi home ensanble
Me blasmoient trop durement
De ce que trop eschagement
Aloie joer avoec ax,
Et mes maistres dist que c'ert max,
Qui laidement m'en a repris.
Neporquant bien sai qu'ai mespris

Quant por ax desfis ainc en mi
La volenté de fin ami,
Mais ge doutai despit et honte."

228-37

In this particular conflict between love and social expectations, the latter win, as Alixandre rather sheepishly confesses to his *amie*. She is immune to such feudal logic (perhaps because she is a woman and a foreigner?) and instantly determines to tackle Aristote, who has been the spokesman of the feudal order. In her words to Alixandre though she opposes Love not to "the establishment", as represented by the barons, but to learning:

Se ge vif demain jusqu'a nonne
Et Amors sa force abandone,
Qui poissance ja ne faudra,
Ne ja vers moi ne li vaudra
Dialectique ne grammaire!

245-49

This is a personal attack on Aristote as an individual responsible for their plight, not as a representative of a feudal group in which he is in fact something of an outsider. Even after his humiliation, Aristote maintains that he is right – or at least not entirely wrong:

"Puis que par force m'en estuet
Faire folie si aperte,
Voz n'en poiez aler sanz perte
Ne sans blasme de vostre gent!"

499-502

If anything, his experience has taught him to be more wary of love as a source of the irrational and his defeat is only partial. But in admitting the power of love to force him to such actions, Henri considers Aristote has made proper reparation and can be forgiven, the more so since Alixandre wins the right to direct his own acts:

... ses maistres li abandone
Sa volenté a parformir,
Quar n'a raison au retenir.

513-15

Like *Fresne*, *Aristote* reveals constraints forced on a lord by his vassals. Gurun's vassals are prepared to accept his liaison, but only if it does not interfere with their own priorities. *Aristote* is more lighthearted, and although the pretext for the rupture between Alixandre and his *amie* is based on feudal conceptions, it is actually Aristote's excessive knowledge that is the real target, possibly because the audience for this lay was not entirely composed of nobles: "C'est pour le monde "clérical" des écoles parisiennes qu'Henri a rimé son poème". In both lays the basic social order is not threatened. In *Eliduc* this is not entirely so. The hero's love is interwoven with conflict in both the feudal and ecclesiastical fields and resolution is effected not by him, but by his wife.

Eliduc is the liege man of the king of Brittany, to whom he owes his principal duty, as the king reminds him:

weir
Par sun grant busuin le mandot
E sumeneit e conjurot
Par l'aliance qu'il li fist,
Quant il l'umage de lui prist,

Que s'en venist pur lui aider;

565-69

As we know, Eliduc has been practically exiled through ^ucalumny, but the king makes amends by punishing those who caused the difficulties. While absent from Brittany, Eliduc seeks employment as a mercenary in the service of the king of Exeter. This is signalled by the oath of fealty he swears to the king:

Un an entier l'ad retenu
E ceus ki sunt od lui venu,
La fiance de lui en prist;

267-69

This practice was normal (see Chapter 2) and binds Eliduc only for the time specified. When he receives the summons from his liege lord it does not occur to him to ignore it, and the English king, while he offers cash inducements for him to stay, does not insist on the precise fulfilment of Eliduc's contract. In any case, Eliduc has already effectively pacified the land. Eliduc promises to return later if necessary "od grant esforz de ^rchevalers" (l. 640), an apparently satisfactory compromise. Eliduc is in fact remarkably successful as a soldier, able to defeat with ease the marauding *per*, and in Brittany seemingly able to make peace at will:

Mes quant li termes apreça
Que la pucele li numa,
De pais fere s'est entremis;
Tuz acorda ses enemis.

745-48

Taking his duties as a vassal seriously, Eliduc is faced with a dilemma as far as Guilliadun is concerned. He is bound to do nothing that would harm or shame either of his lords; thus he cannot ask for Guilliadun's love "tant pur ceo qu'il est od le rei" (l. 476), because he cannot offer the honourable issue of marriage, and he cannot refuse to leave when recalled. There would appear to be an impasse, but love is not subject to reason, and Eliduc compromises. While he does nothing active to secure her love, he freely accepts it when it is offered (ll. 519-30), although to begin with he holds to the framework of his contract with her father insofar as he has agreed to stay for a limited period. However, he will not leave unless Guilliadun allows it. Furthermore, manifestations of love are confined to those which permit them to avoid the dangers inseparable from a sexual relationship:

Mes n'ot entre eus nule folie,
Joliveté ne vileinie:
De douneer e de parler
E de lur beaus aveirs doner
Esteit tute la drüerie
Par amur en lur cumpainie.

575-80

This is one of the few occasions in any lay in which a couple refrains voluntarily from proceeding directly to the ultimate solace, as Andreas would have it. Their relationship gains stability from their restraint; until the crisis precipitated by Eliduc's recall. His first thoughts suggest a change in heart:

Mis ki k'il turt a mesprisun,
Vē⁵li (Guilliadun) ferai tuz jurs raisun;

Tute sa volonté ferai
E par sun conseil err[er]ai.

605-8

He gives priority to Guilliadun over all other considerations, and when he tells her what has happened, his abdication seems complete:

Mes jeo ferai vostre pleisir,
Que ke me deivè avenir

677-78

We note two things though: first, that Eliduc has not revealed all the pertinent facts to Guilliadun, who is thus unable to make a reasoned decision, and secondly, when she requests an elopement, that he is not completely lost to the dictates of feudal duty:

'Bele, jeo sui par serement
A vostre pere veirement –
Si jeo vus en menoe ad mei,
Jeo li mentireie ma fej –
De si k'al terme ki fu mis.

685-89

There is something specious about his reasoning. Certainly Marie's audience would have found the idea of a vassal eloping with his lord's daughter distasteful and a major breach of faith calling for the strongest countermeasures. This is not to say that elopement in itself was acceptable; most definitely it was not. Eliduc remains technically true to his oath, but the manoeuvre is at best dubious. However, it enables Eliduc to avoid disclosure. This is important as if Guilliadun had known of his marriage, she would either have been obliged to renounce him there and then, or to elope with him as an accomplice. As it is, she is very much a victim of Eliduc's evasions and the shock of learning the truth goes deep. As she says to Guildeluëc: "Peché ad fet k'il m'enginna" (l. 1076), and her summary stresses her disillusionment:

Trahi[e] m'ad, ne sai quei deit.
Mu t est fole què humme creit.'

1083-84

Guilliadun's first contact with Eliduc is the consequence of an attempt to seize her by force. In *Guigemar* the lady finds herself in this same situation, except that she has actually been taken. Meriadus, effectively captures her:

Il la saisit par le mantel,
Od lui l'en meine en sun chastel.

705-6

Following this, as we have seen, he refuses to release her and keeps her prisoner just as much as did her husband. The lovers are reunited at a tournament that Meriadus "afia / Cuntre celui que il guerreia" (ll. 745-46), to which Guigemar is specially invited. The attitude of the lovers towards him is interesting in that both accept he has rights over the lady. She will not attempt to unknot Guigemar's shirt without his express permission and Guigemar does not feel able simply to walk away with her. Instead he offers an exchange:

Meriaduc requer e pri
Rende la mei, sue merci!
Ses hummes liges devendrai,

Deus anz u treis li servirai,
Od cent chevalers u od plus.'

841-45

Service in return for his love; feudal concepts used as a means of gaining his lady. But Meriadus refuses:

Jeo ne sui mie si suspris
Ne si destrei[z] pur nule guere
Que de ceo me deiez requere.
Jeo la trovai, si la tendrai
E cuntre vus la defendrai.'

848-52

Since the other knights present take Guigemar's part in the subsequent war, it is clearly felt that the offer is equitable and Meriadus is wrong to reject it. This is the only lay in which a knight is obliged to fight specifically to gain possession of his *amie* and, like Eliduc, Guigemar shows himself to be competent in his profession, besieging the town and starving it out. Meriadus perishes.

Equitan is unsuccessful. He is presented in terms of his rank, "sire de Nauns, jostis' e reis" (l. 12), but as a negligent ruler from the start, preferring hunting and war to the more mundane duties of kingship, which are left to the seneschal (ll. 23-4). In view of this, it is going a little too far to say, as Glyn Burgess does, that not only does Equitan cuckold his vassal but also obliges him to do the hard work of ruling,²⁸ although as the affair progresses, the seneschal takes on more responsibilities, including that of justice (ll. 195-96). Equitan is aware from the start, as is Eliduc, that there are obstacles to his love, namely that in wooing this particular woman, he disturbs the feudal proprieties:

E si jo l'aim, jeo ferai mal:
Ceo est la femme al seneschal.
Garder li dei amur e fei,
Si cum jeo voil k'il face a mei.

71-4

He risks breaking the trust on which social order rests. Like Eliduc, he finds a way round his dilemma. Eliduc limited himself, to begin with, to *purus amor*, and in the strictly legalistic sense (and Eliduc is nothing if not a literalist in the interpretation of his oaths) he does not break faith with the king. Equitan sets feudal values aside altogether, since these obstruct his wishes, and embraces instead those more commonly associated with lyric poetry. Thus he can court the lady with a clear conscience, believing (or making himself believe) that it is right for the lady to take a lover:

Si bele dame tant mar fust;
S'ele n'amast u dru eüst!

79-80

It would be beneficial to both of them if she were to take a lover, especially
← since she could only improve the man she chose:

Suz ciel n'ad humme, s'ele amast,
Ki durement n'en amendast.

83-4

Seen in this perspective, it would be unreasonable of the seneschal to object – again, a

convention drawn from fiction rather than life. Having convinced himself that he is acting in strict propriety, he can then make his approach to the lady, which Marie reports indirectly:

Saver li fet qu'il meort pur li;
Del tut li peot faire confort
E bien li poet doner l[a] mort

114-16

This is highly melodramatic, but quite conventional. The lady is not greatly impressed by his plaint, requesting time to think about the proposition (in terms that recall those used by Guigemar's *amie* ll. 509-12). She is surprised, not only at the abrupt nature of the request, but more especially that it is made in the first place:

Vus estes rei de grant noblesce;
Ne sui mie de ~~te~~ richesce
Que [a] mei [vus] deiez arester
De drüerie ne de amer

121-24

She perceives a gap in their respective social rank that renders love between ^{them} impossible. Andreas certainly takes up the question of partners of unequal rank (e.g. the first dialogue between the commoner and the lady of the high nobility and that between the great lord and the commoner) but he does not address the precise difficulties arising from a relationship between a king and a dependent. Moreover, it must be remembered that love between those of unequal status was deprecated and Andreas pronounces that it is unwise to love a woman one could not marry (see Chapter 3). For the lady "amur n'est pruz se n'est egals" (l. 137), and this is not so in ^{his} case, as she says:

Ne sereit pas üel partie
Entre nus deus la drüerie.
Pur ceo quë estes rei puissaunz
E mi sire est de vus tenaunz,

131-34

She takes her rank from her husband; both are obviously subservient to Equitan. The fact that this inequality exists leads her to make the accusation that Equitan is using his position as their superior to force her compliance; he seeks love "per seignurie" (l. 148). Furthermore, she perceives dangers inherent in unequal relationship.

S'aukuns aime plus ha[u]tement
Que [a] sa richesce nen apent,
Cil se dut[e] de tuerien.

143-45

This is prophetic, for she does not believe that Equitan will remain faithful to her. Her reservations then are solidly based on feudal concepts current at the time, of which Equitan is aware, namely that love exists uneasily where there is a great discrepancy in rank, and Equitan's knowledge that he should not disturb the relationship he necessarily has with the seneschal. The lady is genuinely concerned about the situation and there is no reason to accuse her of coquetry. It is interesting to note that the only objections she raises are social. She accepts that the links binding her husband to Equitan present an obstacle to the latter's proposition. Never once does she raise the question of marriage itself as a reason for

abstaining from this (or indeed, from any other) relationship. Religious scruples are not mentioned at all, by her or by Equitan.

The lady's preoccupations are valid. Equitan knows this, but as we have seen, he resorts to another system of values that permits him to continue, by stating that inequality of rank is irrelevant provided the lady (the lesser partner) possesses certain qualities:

Suz ciel n'ad dame, s'ele est sage,
Curteise e franche de curage,
Pur quei d'amer se tiegne chiere,
Que el ne seit mie novelere,
S'el n'eüst fors sul sun mantel,
Que uns riches princes de chastel
Ne se deüst pur li pener
E léalment e bien amer. 155-62

Success depends on the innate worth of the woman, which the man should strive to deserve. Only the fickle – “cil ki de amur sunt nov[e]lier” (l. 163) – and the uncourtly –

Que pur avoir ne pur grant fieu
Mettent lur peine en malveis liu. 153-54

are destined to be deceived. Equitan's solution again turns away from the actuality perceived by the lady. He reverses the normal order:

Ne me tenez mie pur rei,
Mes pur vostre hum e vostre ami! 170-71

This also satisfies lyric conventions in which the suitor was frequently of inferior rank to the lady. The lady finally agrees and the relationship is sealed by the exchange of rings as love replaces their feudal (and conjugal) obligations (ll. 181-82). These promises are kept faithfully, but are the cause of their own destruction:

Bien les tiendrent, mut s'entr'amerent;
Puis en mururent e finerent. 183-84

Up to this point, Marie's attitude towards the lovers is not unsympathetic. After all, she has the lady employ similar arguments to some used by Guigemar's lady, and there is a degree of inequality in other relationships, notably Fresne and Gurun (though here of course the reader knows that Fresne is really noble), and in *Eliduc* and *Deus Amanz*. The picture darkens only when the truth of two statements becomes obvious: that the lady fears abandonment forced on Equitan by his responsibilities as king, and Marie's general statement on the nature of love itself, that “nul n'i deit reisun garder” (l. 20). Consequently, she suspects that he will marry “fille a un rei” (l. 215) – this is what is expected of him – and he first suggests that under certain circumstances he would marry the lady:

Sacez de veir e si creez:
Si vostre sire fust finez,
Reïne e dame vus fereie; 225-27

This is surely more self-delusion. In the light of Gurun's experience it is reasonable to

suppose that Equitan's vassals would be far from pleased with such a marriage. And it is hypothetical in that the seneschal is very much alive. The lack of reason is even more acute in the way the lady calmly proposes murdering her husband and Equitan concurs. Both pass beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour, consulting only their own desires and disregarding those, quite legitimate, of other people.

In these lays, there is a conflict between the free exercise of love and the expectations society has of its members. This is also true of *Fresne*. Up to a point, love is accepted, but it is subordinate to other imperatives, at least in the eyes of those who do not love, who see their own interests menaced by what they consider to be irresponsible behaviour. The irresponsibility comes from the highest in the land e.g. Equitan and Alixandre, which makes it much more dangerous. This is also true of those lays in which queens attempt to seduce knights, i.e. in *Lanval*, *Graelent* and *Guingamor*. In *Graelent* the queen has loved the knight for some time before making up her mind to sound him out on the subject. Like Equitan, she is undisturbed by thoughts of adultery; unlike him she does not consider the feudal ramifications. She does not approach Graelent as a suppliant either, but issues a command:

je vos aim mout parfaitement.
 Onques n'amai fors mon segnor,
 mais je vous aim de bone amor.
 Je vos otroi ma druerie,
 soiés amis e jou amie.

116-20

Granting her love to an inferior, the queen does not expect he will refuse the proffered "druerie". More alive to the kind of proprieties expressed in *Equitan*, he does so:

... il ne peut pas estre ensi,
 car je sui saudoiers le roi;
 loiauté li promis e foi,
 e de sa vie e de s'anor,
 quant a lui remes l'autre jor;
 ja por moi honte n'i ara."

122-28

Quite clearly acceptance of such an offer is harmful to the king's honour if not to his life. Again, he does not consider engaging in an affair to be harmful in itself; it is more a case of operating selectivity in choosing a partner. Not ^{that} the queen admits the argument. It is some time before she ceases pursuing Graelent, still hoping to win his love. When this fails, her revenge hits Graelent in his ability to perform his duties:

a son segnor mal le metoit
 e volentiers en mesdisoit.
 Tant com li rois maintint la guerre,
 remest Graelens en la terre,
 tant despendi qu'il n'ot que prendre,
 car li rois le faisoit atendre,
 ki li detenoit ses saudees;
 ne l'en avoit nules donees,
 la roïne li destornoit.
 Au roi disoit e conseilloit
 ke nule rien ne li donast
 fors le conroi, qu'il n'en alast;

139-50

logie

Lacking money, Graelent cannot leave, ^{and} he cuts a sorry figure as we have seen, and becomes an object of ridicule. Thwarted love brings him down in the world.

In *Guingamor* there is an additional complication in that the hero is not only a valued knight, but the king's nephew and heir as well. In this lay the queen acts far more on impulse and Guingamor is more subtle than Graelent. The queen begins with ~~the~~ innocuous statement that Guingamor's merits have brought him a mistress unsurpassed in the kingdom (ll. 71-9). He replies that he is ignorant of this, not having sought such love. The queen is therefore obliged to clarify her words so as to remove any doubt as to who the lady is:

ne soiez mie si eschis;
moi devez vos tres bien amer, 88-9

Guingamor realises that the queen has strayed beyond the bounds of propriety (ll. 93-4) but tactfully allows her a way out with honour:

“Bien sai, dame, q'amer vos doi,
fame estes mon seignor le roi,
et si vos doi porter honnor
conme a la fame mon seignor.” 95-8

She however disregards the way of safety and finally states her position without any ambiguity:

“Je ne di mie amer ainsi,
amer vos voil de druerie
et que je soie vostre amie. 100-2

She does not command, but asks for love. As for Guingamor, his reactions are manifested not in words but physically: “grante honte en a, tout en rogi” (l. 109). He leaves immediately. The queen accepts this, and is fearful only for her reputation. She does not seek to embroil Guingamor with the king, and although she knows the quest she proposes is dangerous (ten knights having failed already) it is within the grasp of a brave and courageous knight, who may even be elevated by the attempt, and not diminished by the shame of a trial. In these lays the attempted seduction serves to explain why Graelent is reduced to poverty and ridicule, and why Guingamor is eager to accept a perilous undertaking. In *Lanval* it is more central in that the seduction is the occasion on which the knight transgresses the lady's demand for silence. There is a certain ambiguity in *Lanval*: why does Guinevere approach Lanval and with what purpose? She singles him out from a group of prestigious knights (l. 241) which perhaps signifies more than normal interest, but then Marie has made it clear that Lanval's stock at court is rising. She then arranges the entertainment in the orchard at which she takes the opportunity to speak to Lanval alone. How far the entertainment was suggested with the intention of permitting Guinevere to do this is left unsaid. Guinevere speaks of a regard for Lanval that has its roots in the past and makes the celebrated offer “ma druerie vus otrei” (l. 267)²⁹ and also, expressed as an imperative, what she expects his reaction to be: “mut devez

estre lié de mei" (l. 268), the expectation of a great lady ^{from} an inferior. Lanval, like his two colleagues, objects on feudal grounds:

Ja pur vus ne pur vostre amur
Ne mesf[e]rai a mun seignur.

273-74

The queen riposs with her damaging accusation of homosexuality. This is insulting to Lanval personally, but also has serious implications concerning his relationship with Arthur:

Mut est mi sires maubilliz
Que pres de lui vus ad suffert;
Mun escient que Deus en pert!

284-86

Sexual deviation renders Lanval highly unsuitable as a vassal and the insult is doubled, hence the vehemence of Lanval's reply. This anger prompts him not only to reveal his love, but also to insult Guinevere by comparing her unfavourably with his *amie's* maidens (although his insult is true; hers is not).

As in *Graelent*, Lanval's troubles arise from an insult to the queen, although in the former the queen does not bear false witness as Guinevere does. She merely states what is known to be true, that she and Graelent do not like each other. Arthur takes the same view as Graelent's lord: that in insulting the queen, the king has been disparaged:

Trop començastes vilein plait
De moi hunir e aviler
E la reïne lendengier.
Vanté par estes noble vostre amie,
Quant plus est bele sa meschine
E plus vaillanz que le reïne.

364-70

It is on this basis that Lanval stands trial, since no one is disposed to take up the separate matter of his alleged seduction of Guinevere.³⁰ As in *Graelent*, the solution is simple: both knights have only to produce their ladies in court to prove they spoke the truth and that "pur vilté nel dist de li"(l. 456). Once the ladies have duly appeared, their unwise words can be verified. The women appreciate the difficulties their lovers are in. Lanval's puts the case clearly:

'Reis, j'ai amé un tuen vassal:
Veez le ci! ceo est Lanval!
Acheisuné fu en ta curt –
Ne vuil mie que a mal li turt –

615-18

and both make the same demand:

Se par moi s'en puet aquiter,
li rois li doit quite clamer."

^{ref?}
Graelent

629-30

As the courts find no difficulty in awarding the palm of beauty to the ladies, Graelent and Lanval are freed from their imprisonment. Love saves them, since the ladies were not obliged to appear, the knights having disobeyed their injunctions, albeit under great provocation. Neither knight chooses to remain at court, although in both cases they cannot suppose

forgiveness goes so far as to allow them to return with impunity to their ladies. There is no hint that the ladies intend to do anything other than save their lovers from the feudal consequences of their actions. Graelent in particular has to undergo real danger before the lady agrees to take him back as her lover, and this only at the behest of her maidens.

Guingamor differs from these two lays in that the lady does not ask for silence as a condition for love to continue; ^{breaks a natural law} eating forbidden fruit, and the consequences are physical, not feudal. In *Desiré* indiscreet speech is again the occasion for revelation, but the circumstances are entirely different, deriving from ecclesiastical and not feudal considerations. This matter will be dealt with separately.

In *Lanval* and *Graelent* (also *Guingamor* and *Desiré*) love has one consequence not found in other lays. In *Guingamor*, *Aristote*, *Eliduc*, *Fresne*, indeed in most lays, a way is eventually found to reconcile the lovers with their society. In *Equitan* and *Bisclavret* society asserts its rights. Couples win recognition and integration, or face retribution. In the aforementioned lays, this is not so. *Lanval* and *Graelent*, both of whom have been unfairly treated by those who owed them honour and protection, leave the world of humanity and never return. This they do willingly, despite the uncertainty as to their future in the Otherworld. *Guingamor*, more concerned with his reputation and "aventure" is so attracted by life in the marvellous palace that he intends to spend the rest of his life there. His return to his homeland is meant to tie up the loose ends of his adventure. In the event, he is separated from his world by the supernatural passage of time. *Desiré* is ambiguous; *Desiré* has never had to face the calumny and poverty experienced by *Lanval* and *Graelent*, and is fortunate enough to be explicitly forgiven by his *amie*. His children are established in Scottish society thanks to the lady's efforts, but she and *Desiré* both leave his lands forever, experiencing no desire to return to Calatir. To this extent, some men, finding no happiness in their world, take refuge in flight. Dietmar Rieger comments on this

"si l'individu – et c'est la "leçon" de la fin du lai (*Lanval*) – veut assurer la continuité de son bonheur, il ne peut la réaliser dans l'ordre perturbé qui lui refuse la réalisation de son existence individuelle, mais uniquement là où ce bonheur pouvait et peut seul encore être trouvé: dans l'évasion".³¹

This type of conclusion is relatively uncommon in the lays however. A means is often found of reconciling the wishes of individuals with the exigencies of society.

This attitude prevails if we consider the relationship between love and the Church. Adultery and fornication are often considered not as sins, as we have already discussed, but as social misdemeanours whose consequences are limited to possible punishment by higher social authorities and not by the Church through its representatives. *Fresne* employs certain notions of canon law as a means of allowing the union of the principals. It would have been possible for the problem of *Fresne*'s identity to be resolved before *Codre*'s marriage to *Gurun* rather than after it, which would have avoided the problem altogether. By postponing this,

Marie increases the tension. The reader has every reason to suppose that Fresne has lost Gurun beyond any hope; and is the more pleased when thanks to the intervention of the archbishop, this proves not to be the case. The influence of canon law is unobtrusive in *Fresne*, but works to the lovers' advantage. In *Bisclavret*, and *Melion*, the application of canon law is more dubious in that the knights are, at the end of the lays, separated from their wives, with their peers giving every indication of satisfaction, and in the former, the wife remains with her second husband although it seems improbable that this would have been permitted at the time Marie was writing. The least we might expect in such circumstances is a period of penance, but even this is not present. In *Eliduc* the solution proposed by Guildeléc and thankfully accepted by Eliduc relies on a loose application of the Church's teachings. Such action was, at the time of Marie, dubiously permissible, but still existed. Since the lay is set in the past (as all lays are), it gains more acceptability. It cannot have been commonplace after the declarations of Alexander III on this type of annulment. *Equitan*, like *Bisclavret* and *Melion*, does not involve the Church at all, and depicts a relationship inadmissible in feudal terms and also contrary to the Church's ethics. It is however feudal preoccupations that predominate. The Church is not involved.

Nevertheless, in some lays there is a closer connection made by the authors between love and religious conceptions. This is especially true of *Conseil*, *Oiselet*, *Épine*, *Desiré*, *Yonec*, in which more serious attention is paid to Christian precepts.

Conseil presents the most striking use of doctrine. The knight expounds in general terms, for the lady's benefit, a theory of the correct conduct of a love affair. Here it should be noted that at the end of the lay the audience discovers the lady is married, but there is every reason to assume this from the start, since it was rare for a noblewoman to be unmarried. The knight is therefore happily giving advice on what we can only take as adulterous affairs, and the lady is in no way scandalised by this – how could she be when her pretext for addressing the knight in the first place is which man she should choose as a lover?

The knight begins his teaching on the interconnection between love and religion when addressing the ravages caused by "la bée", disdain. The term is unknown to the lady, who requests more information, which the knight supplies (ll. 404-561). Briefly, he argues that disdain leads women to reject otherwise suitable lovers, with deleterious effects for their beauty as, in time, they come to regret their former haughtiness with approaching old age:

Par tel bee, par tel desir
 Passe tant vespre et tant matin
 Que sa biaute va a declin
 Tant que sa iouente est alee.
 Lors peut bien dire qu'en la bee
 A cele usee sa biaute:
 Ele a espoir tel refuse
 Dont ele se repentiroit
 S'ele recouurer i pooit:
 Mes qu'est ale, n'est a venir,
 Si vient trop tart au repentir,

Qu'ele s'en va puis que nonne est,
Et si vessel sont au port prest,
Et si voile sont ia drecie,
Qu'a sa iouente a pris congie;
Ses cheuaus l'en porte sanz frain.

460-75

The temporal consequences of pride are unpleasant and strongly joined to the remorseless passage of time as lost opportunities, never to be repeated, are lamented. This regret might seem sufficient punishment, but this is not so. As in *Trot*, it continues after death:

Car se l'escripture ne ment,
En enfer va en son estage
Por demorer a heritage,
Que iames ne s'en partira
Tant con Jhesu-Cris(t) duerra,
Qui n'a fini ne commencement.

498-503

There is no possibility admitted of a spell in Purgatory. Those who refuse love are offered the certainty of eternal damnation – though on the basis of what “escripture” it is difficult to say. Certainly the gospels urge Christians to love one another, but scarcely in the context suggested by the knight. This is the stick; the carrot is the hope of Paradise, for the knight is an optimist. The key is repentance, and fairly late repentance at that: “selonc la fin iugie serons” (l. 512), he confidently announces, incidentally revealing that there is a need for repentance. This is achieved in a striking manner, and no doubt any contemporary theologian would have derided the knight’s reasoning. If, he declares, a lady has conducted herself well in her affairs,

S'une fame a eu assez
De ses bons, de ses volentez,
A son gre et a son plesir,
Celeement et a loisir,
Et ele a bel son cors deduit
Desoz la fleur, desoz le fruit,
Desoz la fueille es placeis,
En beles chambres ses delis,
Par nuit et par ior ses solaz
De son ami entre ses braz –

513-22

(and this cannot refer to anything other than *amor mixtus*), then, as a direct result, she and others like her, will be forgiven:

Cil et celes qui tout ainsi
Font, dame, s'il crient merci
Jhesu, le nostre creator,
Quant par viellece ou par langor
Les couient du siecle partir,
Lor mesfez les fait repentir
De si bon cuer entirement
Que Jhesu-Criz tout vraiment
Lor pardone toz lor pechiez
De quoi il les voit entichiez,

531-40

As an example of a repentant sinner, he cites Longinus – Mary Madgalene might have been more suited to his purpose. According to this lay then, those whose transgressions have been

confined within certain limits, which are not totally specified but which we may assume are well understood, will be prompted by Christ Himself to repent of these deviations from the moral standards of the Church (but only when they have no further interest in love) and so win their way to Paradise. This doctrine gives pause for thought, since in no way can it be accepted that penance was instituted in order to permit sinful activities to take place. The knight is bending repentance to suit his own ends. His teaching is tempered somewhat by some further comments on sin, repentance and mercy:

Ne vous lo ie pas a pechier,
Mes ie vous os bien conseillier
Que, se vous en pechiez manez,
Onques ne vous ne desperez,
Ne vous ne nus qui cest lai oie,
Que trop durement se desvoie
Cil qui cuide qu'il soit perdu:
Cil seus pechiez le dampne plus
Que nus pechiez qu'il peust faire.

547-55

This counsel is addressed to the reader/audience as well as the lady, so it is obviously intended to have a general application. Despairing of forgiveness is certainly a sin – whether or not it is greater than fornication and adultery is difficult to gauge. Again, it is explicit that sin is involved; the knight's advice is centred on avoiding its consequences. The knight sounds a warning about penitential practices – that it is no use donning a hairshirt, if one despairs of mercy. As he says,

Diex ne met onques en oubli
Le pecheor qui merci crie,
Quant il deguerpist sa folie
Ainz le recoit mout liement.'

558-61

It is necessary however to seek for mercy, and as everyone would have known, a precondition would be the abandonment of the sin, which is indeed the case here, although a theologian would doubtless point out there is little merit in waiting until decrepitude sets in before repenting.

The lady accepts the knight's argument inasmuch as she passes no comment on it and no objection, but goes to interrogate the knight on the joys of love. However, this is the pattern normally used in *Conseil*: a question is asked; the knight responds, and the lady makes some anodyne comment before going on to the next matter. The lady does not, as do those in *De Amore*, engage in criticism of her interlocutor's words, and here particularly, one feels some comment would be valuable. The author is trying to reconcile two beliefs that are actually incompatible: the Church's demand for absolute fidelity with secular conceptions which permit a certain amount of extra-marital activity, provided it is strictly controlled. Repentance is the medium through which this reconciliation is effected. The author is sincere in his theorising, for he is not ironic; nevertheless, one is permitted to doubt the efficacy of his solution. *Conseil* gives a Christian gloss to the question of love in aristocratic society. *Trot*

employs a similar argument without the Christian element. We have seen that severe punishment – eternal – is meted out to those who obdurately refuse to love, but this is expressed in more homely terms:

mais se nule dame ot parler
de nos, e nos mals raconter,
se ele n'aime en son vivant,
ce sachiés, bien certainement,
qu'ele avoeques nos en venra,
ki trop tart s'en repentira;
car li vilains nos seut conter:
ki a tart commence a fermer
s'estable, cil ki a perdu
son ceval, dont est irascu.

277-86

In this lay, the only way of avoiding damnation (even of a non-Christian variety) is to comply with the imperative of love. This done, there is no need to repent later. *Trot's* perspective is not Christian and repentance would be out of place. As for *Conseil*, it is in the author's mind that not loving will lead to the same consequences as those suffered in *Trot*. Refusal to love – a conscious decision – is fraught with peril for the individual, although in *Conseil* at least, the Christian background might seem to preclude such teaching.

Oiselet is more orthodox but less specific and concerned largely with matters other than love. As in *Graelent* the author has inserted a passage on love which is quite independent of the original subject matter.³² The bird's doctrine is directed in his "lai" 125 to a specific audience:

... chevalier et clerc et lai,
Qui vos entremettez d'amors
Et qui en souffrés les dolors!
Et a vos le di je, puceles,
Qui le siecle volez avoir ...

← line omitted Qui estes avenanz et beles

126-31

Nobles then, of both sexes, and also, uniquely in a lay, the clergy. Some are excluded:

Li aver sont li covoteus,
Et li tenant li envieus,
Et li vilain sont li mauvais,
Et li felon sont li pusnais;

149-52

It is in fact reminiscent of the *Roman de la Rose*. Love is strictly for the noble. The bird commences with an exhortation similar to those of the *Urbain* and *Chastoiement*:

Vous devez Dieu amer avant,
Tenir la loi et son conmant,
Volentiers aler au moustier;
Quar du service Dieu oïr
Ne vous puet il nus maus venir;

133-38

Similarly, in *Conseil*, the knight gives this advice when the lady asks what she should do "por plus bel courir mon afere" (l. 360):

Toz iors aier cuer et voloir
De dieu servir et honorer,

362-63

Love of God is given primacy in *Oiselet* (and is not neglected in *Conseil*) but those who have other preferences need not, as the bird explains, despair:

Dieus et amors sont d'un acort.
Dieus aime honor et cortoisie,
Et bone amor ne het il mie.
Dieus escoute bele priere,
Amours ne le met mie arriere.
Dieus covoite sor tout larguece;
Il n'a nule mauvese teche.
Dieus aime et honor et bonté,
Et amors aime leauté.

140-48

God approves of love; both nurture similar values. God's approval is limited to "bone amor", just as in *Conseil* the knight states that "de bone amors ne vient nus maus" (l. 231). This implies the existence of "male amor", differentiated in some way from the "bone amor" the author praises. Unfortunately what it consists of is not made explicit. It is quite possible of course that authors, having enumerated what they considered "bone amor" to consist of – generosity, good manners, a concern for the virtues subsumed under the headings of nobility, courtesy and discretion – considered it unnecessary to draw up a similar list of undesirable qualities. The intelligent reader can be left to draw his or her own conclusions. This is more likely in a society deeply imbued with such values. As the bird remarks,

... sens, cortoisie et honor
Et leauté maintint amor,

153-54

No one need fear love, and

... se vous a ce vous tenez,
Dieu et le siecle avoir poez."

155-56

God and Love are not identical, but they are compatible. Paris comments

"... l'oiseau mêle dans son petit discours l'amour céleste et l'amour terrestre, mais il ne les confond pas. Il esquivé les difficultés graves qu'aurait soulevées cette alliance pour des moralistes plus sérieux, et insiste sur la ressemblance des qualités que doit posséder un bon chrétien et un "fin amant".³³

In fact, little is said about the duties of the Christian beyond the injunction to attend divine service. The rest of the bird's exhortations apply to virtues that are secular, but which can apply in domains other than love. The bird is able to make such statements because they are kept very general – nothing like as specific as *Conseil*, for example. Nevertheless, the author, by inserting this passage, or "lai", into the highly moralistic tale of the three precepts, extends its didactic content into fields not envisaged in either the *Disciplina Clericalis* or the *Chastoiement d'un père à son fils*. The content of the passage is however extraneous to the matter contained in the precepts – "ne pleure pas ce qu'aïnc n'eüs" (l. 261); "ne croire pas quanques t'os dire" (l. 291); "de ce que tu tiens a tes mains / ne gete pas jus a tes piez" (ll.

316-17). The unfortunate villein is debarred by his low birth from understanding the sense of the maxims and the teaching on love is beyond his capabilities. Although this too is not in the likely sources for the lay, *Oiselet* concludes on a pessimistic note, unusual in the lays:

... a tele eure s'en ala (the bird)
Qu'ainc puis el vergier ne revint.
Les fueilles chirent du pint,
Li vergiers chei et secha
Et la fontaine restancha.
Li vilains perdi son deduit.

382-87

But he was never worthy of his chance possession in any case. Both *Oiselet* and *Conseil* invoke God in an attempt to prove, to their authors' satisfaction, that they are not advocating practices that are ultimately harmful to the individual. In *Conseil* the theory is applied by the knight and lady to their own case. Presumably since they eventually marry, there is no need for them to repent.

In other lays the intervention of the Church, or even of God, is limited to individual cases and is not meant to have general application. In *Épine* for example, God aids lovers against their parents, for the girl prays to be reunited with her lost *ami*:

... "Pere celestre
Se onques fu, ne ja puet estre,
c'onques avenistement
e chou c'on prie a nule gent,
par coi nus hom fust deshaitiés,
biax Sire, prenge t'en pitié
que li miens amis od mei fust
e jou od lui, s'estre peüst.
E Diex! con seroie garie;
nus ne set con j'ai dure vie,
e nus savoir ne le poroit,
fors sol ichil ki ameroit
la riens qu'il n'auroit a nul fuer,
mais cil le set trestout par cuer.

239-52

Her prayer is rapidly answered, as she exclaims to the boy, "Diex a oïe ma priere" (l. 295). Looked at dispassionately, there is no reason why God should not perform a minor miracle since the lovers flout no basic tenet of the Church's doctrine on love or marriage. That the girl should be transported while sleeping to the ford is a convenient way of bringing the lovers together, but the author could equally well have had recourse to the facilities provided by the Otherworld, as Marie does in providing Guigemar and his lady with the magnificent ship (ll. 151-86). There is nothing overtly Christian about this ship in Marie's descriptions; however, a Christian interpretation is possible.³⁴ More contentions is divine intervention in *Yonec*. As in *Épine*, a woman prays for assistance in her need, and the request itself is to receive what the lady believes existed in the past:

- Mut ai sovent oï c'antier
Que l'em suleit jadis trover
Aventures en cest país,
Ki rechatouent les pensis:
Chevalers trovoënt puceles

A lur talent gentes e beles,
 E dames truvoënt amanz
 Beaus e curteis, pruzje vaillanz,
 Si que blamees n'en est eient,
 Ne nul fors eles nes veëient.
 Si ceo peot estrë e ceo fu,
 Si unc a nul est avenu,
 Deu, ki de tut ad poësté,
 Il en face ma volenté!

91-104

And the prayer is answered, for Muldumarec arrives, who has been awaiting the call, having long loved her:

Mes ne poeie a vus venir
 Ne fors de mun país eissir,
 Si vus ne me eüssez requis.

131-33

Why this limitation exists is never stated, but prayer lifts it – though Muldumarec surely interprets it rather loosely; the lady after all is speaking in the most general of terms.

The lady's reaction to his sudden arrival and declaration is dictated by two factors. She is very much attracted to him – the influence of his remarkable beauty makes itself felt – but she is not, for all that, unconditionally prepared to accept him:

... dit qu'ele en ferat sun dru,
 S'en Deu creïst e issi fust
 Que lur amur estre peüst.

138-40

This reminds us of the Church's objections to the impediment of *cultus disparatus* (see Chapter 2) forbidding marriages between those of different religions (conversion was considered essential for the non-Christian partner e.g. the Saracen princesses of the *chanson de geste* such as Orable/Guibourg). This attitude exists in non-marital relationships as well, and Andreas does not neglect it, so it is not surprising that the lady should seek reassurance from Muldumarec, who has some most unnerving powers. Muldumarec is not offended by her demand as this doubt could be a source of misunderstanding between them, which is deleterious in matters of love. He establishes his good faith in two ways; in words:

Jeo crei mut bien al Creatur,
 Que nus geta de la tristur,
 U Adam nus mist, nostre pere,
 Par le mors de la pumme amere;
 Il est e ert e fu tuz jurs
 Vie e lumere as pecheürs.

149-54

and in deeds, taking communion from the chaplain in the semblance of the lady. This is very orthodox in one way: Muldumarec must be non-diabolic or he would not be able to take communion and yet everything is directed towards one end only, to permit the couple to engage in an adulterous relationship, which they do without any sense of guilt being apparent, at the time or later. Since both are finally interred together and their son succeeds Muldumarec after dispatching his stepfather in an abbey, in the presence of many clergy, it is more than possible to infer that God approves of his relationship, and therefore deprecates the

lady's unhappy marriage. God actually encourages a relationship condemned by secular society – the husband, initially at least suffers nothing – and which churchmen could not have condoned at all (although in fiction Marie's abbot is more lenient). Marie's attitude to these lovers is distinctly indulgent, despite their tragic end.

- The concern the lady feels about Muldumarec is paralleled in *Desiré*, in which Christian preoccupations are taken more seriously than in most lays. *Desiré* is interesting in that it represents in many ways an attempt to christianise the old theme of the *fée* who compensates a knight for the pain he has suffered from an unjust society. It differs in several respects from *Graelent* and *Lanval*. In the first place, *Desiré*'s life is directed far more by thought for the Church – his very existence is the result of a pilgrimage. Secondly, unlike his colleagues, he is anything but disadvantaged, being well-regarded by his king and by his family. Like them he unexpectedly encounters a woman who possesses more than human abilities, and like them again there is no impediment to their marriage. *Desiré*'s love is different in that unknown to him he becomes the father of two children, and he has some qualms about the rectitude of his actions. In this he resembles not *Lanval* or *Graelent*, but *Eliduc*, who realises he is breaching ecclesiastical expectations, and to a lesser extent the lady in *Ombre* who also experiences some hesitation on this point.

The lady advances as one reason (there are others) for not accepting the knight her marriage to a husband who is perfectly tolerable:

... "n'est pas droiz
que je ainme vos nē autre home,
que j'ai mon seignor molt preudome
qui molt me sert bien et enneure". 492-95

It will be remembered that the same argument is employed in the seventh dialogue of the *De Amore*, and indeed *Ombre* owes much to Andreas.³⁵ As in the treatise, the knight congratulates the absent spouse on his good fortune (ll. 496-7) but dismisses the argument:

(...) se gentillece et pitiez
vos prenoit de moi, et franchise,
ja nus qui d'amors chant ne lise
ne vos en tenroit a pieur;
ainz feriez au siecle honneur
se vos me voliez amer – 498-503

The appeal is to a small, sophisticated section of secular society; it is not supposed that everyone would sympathise. The knight does not attempt to justify himself in Christian terms at all (to be fair, *Conseil* shows how impossible this is). In this respect *Ombre* has affinities with *Equitan*, both heroes depending on non-religious, non-feudal doctrines as justification for their actions.

However the lady remains adamant, reiterating her objection:

... je ne vos voil tenir
a ami, car je mesferoie." 770-71

what is
attitude of
nature tho?

Her attitude is not proof against a demonstration of sincere love:

“Biaus douz amis,
tot vostre cuer ont el mien mis
cil doz mot et cil plesant fet,
e li dons que vos avez fet
a mon ombre, en l'onor de moi.

931-35

Her admiration of his courtesy and address lead her to conclude

Or ne li doi je, ne ne puis
plus vëer le don de m'amor!

924-25

after which Jean Renart leads the pair discreetly but firmly to the ultimate solace. The mere fact of marriage, on its own, is no deterrent to undertaking an affair despite the lady's initially rigid attitude: “l'éthique chrétienne, vernis fragile, est oubliée, et l'éthique courtoise se réduit à des règles de savoir-vivre”.³⁶ Desiré however is led to reveal his love, not through anger or provocation at court but through the medium of confession to one of the ubiquitous hermits of medieval literature:

ses pecchez li ad descovers
dunt il esteit seür e serz.
De s'amie li regeï,
cumë il vint primes a li.
Li hermites li conseilla,
sa penitence li chargea.

287-92

As Jean Subrenat remarks, the disclosure forms part of a general confession made before Desiré's departure for the wars and not occasioned by any great anguish about the particular sin of fornication.³⁷ It is one of many sins, and follows on the heels of others, whose position early on in his confession would seem to indicate that Desiré gives them more prominence – i.e. there are worse sins than fornication. The hermit agrees ^{that} Desiré is not above reproach – this would be impossible – and so he must do penance, but it does not appear that he assigns any more importance to the liaison than does Desiré, who later laments to his absent lady

Li hermites me confessa,
unques de vus mal n'i parla

319-20

which does not indicate great wrath from the Church's representative. The penalty is not severe, and even so, Desiré, faced with accepting it and obeying the precept which presumably sent him to seek absolution in the first place and the prospect of losing his lady, decides to ignore the Church: ? logic

Ço ke li hermites me dit
e les enjures qu'il m'aprit:
a vostre pleisir les lerrai
e vos comandemenz ferai'

325-28

Not that this offer has any softening effect on the insulted lady. For one thing, their love has been revealed, and we cannot agree with Jean Subrenat that this is of no importance since that person is presumably silenced by the seal of the confessional. One extraneous party is

more than sufficient to cause the lady to take umbrage. Secondly, when the lady returns after a year to rebuke Desiré, she reveals that he has had doubts about her nature:

Soventes feiz as tu doté
ke jo t'eüsse enfantesmé;
n'aies tu ja de ce regard,
ne sui mie de male part.

383-86

This is precisely what worried Muldumarec's lady, but that difficulty is raised and dismissed before their relationship begins. As Muldumarec says

... 'vus dites bien.
— Ne vodreie pur nule rien
— Que de mei j ait acheisun
— Mescraunce u suspesçun.

145-48

With Desiré this worry has evidently rankled for some time, without him ever have taken any action about it. The lady flatly rejects his insulting suspicions and proves her orthodoxy in the same way as Muldumarec, by taking communion – albeit in more normal circumstances. She attends a church service in her own town.

His confession itself is her final objection, for she denies that the sin merited such measures:

Esteiez tu de mei chargez?
Ço ne fu pas si grant pecchez;
jo ne fu unques espusee,
ne fiancee ne juree,
ne tu femme espusee n'as,
unques nule n'en afias.

373-78

She takes the view that since both are free of any obligations to anyone else, there is little harm in their liaison. In terms of secular expectations, she is perfectly correct. No one else's interests are involved, the more so since this lady has no relatives who might wish to punish her for her actions (cf. *Milun*). As for the Church, the offence remains that of simple if long-lasting fornication uncomplicated by any other impediment. However, in some eyes, this was a serious sin, indicating a continued wish to live outside the Church's precepts. Nevertheless, in *Desiré*, the author takes the view that a sexual relationship between two individuals free of other connections is not sinful. The lady emphasises in addition that the confession signalled, as far as she is concerned, the end of their relationship:

Quant tu confessiun quereies
ben sai ke de mei partireis.
Ke valt li pecchiez a geir
deci ke hom le voille guerpir?

379-82

Confession is meaningless unless Desiré intends to amend his ways, therefore he must intend either to conclude his relationship with the lady, or else he is a hypocrite (this in addition to the question of disclosure itself).

It is not surprising that the lady withdraws for a year and leaves Desiré to lament. However, she is disposed to forgive him. Indeed, she returns explicitly to do this (after telling him what she thinks of his actions), and there is no external mechanism obliging her to exercise clemency as there is in *Lanval* or *Graelent*. Desiré is in no danger of losing his reputation or his honour (only his life). Their relationship resumes on the same basis as before. The lady has calmed his fears about her nature; he does not seek further absolution. However, the event rankles with the lady. When she later returns to arrange her marriage, we sense a certain bitterness:

Lealment serums assemblé,
od mei vivra tut sun éé.
Ja n'en quera confessiun,
ne penitence, ne pardon."

721-24

It is not easy to know why, after all these years, marriage suddenly becomes an issue. The lady definitely desires it, and so does Desiré, who concurs immediately;

mut durement li esteit tart
k'il düst s'amie espusee,

740-41

and the pair are formally married in church:

A un muster andous menerent,
e ensemble les espuserent.

743-44

Possibly the marriage comes about because, as Jean Subrenat believes, the author wished to make a point about the acceptability of pre-marital relationships without preaching free love as a valid alternative. Eventually the couple obey ecclesiastical dictates, and this enables their children perhaps to be more easily integrated into Scottish society, though the boy was well received by Desiré and his kinsfolk before there was any mention of marriage. As in *Milun*, it cannot harm the children's interests for their parents to be married. The lovers, though duly married, never leave the lady's land again, and in this, the story of Desiré returns to the type exemplified by *Lanval* and *Graelent*, which is clumsy since the erstwhile lovers are in fact complying (eventually) with the exigencies of secular society and ecclesiastical precepts, whereas in the other two lays no such issue was envisaged. While there is great diversity in subject matter, it is almost always the case that authors either depict the course of a love affair or find a way to discuss the theory and practice of love. The only exceptions are *Nabaret* and this place^s its central witticism within the context of a marriage, and *Tyolet* and even here the lay concludes with the prospect of a wedding. It is reasonable to assume that authors consider^{ed} love to be an integral part of a lay and that audiences expected it to feature, however briefly.

This is not to say that all lays conform absolutely to one set depiction of love. Given the diversity of material and authorship this would be unlikely. Nevertheless, there are some constants.

Characters either expect to find love, hope to enjoy love, or are actually in love. Indeed, the view is frequently expressed that not to love diminishes the quality of life of an individual (e.g. the *mal-mariée* in *Yonec*) or lessens his reputation in the eyes of others (e.g. Guigemar and the knight in *Ombre*).

As to the nature of love itself, here there are some variations. Some authors conceive of love as an independent force operating on humans, obliging them to love, as for instance the girl in *Aristote* calls on Love to avenge the insult paid to her, or the force that intervenes in *Guigemar* or *Amours*, or *Ombre*. Love is a natural force, capricious and irrational, and as such capable of setting lovers at odds with society, as it takes no account of their circumstances. Potentially there is conflict between lovers and society, and lovers are well aware of this, hence the requirement of discretion. It should be noted though that this only obtains if there is an inconvenient spouse or father. Unlike Andreas, the lays do not demand secrecy as a pre-requisite for love to flourish.

It is necessary to distinguish between types of love. There is the sexual aspect. Most relationships in the lays are carnal and dispense with the casuistry employed by Andreas to justify such relationships. It is accepted in most cases that when a man and a woman discover mutual love, the inevitable conclusion, not long delayed, is a sexual relationship (in passing, it should be understood that as in other medieval romances, it is assumed that love properly exists, as Andreas says, between people of opposite sexes, hence the import of Guinevere's accusation to Lanval). Where a relationship remains chaste, as in *Laiüstic*, *Eliduc* or *Deus Amanz*, there is some factor that overrides this natural outcome, e.g. feudal obligation, a geis, respect for a father's wishes, belief that marriage is close, simply lack of opportunity. The lady in *Lecheor* refers to the importance of this aspect of love, although she cynically divorces sex from love.

Woven into some lays is the assumption of the existence of a kind of socially acceptable love that could be qualified as a type of flirtation. In *Guigemar* this is presumably what the ladies of his acquaintance desire. The knight in *Ombre* is experienced in this form of love, as is Ignaure (despite his protestations of loving all his *amies*). It is this kind of love that leads the knights to whom the lady alludes in *Lecheor* to improve their appearance and manners, and it is this that Melion rejects, to the disgust of the women of Arthur's court. This is not to say that such flirtations are insincere: despite the long rigmaroles of *Amours*, we may ascribe the highest of motives to the "haut home" and his lady. It is simply that Love is considered to be a necessary part of life, to be discussed at festive occasions, as in *Conseil*, commemorated in literary form, as in *Amours*, or *Chaitivel*, and those who refuse it or oppose it are rightfully punished.

While love of this variety has an important place as the background of aristocratic life, and for some authors is the main focus of interest, in most lays we are faced with one love that is qualitatively distinguished from these flirtations. As the knight in *Ombre* realises, the time has

come to concentrate on higher things. The progress of these love affairs is then closely followed through various vicissitudes to a conclusion, which may be satisfactory or tragic.

Impediments to the smooth running of love affairs arise from three sources: ecclesiastical, feudal and personal defects. Relatively few characters possess religious scruples, and as we have seen, these are usually overcome without much difficulty. Even in *Eliduc* and *Desiré* which of all the lays take ecclesiastical precedents most seriously, unorthodox solutions are found that permit lovers to have what they desire. Even when characters suffer from pangs of conscience, the pain is momentary and none experience^s prolonged agony as to the rightness of their choice of illicit love. There is no equivalent in the lays to Madame de Renal.

Much more important are obstacles arising from secular values. It may be possible to placate God, but society is a much more difficult proposition, at least according to Fresne's mother, and her attitude is typical. Lovers are in no doubt that when their love is illicit by worldly standards, potentially (as in the case of spinsters) or actually (where the woman is married), it behoves them to employ extreme caution. Cuckolded husbands and abusive fathers represent very real danger. They inflict punishment immediately and are not to be mollified, as Ignaure for one discovers.

This leads us to the third impediment. When lovers lack caution this generally results from their own desire to gratify themselves unreasonably. The paradox is that, according to Marie at least, love is itself the cause of this excess. However, such unsanctioⁿed love affairs do not all end unhappily, even in Marie's *Lais*, and through the exercise of self-restraint directed by reason and adherence to basic rules of security, the outcome is likely to be favourable.

The indulgence displayed in the lays towards behaviour castigated by civil and religious authorities alike as socially disruptive and sinful is at first rather surprising. On closer examination it can be seen that authors accept limitations on love. Thus in *Fresne* and *Aristote*, love affairs do not initially impede the smooth functioning of society. It is quite permissible for Gurun and Alixandre to have *amies*. When they are felt to be menacing the interests of other, more influential members of that society, they are recalled to a sense of their duties, which they do not contest. Similarly, while young girls lament in private over their parents' choice of spouse, we do not find outright refusal to marry. *Eliduc* acknowledges his responsibilities to his overlords and *Equitan* recognises his to the seneschal, although here duties are honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

Conflicts are resolved in the lays in one of the following manners. Relationships are considered acceptable to God because of the quality of love existing between a couple, even if the couple is, from the Church's point of view, illicit. This is often, but not invariably linked to the existence of an unsatisfactory official union. Secular demands are fulfilled either by the exercise of discretion (rendered difficult by the surveillance placed on women by their husbands and fathers and by passion leading to excessive actions) or by the fact that society is prepared to tolerate some forms of marginal relationships. If these conditions are not

satisfied, retribution is likely to be swift. Alternatively, by removing lovers from worldly control altogether, through death or flight to the Otherworld, society remains undamaged.

Authors do not advocate free or unrestrained love. Lovers do not have the right to please themselves regardless of other people, but they are permitted to seek consolation and happiness outside officially-recognised marriages. But marriage itself is not questioned; this is confirmed by the number of lays in which marriage is the goal from the outset, or which conclude in marriage once any obstacles have vanished, as marriage has the inestimable advantage of allowing private desires to be integrated with public expectations.

Notes

1. Dafydd Evans, "Wishfulfilment: the Social Function and Classification of Old French Romances" in *Court and Poet*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool, 1981), pp. 129-34; p. 130.
2. Prudence Tobin, ed. *Les Lais anonymes des xii^e. et xiii^e. siècles* (Geneva, 1976), pp. 47-8 note 173; p. 122 note 90. She states that Graelent's speech was derived from passages from Cicero's *De Amicitia*.
3. Maurice Delbouille, ed. *Le Lai d'Aristote de Henri d'Andeli* (Paris, 1951), p. 104 note 521: "Cette citation est empruntée aux célèbres *Disticha Catonis* que le moyen âge attribuait à Caton".
4. As we have stated in Chapter 3 the Middle Ages were ^Sinstant that only persons of different sexes could love.
5. Claude Buridant, ed. *André le Chapelain. Traité de l'amour courtois* (Paris, 1974), p. 182: "Personne ne peut aimer vraiment sans y être incité par l'amour".
6. D. Evans, *op. cit.* p. 131.
7. Philippe Ménard, *Les 'Lais' de Marie de France* (Paris, 1979), p. 66 quotes Richard Baum, who believes Le Chaitivel has been made impotent by his wounds. Philippe Ménard does not share this view and believes Le Chaitivel makes a full recovery and that the explanation of his inability to obtain the lady's love is not to be sought in physical incapacity but in the nature of the relationship itself.
8. See also *Aristote*:
Amors, qui tot prant et enbrace,
Et tot aert et tot enlace 93-4
Amours 63-7 uses a similar comparison.
9. See Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury, *La Tentation du suicide dans le roman français du xii^e. siècle* (Paris, 1979), for more details on this matter generally.
10. M. Delbouille, *op. cit.* p. 35.
11. See Mortimer J. Donovan, "Lai du Lecheor": a Reinterpretation", *RR* 42-3 (1951-52);
^{spring} ^{and} *The Breton Lay: a Guide to Varieties* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), esp. ch. 5.
12. See P. Tobin, *op. cit.* pp. 27-35; pp. 167-69 for more information on the *fée* in Celtic mythology;
Eithne M. O'Sharkey, "The Identity of the Fairy Mistress in Marie de France's 'Lai de Lanval'", *Trivium* 6 (1971), pp. 17-21. She identifies Lanval's *amie* with Morgain.
13. M. Faure, "Le 'Bisclavet' de Marie de France: une histoire suspecte de *loup-garou*", *Revue de langues modernes* 83 (1978), pp. 345-56; p. 355.
14. See Howard S. Robertson, "Love and the Otherworld in Marie de France's 'Eliduc'" in *Essays in Honor of Louis Francis Solano* (Chapel Hill, 1970), pp. 167-76.

15. Emanuel J. Mickel, Jr., "A Reconsideration of the 'Lais' of Marie de France", *Speculum* 46 (1971), pp. 39-65; p. 41.
16. E.J. Mickel, Jr., *Ibid.*, p. 41.
17. Constan Bullock-Davies, "The Love-Messenger in 'Milun'", *NMS* 16 (1972), pp. 20-27 shows that Marie accurately describes the topology of the area in which *Milun* is set, including the presence of swans. As the swan was a royal bird ("present reaus" 215), it made a very acceptable gift.
18. Sarah Kay, "Two Readings of the 'Lai de l'Ombre'", *MLR* 75 (1980), pp. 515-27 carefully discusses the sense of the lay giving two interpretations, as follows:

1) "The knight is an inexperienced and rather brash young hopeful, ignorant of the true meaning of love, who, fixing his desire on the lady, is led by her resistance to a greater discernment of love from sham values. His inspired gesture of throwing the ring into the well is the sign that he has graduated from a confused and naive aspiration to the title of 'ami' to a more courtly understanding of the qualities that go with it: obedience, renunciation of self, single-minded attachment to the lady. She, recognizing this change in him, accords him both the title and the reality of being her lover". (p. 519);

2) "The young knight is an ardent aspirant to the love of a lady, who takes shelter from the passionate urgency of his courtship behind social conventions that delude her as to the warmth of her own response. The knight's inspired gesture of throwing the ring into the well reveals to her what her true feelings are, and how she should express them; and as a result she accepts him as her lover.", p. 521.

The choice made between them depends on the "sofisme" of the knight (ll. 227-54); on the lady's monologue (ll. 628-35) and on her motives in recalling him. Sarah Kay does not seek to resolve this choice.

19. See Sarah Sturm, *The Lay of 'Guingamor': A Critical Study* (Chapel Hill, 1968).
20. C. Buridant, op. cit. p. 47:

"L'amour est une passion naturelle qui nait de la vue de la beauté de l'autre sexe et de la pensée obsédante de cette beauté. On en vient à souhaiter par-dessus tout de posséder les étrointes de l'autre et à désirer que, dans ces étrointes, soient respectés par une commune volonté, tous les commandements de l'amour".

21. Rolf Nagel, "À propos de 'Fresne' (v. 261-272)", *CCMe* 10 (1967), pp. 455-56. Gurun uses his economic power and position as lord of Dol to buy his way into the abbey, which otherwise he would not be able to enter. Money cannot buy him love, but it does permit him to maximise his opportunities.
22. P. Tobin, op. cit. pp. 28-32 has details of the two types of supernatural ladies.

23. E.J. Mickel, Jr., op. cit. p. 43.
24. M. Delbouille, op. cit. p. 35.
25. See Samuel T. Cowling, "The Image of the Tournament in Marie de France's 'Le Chaitivel'", *RoN* 16 (1974-75), pp. 686-91.
26. P. Tobin, op. cit. p. 57.
27. M. Delbouille, op. cit. p. 35.
28. G.S. Burgess, "Chivalry and Prowess in the 'Lais' of Marie de France" *FS* 47 (1983), pp. 129-42, p. 130.
29. Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, "Le Personnage de Guenièvre chez Marie de France", *MRO* 13 (1963), pp. 119-31. The author believes the queen's initial offer was a courteous gesture misinterpreted by Lanval. Whatever the truth of the matter, Guinevere's treatment of Lanval afterwards is mean-spirited.
30. For information on Marie's knowledge and use of contemporary legal forms, see E.A. Francis, "The Trial in 'Lanval'", in *Studies in French Language and Medieval Literature Presented to Professor Mildred K. Pope* (Manchester, 1939), pp. 115-24;
 — Jean Rychner and Paul Aebischer, eds., *Le Lai de Lanval* (Geneva, 1958).
31. Dietmar Riger, "Évasion et conscience des problèmes dans les 'Lais' de Marie de France", *SpMod* 12 (1979), pp. 49-69; p. 68.
32. The *Disciplina Clericalis* and *Chastoiement d'un père à son fils* are concerned only with the tale of the three precepts.
33. Gaston Paris, *Légendes du Moyen-Âge* (Paris, 1904), p. 263.
34. Further information may be obtained from: Jacques de Caluwé: "L'Élément chrétien dans les 'Lais' de Marie de France", in *Mélanges Jeanne Lods* (Paris, 1978), 2 vols; vol. 1, pp. 95-114;
 Jacques Ribard, "Le 'Lai d'Yonec' est-il une allégorie chrétienne?", in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages*, eds Grout, Lodge, Pickford and Varty (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 160-69.
- Nigel Abercrombie, "A Note on a Passage in 'Guigemar'", *MLR* 30 (1935), p. 353 suggests a source for the description of the ship in the Song of Songs III, vv. 9-10.
35. This point has been discussed in Chapter 3; see note 36.
36. Jean Larmat, "La Morale de Jean Renart dans 'Le lai de l'ombre'", in *Mélanges de Philologie Romaine offerts à Charles Camproux* (Montpellier, 1978), pp. 407-416; p. 416.

37. Jean Subrenat, "L'Aveu du secret d'amour dans le 'Lai de Desiré'", in *Melanges Charles Foulon* (Rennes, 1980), 2 vols, vol. I, pp. 371-79.

At the beginning of the text of the lai, the narrator announces that he will tell a story before it was written by the poet. This is a common device in medieval literature, and the genre itself. The lai is a form of poetry, and the narrator is a poet. The narrator gives us a glimpse of the poet's life, and the poet's life is a very interesting one. It is a life of a poet, and the poet is a very interesting person. The poet is a man of letters, and he is a man of letters. The poet is a man of letters, and he is a man of letters.

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Two other stories are told in the lai. The first is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The second is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The first is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The second is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The first is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The second is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The first is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The second is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The first is a story of a man and a woman who were in love. The second is a story of a man and a woman who were in love.

Conclusion.

At the beginning of this thesis we were faced with a number of matters requiring clarification before it was possible to proceed with an examination of attitudes to marriage and love in the narrative lay. The first of these, and possibly the most problematical, was the delimitation of the genre itself. The lay was, of all short narrative genres, the most self-conscious, with authors given to lengthy discussions of the antecedents of their material, their own motives in re-casting it for a French-speaking audience of the late 12th and early 13th centuries.

It might be thought that this habit would have eased the difficulties of definition for modern critics but this has never been the case, for reasons that are discussed in the opening chapter. After examination of previous attempts at definition we argued that self-definition was a legitimate means of establishing a corpus of lays, principally on the grounds that other criteria produced too many anomalies. The corpus consists of 34 lays, of which 12 are by Marie de France. As the Shrewsbury manuscript shows, more lays were certainly composed and the extant examples form only a small part of what was a relatively favoured genre, although the *fabliau* was probably more popular.

In their dialect the surviving lays show a strong bias towards the northern part of the French-speaking world which included the kingdom of England. Most lays were written in the Francien, Anglo-Norman and Picard dialects. It was also evident that the lays were intended principally for audiences made up of the nobility of Angevin England and France. All important characters belong to this caste and events largely concerned their particular interests – war, tournaments, hunting, feasting. Surviving independent evidence such as the comments of Denis Piramus on Marie's success, the few remaining dedications, the information that some authors give about themselves, tends to confirm that the lay was particularly enjoyed by the nobility. In addition it was possible to hypothesise that women formed an important part of this audience. Apart from the ^{historical} fact of Marie de France's authorship women in the lays are not infrequently credited with composing or performing lays and the element of misogyny so common in other genres is noticeably lacking in the lay, which was generally positive towards women and their aspirations.

Two other matters remained to be discussed: contemporary attitudes to marriage and to love. With regard to the former we examined historical evidence in order to understand better how marriage was perceived. This revealed the existence of two basic approaches to marriage, interdependent but sometimes at loggerheads. The Church saw it as a sacrament, the only legitimate form of sexual relationship (not that this meant all sexual activity within marriage was sinless, to the confusion of many). Over the centuries theologians and canon lawyers had meditated on the meaning of marriage itself and on specific matters concerning its formation and whether or not it could be ended during the lifetime of both partners. At the time when the lays were being written the work of Peter Damian, Gratian and Alexander III, and the

Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, was leading to the codification of a definitive body of teaching on marriage and its dissemination throughout Europe. Increasingly the Church had answers to most questions and increasingly, few lay-people could claim to be ignorant of that teaching and its consequences.

The Church, as the only authority empowered to declare marriages valid or invalid, evidently wielded immense power over ^{secular} society. It did not intervene directly in the economic aspects of marriage, being basically concerned that its own criteria were fulfilled, namely that the couple were free to marry each other and that they freely consented to do so. Consent was not to be equated with choice; nevertheless, in insisting that the consent of the couple was the essential factor in marriage, the Church accorded a place to the wishes of the individual that was new in European society, even if did little to enforce this right.

In examining lay attitudes to marriage it should be stressed that the Church's doctrine had universal application (and was, more or less, universally accepted), but we were concerned only with the nobility, which had its own set of imperatives. In order to see how these worked in practice, we have used two biographies roughly contemporary with the lays to illuminate historical evidence. The first was the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* which outlined the rise of a noble family over three generations resulting from bravery in the martial exploits expected of loyal vassals which led to a series of highly advantageous marriages. The second was the *Life of Christina of Markyate* which demonstrated the difficulties and dangers faced by a young girl who flatly refused to marry according to her family's wishes and the problems she experienced in finding support from the Church. Christina, it should be stressed, lived before the extant lays were composed, but the attitudes of her parents and of the Church certainly persisted beyond the date of her death. William on the other hand may possibly have been the dedicatee of Marie's *Ysopet*.

Secular attitudes to marriage were inextricably entangled with the theory and practice of feudalism which are discussed in Chapter II. Marriage was a vital foundation of this system. Only marriage legitimated a couple and it was at the time of betrothal and marriage that lineages exchanged wealth to ensure that the young couple could support themselves. Only the legitimate offspring could become heirs (and heiresses) to their parents' rights and duties, and so influence and money passed between generations. Seen in the perspective of maintaining or improving the standing of lineages, the emotional satisfaction of individuals was of minor importance. Marriages were therefore arranged by the senior men of a family on behalf of their younger dependents or by overlords on behalf of their vassals. Only men of full age possessing a fief were able to exercise anything approaching free choice. Holders of fiefs and heirs married to secure a clear line of descent as well as for the reasons already cited. Younger sons received a military training and basic equipment or were trained for a career in the Church. By remaining single they prevented the family's property from being continually sub-divided. Women on the other hand almost always married unless they chose

the Church. A dowry cost less than the land needed to support a son and girls could be used to extend the web of relationships between families. Heiresses were also important means of redistributing wealth and of rewarding followers, as Isabel de Clare was to find.

Few individuals then were able to enforce their own wishes in marriage as even holders of fiefs were obliged to exercise caution in their choice. Many marriages were settled while the prospective spouses were very young indeed and thoughts of protest probably did not occur to these children. Moreover, so strong was the sense of family identity that rebellion must have been uncommon, although Christina's *Life* certainly proves that it existed.

The nobility found certain aspects of the Church doctrine irksome. In Christina's case, her right to refuse marriage was eventually upheld by both archbishops. Other problems concerned the indissolubility of legitimate marriages. A shift in political alliances could make an existing marriage undesirable; on a more personal level, spouses might find each other intolerable. The remedy was annulment, but although this was justifiable in theological terms, there was no doubt that it was abused to secure a result favourable to secular concerns. We concluded that while the Church's position as arbiter in marriage was accepted nobles were far more likely to pay attention to the secular consequences of marriages.

We have stated that marriages formed the basis of social stability, and historical evidence seldom dwelt on the sentiments existing between spouses unless this had a direct bearing on events, as did, for example, the notorious disagreement between Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine. In order to widen discussion into the field of the emotions it was necessary to look for other information, and so we examined a far more subjective type of writings, those in which love, the informal relationship, was the focus of interest, and a selection of such writings has been made in order to facilitate this study.

Some works were intended to warn and instruct and assume the desirability of marriage and the sinfulness of illicit love. *Urbain* included among its advice to young squires some suggestions on the choice of a wife, assuming that the mere fact of marriage should be sufficient to ensure the man's fancy did not stray elsewhere. Anything other than marriage was liable to bring ruin on a family. Étienne de Fougères castigated the vices of noblewomen, seen by him as a cause of strife and the degeneracy of the aristocracy, the natural consequence of their perverse femininity. Robert de Blois in the *Chastoiement des Dames* dealt sympathetically with the particular problems encountered by women in society, expected to behave courteously towards all men yet swiftly condemned for showing too much favour to them. Robert did not condemn out of hand the taking of a lover provided discretion was maintained and society was not challenged by an open liaison.

De Amore and *Roman de la Rose* differed from the above manuals on social conduct in two ways. Firstly, they were fictionalised as the advocates and counsellors of love faced each other in debate to uphold their own conceptions (a technique employed in the conclusion of the *Chastoiement*). Secondly, up to a point, they enthusiastically propagated values at variance

with those of the Church and lay society in that they elaborated systems in which love unsanctified by marriage was acceptable. Andreas Capellanus and Guillaume de Lorris assumed that love was an essential human experience that should never be rejected, although it inevitably entailed suffering. Guillaume, as we have seen, treated love in a social void so that we know very little directly about how he saw the relationship of love to marriage and society at large. Andreas however constantly involved himself with the impact of love on marriage and vice versa. Andreas erected a parallel system of his own to marriage, equally comprehensive, of which perhaps the most notable assertion was the impossibility of love co-existing with marriage since they derived from different sources, together with the dictum that love was to have the primacy.

It was against this cultural background that the lays were composed. On reading them it was evident that love and marriage were important to the authors and presumably to the readers too. Elements of one or the other, or both, are prominent in many lays and in others are forced in, even when plainly extraneous to the material. Two examples are *Haveloc* and *Tyolet*. In the former marriage was the means of restoring Haveloc and Argentille to their rightful status. That they should also be stated to love each other is the kind of additional detail audiences seem to have expected. Similarly in *Doon* the proud lady's feelings undergo a complete and improbable reversal after her marriage. As for *Tyolet*, the hero's eventual marriage was fortuitous; his only stated desire was to prove his knighthood.

It emerged from a careful examination of marriages in the lays that authors depicted with fidelity the realities of marriage. Analysis revealed that men already settled in society married as and when they chose and whom they chose. In other cases enormous influence was wielded by agents of social order: by fathers, as in *Milun* and *Vair Palefroi* (*Deus Amanz* and *Eliduc* showed fathers exercising this power in a negative fashion); in *Haveloc* an uncle was substituted for a dead father. Parents are also cited in *Yonec* ^{and} *Le Fresne*. Friends may also be involved. In *Épervier* Ventilas is involved in his friend's marriage and Guigemar's friends would like to see him with a wife. Feudalism also played an important rôle. Equitan's and Gurun's vassals would like their lords to marry and in *Doon* it is only a matter of time before the Lady of Edinburgh has to conform. In cases such as these, marriages are desired for positive reasons: to provide an heir; to gain in wealth and influence. *Haveloc* demonstrates the opposite: a marriage designed by Edelsi specifically to disparage Argentille so that she becomes incapable of maintaining control of her kingdom. In these marriages quite obviously love is not a factor although sometimes authors casually add that a husband loved his wife, as did the parents in *Desiré* or *Le Fresne*. One particular situation that is found in the lays is that of the young man attempting to rise through marriage. In Marie's *Lais* this situation never arises (Lanval does not marry his lady although he certainly grows in public esteem when his lady enriches him). Possibly this is because such unions were inevitably coloured by the suspicion of mercenary motives. In *Conseil* and *Desiré* men gain financially through

marriage, though Desiré is never in any actual want. Tyolet gains a kingdom almost as a by-product of his desire to become a knight. In *Doon* this theme is at its most blatant; it is to win land that Doon undertakes the tasks set by the lady.

The position of women is shown to be less favourable than that of men. They are unable in most cases to prevent marriages they do not want. Only as widows in control of their dowries are they in a position to gain their own ends. Even those who would wield great power, like the Lady of Edinburgh, are obliged to marry when they would prefer not to, though it must be remembered that the Princess of Logres in *Tyolet* willingly submits to her parents' wishes. Not that men are free agents: Guigemar, Gurun and Equitan all discover that other people can be most insistent on this point. Moreover, such pressure to marry is also felt to be legitimate. Gurun complies immediately; Equitan contemplates marriage to his mistress and Guigemar only avoids a wife because he is protected by the magical knot in his shirt.

Two points also raised in the secular concept of marriage are rank and wealth. No marriage in the lays transgresses the caste expectations of the nobility. Nobles always marry other nobles. Most obviously, Gurun and his vassals never consider Fresne a suitable wife or lady until her true social identity is discovered. Some marriages appear to have a degree of inequality. In *Conseil*, *Doon* and *Tyolet* for example the women are clearly of higher rank, and this is also true in *Eliduc*, *Vair Palefroi* and *Melion*. The men, it can be argued, rise considerably in esteem as a result of their marriages. This is a reflection of reality in which landless knights like William Marshal advanced by obtaining wealthy women. As long as the men are born into a noble family, variations of rank within the nobility are treated as being of minor importance. Women, as already noted, do not rise in the same way. It is legitimate to assume that Equitan's people would not have approved of his marriage to a mere seneschal's wife.

The lays are not reticent in tackling financial matters. Most men possess sufficient land and wealth to maintain themselves in adequate style, and authors do not dwell on their economic affairs. Some are relatively impoverished (it is necessary to stress the relative degree of their poverty); Graelent and Lanval are obvious examples; Ignaure, Guillaume, the knight in *Conseil* are others. None is unambiguously stated to be a younger son. It is not uncommon for men to derive considerable financial benefit from a relationship whether it leads to marriage or not. Doon and Tyolet gain rich lands; the knight in *Conseil* and his entire family rise in wealth and esteem; Guillaume gains his wife's rich lands. Haveloc not only wins back his own kingdom but receives control of the two inherited by his wife. There are no instances of women marrying wealthy men however. ✓

Marriages arranged by third parties were not necessarily accepted with unalloyed pleasure. Marie does not reflect on the reactions of La Codre to her impending weddings, nor does she examine the feelings of women such as Guigemar's mother, as this would be irrelevant to her chief interest. This is also true of other authors. Sometimes, on the other hand, the ?

lamentations of girls married, or about to be married, to uncongenial spouses, are given more space, as in *Vair Palefroi* or *Milun*. We note however that complaints are never addressed directly to the person or persons responsible for the arrangement. Mutinous thoughts only rarely lead to outright rebellion – *Vair Palefroi* being the only example – and even then, this only occurs when a chance event removes her from the father's control. The lack of protest may be explained by the author's wish to tell a story in which the main interest is *not* the attempt of lovers to circumvent parental power. However, it may also result from a widespread acceptance by authors and readers that parents, vassals and overlords had a perfect right to intervene in the marriages of their dependents and lords.

It will be appreciated that the values attached to marriage in the lays derived mostly from a secular conception of the institution. The Church's rôle in the lays is not great and it is treated in a somewhat cavalier manner by the majority of authors. In *Haveloc* Edelsi's vassals proposed making Argentille a nun in France to remove her from the secular sphere; any wishes she might have had were of no importance and it is assumed that the Church would turn a blind eye to a forced vocation. Similarly we must assume that Edelsi had at his disposal a compliant priest to confer some kind of legitimacy on Argentille's marriage to a scullion. All in all, the Church emerges with little credit. Clergy in other lays may act as jailers for jealous husbands. Other clerics are, however, more helpful. The abbess in *Fresne* brings up the foundling, thus ensuring her of a noble education. In *Bisclavret*, *Eliduc* and *Fresne* some member of the clergy must have acted to conclude the legal dissolution of first marriages (explicitly an archbishop in *Fresne*). Huon le Roi is quite specific that once Guillaume's chaplain has formally married his master to the rich old man's daughter, there is nothing further to be said. This is the only instance in the lays of lovers availing themselves of the Church's protection. We note however that Huon's assumption seems to be that the ceremony itself confers validity on a couple. Had the girl been obliged to go through with the wedding to Guillaume's uncle, there is little doubt she would have considered herself to be his wife, willing or not, and this is the attitude of other authors too, and demonstrates a popular conception of the legitimacy of marriage. A theologian could well have argued that initially at least such unions were null. *Desiré* is especially interesting on the subject of marriage. The author appears to argue that provided lovers have no other formal relationships such as betrothal to other people, they are free to enjoy a long pre-marital affair that concludes eventually in marriage at a time chosen by the woman, a rare instance of feminine initiative, even though it is mediated through the Scottish king.

While it can be demonstrated that the lays respect the conventions of marriage, especially secular conventions, it is also true that authors can be critical of some aspects of these expectations. Before discussing these we examined the place of love in the lays. We started from the premise that love was generally though not invariably accorded a prominent place in the lays, few of which omit to say something about it. *Nabaret* is perhaps the only extant

case; even *Tyolet* concludes in a wedding. Love is capricious and does not come into being because a marriage has taken place, as *Urbain* and the *Livre des Manières* assume. It is true that Muldumarec's lady says she might have loved her husband had he behaved more reasonably; her later laments, and the protests of Guillaume's lady make it clear that love is not a by-product of marriage. Love is an independent force, unaffected by existing contracts. Its force is overwhelming, but since all people aspire to love, none make protracted efforts to avoid it. Both sexes are subject to its ravages, although men generally initiate the subject. When this is not so, it is because the women have affinities with the Otherworld and are not subject to the restrictions of human society, or because men are prevented by some reason, usually feudal loyalty, from broaching the matter. The lays certainly connect love with pain, but suffering is not intrinsic to the emotion. It results from doubt as to the outcome. Once love has been avowed and accepted, suffering comes only from separation. Love itself is carnal whenever this is possible. Chaste affairs, such as in *Deus Amanz* or *Eliduc* or *Vair Palefroi* are unusual, and accounted for by some complication such as *Eliduc's* oath to *Guilidelüec*; sheer inability to meet, or a wish not to transgress a father's wishes, though this last is tempered by the hope of an early marriage obviating the need for an illicit affair. It is a unique experience; generally each lay is concerned with only one love relationship. Exceptions are *Eliduc*, in which the hero's love for his wife is replaced by love for another woman, and *Ignoure* and *Chaitivel*, both of which depict people loving (so they claim) more than one person. Events do not turn out well in these lays; *Ignoure* is forced to conform to the expectation of one love and ironically dies because of it; the lady in *Chaitivel* is left to mourn three lovers and is unable to accept the love of the fourth. Love is spontaneous in the lays. Men are already accomplished soldiers and those who are not are youthful members of the knightly class who nevertheless enjoy excellent reputations for their prowess. None requires education by a lady to improve their social standing and none needs constantly to surpass themselves to win and keep love although some are stated to continue in their search for excellence. *Milun's* lady for example accepts his need to re-establish his lost primacy as a knight; in *Conseil* the knight shines at tournaments thanks to his lady's generosity and Guillaume's valour is undiminished by his marriage. While men may be admired for their martial exploits, these are rarely the cause of love in themselves. Love does not depend on the successful completion of a task either. In *Tyolet* and *Doon* it is marriage that is at stake.

In love as in marriage, conventions governing the social rank of participants are almost always carefully observed. *Gurun* is exceptional in having a mistress of unknown birth but her upbringing has been aristocratic and the reader of course always knows the truth about *Fresne's* birth.

As we can see, there are expectations of love just as there are in marriage, although a love relationship lacks formal social recognition. This does not mean that an informal relationship cannot be open. *Gurun* and *Alixandre* have no qualms about publicly keeping concubines and

they are not condemned for so doing. Great men are permitted to have mistresses, and there is no need for concealment. Fresne has no family to object and has left the protection afforded by the abbess; the Indian lady beloved of Alixandre comes of a conquered nation. Only when discretion is required because an obstacle exists, such as a jealous parent, spouse, or an Otherworldly *geis*, is love hidden. There is no place in the lays for the notion that of its very nature love could not be made known.

The rôle of jealousy is also quite straightforward. This emotional vice was considered by Andreas to be an essential and positive feature of love but to be misplaced between spouses. In the lays jealousy is invariably experienced by husbands with regard to their wives. Thus in *Guigemar* and *Yonec* it is an inevitable result of the disparity in ages between the spouses that leads the husbands to imprison their wives. In *Épervier* sudden fear that Ventilas may be planning to cuckold him causes the husband to ban him from the house. *Cor* and *Mantel* examine jealousy in the greatest detail. Arthur is outraged when he fails to drink from the horn; Guinevere turns his accusation of infidelity into one of his own jealousy. In *Mantel* the overwhelming atmosphere of acidity owes much to the presence of jealousy related to the infidelity of the court ladies. Jealousy has no positive features in the lays.

Fidelity in love and marriage requires separate discussion. As we have shown, in many instances marriages are unhappy because there is a lack of some kind, normally of love, or of children. In these circumstances characters seldom hesitate long in seeking consolation elsewhere, even though such love is adulterous, clearly sinful and displeasing to society as a cause of confusion and supposedly of the degeneracy of the nobility. Secular powers are not slow to punish erring lovers; Ignaure and Muldumarec are ignominiously murdered; Guigemar's lady is imprisoned. Arthur threatens Guinevere with a knife. Punishment is reserved to secular authorities, perhaps, as Étienne de Fougères indicated, to spare the injured spouses embarrassment. Ecclesiastical courts are not involved. The guilty parties are rarely shamed by discovery even if this means an affair must come to an end. The existence of a marriage is then no bar to an affair. In fact, so lightly does marriage appear to be taken that Eliduc's fidelity to his wife is the consequence of an additional oath. Moreover, while society certainly protects itself from adultery, God is far more lenient and is actually perceived in some lays as giving support to lovers. This is especially marked in *Yonec* and *Conseil*. In marriage then fidelity is not assured unless the partners enjoy a satisfactory emotional relationship. In love there is rarely a problem; fidelity is the norm. Equitan for example refuses to contemplate taking a wife. The exception is Ignaure who nevertheless claims to love all twelve of his mistresses; an argument they refuse to accept, forcing him to restrict himself to one mistress only.

Love is often an important part of the narrative but in some lays its nature and the correct method of conducting an affair assume such proportions that the narrative content of the lay is greatly diminished. *Conseil*, *Trot*, *Lecheor*, *Amours*, *Ombre* and *Oiselet* are among the most

interesting of the lays. *Trot*, and to a lesser extent, *Ombre*, have evident affinities with *De Amore*, both authors utilising elements from the Latin treatise. We might conclude then that they shared Andreas' precepts to a greater degree than we find in other lays. *Amours*, like *Ombre*, is a record of courtship, both dwelling on the mechanics of how love is experienced as suffering and how it may be revealed and the pain assuaged when lovers find themselves in agreement. In addition *Ombre* includes some arguments taken from Andreas to explain why the lady's marriage is no bar to her acceptance of a lover. It is in *Oiselet* and *Conseil* that the most energetic attempts are made to reconcile God and love. *Oiselet* asserts forcefully that God and Love seek the same ends and hence are not in contradiction. If the author succeeds it is because he is only speaking in the most general of terms. There is no specific application of the principles enunciated by the bird to a human affair with all its social ramifications. *Oiselet* also shows how authors included material on love in lays. The source of *Oiselet* lacks this justification of profane love altogether. *Conseil's* author was a layman, but one obviously well-versed, albeit at a simple level, in theology. He takes the view that love is necessary and frequently adulterous. That this is sinful is admitted, but the doctrine of repentance permits him to encourage his readers to seek love in the belief that all can be made well with God at a later date. The reconciliation of profane love and divine expectations would not have convinced a rigorous moralist, but it is indicative of how some secular authors utilised the Church's teachings to their own ends.

Up to this point, we have always considered love in a positive light. *Lecheor* serves as a timely corrective, reminding us that even when the lays were composed some people entertained doubts as to the motivation of some men, who are accused by the author of outwardly adhering to the tenets of courtly behaviour while being motivated by simple lust. Such astringent comment is most refreshing.

Finally, we come to the relationship in the lays between love and marriage. In some lays of course there is never any question of a connection between the two. In *Guingamor*, *Graelent* and *Lanval* for example the human world and its conventions are eventually abandoned. In *Épervier*, *Ombre*, *Amours* or *Laüstic* the lovers are seemingly satisfied with matters as they exist, or at least do not plan anything other than an affair, albeit of long duration. In other lays, though, a couple may wish to marry from the outset, presumably because they want to fit in with society and can see no valid reason, other than a parent's obstinacy, why they should not marry: *Vair Palefroi* and *Deus Amanz* are examples of this. In addition some couples enjoy protracted adulterous relationships but marry when it becomes possible. In these lays – *Conseil* and *Milun* are two – marriage is perceived as a natural progression, permitting clandestine or marginal relationships to gain full public recognition. These lays all fall into the category of wish-fulfilment literature, depending as they do on the intervention into human life of supernatural powers; on the convenient application of law; the discovery of true identities and the fortuitous deaths of unwanted spouses. No doubt such

tales softened the harshness of reality for those condemned to live out their lives with uncongenial spouses.

However, the lays did not pose a threat to society. Love was recognised and tribute paid to it, but it was never suggested that love should uniquely be the dominant factor in society. It could not replace marriage or give form to society, and few lays eschew human society altogether. What was shown in the lays was that love and marriage could be successfully integrated without harming the social structure and without blighting the lives of individuals; everything could be made right within the rules if lovers would be patient and exercise restraint, a humane and pragmatic view. It should not be thought though that the lays were conceived by their authors as social programmes (except perhaps for *Conseil* and *Trot*). Their main purpose was to entertain, to lift the spirits of their listeners, as Yonec's mother remarks:

Mut ai ^osevent oï cunter
Que l'em suleit jadis trover
Aventures en cest païs,
Ki rechatouent les pensis:

91-94

This was their greatest achievement, and this is why today the lays are still studied and enjoyed.

Not relevant

Appendix. I

1. The Stories.

All of Marie's *Lais* are well-known and many excellent editions are easily available. This is not the case with most of the other lays, and so we give here brief résumés of them as an aid to comprehension.

Amours 518

The author, Girard, is writing on behalf of his patron, the *haut homme*. On a voyage the patron meets a noble, beautiful (married) lady and falls in love. He is soon able to establish that she shares this love. He is then suddenly recalled to his own country and asks Girard to compose a *salut d'amour* which is sent by messenger to the lady (most of this *salut* is given in the lay). The first part of the poem ends at this point as Girard (and his patron) has to wait for the lady's reply before he can continue. The lady's answer expresses her desire to see the *haut homme* again. The message is analysed by Girard, who adds to it the transports of delight which it inspired in his patron, then sends another *salut* to the lady which tells her that her lover will soon be with her again. If the messenger returns with more news, Girard will continue his work.

Aristote 579

Alexander the Great has conquered India and has fallen in love with a beautiful Indian girl. As a result he neglects his barons who complain to the philosopher Aristote. Alexander is reprimanded by his mentor and reluctantly agrees to avoid his lady in future. She discovers the reason for his sudden coldness and swears that she and Alexander, with the help of Nature, will be revenged on Aristote. She tells her lover to be in the orchard the next morning. At dawn, very lightly clad, she enters the orchard and attracts Aristote's attention by singing *chansons de toile* and ballads. The old philosopher sees her and is consumed with desire. He seizes her and requests her love. She tells him of her unhappiness because of the breach with Alexander and Aristote promises to patch things up if she will agree to his propositions. She consents, provided Aristote will allow her to ride on his back round the orchard. The besotted old man is all alacrity, and the girl rides triumphantly on his back, singing. Alexander then appears and chides his tutor for giving in to his passions. Aristote defends himself by saying that if he, with all his wisdom, could be overcome by love, then Alexander can also be conquered. Alexander and his *amie* are then able to resume their interrupted affair. The author, Henri (d'Andelys?), says that lovers should not be blamed for their actions since Love has, and always will have, the mastery.

Conseil 868

A lady, beautiful and married, has three suitors for her love and no particular preference for any one of them. At a Christmas feast she asks a fourth knight, renowned for his eloquence, for advice. He asks her to describe her suitors; each has some flaw, but the choice is clearly for the third (poor and not handsome, but well-mannered and merry). Finally though, it is the lady's right to choose whichever she wants. She then asks the man to teach her how to love i.e. to explain the advantages, the problems, and how to conduct an affair with propriety. The knight is so eloquent (and a mine of information on love) that spontaneously the lady decides she prefers him to the other three. She gives him her belt and says that she will take as lover the man to whom he gives it. Being courteous, he guesses her meaning and keeps it himself. Their affair, conducted along the rules he has laid down, lasts some time, and when the lady's unpleasant husband dies they marry. In this way the knight's eloquence raises both himself and his family in public esteem. The lay was written by a knight who regrets that he is hopelessly in love and unable to follow his own excellent, rational advice.

Cor 594

At Pentecost Arthur is holding court at Caerleon. A messenger arrives with a gift from King Magoun, a beautiful drinking horn with strange properties made by a *fée*. The messenger tells Arthur that he will not be glad of the gift, but the king accepts it anyway. The messenger then prudently takes his leave. Arthur's chaplain unwillingly reads an inscription on the horn that says that only a man who is not jealous and whose wife is faithful can drink from it. The women are amused by this and Arthur declares that the men at

court will attempt this *aventure*, and is himself the first to drink... and spill the wine. Angrily, he attacks Guinevere, but is restrained by Gawain and Yvain. Guinevere defends herself by accusing her husband of jealousy. Arthur insists on the other knights taking the test and is mollified when no one else succeeds either; he forgives his wife. Finally Garadue (Caradoc) takes the horn and, reassured by his wife, successfully drinks from it. The court is delighted, and Arthur awards him the horn and a fief. Caradoc builds an abbey to house the horn and wrote a lay to commemorate the event which the present author, Robert Biket, has used as a basis for his own work.

Le Desiré 764

A noble Scottish vassal and his wife are childless, but after a pilgrimage to St Gilles they have a son, Desiré. When he is old enough, he is sent to his uncle the king, and when he is the correct age, he becomes a knight. He then seeks fame in tournaments on the Continent for seven years before returning home. One day, while riding in the forest, he meets a beautiful girl by a fountain and immediately makes advances to her that are far from courtly. She defends herself by telling him that her mistress is far more beautiful than she is and he should court her instead (and if he does not agree that her lady is more beautiful, then he always has her). Desiré however does agree that the lady is the most beautiful, and she agrees to accept him as her lover, giving him a ring and warning him that if he ever transgresses this love, the consequences will be dire. She also gives him great wealth. They often meet, and unknown to Desiré, they have a son and a daughter. Then he has to accompany the king to war. Before leaving, he comes to a hermitage where he confesses his *liason* to its incumbent. The ring vanishes, Desiré realises he has lost his *amie* and falls into a decline. A year later the lady relents and reappears to reproach him for revealing their love. She is ready to prove she is not, as he fears, of a diabolic nature, by taking communion with him at a nearby church. They resume their affair. One day the king and Desiré are hunting when they encounter a young boy who turns out to be Desiré's son, who accompanies them to court. He soon leaves though. Desiré tracks him, but is soon lost in the forest. He meets a dwarf who takes him to a castle where his *amie* lives. He breaks in, but has to escape with the help of his *amie's* sister. He returns to court, wounded. Next Pentecost his *amie* arrives at court with her children. She requests (orders) the king to knight the boy, find a husband for the girl and to witness her own marriage to Desiré. The king marries the girl himself and Desiré and his lady leave immediately for her country and do not return.

Doon 286

The heroine, lady of a castle in Edinburgh, does not wish to marry and so imposes a test on her suitors: to ride from Southampton to Edinburgh in one day. Many attempt it; those who succeed are killed by the lady as they sleep in her castle. Doon hears of the test, and with the aid of his horse Baiart, succeeds. Moreover, he survives the lady's hospitality by not sleeping in the bed she provides! She imposes a second test: to follow the flight of a swan for one day. He succeeds in this too, and marries the lady but after three days he departs, predicting the birth of a son, leaving instructions for the child's education and a ring. The son is eventually sent to France, where he distinguishes himself in tournaments. At one of these he unhorses Doon, who recognises the ring. Both are delighted. The only explanation Doon gives of his behaviour is that the lady was proud. They return to Edinburgh together, the family is reunited, and all ends well.

Épervier 232

Two knights are close friends. On the advice of one, named Ventilas, his friend marries a charming lady. She and Ventilas become close friends, but the husband becomes unreasonably jealous and eventually forbids Ventilas the house. At this point the two fall in love, and henceforth often find chances to meet. One day the husband goes hunting and Ventilas sends his squire to her to inform her of his arrival. The squire, struck by the lady's beauty, does some courting on his own behalf; the lady is flattered, but then Ventilas arrives. The lady hides the squire under the bed and is busy entertaining Ventilas when her husband returns. Ventilas is resigned to his probable fate, but she tells him to draw his sword and to leave shouting. The husband hears his mock threats and conceals himself, bravely entering after Ventilas has left. He attacks his wife, who says that she can explain if he will only listen. Ventilas, she says, had given his sparrowhawk to his squire to look after, but the squire had

released it without permission and lost it. Ventilas then pursued the squire who fled to the lady's castle and had taken refuge behind the bed. The lady had not wanted to hand him over to Ventilas... and she produces the young man to prove the truth of her story. He praises her clemency, the husband is delighted and gives the squire his own sparrowhawk. The squire then returns to tell Ventilas what has happened (*all of what happened?*).

Épine 512.

In Brittany live a young boy, son of a king by a *suinant*, and a girl who is the daughter of the king's wife by a previous marriage. The two are brought up together and when they reach a suitable age, they fall in love. One day, through their carelessness, they are discovered by the queen who demands that in future they should be kept apart. The king agrees. The boy becomes a knight and the girl is kept in the queen's care. They are unable to communicate. The week before St John's Eve, the boy learns from another girl at court of an *aventure* that takes place at the "*gué de l'espine*" on that day and decides that he will seek it out. On the day, the girl prays that she might be with her *ami* and falls asleep, awaking to find that she has been transported to the ford where the boy is waiting for his adventure. At this point, a strange knight arrives and the two fight, the boy initially getting the worst of it. However he succeeds in unhorsing the knight and capturing his mount. Two other knights then arrive; the first remounts. The boy then fights them in single combat. They are then separated by another knight who asks the boy to joust with him before he leaves, and warns him that his valour will be useless if he dies or there is no one to make a song of his exploits later. They fight, but the girl is frightened and asks the first knight to stop them, which he does. The strange knights leave, but the boy keeps the horse which provides great wealth as long as its bridle is left on. The boy and girl return to court and relate their story. They are able to marry. Later on the horse is lost when the girl takes the bridle off to see if what the knight said about it was true.

Graelent 732.

Graelent is a Breton knight in the service of the king of Brittany. The queen, hearing of his merits, sends for him and propositions him, but he refuses because of his loyalty to the king. The queen continues for some time to ask for his love, but he always refuses. Eventually she slanders him to the king and ensures that he remains unrewarded for his services, as a result of which he soon becomes poor and mocked. One day in May he decides to go for a ride and comes to a forest where he sees a lady bathing in a fountain accompanied by two maidens. The lady sees him and asks him to leave her clothes alone. He wants to speak to her and convinces her to leave the water, promising that she will be safe. He asks for her love; she refuses, but Graelent takes no notice and rapes her. However the lady (who came to the fountain so that she could meet him) forgives him and takes him as her lover, giving him a warning not to boast of his love. On his return, he finds he is wealthy, with a servant and a splendid horse. From this moment he is able to live as befits a knight and be visited by his *amie* at night. At Pentecost the king, as is his habit, calls all his vassals to a feast at which he exhibits his wife and declares that she is the most beautiful woman in the world. The barons agree, except Graelent, who merely smiles. The queen sees this and accuses him of mocking her. The king demands an explanation, and Graelent replies that the king has acted foolishly and that there are more beautiful women. The king, furious, demands that he should produce such a woman. Graelent is dismayed as he realises he has transgressed his lady's command and asks for a delay. This is granted, and he is told to produce her at the feast to be held the next year. On his return he finds his servant gone and spends the year in lamentation. At the feast he says he cannot produce the lady. The king asks the vassals for a judgment, but as they are deliberating, a messenger arrives saying two beautiful maidens have come to help Graelent. They are followed by two more who announce the arrival of their lady. She tells the king that if she is indeed more beautiful than the queen, Graelent must be acquitted. He is released, but the lady is already taking leave of the court. He pursues her on his white horse, but she ignores his cries until they reach a fast-running river. She warns him that it is dangerous, but he persists in trying to follow her across, finally being swept off his horse. The lady's maidens plead with her on his behalf, and she saves him and takes him to her land. The horse survives but runs wild in the forest seeking his master. Ever since this, on the anniversary of Graelent's disappearance, a horse can be heard lamenting the loss of Graelent.

Guingamor 678

Guingamor is the nephew of a king of Brittany. One day the king and court go hunting, leaving him behind as he has just been bled. The queen sees him in a ray of sunlight and is suddenly struck by his beauty. She sends for him and asks him to become her *dru*. Horrified, he refuses and as he leaves the queen attempts to retain him and seizes his cloak. Later, frightened, she returns it. That evening, the knights recall their adventures at a feast and to spite Guingamor the queen mentions the white boar that no one can capture. The king is angry as he has already lost ten men on this particular quest. That night Guingamor asks his uncle for a gift and when this is granted asks for the king's hunters, pack and favorite dog to hunt the boar. The king is grieved, but agrees when the queen adds her entreaties to Guingamor's. The next day the hunt sets off. Guingamor sights the boar and gives chase, but is soon separated from the others. Soon though he loses track of both the boar and the dog his uncle has lent him. Moreover, he is lost. Catching sight of them, he pursues them across the forest and a river until he comes to a mysterious and luxurious castle that is deserted. Despite his curiosity he continues his hunt, but loses the animals again. In his search he finds a fountain in which a beautiful lady is bathing, attended by a maiden. He intends to take her clothes so that she will remain and talk to him, but she addresses him by name and reprimands him for such discourteous intentions. She offers hospitality but he refuses, thinking of his task. She says that he cannot succeed without her aid, and that if he will spend three days with her, he shall have both the boar and the dog. He agrees, and the two return to the castle, pledging their love on the way. The castle is now full of richly clad men and women, including the ten lost knights. They spend the time feasting, and on the third day he asks for the animals. He also wants to tell his uncle of the adventure that has befallen him. The lady then tells him that 300 years have passed since he left and that everything he knew has been destroyed. Guingamor does not believe this and insists on setting out with the boar, promising he will return. The lady warns him that once he has crossed the river he must neither eat nor drink. He sets out with the boar's head, crosses the river by boat, and finds everything has changed. He meets a charcoal maker who tells him his fate has become a legend. Guingamor gives him the head and tells him his story, then begins his return. In the evening, hungry, he eats three wild apples and immediately ages 300 years. The charcoal-maker has followed him and seeing what has happened, takes him to his own house, but believes he will soon die. Two ladies then arrive, berating him for his lack of care and take him back across the river with the dog and his horse. The peasant takes the boar's head to the king and relates the story which is told at many feasts. The king has a lay made of it.

Haveloc 1112

Haveloc is the son of Gunter, king of the Danes. King Arthur attacks Denmark and Gunter is killed by the traitor Odulf who is given Denmark by Arthur. Siga Estal, one of Gunter's men, takes a horn that only the true king of Denmark can sound. Meanwhile the faithful Grim manages to flee by ship with the queen and her son, who is only 2 years old. When he sleeps a flame comes from his mouth which is sweet to smell. At sea, they are attacked by pirates and the queen is killed. Grim, who knows the pirates, manages to save his own wife and children and Haveloc. They land in England at the place now called Grimsby after Grim who founded it and settle down. They care for Haveloc as their own and change his name for safety. He grows up strong, but Grim laments that he is not receiving a suitable education, as he believes Haveloc may recover his heritage. Consequently he advises the young man to seek learning in England at a king's court. He sets off with his two foster brothers and they come to Lincoln, ruled by King Edelsi. His sister Orwein is married to Achebrit, king of what is apparently South England. They have a daughter, Argentille, who is their heir. Knowing himself to be ill, Achebrit makes Edelsi promise that he will care for Argentille and marry her suitably, by the advice of her vassals, to the strongest man in the land. Edelsi does so, and soon after both the girl's parents die. Henceforth, Edelsi rules the two kingdoms. Haveloc takes service with him and becomes a kitchen servant, popular for his good nature but considered rather stupid and nicknamed Cuaran (kitchen boy). He is also known for his great strength and skill at wrestling, performing many times before Edelsi. At this point, Argentille is old enough to marry and her barons demand that a husband be found. Edelsi asks for time to consult his own men, as he does not want to return her lands to her. His counsellors suggest making her a nun in France, but Edelsi has a way of fulfilling his oath: as Haveloc is

the strongest man, she shall marry him. If anyone objects, he will be imprisoned. This is done, and Argentille is forced to marry Haveloc, which is a severe blow to both her and her vassals. At first the two are both ashamed, but then they soon overcome this to become lovers. After this, Argentille has a strange dream and when she wakes sees the flame which Haveloc had concealed from her. She asks what it means; he does not know. He tries to explain her dream in terms of events in the kitchens. The next day Argentille asks one of her father's former servants for his advice. He suggests she consult a hermit. He says her husband is of royal blood and that they will become king and queen. She is to make enquiries about his family. At her urging therefore the two return to Grimsby, but Grim and his wife are dead. Struck by Argentille's beauty, their daughter Kelloc asks her foster-brother who she is. Haveloc relates her history and Kelloc tells him of his true parentage and reveals that Odulf is unpopular and that Sigar is leading the opposition to him. If Haveloc can contact him, he may yet be king. Kelloc's husband takes them to Denmark with his foster-brothers. The merchant tells them to lodge at Sigar's house; he will surely be struck by Argentille's beauty and ask questions. This they do. At the meal though it is the young men who are enflamed by her beauty and who waylay the couple as they are on their way back to their lodgings. They seize her, but Haveloc kills the aggressors. They seek refuge in a church tower. Sigar and his men attack them, but he is suddenly struck by the young man's resemblance to Gunter. He asks for an explanation of the carnage and Haveloc exculpates himself. Sigar asks him about his parents; Haveloc tells how Grim saved him when his father was killed and how he married Argentille. He has now come to seek his relatives, but does not know their names. Sigar is almost convinced that Haveloc is Gunter's son, and says nothing but takes them to the castle. He sets a servant to spy on the couple since he knows of the flame. Satisfied by this, he sends for his men and relatives. The next day he dresses the couple suitably. Haveloc believes he is to be judged for the events of the previous night and seizes an axe with which to defend himself but Sigar reassures him. The horn is brought in, and all fail to sound it. Haveloc, naturally, succeeds, and Sigar reveals the truth to the assembled multitude. Haveloc is knighted, an army gathered. Odulf is defeated, his men surrender and Haveloc becomes king of Denmark, and for three years is a good and popular ruler. Argentille then demands that her kingdom too should be reconquered and the Danes invade England, demanding redress for their queen. Edelsi decides to fight, and at first comes off best. Haveloc considers a return to Denmark, but Argentille suggests a ruse: the dead are arranged to look as though they are alive and armed. When Edelsi sees this, he has no desire for further fighting and returns Argentille's lands. Two weeks later he dies, and Haveloc and his wife inherit these lands too. Haveloc reigns happily for the next twenty years and a lay was made of his victory.

Ignare 664

The author, Renaus, proposes to tell a tale about the young and popular knight Ignare who was devoted to "*fine amors*". He lived in Hoel's lands at the castle of Riol. There were also 12 knights and their wives living there, and Ignare became the lover of *all* of the ladies. The ladies were unaware of this until one St John's day one of them suggests a game of mock confession at which all will reveal to a "prestresse" the name of their lover. The ladies will then decide whose lover is the worthiest. They are furious when they discover the deception and decide to be revenged on the perfidious knight. The next time he asks one of them for a rendez-vous, all will be present and they will kill him. However, when this happens, Ignare's charm and eloquence soften the heart of their leader who proposes an alternative punishment: he must choose one of the 12 and be faithful to her. Somewhat reluctantly Ignare agrees to this and chooses the leader (who was also the priestess). Two misfortunes follow from this: Ignare's attentions to his one mistress are more noticeable, and in any case the confessions have been heard by a "losengier" who wastes no time in informing the husbands of their collective shame. All are angry, particularly the husband of Ignare's sole *amie*. They decide to capture Ignare on one of his visits to her, a task that proves simple. The lady informs her friends, and they refuse to eat until they are told the fate of their lover. The husbands decide to kill him and to serve his heart and "derrain membre aval" to their wives, which they manage after some cajoling. The ladies promptly go back on hunger-strike, despite the pleas of their friends and families. They have ample time to compose a lay of 12 strophes in honour of Ignare before they die. Renaus then describes his

own *amie* and how her beauty chains him to her, a prison from which he does not seek to escape. The lay is called the 'Lay del Prison' by the French, Bretons and Poitevins.

Lecheor 122

The Bretons relate how the noblest men and women of the land used to gather at the church of St Panteleon on his feast-day and discussed the adventures that had befallen them that year. The best tale was selected and a lay composed on that subject and was given the same name. Those who played *viel*, *harpe* or *rote* then disseminated it throughout other kingdoms. At the feast, eight of the most beautiful and courteous ladies of Brittany were sitting apart from the rest. One of them asked the others why knights perform great deeds, give gifts, are courteous and attempt to increase their worth and reputation. For one reason only, says the lady: "*le con*", without which no lady would receive any attention at all. Therefore the lay should be about it. Her companions agree with this shrewd assessment and together they begin to compose both "*son et chant*". The others present stop what they are doing to listen and praise the lay and join the ladies in their work. The lay, says the author, is highly esteemed by clerics, knights and laymen. It is called '*Lai du Lecheor*', but this is not the true title, which he will not give lest his intentions be misinterpreted.

Mantel 922

At Pentecost Arthur is holding court and he and Guinevere distribute gifts to the knights and their ladies. On the Sunday, the queen and the ladies retire to their own apartments while the men wait for the feast to begin. Arthur does not want to start eating until he has heard, according to custom, some adventure. Gawain and Kei are none too pleased by the delay, but then a handsome young man arrives, a messenger who has come from his lady to ask Arthur for a gift and to give him one. He adds that he has not come to humiliate Arthur in any way. The king agrees and the messenger produces a beautiful cloak made by a *fée* which can only be worn by a woman who has never wronged her husband or *ami* in thought, word or deed. Otherwise it will not fit. The young man then asks Arthur to send for the ladies so that they can try the cloak. This is the gift he asks for, and for which he has travelled far. The king agrees and Yvain, Gauvain and Kei fetch the ladies, without however revealing the import of the event. The cloak does not fit Guinevere, nor another lady who is the same size. The women are angry and upset when Kei tells them about the cloak's properties. There follows a detailed account of how all the ladies are obliged to try the garment and of their humiliation – and of that of their men – when they fail. The messenger announces that unless one woman at least can succeed, he will have to leave, taking the cloak with him, and this will bring shame to the court. He asks if there are any women hiding. Girflez is sent to search, and finds one who had been delayed, the *amie* of Carados Briebraz, who is none too pleased to see her, as he loves her and declares he would rather not know if she had wronged him, something which Kei disagrees with. The lady is successful however, and the messenger reveals that although he has been in many lands, she is the first who has been able to wear the cloak, and as a reward she should keep it. The rest of the court is somewhat disgruntled and the messenger refuses an invitation to stay for dinner, preferring to return to his lady with the news. Carados and his *amie* return to Wales where they build an abbey to keep the cloak. It is still there, a threat to all women everywhere, although the author thinks that unfaithful women deserve the shame.

Melion 592

Melion is one of Arthur's knights. One day he takes an oath never to love any woman who has been loved by another man or who has even been talked about. The queen and the other ladies hear of this and refuse to speak to him. As a result Melion loses his interest in arms and becomes depressed. The king gives him a fief to console him, where he goes to live with a hundred knights. One day, while hunting in the forest, he meets a beautiful woman on a horse who tells him she has never loved any man but him and has heard much praise of him. She is the daughter of the king of Ireland. Melion is overjoyed and they are immediately married. For three years they are happy and have two sons. Then, when hunting, they see a stag and the lady says she will never eat again unless she has the stag and faints. Melion is concerned and shows her a ring set with two gems, one white, the other red. If he strips and she then touches his head with the white stone, he will become a wolf and catch the stag for her. She must guard his clothes as he cannot transform himself back again without them and

unless he is touched with the red stone. As a wolf, he sets off in pursuit of the animal. The lady, though, returns immediately to Ireland with her squire who has accompanied them. Melion catches the stag and is dismayed to find the lady gone, but having still the intelligence of a man, he too takes ship for Ireland. Once arrived he soon becomes leader of a pack of ten wolves which ravages the country. After a year, the king kills the beasts, but Melion escapes. His daughter predicts that this animal will cause them problems yet. Arthur then arrives, intent on a peace agreement with Ireland. Melion sees the shields from afar and goes to meet the king, knowing he is his last hope. He greets the king and Arthur, impressed by the wolf's nature, takes him under his protection. Later, at a feast where the two kings are present, Melion sees the squire who eloped with his wife and attacks him. Ydel stops the wolf from being killed and suggests that the squire should be questioned. He confesses to the plot and the lady is sent for. Arthur is about to restore Melion when Gauvain says it would be better to effect the transformation in private. This is done, and the next thing is to decide the punishment of the lady. Arthur restrains Melion from turning her into a wolf for the sake of her sons. In the end they return to Britain, leaving the perfidious lady behind, for as Melion says, no one should believe his wife as this inevitably leads to misfortune.

Nabaret 48

The lay was composed in Brittany and concerns a knight called Nabaret. He is noble and rich, and his wife beautiful. Unfortunately she likes to dress in the most fashionable clothes and spends most of her time looking after her appearance, something that angers her husband. He maintains that her beauty alone is sufficient, but although he protests both publically and privately, she continues in her ways. At last he calls together some of her relatives and expounds his objections to them. She, in her turn, declares that if this displeases him, "k'il face crestre sa barbe grant / e ses gemuns face trescher: / issi se deit gelus venger" (He should let his beard grow and plait his moustaches as this is how jealous husbands take revenge). The answer is thought so amusing that everyone enjoys it and those who compose lays make up one which they call 'Nabaret' after him.

Oiselet 390

A rich *vilain* possesses a beautiful garden which he has bought from the unworthy heir of a knight. In the orchard is a fountain shaded by a tree in which a little bird sings, and it is the song of the bird that maintains everything in the orchard. It also possesses the power to cure sorrow. One day the villein hears the song (a *lai*). The bird is expounding his doctrine: the compatibility of God and love, proving that it is possible to have both. Seeing the owner, the bird laments that those who should hear his song – the noble knights and their ladies, not to mention clerics – have been replaced by an avaricious old man. The villein is nevertheless entranced by the song and decides to catch the bird, which he does. The bird declares that he will not sing in captivity; the villein threatens it with the cooking pot. The bird offers an exchange: three precious sayings for its freedom. The man agrees and releases the bird who, to his disgust, tells him not to cry for what he never had, not to believe whatever he hears, and not to throw away what he already has. The man says that these are well-known. The bird says that if he had known the third, he would not have freed the bird. This is true, he man admits, but the others are not. The bird then claims that there is a precious stone in his body which the man could have had. The villein tears his hair out at this, but the bird says that this is not true; he does not weigh enough – something the man knows – and that he has believed something that was patently false, and then foolishly lamented the loss of an object he had never had. Advising him to retain the three sayings in his mind, the bird flies off. The pine tree loses its leaves, the fountain dries up and the villein loses all his joy in life. As the proverb says: those who desire all, lose all.

Ombre 962

Jean Renart announces his intentions of displaying his skills in the '*Lay de l'Ombre*' for the pleasure of his patron. A courteous knight, who is decidedly a paragon of all the virtues, has never rendered to Love the necessary homage. One day though he hears of the perfection of a lady who lives close by. Knowing this, he decides to visit her, accompanied by two companions. While they are entertained by two of her maidens, he sets himself to win the lady over. This proves more difficult than he might have expected; the lady is well able to answer his proposals, and does not seem to be particularly interested in his approach. They

discuss love and the problems surrounding it (eg. the lady is married, but this is no obstacle). The lady wavers slightly when the knight claims he will die if she does not concede and is silent for a while. Seeing her sunk in reverie, the knight takes a ring off her finger and replaces it with his own. He then asks the lady's leave to depart, leaving her somewhat perplexed and not a little piqued, concluding that he must be insincere. Then she notices the ring and is furious, believing that he will now claim she is his *amie* – something she objects to. Therefore she decides to send for him to demand the return of her own. When her messenger asks the knight to return he is overjoyed, thinking that the lady has capitulated. The lady soon sets him right on this: he must return the ring. Finally, after much discussion, he has to agree since she asks him to do so in the name of love. He then tells her that he will give the ring to the person he loves most after her and drops the ring into the well whose wall they are sitting on, explaining that he is giving it to the lady's reflection. The lady is touched by this gesture and spontaneously grants him her love. Jean Renart says he does not propose to follow them any further; since love has brought them together, he should be silent.

Trot 304

The author proposes to tell of an adventure that took place in Brittany. Lorois is a knight of the Round Table. One April morning he decides to ride out into the forest to listen to the nightingale. In the forest he sees a cavalcade of 24 ladies, beautiful and well-dressed, riding on fine horses and accompanied by handsome and attentive knights. Lorois is amazed by the sight, which is followed by another, similar procession. The next sight is sadder. There is a third group, composed of a hundred ladies, poorly dressed, mounted on old nags, accompanied by what looks like permanent bad weather, all moaning and wailing. There are also knights in an equally sorry plight. Lorois decides to ask one of the women the meaning of the spectacle and speaks to the one bringing up the rear. She explains that the first group is composed of those who in their lives served love well and who now have their reward. Those who follow disdained love out of pride and folly. She deeply regrets this as now they are forced to ride through all weathers without rest. This should be a warning to all ladies still alive who do not love; it is too late to repent when one is dead. Lorois returns to his castle of Morois where he relates his adventure to the ladies there, warning them that trotting (on an old nag) is less comfortable than riding on a good one. The Bretons made a lay of this, called the '*Lai del trot*'.

Tydorel 490

The lay is set in Brittany. The king and his wife have no children after ten years of marriage. One day the king and court go hunting while the queen remains in an orchard with her ladies. Mysteriously they all fall asleep. When the queen awakes she finds herself alone. There then appears an extremely handsome knight who greets the queen and says that he has long loved her, and that if she accepts him as her lover, she will have great joy. If she rejects him, she will never be happy again. Because of his beauty the queen agrees and asks him who he is. He replies that he will show her, and takes her on his horse to the shore of a lake. Leaving her there, he rides into the water and then re-emerges, telling her not to ask any more. He then predicts that they will love each other for a long time. She will have a son, Tydorel, who will be handsome and powerful, but who will never sleep. They will also have a daughter who will have two sons, and from them Count Alain and his son Conain will be descended. They will sleep more than other men. Their affair will cease when they are seen by other eyes. Events turn out as predicted; the children are born (and the king is delighted), but when a wounded knight seeking charity from the queen sees the lovers, the strange knight departs immediately while the other dies the following day. Tydorel later becomes king and employs people to tell him stories at night. For ten years all goes well. Then, while staying at Nantes, his men order a goldsmith, the son of a widow, to undertake this task. He is most reluctant, claiming not to know any tales. His mother tells him that if Tydorel insists, he must tell him that someone who never sleeps is not a man. When Tydorel hears this he becomes extremely agitated and seeks out his mother. Threatening her with a knife, he induces her to reveal the truth of his birth. On hearing this, he sends for his horse and arms and rides to the lake, plunging into it as his father did, and never appearing again. The Bretons made a lay of this tale.

Tyolet 704.

When Arthur reigned in Britain knights performed many brave deeds that were recorded in Latin by clerics, then translated into French. The Bretons made lays of some of them. The author is going to tell one according to a tale he knows. Tyolet lives alone with his mother in the forest, they survive thanks to a gift Tyolet has from a *fée*: animals come to him when he whistles. One day he is hunting a stag. He whistles, but it flees, and crosses a river. He kills instead a roe deer, but as he does so, the stag transforms itself into a knight on a horse, something Tyolet has never seen before. He questions the knight on his equipment and its meaning and if there are other "chevaler beste". The knight says that there are, and a group of two hundred appear, on their way to court. Tyolet says he would like to be a knight too, and is told to return home and speak to his mother who, despite her sorrow, will give him arms. She tells him to go to Arthur's court, not to accompany any man or to consort with common women. Tyolet rides into court, where the knights are eating and asks to be made a knight and to learn the arts of chivalry and courtesy. The king agrees and Tyolet joins the knights. Into the court rides a maiden, daughter of the king of Logres, accompanied by a small dog. She asks Arthur that he should give her the foot of the white stag guarded by seven lions. She will marry the one who succeeds in this. Arthur agrees, and she says that the dog will serve as guide. Lodoer is the first to try, but fails, for which the others deride him. Many knights try, but all fail, until Tyolet asks to go. Arthur knights him and he sets out. Using his gift he succeeds in cutting off the stag's foot but is seriously wounded by the lions before he manages to kill them. A knight then arrives, to whom Tyolet relates his story and gives the foot. The villain however decides to make sure Tyolet is dead and strikes him. He then goes to court and claims the princess. Arthur is concerned by Tyolet's absence and by the fact that the dog is also missing and asks for an eight day delay. Gauvain sets out to find Tyolet and is led to him by the dog. The next person to arrive is a maiden riding a mule. Gauvain asks her to take Tyolet to the doctor of the Black Mountain to be healed, which the doctor says will take a month. Gauvain returns to court to find the delay is over. He accuses the knight of taking what is rightfully someone else's; this is denied, but then Tyolet arrives and the truth becomes clear to all. Tyolet forgives the knight and gives the princess the foot. Tyolet asks for her, and Arthur grants her to him. She takes him to her land and they become king and queen.

Le Vair Palefroi 1342

Huon le Roi has written this lay of the '*Vair Palefroi*' to demonstrate how he can use his skills, and also to show what can be gained from a woman who is true, although most are too changeable. A brave knight lives in Champagne. All have a high opinion of him and his prowess, but he is poor. He therefore thinks of the daughter of his neighbour, a wealthy old man who guards his daughter closely. The knight, Messire Guillaume, has one possession of value, a beautiful horse. He often goes secretly to visit the girl taking a path through the forest that separates his house from hers, one known only to him and his mount. Although they can speak, they cannot touch since the girl cannot leave the grounds she lives in. This is clearly unsatisfactory and eventually Guillaume decides to ask the old man for his daughter's hand although both are somewhat scared of him. Guillaume accordingly pays a formal visit to the house and attempts to win the girl through using the "*don contraignant*" device. The old man is adamant though: his daughter shall not marry a penniless knight who lives on what he wins from tournaments. She can look higher. Guillaume is inclined to despair at this summary dismissal of his hopes which he blames on the old man's greed. The girl also criticises those who are old and rich, but she has a plan. Guillaume is his uncle's heir; another rich old man and former companion of the girl's father. She suggests that he should talk to his uncle and ask for land and money. His uncle can speak on his behalf to the girl's father and after the marriage has taken place, Guillaume can return the land to his uncle. Guillaume immediately agrees to do as she suggests, and explains the plan to his uncle who is happy to help. Guillaume then tells his uncle he is going to attend a tournament at Galardon where he hopes to do well. He will marry the girl when he returns. He then leaves, confident that all will go well. However, when the uncle arrives at the girl's house and sees her, he decides to marry her himself (this, he explains to her father, will save both of them money). The girl despairs when she learns of this betrayal, but knows there is little she can do to prevent it. Meanwhile the two old cronies are enjoying themselves immensely, talking over old times. The wedding

arrangements are made, but suddenly it is discovered that there are not enough horses. It is suggested that Guillaume will give his to carry the bride and a messenger² sent to ask him for it. Guillaume, who has won all the prizes at the tournament, is unaware of his uncle's treachery and is cast into despair when he learns that his *amie* is to marry him the next day at the "gaste chappelle". He debates as to what he should do and decides to send the palfrey so that the girl knows he has not forgotten her. He then shuts himself away to mope. The girl's house is now full of ancient knights come for the wedding feast. The following morning the cavalcade mounts up for the ride to the chapel, the girl on Guillaume's horse. However, thanks to the excesses of the previous night, the old men soon nod off. The horse, seeing the path it was accustomed to take with its master, turns aside, unnoticed by the knights. The girl is frightened but prefers to give the horse its head. They travel all day through the forest until they come to Guillaume's house. She asks the sentry to be allowed in; he replies that he has orders not to admit anyone because his master is greatly distressed by treachery. Nevertheless, recognising the horse in the moonlight and struck by her beauty, he goes to wake Guillaume who, on learning of this, hurries to let them in. Thus God saved the lady from a husband who would have taken her only for her wealth. The next day she and Guillaume are married by his chaplain, which cannot lightly be undone. Meanwhile, back at the chapel, the absence of the bride has been discovered and a search instituted. At this point a messenger arrives from Guillaume with the news of the marriage and a pardon for the treachery. They all return to Guillaume's manor where they are richly received and obliged to recognise the marriage, like it or not. Guillaume does not neglect his chivalric duties because of his marriage and increases his fame. Three years later the girl's father dies and they inherit his money, and the evil uncle dies soon after.

ABBREVIATIONS.

Ann. Bret.	Annales Bretonnes
AESC	Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations. Archivum Romanicum
BCLSMF	Académie Royale de Belgique: Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales.
BFPLUL	Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège.
BBSIA	Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne.
BBCS	Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies
CAIEF	Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises.
CCME	Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale. Comitatus.
CL	Comparative Literature. Cultura Neolatina.
EHR	English Historical Review.
FILR	Filologia Romanza. Folklore
FMLS	Forum for Modern Language Studies.
FS	French Studies.
JMH	Journal of Medieval History.
KRQ	Kentucky Romance Quarterly. Lectures
LR	Les Lettres Romanes.
MRO	Marche Romane.
MAe	Medium Aevum.
MH	Medievalia et Humanistica. Médiévales-Trajectoires du Sens.
MedS	Medieval Studies.
MLN	Modern Language Notes.
MLR	Modern Language Review.
MP	Modern Philology.
MA	Moyen Âge.
MD	Musica Disciplina.
Neophil	Neophilologus.
NMS	Nottingham Medieval Studies. Nouvelle Revue Historique de Droit. Français et Étranger. Nuovi Studi Medievali.
OM	Orbis Medievalis.
PandP	Past and Present.
PQ	Philological Quarterly.
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.
RMS	Reading Medieval Studies.
RBPH	Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire. Revue Celtique.
RDM	Revue des Deux Mondes. Revue des Langues Modernes.
RLaR	Revue des Langues Romanes.
RevR	Revue Romane.
RUB	Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles.
RoN	Romance Notes.
RPh	Romance Philology.
Rom	Romania.
RR	Romanic Review.
RF	Romanische Forschungen.
Spec	Speculum.
SpMod	Spicilegio Moderno.

- SMC Studies in Medieval Culture.
 SP Studies in Philology.
 SRo Studi Romanzi.
 Symposium.
 Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis
 Trivium.
 Thoth.
 Vox Romanica
 ZFSL Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur.
 Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte.
 ZRP Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie.

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