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# THE SECULAR, RELIGIOUS, AND COURTLY DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIEVAL CHIVALRY

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# ABSTRACT

Few images in history are as provocative as the knight in shining armor, and few concepts of medieval knighthood are as romanticized as chivalry, the code-of-conduct that all knights were supposed to follow. The concept of chivalry emerged alongside medieval knighthood in the decades around 1000 C.E., with the express purpose of portraying knights as the elite, mounted fighting-force of Western Europe. By 1100, Christian ecclesiastics had appropriated the militaristic qualities of chivalry in order to promote religious warfare in the form of the crusades, transforming the knight into a holy warrior. At the same time, the idea of courtly love, which promoted the wooing of noble maidens as the ultimate goal of knighthood, emerged in southern France. My thesis will explore this emergence and development of chivalry by looking at these three different aspects—secular/militaristic, religious, and courtly—specifically from the point of view of medieval chivalric texts, including the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes, heroic texts like *The Song of Roland*, and religious documents like St. Bernard of Clairvaux's exhortation of the Knights Templar. Through this literary analysis, supported by relevant medieval letters and documents, I hope to show that the concept of chivalry is more complicated than the knight simply riding out to save the damsel in distress.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures ......iii

Acknowledgements ......iv

Introduction: What is Chivalry? ......1

Chapter 1: “For his lord a vassal must suffer hardships”: Militaristic and Secular Chivalry ......15

Chapter 2: “It is the will of God!”: Religious Chivalry and the Warrior-Monk ......46

Chapter 3: “Let Love do with me what he will”: Courtly Love and Chivalric Romance ......77

Conclusion: The End of Chivalry? ......115

Appendix A: “The Skylark” by Bernart de Ventadorn ......122

Appendix B: *The Rules of Love* by Andreas Capellanus ......124

Appendix C: *Be•m degra de chanter tener / It Would Be Best If I Refrained from Singing* by Guirant Riquier ......125

Bibliography ......127

# LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1**: Second-to-third-century graffiti of a mounted *clibanarius* at Duro-Europos in modern-day Syria ....................44

**Figure 2**: Sections of the Bayeux Tapestry detailing the Norman conquest of England. Note the couched lance as the Norman cavalry charges the English shield wall ....................44

**Figure 3**: Norman cavalry charge. Note the use of stirrups attached to the saddles ....................44

**Figure 4**: Illustration of the Nine Worthies in no particular order ....................45

**Figure 5**: The archangel Michael, dressed as a twelfth-century knight, combats the devil on the façade of the church of Anzy-le-Duc in Burgundy ....................75

**Figure 6**: A knight preparing to leave on crusade posing in an act of homage ....................75

**Figure 7**: Angels carry Roland's soul into heaven ....................76

**Figure 8**: Manuscript illumination depicting Lancelot and Guinevere speaking privately as a friend stands guard ....................112

**Figure 9**: Illustration of a musician (left) and juggler (right) performing ....................112

**Figure 10**: Map of the medieval county of Champagne ....................113

**Figure 11**: Map of European trade routes. Note the location of the Fairs of Champagne in northeast France ....................113

**Figure 12**: A noble lady arms her knightly lover in preparation for a joust ....................114

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# Introduction

## What is Chivalry?

Sir Morien faces a conundrum. He is a young knight, most likely not even an adult by twenty-first-century standards, and he is far away from home. Sir Morien, as his name suggests, is a Moor from North Africa. He is identified by the dark color of his skin as an oddity, making him an outsider in European lands. However, he is also a knight, trained in mounted combat by his father, Sir Agloval, the brother of the famous Sir Perceval of Arthurian legend. It is Agloval who prompts Morien to begin his quest, for Agloval had left Morien and his mother in his own quest to find the Holy Grail. Morien has therefore been disinherited, and he seeks to find his father in order to restore his family's honor. To achieve this, he has sworn to fight any other knight he comes across in order to question them on the whereabouts of his father.

It is during this aggressive quest for the truth that Morien comes across Sir Gawain and Sir Lancelot, the two greatest knights in Arthur's kingdom and all of Christendom. After fighting Lancelot to a draw, Morien relays his tale to the two knights. They are moved to tears by his plight and agree to let him travel with them, for they are out searching for Perceval, and there is a good chance they will encounter Agloval on their journey. But before they set out, Gawain and Lancelot lecture Morien on his belligerent behavior. In place of Morien's previous attitude, they advise the young knight to uphold the following rules: to greet courteous knights in kind, to overcome violent knights in honest combat, to uphold the honor of all women, to be kind to all gentle-natured individuals, and to pursue justice against the wicked. By default, humility and piety to God is also a requirement. Gawain and Lancelot's advice represents the code of conduct that all good knights were expected to follow, and this code, known collectively as chivalry, would come to take many different forms.[1]

Few images are as provocative as the mounted knight riding into battle to fight the evil beast or rescue the "damsel in distress". Indeed, the adventures of noble knights have captivated audiences from the Middle Ages into the Modern Era. *Morien* is just one example in a long line of romances that glorify the activities of knights. In the context of the Middle Ages it is a rather late piece of chivalric literature. The romance itself, dated to around 1400 C.E., is preserved in medieval Dutch and is very likely based off of a lost French original. Its characters and themes clearly show that it is written in homage to previous Arthurian romances like those of the famous Chrétien de Troyes, who introduced the character of Lancelot into the Arthurian corpus and was the primary contributor to its revitalization.

The focus on the behavior and activities of knights by medieval writers like Chrétien, which stretches back centuries before *Morien*, led to a rebirth of interest in the Arthurian legend in the Middle Ages, a tradition that up until the twelfth century had been largely neglected. Turning from myth to history, medieval knights also took inspiration from the deeds of Charlemagne, who in 800 C.E. was the first man to be crowned Emperor of Rome since the fall of the Roman Empire. The romance writers drew inspiration from the works of Roman authors like Ovid, as well as their Muslim neighbors in Spain and across the Mediterranean. Finally, the Roman Catholic Church incorporated the values of knighthood into its own beliefs and used them to help launch the crusades. Chivalry influenced and was influenced by all of these sources, secular, religious, and amorous, as it developed alongside the knightly class of medieval Europe.

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[1] Jessie L. Weston, ed., *The Romance of Morien* (Project Gutenberg, 2013), accessed May 21, 2015, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/8447/8447-h/8447-h.htm.

This thesis is not a study of the weapons, armor, or specific tactics knights used in battle, although these do play some part in the discussion to come. Rather, this thesis will explore the mindset of knights as viewed by the famous literary authors of the Middle Ages, whose writings essentially created the chivalric values of knighthood as they exist today. Who should a knight follow in their minds? With what mindset should a knight confront his enemies? What should a knight do if his vows conflicted with one another? Do the individual secular, religious, and courtly aspects of chivalry hinder or promote a knight's ability to be chivalrous overall? All these and more are valid questions to ask in the attempt to understand the complexity of chivalry.

Part of the problem lies in terminology and definition. The term chivalry is derived from the old French *chevalerie* (English *cavalier*), which comes from the Latin word for a mounted soldier, *caballarius*.[2] *Chevalerie* is just one name among many used to denote a knight in medieval documents; the Latin *miles*, a word that traditionally signified a standard soldier during the Roman Republic and Empire, was also appropriated to identify a person as a knight. Chivalry's original meaning therefore refers to a knight's ability to engage in mounted combat. Yet it became so much more, as knights and nobles, who initially constituted different social classes after the former emerged around 1000 C.E., took up the aspects of one another. The term "knight" became a title of nobility as well as a military connotation, but the relationship between a knight and his ability to fight remained. Sydney Painter in his influential 1940 work *French*

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[2] Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave & Noble: Chivalry & Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 103.

*Chivalry*, defines chivalry as, “the ideals and practices considered suitable for a noble.”[3] However, this definition is still ambiguous because there were many noble practices (activities done by a member of the “noble class”) that would not necessarily apply to an eleventh-century knight on the cusp of being considered a noble aristocrat. Knights were initially soldiers, and while they always remained a martial force, they began to copy noble practices in the eleventh century by linking themselves and their families to ancient bloodlines and engaging in the medieval system of feudal relations. Parceling out a fief (a reward given by a lord in return for some form of service) was a staple of medieval nobility, and there were many knights in the decades after 1000 C.E. who would not qualify as nobility under such a regulation. This would change over the next 400 years as knights became greater symbols of authority.

Time and place also factor into the discussion. The majority of this thesis, based on the analysis of the primary sources, covers the time period from the mid-tenth to the beginning of the fifteenth century—in other words, the High and early Late Middle Ages. Obviously, discussing a topic as it evolved over roughly 450 years is no easy feat, made all the more difficult due to the changing atmosphere of the institutions that contributed to the development of chivalry. Expansive topics like medieval lordship, the every tricky to define “feudalism,” papal and church reforms, and the crusades all figure into this analysis of chivalry. I have endeavored at every point to be as concise yet informative as possible. These concepts and events shaped the lives of the writers who formulated the various aspects of knightly chivalry. It is only fair that modern readers have some understanding of the topics as well.

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[3] Sidney Painter, *French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideals and Practices in Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940), 1.

Most of this thesis centers on what is now modern-day France, primarily in the literary center of the medieval county of Champagne in northeast France, as well as the duchy of Aquitaine to the southwest. Once again this is made all the more difficult because during the time period this thesis focuses on, there was no unified idea of a French nation, merely an assorted collection of duchies and counties with some degree of recognition towards the ruling Capetian dynasty. In addition to these areas in France, northern Spain and southern England, especially after the Norman conquest of 1066, also figures into the discussion at times.

The partition of chivalry into the following aspects—secular/militaristic, religious, and courtly—is not unique to this thesis. Indeed, influential books on the subject, including Sydney Painter's *French Chivalry*, Constance Brittain Bouchard's *Strong of Body, Brave & Noble*, and Maurice Keen's *Chivalry*, all follow this division to some degree.[4] It is a testament to the sheer extent of chivalric literature in the Middle Ages that these divisions can be made, and yet, the sources have a strong degree of interconnection with one another in terms of the type of chivalry they refer to. *The Song of Roland*, for instance, a poem that will appear frequently in this thesis, is as much a work in favor of the crusades as one that discusses a knight's role as a loyal vassal. Likewise, Chrétien's romances create an image of a knight that is just as much a deadly warrior as he is a passionate lover. There is no single interpretation of chivalry that treats the three aspects listed above equally. Indeed, the medieval writers themselves do not seem to know which aspect of chivalry was most important. This is partly because many of the writers on which this thesis will focus were not writing for themselves. They were in the service of secular lords and ladies, as well as religious magnates like the pope, who had their own ideas concerning chivalry that they wished to be conveyed to their respective audiences. Therefore, part of the problem in understanding chivalry is figuring out each author's bias as well as their place in society.

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[4] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Bouchard, *Strong of Body*; Sidney Painter, *French Chivalry*.

To begin, Chapter 1 looks at the origin of knighthood and the way knights and nobles began to merge into a single social class around the start of the eleventh century. Knights were first and foremost soldiers, and the chivalry they represented was one of military service and loyalty to a liege lord. As the eleventh century progressed, they expressed their role as soldiers by allying with more powerful noble lords. The most powerful and wealthy knights became lords in their own right, in charge of their own castles and men, many of whom were also knights. Keeping in mind this fluidity of social classes, Chapter 1 also discusses the complexity of medieval feudal relations. Knights were fundamental to these relations, as in the examples of Hugh of Lusignan and Roger of Mortemer, two French nobles who juggled their obligations to their lords with their own personal desires. The *chansons de geste* (songs of heroic deeds) perfectly encapsulate this secular, militaristic chivalry in the forms of *The Song of Roland* and *The Song of the Cid*. Each put particular emphasis on a knight's duty to his lord and the mindset he should display in combat.

Chapter 2 focuses on the religious side of chivalry. As knights developed into the great military force of eleventh-century Europe, the church began the slow process of trying to control secular, knightly violence through the Peace and Truce of God movement. The papacy, undergoing its own reforms, slowly became involved in this process to the point where it launched the First Crusade to redirect knightly violence out of Europe to fight the enemies of Christianity. Once again, *The Song of Roland* supports this style of chivalry with its emphasis on the righteousness of the crusader cause against non-Christians, while at the same time portraying certain non-Christians as having noble qualities worthy of recognition and perhaps even respect.

Other works like Chrétien's romances place emphasis on knightly piety working alongside secular chivalry to create an overall better warrior. Finally, St. Bernard of Clairvaux's *In Praise of the New Knighthood* proposed a new style of knighthood in the form of the Knights Templar, who acted as warrior-monks in service to Christ alone.

Chapter 3 discusses the effect courtly love had on the development of chivalry. At the same time as the crusades were launched in Europe, the first troubadours of southern France began to pen their love poems. Taking influence from both Ovid and contemporary Arabic sources, these troubadours (male) and troubairitz (female) styled courtly love, not militarism or religious piety, as the ultimate expression of chivalry. Chrétien de Troyes' romances shine forth in this segment; his knights are the greatest warriors in the world because they are courtly lovers. A contemporary of Chrétien, the mysterious Marie de France, challenges this in her lais, arguing that love, not fighting, is the sole requirement of a noble knight. This chapter also discusses Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love*, a formal treatise on how a young, passionate knight should go about wooing a noble maiden.

As the breakdown of the chapters suggests, many of the sources that this thesis will cover are literary. As such, this thesis is as much a literary analysis of knighthood as it is a historical one. Medieval documents like Bishop Fulbert of Chartres's letter to William V of Aquitaine (Chapter 1) and Pope Urban II's speech at the Council of Clermont (Chapter 2) are relevant to the discussion of medieval chivalry, but the literary sources are by far the most important sources of information. With that in mind, I will attempt to help the reader by providing a short amount of historiographical and biographical information on the major sources and their authors (if known). Some sources, like the poems of the troubadours and troubairitz, are so varied that their analysis will be relegated to their appropriate chapter. Others, like Fulbert's letter and Urban II's speech, are concise enough that they can be discussed within the chapters themselves. The sources of chivalry in the Middle Ages must include literary sources, as varied as *The Song of Roland*, the works of Marie de France, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux. It is to those that we now briefly turn.

### ***The Song of Roland***

*The Song of Roland* (French *Chanson de Roland*) is a fictionalized dramatization of an actual battle between the rearguard of Charlemagne's army and Christian Basque raiders in what is now northern Spain. The battle, which was in fact more of an ambush, took place at the Roncevaux mountain pass in the Pyrenees Mountains in 778 C.E., and saw the annihilation of Charlemagne's rearguard. One of Charlemagne's courtiers, a man by the name of Einhard, recorded the battle in his *Vita Karoli Magni* (*The Life of Charles the Great*), where he notes the death of a few prominent figures of Charlemagne's court, one of whom was named Roland.

The events of the Battle of Roncevaux survived in some form of oral tradition until its codification as early as the second half of the eleventh century. Wace, an Anglo-Norman chronicler writing in the twelfth century in service to the descendants of William the Conqueror, notes that a version of *The Song of Roland* was sung at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 to inspire William's army.[5] There are actually seven different, recorded versions of *The Song of Roland*, but the most popular (and the one used in this thesis) is the Digby 23 manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. The manuscript has been dated between 1125 and 1170 and is most likely based off of a lost original work composed as early as 1060.[6] Literary historians have long debated the authorship of the poem, with the argument centered on “traditionalists,” who see the poem as on ongoing compilation of various, oral narratives, and “individualists,” who believe a single individual wrote down the poem from the oral tradition.[7] The poem itself is 4,002 lines long, and the last line cites a certain Turoldus as the author. Whoever the author was, it is important to remember that *The Song of Roland* is a twelfth-century manuscript of an eight-century battle. As such, its tone is far more focused on contemporary matters, such as knightly values and the crusades, than any historical accuracy to the actual battle.

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[5] Andrew Taylor, "Was There a Song of Roland?" *Speculum* 76 (2001): 28-29.

### *The Song of the Cid*

Like *The Song of Roland*, *The Song of the Cid* (Spanish *Cantar* or *Poema de Mio Cid*) is also based in history. The protagonist is Rodrigo Díaz, a Spanish knight who lived during the eleventh century. Rodrigo was in the service of Sancho II of Castile in northern Spain, the eldest son of Ferdinand I of Castile and León. After Ferdinand’s death in 1065, his lands were distributed to Sancho and his two younger brothers, Alfonso and García. The brothers fought one another for overall control of the Christian, Spanish kingdoms, and in 1072, Sancho was murdered. Alfonso, the middle brother, was implicated in Sancho’s murder, but he managed to secure his sovereignty over his brothers’ kingdoms. [8] The poem begins with Cid’s exile, with the understood reason being his allegiance to the late Sancho and therefore a threat to Alfonso’s rule.

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[6] Jane Gilbert, “The *Chanson de Roland*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. by Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22; Glyn Burgess, trans., *The Song of Roland* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 7-8.

[7] Gilbert, “*Chanson de Roland*,” 22.

[8] María Rosa Menocal, introduction to *The Song of the Cid: A Dual-Language Edition with Parallel Text*, trans. Burton Raffel (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), xii-xiii.

Unlike *The Song of Roland*, *The Cid* is much closer historically to the events it tells. The poem is dated to 1207 C.E. (although it may have circulated beforehand in some form of oral poetry); this means that there is roughly 100 years difference between the Cid's life and the writing of the poem.[9] This is compared to the roughly 300 years that separate the Battle of Roncevaux to the composition of *The Song of Roland*. Once again, the author of the poem is unknown, but considering the Spanish Christian kingdom's close proximity to the Muslim-controlled lands of Al-Andalus, whoever wrote *The Cid* had the cultural exchange between Christians and Muslims in mind (see Chapter 2).

## Chrétien de Troyes and the Arthurian Romances

Despite his undeniable contribution to the Arthurian legend, almost nothing is known about the life of Chrétien de Troyes. Only five of his works, all of them romances, survive: *Erec et Enide*, *Cligés*, *The Knight with the Lion* (*Yvain*), *The Knight of the Cart* (*Lancelot*), and *The Story of the Grail* (*Perceval*). A clerk by the name of Godefroy de Lagny, of whom there is no other mention in history, completed *Lancelot* with Chrétien's permission, possibly to allow him more time to work on *Yvain*. His longest romance, *Perceval*, is unfinished.

His full name only appears once in the introduction of *Erec et Enide*. He only refers to himself with his first name in his subsequent romances. Knowing only his name, a variety of theories have emerged in an attempt to identify who Chrétien really was. One theory is that he was a converted Jew, the "Christian of Troy" who combined the epics of classical antiquity with the Christian, moral supremacy of his own time. Other theories include him being a canon priest, someone connected with Islamic mystics from northern Spain, or a group of writers using the name Chrétien.[10] Frankly, most of these assumptions are dubious at best, but based on the introductions to his romances, it is clear that Chrétien worked for some of the most powerful nobles of twelfth-century France. Chrétien's *Lancelot*, for example, begins with praise for his patron, Countess Marie de Champagne, who convinced him to write the romance. He eventually came into the service of Count Philip of Flanders, who he gives thanks to for providing him with the book with which he used to write his *Perceval*. Since Philip died during the Third Crusade (1189-1193), it is assumed that the loss of his patron is why Chrétien never finished the story.[11]

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[9] Menocal, introduction, xii.

## Andreas Capellanus and *The Art of Courtly Love*

Of the romance writers in this list, Andreas Capellanus may be the most well-known, at least in the ability to place him in history. His only known work, *The Art of Courtly Love* (*De Amore*), was written sometime between 1174 and 1238, making him a contemporary of Chrétien and Marie de France. Like Chrétien, his work was commissioned by Countess Marie de Champagne. If he completed *De Amore* before her death, this would place its composition before 1198 C.E. His surname is based off of the word chaplain, and it is believed by many literary historians that he served for a time as Marie's chaplain at Troyes in northeastern France. Over half-a-dozen charters from between 1182 and 1186 support this with the inclusion of a certain

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[10] Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, "Chrétien de Troyes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. Simon Guant and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 80.

[11] Douglas Kelly, "Chrétien de Troyes," in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 136.

Andreas on the witness lists, but aside from this, there is no other evidence connecting him to Champagne.[12]

### Marie de France

Continuing the trend of medieval authors (even those who are well known), much of Marie de France's life is a mystery. Her writings are contemporary to Chrétien de Troyes's. Her greatest contributions to medieval literature are her *Lais,* twelve short romance poems ranging from 118 to 1184 lines. The dates are approximate, but she was active from around 1160 to 1215. As her name suggests, she was most likely from France, although she was active in the court of England, most likely writing for King Henry II (r. 1154-1189).[13] Thanks to the Norman conquest of England a century prior, the English court had a strong French atmosphere, and French was the spoken language. At the very least, her writing skills and education make it almost certain that she was of noble birth.

### St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the *In Praise of the New Knighthood*

The only known writer in this list not concerned with courtly romances, Bernard was a defining figure of the Cistercian monastic order, monks who rebelled against the worldliness of their Benedictine brothers, who since the time of the Carolingians in the ninth century had served in governmental positions. The Cistercians, founded in 1098, made a move back towards their ascetic roots, choosing to live in unheated houses, eating meager amounts of food, and practicing a strong vow of silence unless speech was absolutely necessary, all in the hope of attaining a stronger relationship with God.[14] Their emphasis on austerity was welcomed by the church and medieval society in general, who viewed the Cistercians as icons of piety. The fact that the Cistercians emerged at the same time as the papal reform movement picked up speed (see Chapter 2) also helped gain goodwill.

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[12] John F. Benton, "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center," in *Culture, Power, and Personality in Medieval Europe,* ed. Thomas N. Bisson (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 30-31.

[13] Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante, introduction to *The Laís of Marie de France* (Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1982), 1, 6-7.

Bernard joined the Cistercians in 1115 at the age of 21. He was born to a French noble family, and it is clear from his writings that he admired the chivalric qualities of knights. However, he lacked the physicality required to be a one, so instead made up for it with the strength of his preaching. Within five years after joining the Cistercians, he became the abbot of Clairvaux and had converted most of his immediate family to the cloth.[15] Bernard was the primary promoter of the Second Crusade (1147-1149). Sometime around 1130 C.E., his cousin, Hugh de Payens, one of the founding members of the Knights Templar, approached Bernard with a request. The Templars had received church approval to become an official knightly order, but they were low in membership. Knowing Bernard's skill with words, Hugh requested that Bernard craft a statement in favor of the Templar cause. Bernard's response, the *De laude novae militae* (*In Praise of the New Knighthood*), proved to be a founding document for the order with the way it emphasized the uniqueness of Templar knighthood.

This variety of sources, both literary and historical, by secular and religious authors already shows the various viewpoints that chivalry can be viewed from. Whether they wrote for themselves or (more likely) for a wealthy patron, these authors certainly had a bias towards the type of chivalry they favored. *The Song of Roland*'s focus on the Battle of Roncevaux ensures that its viewpoint of chivalry is primarily militant; however, its connection with Charlemagne allows a place for the religious themes of chivalry to express themselves. *The Song of the Cid*, with its focus on the adventures of its titular hero, follows a similar pattern by emphasizing the Cid's military skill and religious piety. St. Bernard of Clairvaux's strong connection to the Cistercians and the Knights Templar allows for religious chivalry to fully manifest itself in his *De laude novae militae*. Finally, the troubadours, troubairitz, Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, and Andreas Capellanus all wrote within the boundaries of the medieval court, and as such, medieval courtly culture finds its way into their particular vision of chivalry. As we progress through this thesis, it is important to keep in mind these biases and the forces that influenced the medieval authors in order to discover not only what chivalry was, but what these authors wanted chivalry to be.

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[14] Clifford R. Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 286.

[15] John J. Robinson, *Dungeon, Fire and Sword: The Knights Templar and the Crusades* (New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc., 1991), 36.

# CHAPTER 1

## “For his lord a vassal must suffer hardships”:

## Militaristic and Secular Chivalry

Medieval knights were first and foremost warriors, loyal soldiers and nobles who fought with sword, shield, and lance on the battlefields of Europe in service to their own feudal lords. Like any other time period in history, war was a frequent reality in the Middle Ages, and knights were a by-product of these conflicts. Being heavily armed and armored (even more so in the Late Middle Ages with the development of plate armor), knights were a specialized group clearly separate from the common foot soldiers and archers (knights tended to avoid the use of bows in the heat of battle) that filled out the armies of medieval Europe. As a result of this distinction, some of earliest literature concerning knighthood needed something that would further distinguish a knight’s usefulness both in and out of war. The answer to this problem was the militaristic qualities of chivalry. For example, one of the most famous tales of knightly valor, *The Song of Roland*, is historical fiction entirely centered on the combat between French knights and their enemy counterparts. *The Song of Roland’s* Spanish equivalent, *The Song of the Cid*, likewise praises the Cid’s incomparable skill at arms and warfare. Finally, despite his focus on knights as romantic lovers, Chrétien de Troyes knights display their amorous feelings through physical violence. Whoever the author in question, it is clear that knights are always meant to have a sword in hand, ready to face any trial through heated combat.

Why and when did knights emerge, and what did they value as integral members of the medieval society they were a part of? The problem in approaching these questions is that the literary works that this chapter covers, from *The Song of Roland* to Chrétien de Troyes, do not provide any sort of answers. They are far more in the moment with their viewpoint of chivalry, choosing instead to focus on specific knightly values rather than its explicit origin. With that said, this chapter on militaristic and secular chivalry, to separate it from the values that characterize religious chivalry and courtly love, must also include historically documented events involving knights that preceded the composition of works like *The Song of Roland* and *The Cid*. Medieval documents like Bishop Fulbert of Chartres's letter to William V of Aquitaine and the accounts of vassals Hugh of Lusignan and Roger of Mortemer provide strong historical context for the problems knightly vassals faced in the service to more powerful feudal lords, problems that would find their place within the knightly literature that would characterize militaristic chivalry. Ultimately, alongside the need for knights to be paragons of combat, both the historical documents and literary sources require knights to be loyal vassals worthy of the fidelity they owed to their lord.

What is important to keep in mind is that as the Middle Ages progressed, knights and the noble lords they served under slowly fused into a more homogeneous social group. This trend can be traced backwards all the way to the time of the Carolingian dynasty—the Frankish monarchs beginning with Charlemagne and his immediate descendants of the ninth century—and the rise of comital power that followed after Carolingian power declined. The first knights of Europe were in the service of these increasingly powerful counts. Indeed, *The Song of Roland* is set during Charlemagne's expedition into Spain in the eighth century, roughly two centuries before knights emerged as a distinct social class in medieval documents, and an underlying theme throughout the story is the conflict between the king/emperor and his powerful counts, along with the knights who serve both sides.[16]

Peter Brown, however, finds a connection outside of literature in the Late Roman/ Early Byzantine period of Eurasian history. He notes a predecessor of the medieval knight in the form of the Persian 'cataphract', a heavily armored cavalry unit which operated in the Eurasian Steppe during the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. To their Roman rivals, the Persian cataphract translated in Latin as a *clibanarius* (a mounted soldier—Figure 1).[17] This is an important point since a related term used to identify a knight in medieval documents is *caballarius*, another Latin term for horse.[18] Even before European knights formally existed, mounted soldiers like the cataphract held unique status for their heavy armor and mobility. Medieval knights, whose skill in combat rested heavily upon their skill as horsemen, followed in this tradition.

From the end of the tenth century onward, a more common term used to classify a knight was *miles* (plural *milites*, from which modern English gets the term military), the Latin word for soldier. Joachim Bumke notes that the *Sächsische Weltchronik*, a thirteenth-century German text, cites Romulus, the mythological founder of Rome, as the man who coined the term and its meaning: "he collected all sorts of persons and made a people. From these he selected a hundred for the council and called them senators and a thousand for war and called them knights. Hence the name *miles* [soldier/knight], meaning 'one from a thousand.'"[19] Of course, the Roman *miles* was not necessarily a mounted soldier like the medieval knight. He was a foot soldier through and through, first as a citizen-soldier in service to the Republic, and later as a professional legionnaire spreading imperial rule across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Nevertheless, using a word like *miles* made it clear that military service was a primary responsibility of knights.

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[16] The word *chanson* refers to songs of heroic deeds which praise the chivalric qualities of the protagonist. The spirit of these works is not too different from Homeric epic.

[17] Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), 160-62.

[18] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 11-13.

[19] Joachim Bumke, *The Concept of Knighthood in the Middle Ages* (New York: AMS Press, 1977), 22.

By the Middle Ages, however, the term *miles* changed to denote a variety of new meanings. For one, it specifically referred to a mounted soldier, clearly separating their role in warfare from foot soldiers. More broadly, the term also highlighted the individual's martial capabilities as a professional soldier, distinguishing them further from the clergy and common people. Finally, *miles* became a term used increasingly by the upper nobility of Western Europe to identify themselves.[20] These nobles saw the value in calling themselves knights by incorporating the martial qualities of the *miles* within their role as the social magnates of their respective lands. Yet as the term *miles* improved concerning its societal implications, it always remained based around the fact that the knight was a professional soldier skilled in mounted combat.[21]

The knight's focus on mounted combat was not in itself a new phenomenon. As Peter Brown as shown, heavily armed and armored, mounted soldiers had existed centuries prior in the form of the Persian 'cataphract' and Roman *clibanarius*. However, what would make the mounted knight the preeminent fighting force on the medieval battlefield for years to come was the introduction of the heavy cavalry charge. The introduction of the stirrup prior to the eleventh century and overall improved saddle design made it possible for knights to engage in a cavalry charge in which the spear or lance was tucked or ‘couched’ under the knight’s arm (Figure 3).[22] Without the stirrups or a saddle-bow to help grip the rider, a knight engaged in such an attack had a high risk of falling off his horse from the sheer force of the blow. These technological improvements helped to ensure that mass charges by large groups of armored knights were a viable, and indeed highly effective, strategy in warfare, capable of ripping through enemy lines by sheer force alone. Indeed, it remained the preeminent form of medieval combat into the fifteenth-century, when longbows and crossbows proved to be more than a match at piercing metal armor.[23]

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[20] Keen, *Chivalry*, 27-28.

[21] A wide variety of attempts to rank and categorize knights survives from medieval documents. Examples include *milites nobilis* (noble knights), *milites ignobilis* or *gregarii* (common knights), *milites mediae nobilitatis* (knights of middling nobility), *milites maiores* (greater knights), *milites minors* (lesser knights), and *milites praecipui* (leading knights). Other adjectives used include *optimi* (most excellent), *honorabiles* (honorable), *fortissimi* (most brave), and *prudentissimi* (most wise). See Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, & the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 224-25.

The points made above, from Peter Brown’s discussion of the *clibanarius*, the use of term *miles*, and the emphasis on the mounted cavalry charge, all focus on the militaristic aspects of knighthood, but unlike the solely-militant *clibanarius*, medieval knights evolved into more than just soldiers. As stated, the knights of the Middle Ages were not immediately recognized as members of the aristocratic class of Western Europe. Instead, around the end of the tenth century C.E., the militant knights, who at this time functioned more along the lines of hired soldiers than hereditary nobles, took up the practices and appearances of the aristocratic lords they served. Although combat remained their primary focus, they also became bureaucrats and lords in their own right.  Likewise, the aristocracy of Western Europe transformed their own identity to better mirror the martial qualities of their knightly vassals.

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[22] Keen, *Chivalry*, 23-24.

[23] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 483. English longbows proved to be the deciding factor for English victory at battles like Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt during the Hundred Years War.

Medieval lordship is a complicated subject that this thesis does not have to time to explore in its entirety, but suffice it to say that lordship among the nobility of medieval Europe developed over the course of centuries, with influences ranging from Roman legal practices, biblical teachings, and Germanic tribal customs, all of which stressed some form of loyal subservience to a master whose duty was to look over his charges.[24] Like their knightly vassals, medieval lords had a number of terms used to identify themselves: *nobilis* (noble), *praeclarus* (bright or famous), *illuster* (illustrious), and *venerabilis* (venerable) to name a few.[25] Unlike knights, however, whose identifying terms spoke more towards their rank, profession, or specific social standing (i.e. greater versus lesser knights), the terms used to describe a noble are adjectives that describe the individual's nature. Essentially, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, terms like "noble" and "aristocrat" were not necessarily synonymous with one another. Being "aristocratic" signified that the person in question belonged to the privileged, ruling segment of society, while being "noble" meant the person was a distinguished individual, ideally from a likewise distinguished family.[26] Therefore, while nobles were aristocrats, not all aristocrats were nobles.

That is not to say that there was not what could be called a "noble class", but such a classification depends upon the specific time period of the Middle Ages in question. From their initial emergence around 1000 C.E. onward, knights were always aristocratically separate from the masses of medieval society. The arms, armor, horses, and manpower alone required to keep a knight ready for battle were extremely expensive, and being a knight implied a degree of wealth and authority that placed him above most people. Yet while the earliest knights had the wealth to maintain their social position and the power (in the form of martial training) to command, as newcomers on the medieval scene what they lacked was the noble quality which most distinguished them from the masses of society—a noble ancestry connecting them to oldest houses of Western Europe.

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[24] Thomas N. Bisson, "Medieval Lordship," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 746.
[25] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 1-2.
[26] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 2-3.

The emphasis on noble blood speaks to the change in power occurring around the year 1000 C.E. Prior to this, the monarchial power once held by Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious two centuries before had long been on the wane due to interfamilial conflict among their descendants.[27] In this power vacuum, the medieval count (from the Latin *comes*, friend or companion) and duke (from the Latin *dux*, leader) emerged. French duchies such as Normandy and Aquitaine achieved political independence from what survived of the monarchy during this period, merely paying lip-service to whoever held the throne. However, these new noble leaders, whose titles could be fairly interchangeable, used the prestige of Charlemagne's family to solidify their own claims to power.[28] By claiming to have the blood of the Carolingians running through their veins, or at the very least the blood of a powerful Carolingian noble who lived during Charlemagne's rule, these new counts and dukes could readily justify their positions of authority.[29] After 1000 C.E., the more powerful knights of medieval France would begin to make the same claims.

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[27] Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe: 300-1000*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 311-312. Cracks in Charlemagne's rule appeared during his own reign, as seen in one of the more infamous conspiracies led by his illegitimate son, Pippin 'the Hunchback', and a cabal of supporters who claimed to have never swore allegiance to Charlemagne as emperor.

[28] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 5.

[29] The ancestors that noble families used to prove their heritage did not necessarily have to be real people. For example, while trying to reconstruct the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona around 1150 C.E., the monks in the nearby city of Ripoll created an imaginary ancestor who married the daughter of a count of Flanders (Barcelona and Ripoll were both part of the kingdom

Aside from claiming a noble heritage, whether truthful or not, another way for a knight to gain noble status was through marriage. Medieval, aristocratic marriages were often not initiated by love. Rather, marriage was a contract intended to link the fortunes of two families together in a way that would ensure the loyalty of both sides. Due to the nature of medieval life, aristocratic men and knights tended to die more frequently than their female counterparts from warfare, tournaments, crusading, and disease. Along with the fact that more boys entered into the Catholic Church than girls, noblewomen were therefore in larger supply to marry.[30] As such, aristocratic men could readily expect to marry a woman whose family was of a greater social station than his own, since there were more women that he could choose from. Indeed, knights were expected to marry above their social standing to improve their own lot and that of their family. For knights who already held some degree of authority, the system could work the other way, allowing said knights to tie lesser knights into their service by marrying them to their daughters. [31] Through this system, even the lowliest of knights could ensure the future nobility of their descendants by marrying into the family of his lord. In turn, his descendants could marry upward as well into the families of counts and dukes.

Unfortunately, for a discussion about the relationship between knights and aristocracy, the concept of "feudalism", the socio-political system of relationships that dominated the Middle Ages, cannot be avoided. As any textbook explanation of feudal relations will show, "feudalism" calls to mind the famous pyramid chart, in which the hereditary monarch at the top of the pyramid rules over the nobility, who in turn rule over lesser nobles and knights, who in turn

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of France during the twelfth century). See Thomas N. Bisson, "Nobility and Family in Medieval France: A Review Essay," *French Historical Studies* 16 (1990): 605-06.

[30] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 90.

[31] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 90.

control the serfs and peasants at the bottom. While not necessarily wrong, such a description does not give justice to the sheer complexity needed to describe medieval feudal relations. This oversimplification, and the constant reinterpretations that have come about as a result, has led medievalists like Thomas N. Bisson to make the humorous claim that “feudalism” has been turned, “into a unicorn.”[32] Therefore, a quick clarification is needed in order to show how knights specifically fit into this system of relationships, as well as the problems they could face as they tried to uphold their vows to the men above and below their rank.

The core of medieval feudal relations revolved around the lord-vassal agreement. Essentially, a person who held sufficient land or resources (the lord) could give a portion of it away to another individual (the vassal). The vassal would then hold the land, known as a fief or benefice, until his death or until the lord should ask for it back. The agreement between the two would be a highly formal affair in which both parties, accompanied by friends, family, fellow vassals, and local clergymen, would sign their agreement as proof of their fidelity to one another.[33] While simple on paper, the nature of feudal relations becomes much more complicated when one considers that a vassal could have multiple lords, and the collective lands he held from them could make him more powerful than any individual lord. Conversely, the vassal owed some form of service, usually military, to each lord, and if his lords should come into conflict with one another, the vassal would be forced to choose which lord he would support. Thus the concept of the liege lord, the lord whom a vassal owed his ultimate service, was born. Other complications include the fact that the fief granted to a vassal did not have to necessarily be land. Hunting rights, money, and other privileges were all potential fiefs that a vassal could receive in return for his allegiance.

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[32] Bisson, “Medieval Lordship,” 743.

[33] M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 3rd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). As medieval charters became more formalized, various methods were used to ensure the authenticity of a document. One such method, the chirograph, would have a document written in duplicate one the same piece of paper, which would be cut down the center with a wavy or jagged line. Each party would get a copy, and by piecing the two halves together, one could ensure if the document was authentic.

One example of a medieval description concerning the nature of feudal relations can be found in a letter written by Bishop Fulbert of Chartres in 1020 C.E. Duke William V of Aquitaine, the recipient of the letter, had asked Fulbert to elaborate on the nature of fealty between a lord and vassal. As Fulbert states:

> He who swears fealty to his lord must always remember these six things: harmless, safe, honorable, useful, easy, possible. Harmless, that is, he must not harm his lord in body. Safe, he must not harm him in secrets or in the fortifications by which he is able to be safe Honorable, so that he must not harm him in his justice or in other affairs which are seen to pertain to his honor. Useful, that he might not be harmful to him in his possessions. Easy or possible, so that he not make difficult any good which his lord could easily do nor make anything impossible that is difficult. It is just that the vassal avoid these evils, but he does not merit his holding for so doing, for it is not enough that he abstain from evil unless he does what is good.[34]

Fulbert provides a short and concise explanation of the basic requirements needed to maintain a healthy lord-vassal relationship, in many ways not unlike a modern-day business deal. In both situations, mutual trust in the belief that both parties would uphold their side of the deal was paramount. It is important to note that the lord was bound to obey the same obligations as his vassal. The ideal vassal and lord were sources of aid to one another, ready to provide service, military or otherwise, whenever needed. Knights, who were both lords and vassals to men above and below their social rank, were expected to follow these sorts of rules. If not, they risked destroying their reputation as honorable warriors, thereby jeopardizing any future deals they might make. They would also be more vulnerable to invasion by a rival lord, who could exploit his opponent's lack of allies.

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[34] Fulbert of Chartres, “Letter to William of Aquitaine,” in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 10, ed. L. Delisle (Paris, 1904), 463

Fulbert's second point in his letter highlights the importance of security in the form of "fortifications" (i.e. castles). Like the introduction of the knightly class, castles were also a feature of the Middle Ages that emerged around 1000 C.E.[35] It is interesting to consider that the great age of castle building that lasted from 1000 to the end of the Middle Ages did not begin, as one would expect, a century or two earlier during the infamous Viking and Magyars raids from northern and eastern Europe, respectively, but during the time period in which counts, dukes, and powerful knights began exercising their individual authority over Western Europe. Moreover, the introduction of castles also saw the emergence of the castellan, or castle-knight, a knight who controlled a specific castle or castles given to them by a count or duke they served. It was also possible that the castellan ruled a castle in his own name without paying homage to a more powerful lord. These independent castle-knights could exercise banal lordship, effectively acting as lords in their own right while charging customary dues (protection money) from any peasants or clergymen who resided within their domain.[36] While a knight in service to a more powerful lord could still be seen as little more than hired mercenaries, the castellans were a new breed of relatively independent knights who had greater leeway to expand their own authority.

This mass of information of feudal relations and medieval lordship is no doubt complicated, but to clarify, knights in the decades after 1000 C.E. used these systems and concepts in order to integrate themselves more fully into society. Their primary focus was still military service, but by serving as loyal vassals to their liege lords, knights began to rise up the medieval social ladder. In turn, their liege lords, namely counts and dukes, associated themselves with knights in order to increase their own authority as the military powerhouses of Western Europe. However, problems began to emerge as knights became lords in their own right. As lords, they had obligations not only to themselves, but their own vassals and other individuals of higher rank. As a result, nobles and knights often came into conflict with others as they tried to uphold their numerous vows. Below are two instances in which the problems of lordship and feudal relations are made readily apparent, and more often than not, result in or exacerbate knightly violence.

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[35] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 15.
[36] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 20, 58-59.

## Feudal Tensions at work: Hugh of Lusignan and William V of Aquitaine, Roger of Mortemer and William the Conqueror

Fulbert of Chartres' letter is not the only time William V of Aquitaine appears in a primary source concerning feudal relations. An account written or dictated in the 1020's by one of his vassals, Hugh of Lusignan, shows that despite Fulbert's advice, William was not the ideal liege lord. According to the account, Hugh was a chatelaine (French for castellan, a commander of a castle), who frequently came into conflict with rival nobles over land and castles. One such conflict was with Viscount Josfred (Geoffrey) of Thouars, who had seized Hugh's fief, Mouzeuil Castle, and tortured his knights. Hugh responded by calling on William, his liege lord, to mediate with Josfred in order to regain his lands, for Hugh had previously aided William in a war against Josfred's uncle and expected aid for his service. However, the account makes clear that William never helped regain Hugh's lost land, and when Hugh responded by taking captive 43 of Josfred's knights, William retorted with angry words; "I don't ask you for them [Josfred's knights] in order to do you wrong but because you are mine [i.e. my vassal] to do my will."[37] Before more violence ensued, William then proceeded to renew his pact with Hugh, promising again to regain Hugh's lands provided that Hugh turn over his captured knights. Hugh did so, but once again William never fulfilled his pledge, and Hugh lost both the castle and the captured knights he could have held for ransom.

To further complicate Hugh and Williams's relationship, the account lists another instance of hostility when Hugh captured and burned a castle belonging to a certain Count Fulk for the purpose of building his own. What complicates the matter is that Hugh was a vassal of Count Fulk, though Hugh justified his actions by claiming the castle he captured belonged to his relatives and that he had a better claim to it as a result. Just as in the first example, Hugh approached William to mediate the dispute. This placed William in a precarious position, because according to the text, Fulk was either a vassal of William, or they held some form of agreement between one another as social equals. Whatever their particular relationship, William risked conflict; Count Fulk could potentially attack William for violating their friendship if he sided with Hugh and granted him the castle. The same goes with Hugh, who threatened to annul their lord-vassal relationship if he did not receive what he believed was his familial right. Ultimately, William chose to grant the castle to Hugh, but does not offer any protection to his vassal when Hugh's new lands come under attack. As expected with Hugh's earlier demand, he breaks his feudal tie with William, but before the two could come to violence, Hugh accepted lands once held by his late uncle which had fallen into William's possession. In the end, their tie as vassal and lord is renewed and Hugh's account ends.[38]

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[37] Hugh of Lusignan, "Agreement Between Lord and Vassal," in *Readings in Medieval History,* 2nd ed., ed. Patrick J. Geary (Calgary; Broadview Press, 1997), 367-68. An important note is that throughout the narrative William is referred to as "Count" rather than his title Duke of Aquitaine. Hugh is referring to William's title as Count of Poitou, a city in west-central France. Being a chatelaine operating around the area of medieval Poitou while at the same time being a vassal to William, Hugh is more inclined to identify William by his more local count title. Medieval documents tend to use different titles when referring to powerful nobles depending on the location and particular relationship in question.

Roughly 30 years after Hugh's dispute with William V of Aquitaine, Roger of Mortemer in northern France came into conflict with William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy. As the story goes, Roger served as William's vassal and aided him in his conflict with Ralph of Crépy, Count of Amiens and three other great lords. Roger's castle at Mortemer served as the battleground between the two forces, and during the battle, Roger captured Ralph. Because Roger had paid homage to Ralph in the past and was therefore his vassal, he was obliged to shelter Ralph from William for three days before escorting him back to his forces. William saw this action as an act of betrayal and promptly banished Roger, only to rescind the order later due to Roger's proper treatment of the captive Ralph.[39]

These two examples highlight a variety of important points concerning the lord-vassal relationship. As these two examples clearly show, the situations lords and vassals found themselves in is highly complicated. In both, the origins of the disputes center on land, especially strategic castles, and who has the right to hold it. From William V of Aquitaine and William of Normandy's point of view, they must juggle the responsibilities of dealing with vassals who may have conflicting obligations to other lords, and they both respond violently, chastising or banishing their vassals over slights to their honor and power.

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[38] Hugh of Lusignan, "Agreement Between Lord and Vassal," 370-72.

[39] John F. Benton, "Written Records and the Development of Systematic Feudal Relations," in *Culture, Power, and Personality in Medieval Europe,* ed. Thomas N. Bisson (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 278. Although Roger is allowed to return, William does not return Mortemer castle to him, instead granting it to another vassal.

More than anything, the two examples listed above show the value of the lord-vassal agreement in feudal relations, specifically for the reason that violence occurs when they do not work. Hugh engages in his violent acts when he believes William is no longer helping to achieve his goals. Roger is banished for not acting out justice in his lord's name, choosing instead to let Ralph live. Throughout both works, the underlying theme of treachery (or at the very least going against a lord's wishes) and the danger it poses to the lord-vassal system is ever present. The theme of knightly service ties into this, as both William V of Aquitaine and William of Normandy expect absolute loyalty from their vassals. In order to rule effectively, they both require knightly vassals who will obey their orders and accept their rule. From Hugh and Roger's point of view, they need lords who look out for their well-being and interests. As this chapter will go on to discuss, some of the most popular works of the Middle Ages, *The Song of Roland* and *The Song of the Cid*, as well as the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes, explore this issue of knightly service and betrayal while espousing the proper behavior a knight and vassal must show his lord. Characters like Roland and his uncle Ganelon, under the militaristic code of chivalry, would come to represent the best and worst of knightly honor, respectively.

### ***The Song of Roland***

The central event of *The Song of Roland* is the Battle of Roncevaux, during which the titular character, Roland, dies valiantly defending the rearguard of his uncle Charlemagne's army against a far larger Muslim force. The battle itself is rooted in history; in 778 C.E., Charlemagne and his army pushed into northern Spain after receiving envoys from the independent Arab rulers of Barcelona and Zaragoza, who were both under increasing pressure to submit to the growing power of the Umayyad caliphate to the south. In the preceding decades, Charlemagne had accumulated a great amount of power and prestige in his conquests of Aquitaine (or in this particular case “reconquest”, as the lord in charge of the lands had rebelled against Charlemagne despite swearing allegiance to him), Northern Italy, and the Saxon tribes across the Rhine River. In that same spirit of conquest, he crossed over the Pyrenees, only to find that Barcelona and Zaragoza were closed off due to infighting between the rulers of the two cities. With the Umayyad army steadily approaching, Charlemagne made a hasty retreat back into France.[40]

It is during this retreat back across the Pyrenees, through the Roncevaux mountain pass, when the attack occurred, not by the advancing Umayyad army, but by Christian Basque raiders. One of Charlemagne’s courtiers and chief advisers, Einhard, recorded the event in his *Vita Karoli Magni* (*The Life of Charles the Great*):

> They [the Basques] attacked the rear of the baggage train and drove the men of the rearguard and those who were marching in the rear down into the valley below…In the battle, Eggihard, the overseer of the king’s table, Anselm, the count of the palace, and Roland, the prefect of the Breton March, were killed, along with many others. The deed could not be avenged at that time, because the enemy had so dispersed that not even a rumor remained as to where they might be sought.[41]

*The Song of Roland* takes significant liberties in its account of the battle. The fictional Muslim army and Roland’s rearguard are inflated to gargantuan proportions; Roland’s rearguard numbers at 20,000 (vv. 789), while the Muslim forces amount to 400,000 (vv. 851). The two individuals who ground the story in some semblance of historical fact, Charlemagne and Roland, are also altered. Charlemagne is referred throughout *The Song of Roland* as emperor, despite the fact that the Battle of Roncevaux took place 22 years before he was crowned Roman Emperor by the pope. Likewise, Roland is upgraded from being the prefect of the Breton March (a territory that served as a border zone of the larger Carolingian territories) to Charlemagne's favorite nephew, and is given greater importance than Charlemagne's son and heir, Louis the Pious.[42] As discussed above, Roland's upgraded genealogy speaks to the trend of connecting noble, aristocratic knights to Charlemagne's family. By making Roland Charlemagne's nephew, his achievements are made all the more impressive. Likewise, Charlemagne's reputation increases with the bravery and sacrifice his nephew displays in battle.

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[40] Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 284-85.

[41] Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, in *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, revised edition, trans. David Ganz (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 25, c. X.

These distinct differences between Einhard's historical account and *The Song of Roland*—the treatment of Charlemagne, the inflation of the two armies, one of which is now Muslim, and the alteration of Roland's genealogy—all speak to the expectations the late-eleventh, early-twelfth century audience would have who heard the poem. Because *The Song of Roland* is 4002 lines long, it is difficult to believe that a travelling *joglar* (juggler/minstrel) or court-affiliated troubadour would have recited the poem. Andrew Taylor notes that such performances tended to last for only a short amount of time; instead, he maintains that a story like the *Roland* was the work of a church cleric, "since only if it took the form of a written text [rather than an oral performance by a minstrel] would a poem have the prestige or authority to command a listener's attention for four thousand lines."[43] The audience in question would be the members of a noble court, in particular the nobles themselves, other clerics and clergymen affiliated with the court, and especially knights.[44] On one hand, the fact that clerics would have presented *The Song of Roland* speaks to the authority the church had in distributing and controlling chivalric texts, a theme that will be addressed in Chapter 2. More importantly, the knights who heard *The Song of Roland* would have been inspired to model their own behavior off of Roland's selflessness and loyalty.

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[42] As seen in the dialogue between Charlemagne and Roland's fiancée, Aude. See Chapter 3.

[43] Taylor, "Song of Roland?" 58, 63. Indeed, the prelude to the battle, the battle itself, and Charlemagne's subsequent vengeance all serve as "acts" which could be recited over a period of a few days.

[44] Robert Francis Cook, *The Sense of the Song of Roland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 133.

Even though a work like *The Song of Roland* was most likely orated by a cleric, and therefore lacked the performance value of a work told by a minstrel, that is not to say that the knights and nobles who heard it would not have found it entertaining as well as motivating. Indeed, stories involving Charlemagne or Roland (in the pseudo-historical form they came to represent) were an entertaining pastime for clerics and their noble/knightly audience; minstrels and clerics alike could "boast of their repertoire" by recounting such stories.[45] This process continued well throughout the Middle Ages. By the early fourteenth-century, the author Jean de Longuyon compiled what would come to be known as the Nine Worthies, nine figures across time who embodied the chivalric spirit and were worthy of emulation (Figure 4). These nine were categorized into three "Laws": the Old Law, Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabaeus: the pagan Law, Hector, Alexander, and Julius Caesar: and the Christian Law, Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey de Bouillon (one of the Christian lords who led the First Crusade).[46] Clearly, medieval writers from *The Song of Roland* onward had in mind a clear idea of the individuals that knights should follow in their eternal quest to be chivalrous.

Returning to Charlemagne, the Carolingian emperor in *The Song of Roland* has all the trappings of a medieval lord, and even though the central event of the poem is Roland's sacrifice, it is his uncle who is presented first and last as the leader of the Christian world. As such, there is a particular emphasis on the land's Charlemagne has conquered. On two different occasions in *The Song of Roland*, Charlemagne's conquests are used to highlight his worthiness as a Christian lord. The first time occurs as the Frankish traitor Ganelon discusses his plot to betray Charlemagne to the Spanish Muslim force of King Marsile. Marsile's chief advisor, Blancandrin, mentions that the regions of Apulia and Calabria in southern Italy along with England are now under Carolingian control (vv. 370-76). Even Charlemagne's enemies cannot avoid praising him as they equate conquered territory to worthiness of character.

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[45] Taylor, "Song of Roland," 50-51, 55.

[46] Keen, *Chivalry*, 121. Nine Heroines would come about to complement their male counterparts, although they do not conform to the three Laws, mostly being noteworthy women from Biblical or Roman antiquity.

Roland's monologue as he lies dying provides a more detailed account of Charlemagne's lordly value, and again that worthiness is expressed through military conquest:

> [With his sword Durendal] I conquered Anjou and Brittany
> And with it I conquered Poitou and Maine;
> With it I conquered Normandy the free
> And with it I conquered Provence and Aquitaine
> And Lombardy and all Romagna.
> With it I conquered Bavaria and all Flanders
> And Burgundy and all Apulia.
> And Constantinople, which rendered homage to him.
> In Saxony his commands are obeyed.
> With it I conquered Scotland and Ireland
> And England, which became his domain;
> With it I have conquered so many lands and countries
> Which Charles with the white beard now holds. (vv. 2322-34)

The Carolingian Empire at its height in the ninth century encompassed much of modern-day France, Germany, and northern Italy; many of the regions Roland lists—England, Scotland, Ireland, southern Italy, and Constantinople—remained independent of Carolingian control. Being a work composed sometime shortly after the Norman conquest of England, it is believed that the Norman kingdoms of England and Sicily were combined with the historic Carolingian

Empire to highlight Norman dominance by the twelfth century.[47] In this sense, the Normans have taken up the image of Charlemagne as the conquering hero of a revitalized and expanding Roman Empire, and just as the Charlemagne of history renewed the imperial idea of Rome, so too did Norman nobles and knights use Carolingian-inspired tales like *The Song of Roland* to emphasize their own role as conquerors.

Outside of his role as a conqueror, *The Song of Roland* depicts Charlemagne as an upholder of both justice and proper feudal relations. Again he conforms to the contemporary twelfth-century ideals of medieval lordship; despite being referred to as emperor, he holds little power outside of the battlefield. Ganelon's trial at the end of the poem highlights this theme. Ganelon defends his actions by stating that Roland wished for his death and nominated him to be the envoy to King Marsile to fulfill that wish (the previous envoys had been killed by Marsile, and Ganelon expected the same thing to happen to him) (vv. 3768-78). All the barons of Charlemagne's court see this as a valid argument and press the emperor to absolve Ganelon, except the noble knight Thierry, who defends Charlemagne's and the late Roland's lord-vassal relationship: "Whatever Roland may have done to Ganelon, / The act of serving you should have protected him. / Ganelon is a traitor in that he betrayed him; / He committed perjury against you and wronged you" (vv. 3827-30). Thierry defends the feudal system that men like Bishop Fulbert of Chartres espoused and men like William V of Aquitaine and William the Conqueror maintained. Charlemagne, for his part, represents an "ideological hierarchy" of power, in which his authority is not derived from his own absolute power—the fact that most of his barons initially side against him shows that he has little legal authority to act as he sees fit—but the power he gains from loyal vassals who uphold his law.[48]

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[47] Taylor, "Song of Roland," 28-29; Burgess, *The Song of Roland*, 157.

If Charlemagne represents the ideal lord of the lord-vassal relationship, then Roland is surely the ideal vassal. Roland is first and foremost a loyal knight and baron in service to his uncle. At the beginning of the poem, he nominated himself to be the envoy to King Marsile, but is refuted by his friend Count Oliver for his aggressive temperament (vv. 255-57). His martial prowess is so great that he is considered Charlemagne's right arm, and Ganelon believes that Roland's death would break the morale of the Frankish army (vv. 596-98). Roland is fully aware of his skill in battle and the crucial role he plays in his uncle's army. On more than one occasion before his death, he notes, almost prophetically, the affect the battle will have on his legacy. Specifically, Roland wishes to avoid at all costs the "shameful songs" that would arise should he show dishonor or weakness in the defense of his uncle (vv. 1014, 1466). As such, his chivalric reputation for posterity is as much on the line as Charlemagne's well-being.

Roland is almost single-minded in his quest to be valiant in the face of overwhelming odds. Keeping in mind his duty as a vassal, Roland lectures Oliver when the latter shows hesitation at the prospect of engaging the far greater Muslim army: "For his lord a vassal must suffer hardships / And endure great heat and great cold; / And he must lose both hair and hide" (vv.1010-12). Roland explicitly states the need for a knight to be a loyal servant to his lord. As the battle progresses, the poem notes the distinctive qualities of Roland and Oliver particularly in the forms of bravery and wisdom (vv. 1093). The fact that this line is given in the heat of battle would seem to suggest that Roland's description of being brave makes him superior to the wisdom-oriented Oliver. However, the next line refutes this statement: “Both are marvelous vassals” (vv. 1094).[49] Similar to how Fulbert of Chartres highlights different points a vassal must follow to be of service to his lord, so too does *The Song of Roland* note different qualities that knights can aspire to, be it bravery or wisdom. Both are worthy qualities of a loyal knight.

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[48] Sarah Kay, *The Chansons de Geste in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 120; Cook, *The Sense of the Song of Roland*, 18.

That is not to assume that these various qualities did not come into conflict with one another. *The Song of Roland* makes clear note of this in the famous horn scene where Roland debates whether or not to blow his war horn (called the oliphant) and request Charlemagne’s assistance. In fact, the scene is of such importance in understanding Roland and Oliver, it is repeated almost word-for-word three consecutive times:

> Oliver said: ‘There is a huge army of pagans,
> But mighty few of our Franks, it seems to me.
> Companion Roland, blow your horn;
> Charles will hear it and the army will turn back.’
> Roland replies: ‘That would be an act of folly;
> Throughout the fair land of France I should lose me good name.
> Straightaway I shall strike great blows with Durendal;
> Right up to its golden hilt the blade will run with blood.
> These treacherous pagans will rue the day they came to this pass.
> I swear to you, they are all condemned to death.’(vv. 1049-58)

Roland believes his honor as a knight and baron is contingent upon his steadfastness against a far superior force. To call for help prematurely would be a sign of cowardice. However, as the battle slowly turns in favor of the Muslims, Roland considers calling for Charlemagne’s help, only to have Oliver reprimand him: “For a true vassal’s act, in its wisdom, avoids folly; / Caution is better than great zeal. / Franks are dead because of your recklessness” (vv. 1724-26). Roland and Oliver’s roles have now switched; Roland suggests prudence and wisdom while Oliver supports bravery.[50] Roland had his chance to wisely call for aid, but squandered it to promote his own sense of chivalric bravery, and as a result, Charlemagne's rearguard is utterly annihilated.[51] This example once again highlights the complicated nature of vassalage. Roland's bravery and Oliver's wisdom are not mutually exclusive to each other; however, as vassals, they must be aware of their environment and situation and model their behavior accordingly.

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[49] Gilbert, “The *Chanson de Roland*,” 27.

The final example of Roland's depiction as the ideal knight and vassal comes in the form of his approach to combat. As expected of a knight, he fights similar to the Frankish warriors depicted in the Bayeux tapestry (Figure 2), fighting initially with a spear on horseback until it shatters, at which point he draws his sword, Durendal. The combat becomes much more descriptive and fantastical at this point with the introduction of attacks like the "epic stroke", in which Roland, striking with Durendal, cleaves through his enemies' armored head, chest, and groin, the saddle of the rider's horse, and into the horse itself (vv.1325-34). Such an attack, while certainly dramatic, is physically impossible to perform. Nevertheless, its incorporation in *The Song of Roland* is for the sake of drama. The "epic stroke," according to medievalist John Benton, is a tool of "enculturement" that teaches proper knightly values: "The *Chanson de Roland* can be considered an enculturative instrument for an entire warrior class, from the most aristocratic descendants and successors of the heroes named in the text to the lowest *milites* with pretensions of chivalric honor."[52] A legendary knight like Roland was worthy of emulation because he gave his all in service to his lord, both in battle and in his death. As he lays dying,

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[50] Peter Haidu, *The Subject of Violence: The Song of Roland and the Birth of the State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 77-79.

[51] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 115-16.

[52] John F. Benton, "'Nostre Franceis n'unt talent de fuïr': the *Song of Roland* and the Enculturement of a Warrior Class," in *Culture, Power, and Personality in Medieval Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 150-51, 162.

Roland positions himself so that when he passes, he will be facing toward Spain (vv. 2866-67). Even death cannot stop Roland's service to his uncle, for he becomes a silent watchman of Charlemagne's enemies. To Roland, there are no half measures. His entire life's goal is to prove his chivalric valor in the service of his feudal lord, and in the context of *The Song of Roland*, he succeeds.

## Similarities to *The Song of Roland* in other works

*The Song of Roland* is not the only chivalric tale that highlights the worthy qualities of knights. *The Song of the Cid* (*Cantar* or *Poema de Mio Cid*), which idolizes the exploits of the eleventh-century Spanish knight Rodrigo Díaz, is only 300 lines shorter than *The Song of Roland* and features many of the same themes.[53] Like Roland, the Cid (referred to endearingly throughout the poem as my Cid, a contraction of the Arabic *sayyid*—lord or commander) faces a crisis as a vassal. Unlike Roland, however, his crisis does not revolve around whether or not to value bravery or wisdom, as seen in the dialogue between Roland and Oliver. The Cid's predicament is much worse, for the poem begins with him being cast out from his lands by Alfonso VI, King of Castile and León in northern Spain. The historical Cid had been in the service of Alfonso's older brother, Sancho, who was killed in the infighting between the brothers after their father's death.[54] A vassal to a dead lord, the Cid's punishment for his service is banishment, and one cannot feel anything but sadness as he is forced to flee his lands and leave his wife and two young daughters in the care of a monastery.

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[53] Menocal, introduction, x.

[54] Menocal, introduction, xii.

Despite having every reason to hate Alfonso, the Cid throughout the poem seeks to gain the king's favor. Rather than be an independent lord in his own right, which he is certainly able to do, the Cid would rather enter into Alfonso's service and transfer all the lands and power he has received to the king. The Cid does so through conquest, and like *The Song of Roland*, there is an emphasis on territorial acquisition. *The Cid* is written in the context of the *Reconquista*, the "reconquest" of the Muslim-held lands of Al-Andalus. The first two-thirds of the poem go into meticulous detail as the Cid travels from town to town, conquering the Muslim defenders and ruling over them in his name. With each conquest, his reputation as a knight and lord grows, and despite being little more than a very successful mercenary, he gains more followers after each battle.

Alongside the territory he gains, *The Cid* places strong emphasis on martial prowess and treasure. Take the following lines as the Cid captures the town of Castejón: "He killed fifteen Moors as they ran. / There was silver, there was gold, / And his knights kept coming to him with more" (1.23). The Cid periodically sends great portions of his newly acquired wealthy to Alfonso in Castile as an act of homage. Each time he requests forgiveness, and it is clear from the first canto that Alfonso wishes to make the Cid his vassal, however, his duties as king prevents him from forgiving Cid so quickly (1.47). It is only when the Cid captures the great Moorish city of Valencia in Canto Two that Alfonso personally absolves him, and the Cid responds by emphasizing the joy he feels at becoming the king's vassal (2.104).

Canto Three highlights another common theme between *The Song of Roland* and *The Cid*: the danger of treachery. Ganelon's treachery leads to the destruction of Charlemagne's rearguard and the death of Roland. Similarly, the Cid is betrayed by his two son-in-laws, the opportunistic Carrión brothers, who convinced the Cid to allow them to marry his daughters to them. After being humiliated at the beginning of Canto Three, they leave Valencia with their wives, and after gaining enough distance from the city, viciously scourge them to get back at the slight to their honor.[55] It is only because of the timely arrival of one of the Cid's loyal vassals that the two girls are saved. In both *The Song of Roland* and *The Cid*, the internal traitor is a disloyal family member not biologically related to the protagonist but a member of the family nonetheless (Ganelon is Roland's stepfather). Because of their treachery, they become identified as outsiders to the accepted, ideal system that Roland and the Cid represent.[56] In both stories, the traitor is put on trial, and trial-by-combat is necessary to convict them.

While not a *chanson de geste* by definition, the Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes feature similar themes of chivalric valor that *The Song of Roland* and *The Cid* share. More specifically, characters in *The Song of Roland* become archetypes of both proper and improper noble conduct. In his *Yvain* (*The Knight with the Lion*), Roland's legendary martial skill is the standard that Yvain is compared to when he fights the knights of the treacherous Count Alier: "and see how he [Yvain] wields his sword when he draws it! Roland never caused such devastation with Durendal against the Turks at Roncevaux or in Spain."[57] Once again, the valor of one noble knight, Yvain, is juxtaposed by the deceitfulness of another noble, Count Alier. On the opposite side of the chivalric spectrum, Chrétien's *Cligés* presents the treacherous Count Angrés as being, "worse than Ganelon."[58] What is clear is that medieval writers writing after the composition of the *Roland* had a clear understanding of the values a knight should identify with, namely valor, strength, honesty, generosity, and loyalty.[59] By creating characters who represented the antithesis of these characteristics, medieval authors could display the full might of their heroes as they fought and died in the name of their respective lords.

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[55] The Carrión brothers are ridiculed for their cowardly reactions by the Cid's men, but not the Cid himself, after the Cid's pet lion escapes his cage (1.112).

[56] Kay, *Chansons de Geste*, 177.

[57] Chrétien de Troyes, *The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)*, in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William Kibler (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 335.

[58] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William Kibler (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 136. Even more interesting is the fact that Arthur blames his barons for

## Conclusion

To recap, the intricacies and complications of medieval lordship and lord-vassal feudal relations are difficult topics to tackle. What is clear is that after 1000 C.E., knights became an active part of that feudal system, becoming both lords and vassals in their own right through marriage and by associating themselves with noble ancestors. With their emphasis on armored, mounted warfare, knights quickly became the dominant military force for much of the High Middle Ages. As such, medieval lords did not just value knights for their military prowess; they took on the militaristic trappings of knights in order to depict themselves as sources of military authority. Clergymen like Fulbert of Chartres attempted to give a straightforward definition to what was required of knights as vassals, but as the examples of William V of Aquitaine and William the Conqueror show, the concept could become difficult in practice. As vassals, knights held a variety of obligations to their various lords, forcing them to pick and choose who they served at any given time.

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convincing him to leave Angrés in charge of his lands, similar to how Charlemagne sees his barons as an obstacle in the way of bringing justice to Ganelon.

[59] Simon Barton, “The ‘Discovery of Aristocracy’ in Twelfth-Century Spain: Portraits of the Secular Elite on the *Poem of Almería*,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 83 (2006): 455.

The *chansons de geste* like *The Song of Roland* and *The Song of the Cid* idealize the lord-vassal relationship, to the point that their values become a symbol of conformity.[60] A knight like Roland has no character development. He is merely the archetype and symbol of the loyal vassal, who confirms his loyalty through chivalric valor in the heat of battle, and who will give his life in service to his lord. The Cid initially is freed from the lord-vassal relationship, becoming a very successful, independent lord in command of his own army. Despite this, he actively tries to gain the favor of King Alfonso in the hope of becoming his vassal. Chrétien's knights are more free-thinking, but even they cannot escape being compared to the idealized, loyal Roland or the deplorable Ganelon. Their will is ultimately the will of their lord, and if they go against their lord's wishes, they run the risk of losing their honor, of having "shameful songs" sung about them.

An underlying theme throughout all of these works is knightly violence against other knights and nobles. As knights emerged around 1000 C.E. and allied themselves with more powerful lords, they actively engaged in fighting other knights in an escalating power struggle. Hugh of Lusignan and Roger of Mortemor's accounts are just two historically-based examples of men actively engaging in warfare to fulfill their own specific needs. This issue of knightly violence enters into the literary sources as well. Chrétien de Troyes' knights fight against the treacherous counts who rebelled against King Arthur. Roland and Oliver are loyal knights who battle Charlemagne's enemies, but the theme of knightly violence appears in the subtle tension between Roland and Oliver qualities as vassals. More explicitly, the fight between Thierry and Ganelon's champion during the trial at the end of the poem illustrates the conflict between rival knights in service to rival lords. The problem revolves around the liege lord a knight was specifically loyal to. Rather than having all knights and nobles serve under one, unified ruler, there is a distinct division of rival factions battling one another for dominance. *The Song of Roland* comes closest to solving this problem in the form of Charlemagne as a unifying emperor, but even it must create a character like Ganelon to foil Roland's noble qualities.

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[60] John F. Benton, "Individualism and Conformity in Medieval Western Europe," in *Culture,Power, and Personality in Medieval Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 320.

To combat this trend of knightly violence, a new force would insert itself into the development of knightly chivalry—the Catholic Church. Rather than have knights fight each other, the church began the long process of setting rules to limit knightly violence in an effort to protect the defenseless. Likewise, the introduction of the crusades allowed for the exportation of combative knights to the Holy Land, where they could engage in combat against Muslims, rather than Christians. Finally, church officials began to depict knights as defenders of the weak. This theme would be fully realized in the form of the knightly orders, the most popular of which, the Knights Templar, would come to express the perfect combination of the fighting knight and the pious monk.

# Chapter 1 Images

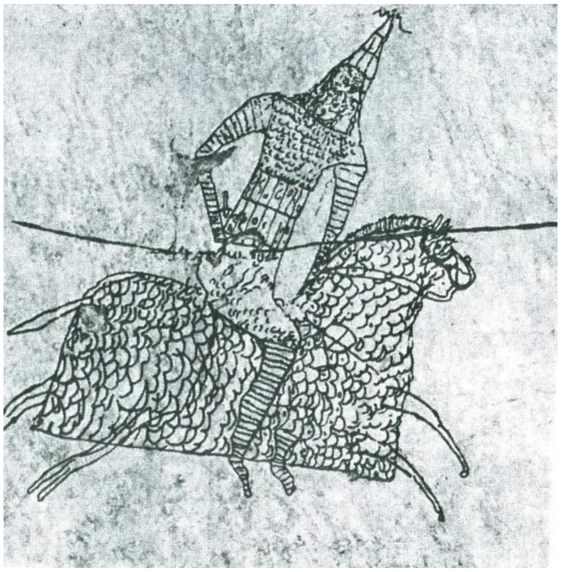

**Figure 1:** Second-to-third-century graffiti of a mounted *clibanarius* at Duro-Europos in modern-day Syria.

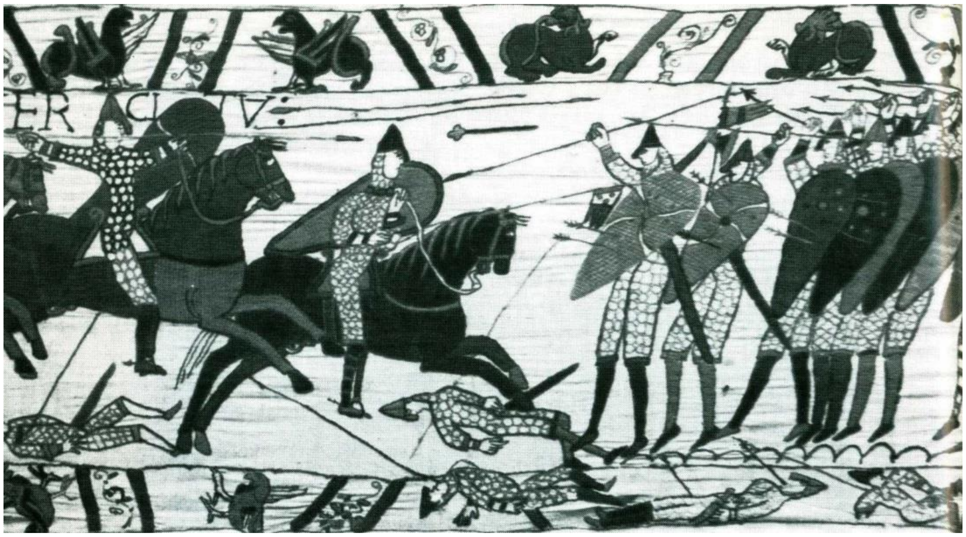

**Figure 2:** Sections of the Bayeux Tapestry detailing the Norman conquest of England. Note the couched lance as the Norman cavalry charges the English shield wall.

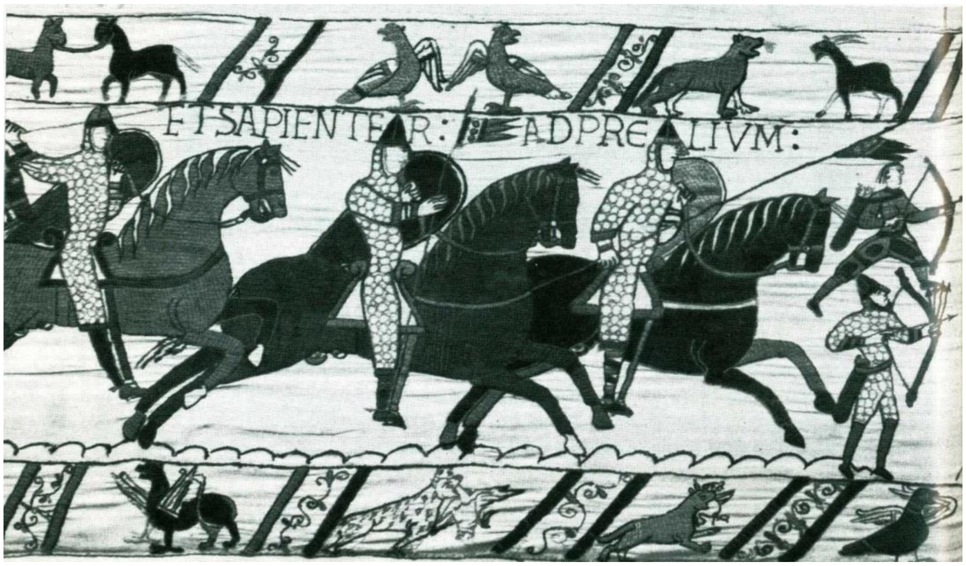

**Figure 3:** Norman cavalry charge. Note the use of stirrups attached to the saddles.

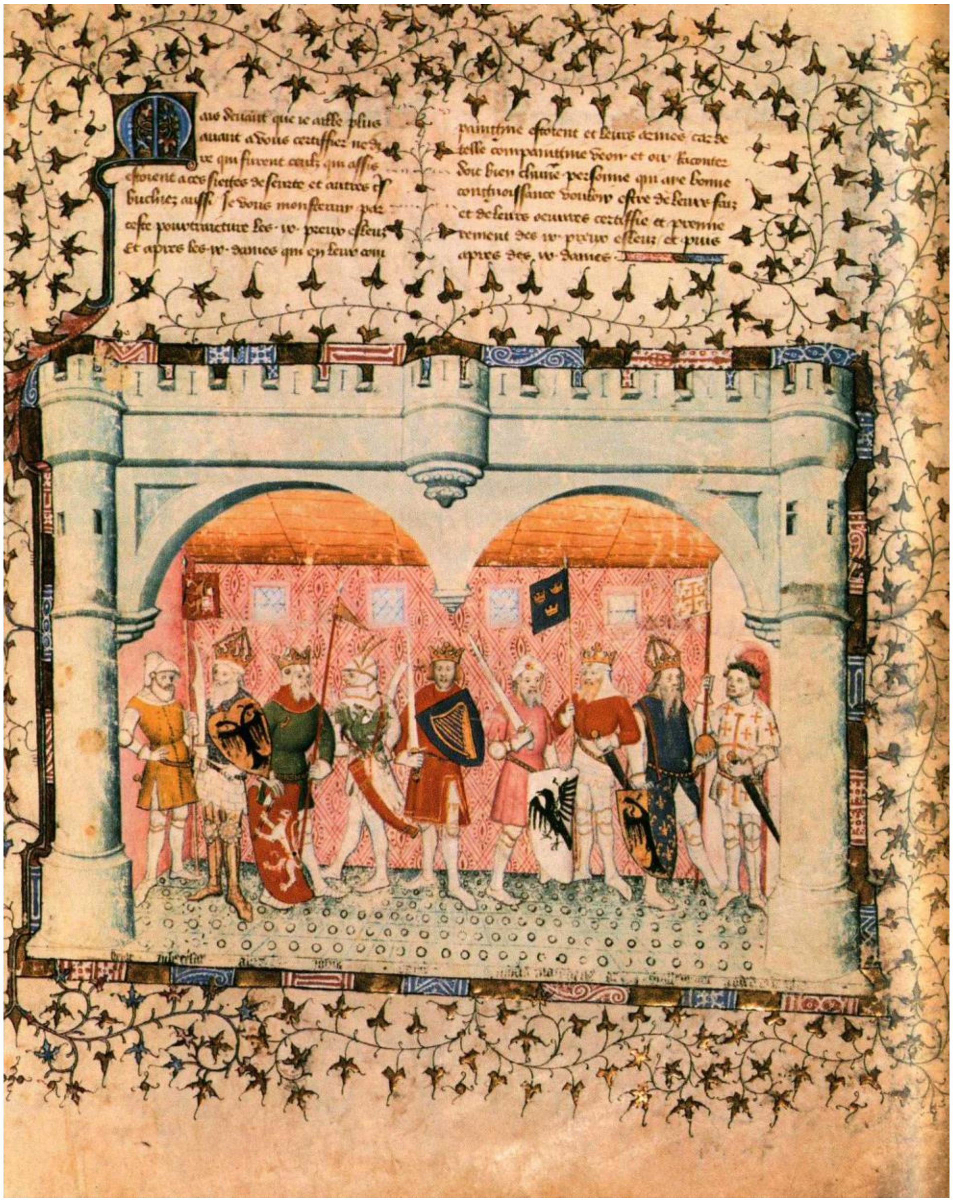

**Figure 4:** Illustration of the Nine Worthies in no particular order.

# CHAPTER 2

## “It is the will of God!”:

## Religious Chivalry and the Warrior-Monk

The militaristic and religious aspects of chivalry are not so different from one another in that both stress absolute service to a noble lord. The ultimate distinction between both aspects of chivalry revolves around the identity of the lord in question. Under militaristic/secular chivalry, a knight serves his liege lord for his own, earthly benefit. As has been seen in *The Song of Roland* and *The Song of the Cid*, both knights gain great fame and, for the Cid, riches serving under Charlemagne and Alfonso, respectively. According to religious chivalry, Christian knights owed their ultimate service not to any earthly, secular ruler, but to God. As God’s representative on earth, the papacy and Roman Catholic Church began the process of implementing the religious themes of chivalry—defending the weak and defenseless and protecting Christendom from external, non-Christian threats—into the knights’ way of thinking. Once again, literary sources like *The Song of Roland*, *The Song of the Cid*, and Chrétien de Troyes’ romances display these aspects of religious chivalry. Historically, religious chivalry finds no greater promoters that ecclesiastical authorities like Pope Urban II and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who promoted the cause of the First Crusade and the formation of the Knights Templar, respectively.

On November 27, 1095, Pope Urban II delivered a speech at the Council of Clermont in south-central France. Earlier that year, the embattled Byzantine Emperor, Alexios I Komnenos, had approached the Roman papacy with a request for knights to aid him in stopping the advance of the Seljuk Turks. The Seljuks, once a nomadic people who converted to Islam around 956

C.E.,[61] had proven extremely capable in pushing back their already fragmented Byzantine enemies at the Battle of Mantzikurt in 1071, capturing Nicaea in the early 1080s, and Jerusalem in 1087.[62] To western Christians, the Byzantine Empire had long served as the shield that stopped the spread of Islam into Europe (Spain was the exception), and despite the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church, and by extension the Byzantine Empire, rarely found common cause with their Roman Catholic brethren. Alexios was politically savvy enough to realize that he needed help if he wanted to take back long-held Byzantine lands.

In front of some of the leading nobles and clergymen of France, Pope Urban II, the then current leader of a church reform movement to reinvigorate papal authority, would irrevocably change the history of the Catholic Church. Referring to the capture of Jerusalem specifically, he called upon the knights and nobles of Christendom to, “wear the sign of the cross of the Lord,” and liberate Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the name of God.[63] Urban had launched the crusades, the series of church-sanctioned holy wars that would, at their height, pit the forces of Christian Europe against the armies of Islam.

Urban’s speech at Clermont is merely the most cited example of crusader literature in the Middle Ages. Indeed, a variety of medieval literature roughly contemporary to Clermont, including more secular works like *The Song of Roland* and *The Song of the Cid*, emphasize the knight’s role not just as a warrior, but divinely-protected ones who fight to protect their people against external forces. What is clear is that the church, just before and during the crusades, had a clear idea in mind when they discussed the role of knights. To the more powerful popes and clergymen like Urban II and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the knight was still a figure quite similar to what was encountered in Chapter 1—a vassal in service to his lord. However, under the context of the religious-inspired chivalry that this chapter will explore, the lord that knights of any rank followed was replaced by God, and by extension, the Catholic Church. In this sense, the knight became, in effect, a warrior-monk, representing the strengths of both and the weaknesses of neither. The church still valued a knight's role as the great warrior on the battlefields of Europe, but by giving him the moral and spiritual strength of a monk, he could become a soldier of Christ unparalleled in strength and piety.

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[61] Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 10th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 81.
[62] Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 255-56
[63] Urban II, “Speech at Council of Clermont, 1095, Five Versions of the Speech,” 1095, *Fordham Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Paul Halsall, ed., accessed 15 May, 2015, http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html.

## The Rise of Papal Authority

Roughly 70 years prior to the Council of Clermont, some medieval clergymen were already working on ways to define knighthood within the broader context of medieval society. As seen in Chapter 1, influential bishops like Fulbert of Chartres believed in the idea that knights could be active participants in the feudal system, indebting themselves to more powerful lords in exchange for lands or some other form of compensation. At the same time, Bishop Adalbero of Laon, writing for the Capetian King Robert II of France, was formulating the system that would one day become the Three Estates of France. His tripartite society, separated into "those who pray" (the clergy), "those who fight" (the nobility), and "those who work" (everyone else), made an important distinction by grouping nobles and knights together by means of their ability to fight.[64] Certainly Adalbero got something right in his division, since his system would survive in the form of the French Estates General up until the French Revolution. But from the point of view of eleventh-century French society, it is clear that Adalbero, a bishop, saw the value in a knight's ability to fight. This praising of martial prowess by Christian priests would become a staple of crusading rhetoric.

Just as bishops like Adalbero and Gulbert attempted to identify the roles of knights and nobles in medieval society, others began to respond to the violence perpetrated by said knights and nobles. The tenth and eleventh centuries were characterized by this type of violence, in which well-armed knights would attack the defenseless peasants and merchants of rival knights and castellans in their attempts to gain greater power and prestige.[65] The church had multiple reasons to intervene in the vendettas that would arise between rival knights. Obviously, killing defenseless people was an immoral action that the church could not condone. At the same time, rampant violence throughout the countryside would make it difficult for church officials to administer to the needy, as well as impact their ability to collect tax payments like the tithe. In 989 C.E. at the Synod of Charroux, the archbishop of Bordeaux called together his bishops to proclaim what would come to be called the Peace of God. In effect, the bishops of southern France, with the support of the duke of Aquitaine, banned the use of violence against the poor and defenseless, namely peasants and clergymen, with the threat of excommunication.[66] Excommunication was the most serious punishment a religious official could administer, as it cut off the guilty parties' connection to the religious community, making it impossible for them to receive church rites like the sacraments and putting their soul in jeopardy of eternal damnation. To any spiritually-minded knight, however violent he might be, such a threat was to be taken seriously.

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[64] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 14-15, 29-30. Other attempts to partition medieval society divided people, for example, into those who were free and those who were not, or into other groupings, such as lords, workers, priests, and monks.

[65] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 22.

[66] "Peace of God," 989, *Fordham Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Paul Halsall, ed., accessed 15 May, 2015, http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pc-of-god.asp.

The Peace of God was only marginally effective in controlling knightly violence.[67] However, it had gained the support of enough bishops and nobles that, in 1063, Drogo, the bishop of the northern French town of Terouanne, with the support of Count Baldwin of Hainault, launched its sequel, the Truce of God. Whereas the Peace of God attempted to limit knightly violence against the defenseless, the Truce of God attempted to set rules of engagement between knights themselves. Literally serving as a truce between warring parties, the Truce of God forbade any violent acts from the end of Wednesday to the sunrise on Monday. In addition, religious seasons like Advent and Lent fell under the Truce, and just like its predecessor, violators faced potential excommunication, along with exile and torture to prove their guilt.[68]

The fact that noble lords like the duke of Aquitaine and Count Baldwin of Hainault supported these reforms is important, as it shows a comradery between the high nobility of France, who wanted to end knights rampaging across their land, and the church to mitigate knightly conflict. It also gave the bishops who supported the Peace and Truce of God movement (the two reforms came to represent one, singular peace reform) the necessary manpower to bring rebellious knights in line. To the knights themselves, the peace movement is one way in which the term *milites* was used to denote a knight's martial function in society.[69] As Constance Brittain Bouchard notes, the knights who upheld the Peace and Truce of God were not following a newfound chivalric ideal that necessitated the protection of the weak and defenseless.[70] Such a concept would take centuries to be fully realized, although the Peace and Truce of God certainly paid a large part in its development. Rather, in the short run, these knights merely accepted a new standard of warfare put forth by the church that rejected the previous system of unending private wars between rival knights and nobles. Warfare now became a defensive endeavor in the church's eyes, in which "good" knights (those who upheld the peace movement) defended the church and its charges (the poor and helpless) against outside aggressors.[71]

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[67] Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, & the Historian*, 262-63. Barthélemy notes that only the areas directly around churches were spared continued violence.

[68] "Truce of God," 1063, *Fordham Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Paul Halsall, ed., accessed 15 May, 2015, http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/t-of-god.html.

It is important to note that it was the bishops of France rather than the papacy in Rome who responded to the knightly violence of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Indeed, the Peace and Truce of God movement was just one example of Rome's inability to display any semblance of authority over its ecclesiastical domain during this time period. The period from around 900 to 1050 C.E. was a moral low-point in the history of the Roman papacy and Catholic Church in general, characterized by simony (the buying and selling of religious offices), lay investiture (the granting of religious offices by powerful, secular nobles), and overall depravity; the papal office from the pontificates of Sergius III (r. 904-911) to John XII (r. 955-964) were so corrupt that this particular period has sometimes been referred to as the "Pornocracy."[72]

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[69] Keen, *Chivalry*, 27.

[70] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 22.

[71] Aryeh Grabois, "*Militia* and *Malitia*: The Bernardine Vision of Chivalry," in *The Second Crusade and The Cistercians*, ed. Michael Gervers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 51.

[72] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 263, 545. As proof of the power Roman aristocracy had over the papacy, Pope John XII was the first layman "elected" to the pontificate. Apparently, he died during intercourse with a married woman, although he was most likely assassinated.

In truth, the papacy up to this point never had much authority over secular rulers or the church itself. The bishop of Rome was begrudgingly accepted as the leader of Christendom since the fourth century, particularly in the east, due to the eminence of St. Peter. However, the pope was a religious leader in name only, and no system existed until the eleventh century in which the Catholic Church could effectively manage itself. Instead, the local noble families of Rome fought one another to hold the title of pontiff for reputation's sake alone. The men who became pope during this "Pornacracy" therefore spent what little authority they had catering to their own familial squabbles and engaging in immoral acts of drunkenness, arson, and murder.[73] All in all, contemporary popes like John XII did little to show nobles, knights, peasants, or their fellow clergymen that Rome was a religious center worth following.

Interestingly, the problems the papacy faced were in part saved and at the same time made worse by the intervention of Emperor Henry III of the Holy Roman Empire. Seeing the infighting that existed among the various families competing for the control of the bishopric of Rome, Henry succeeded in appointing his cousin, Bishop Bruno of Toul, to the office.[74] Bruno took the name Leo IX (r. 1049-1054), and while his appointment did little to solve the problem of lay investiture, Leo successfully began to institute various ecclesiastical reforms, including the creation of the College of Cardinals, a group of select advisors independent of secular, aristocratic control. He also passed decrees that forbade clerical marriage and simony at reform councils in cities like Rheims and Mainz in France and Germany, respectively.[75] Travelling abroad was a particularly prudent move for Leo, as it took him away from the dangerous factions of Rome and, more importantly, gave him the chance to meet like-minded clerics and bishops directly.

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[73] Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 25-26.

[74] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 268. Henry had previously appointed two other popes before Leo, Clement II and Damasus II, but both had quickly died in office, apparently poisoned by vindictive factions in Rome angry at Henry's intrusion.

The reforms that Leo IX began would be drastically expanded upon by his successors, particularly Nicholas II (r. 1059-1061), who condemned lay investiture and put forth the *Papal Election Decree* in 1059, which stated that the pope could only be chosen by the members of the College of Cardinals.[76] The papacy had effectively severed themselves from the power of secular rulers, an act that gained little support among the princes and nobles of Europe. The infamous Investiture Controversy reached its height during the papacy of Gregory VII (r.1073-1085) and Henry III's son, Henry IV (r. 1056-1106), both of whom saw value in being able to appoint their own bishops (Henry needed bishops under his control to help manage the many rebellious princes and nobles in his empire). Gregory, for his part, went a step beyond the reforms of Leo IX and Nicholas II. His *Dictatus Papae* ("Dictates of the Pope") asserted that papal authority superseded any and all forms of secular power; princes, nobles, and knights all owed their ultimate fealty to the papacy. The following are five of the 27 statements regarding Gregory's view of papal authority that highlight, in particular, the pope's supremacy over all of Christendom:

> 3. That he alone can depose and reinstate bishops.
> 12. That he may depose Emperors.
> 19. That he himself may be judged by no one.

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[75] Leo IX, *Decrees of the Council of Rheims (1049)*, in Brain Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 31-32; Adamus Bremensis, *Council of Mainz (1049)*, in Brain Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 32.

[76] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 270.

> 22. That the Roman Church has never erred, nor ever, by the witness of Scripture, shall err to all eternity.
> 27. That the Pope may absolve subjects of unjust men from their fealty.[77]

The last dictate would prove to be particularly troublesome to the secular rulers of Europe. Through excommunication, the papacy had the authority to disrupt and break the feudal ties that bound the nobility of Europe together. The lord-vassal relationship between knights and nobles was now at the mercy of the bishop of Rome and his subordinates. The crisis became so great that before Gregory's death in 1085, both he and Henry had used whatever authority they had to excommunicated one another, and Henry had even gone so far as to march on Rome twice before being turned back by Gregory's Norman allies under Robert Guiscard.[78]

While knights did not play any particular role in the power struggle between secular rulers like Henry III or religious reformers like Pope Gregory VII, the papacy ultimately established its position as an influential, independent institution. For roughly the next 200 years, the individuals who help the bishopric of Rome would be some of the most powerful in Catholic history. This new emergence of papal authority would go on to play a crucial role in how knights operated in the medieval world. Pope Urban II continued his predecessors' work to create an independent church above that of the secular world, in which the nobles and knights of Europe looked to their bishops and clergy for both moral and worldly guidance. When Urban spoke before the nobles and clergy of France at Clermont, he could expect as the head of the most powerful organization in Western Europe that his words would move his audience to action.

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[77] Gregory VII, *The Dictatus Papae*, in Brain Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 49-50.

[78] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 272-72. The Holy Roman Emperors had been the traditional protectors of the papacy, a practice that dated back to Charlemagne's defense of the pope against the Lombards and Roman aristocratic families.

There are, in fact, multiple versions of Urban's speech at Clermont, none of which are believed to be verbatim to what the pope actually said. Of the versions that survive, the text by a certain chronicler by the name of Robert the Monk, is considered the most accurate to both what was said and the general atmosphere of the council.[79] Accordingly, Urban makes no mention of Alexios' call for knights to help the Byzantine Empire. Instead, he frames his argument in favor of the crusades around the supposed depravity of the invading Seljuk Turks, "an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God."[80] Among the many crimes he lists include torture (there is particular emphasis on forced circumcision), rape, executions, and the defilement of holy sites (from the blood of said circumcisions). These accusations, particularly those concerning the pollution of Christian churches and altars, would become a common theme of crusader rhetoric.[81] The Turks are described as little more than monstrous heathens, incapable of compassion or reason.

After the list of Seljuk atrocities, Urban makes his appeal to the knights and nobles of France. Being Franks, Urban appeals to their heritage, bringing to mind the great deeds of their Carolingian ancestors, Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious. As Chapter 1 has shown, one method the knights and nobles of France used to prove their nobility was to link, whether true or not, their family lines with the powerful Carolingian magnates of the ninth century, if not the Carolingian emperors themselves.[82] As Urban states, the Frankish nobles of his time should recall how their ancestors, "have destroyed the kingdoms of the pagans, and have extended in these lands the territory of the holy church." To those knowledgeable of Carolingian history, such rhetoric evokes Charlemagne's brutal wars of conquest and conversion against the Saxons, particularly the infamous massacre at Verden in 782 C.E., in which a disputed 4,500 Saxons were put to the sword after major revolt.[83] In the spirit of Charlemagne, Urban desires the same response, an unequivocal military expedition, led by knights and nobles with church approval, to combat the growing pagan threat. To anyone who took the cross and travelled to the Holy Land, Urban, quoting Scripture (Matthew 10: 37 and 19:29), promises the complete remission of sin and assurance into heaven.

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[79] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 276.

[80] Urban II, "Council of Clermont."

[81] Anne Derbes, "The Frescoes of Schwarzrheindorf. Arnold of Wied and the Second Crusade," in *The Second Crusade and The Cistercians*, ed. Michael Gervers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 143.

[82] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 5; Bisson, "Nobility and Family," 605-06.

To the pious masses of Europe, knights and nobles included, the promise of immediate entrance into heaven was a worthwhile offer in itself, but Urban also makes note not only of the economic gains available to those who took the cross, but the violence the plagued eleventh-century France as well:

> Let none of your possessions detain you, no solicitude for your family affairs, since this land which you inhabit, shut in on all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your large population; nor does it abound in wealth; and it furnishes scarcely food enough for its cultivators. Hence it is that you murder one another, that you wage war, and that frequently you perish by mutual wounds. Let therefore hatred depart from among you, let your quarrels end, let wars cease, and let all dissensions and controversies slumber. Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves. That land which as the Scripture says "floweth with milk and honey," was given by God into the possession of the children of Israel. Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above others, like another paradise of delights.

Here Urban brings to mind the Peace and Truce of God, now taken up by the papacy for the express goal of controlling what conflicts were appropriate for Christian knights and nobles to participate in. Rather than fight one another, Urban calls on the faithful to come together in fidelity and take the fight abroad, against an enemy described as being completely opposed to the ideals of Christianity. This section also alludes to the poverty and overpopulation prevalent in Western Europe at the time of Urban's speech.[84] Ideally, in Urban's mind, Europe would benefit greatly if the warring factions of knights and nobles ended their disputes and redirected their violent tendencies elsewhere.

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[83] Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 286.

All in all, Urban's speech at Clermont proved to be an immediate success; according to Robert the Monk's account, after Urban had finished the congregation cried out in unison, "It is the will of God!" (or "God wills it!" depending on the translation). Indeed, Urban, along with other charismatic preachers like the apocalyptic preacher Peter the Hermit, were so influential in launching the First Crusade (1095-1099) that huge masses of unarmed peasants were the first to take up the cross. Popularly known as the People's Crusade, this phase of the First Crusade, more noteworthy for its vicious pogroms against Jewish settlements, quickly fell apart after being annihilated by Turkish forces when they entered Asia Minor.[85] It was only when the actual crusader army, led by Count Raymond of Toulouse, Geoffrey of Bouillon (also known as Godfrey, later remembered as one of the Nine Worthies), Bohemond of Taranto (the son of Robert Guiscard, the ally of Pope Gregory VII), Count Robert of Flanders, and Duke Robert of Normandy (William the Conqueror's eldest son) arrived that the Christian army make progress in reconquering the Holy Land.[86] In the end, Urban accomplished what he set out to do in his speech. By convincing the knights and nobles of Europe to travel far from their homes to fight Muslims in the Holy Land, Urbans had, at least for a time, exported knightly violence abroad.

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[84] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 277, 405. It is difficult to get exact figures, but from around 1000 to 1300 C.E., the population of Europe rose from roughly thirty to one hundred million, particularly in urban centers.

[85] Herrin, *Byzantium*, 257.

[86] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 280.

With the crusades now underway, it would be up to literary authors to determine what exactly knights should expect as warriors of God.

## Religious Chivalry in the Chrétien de Troyes and the *Chanson de Geste*

Of the three aspects of chivalry this thesis covers—secular, religious, and courtly—Chrétien de Troyes certainly refers to the religious function the least. However, that is not to say it does not exist in his Arthurian romances. His *Cligés,* for example, begins with an interesting look at how clergy, the only people of medieval Europe learned enough to copy documents, ensured the survival of the story up to his life, which he, in turn, incorporated for his own use.[87] Recall how in Chapter 1's discussion of *The Song of Roland,* it is the educated clerics, rather than flashy minstrels, who wrote down the poem and presented it to knights while at court. Chrétien follows this example by paying homage to the group of people responsible for transmitting ancient texts into updated, chivalric works. Just as Chrétien's romances ensure the survival of his version of chivalry, church writings also help to preserve its own, unique brand. Clergy and knights therefore work together; knights perform great deeds, and the clergy preserve them for posterity.

Chrétien depicts *Cligés* as an ancient story worthy of copying (according to him, the story was written down in a book in a certain St. Peter's Library in the northern French city of Beauvais) by linking it to the ancient Byzantine Empire. In the story, Cligés and his father, Alexander, are Byzantine princes who travel to England to serve under King Arthur. Both men are the epitome of chivalry, and by setting the story in this way, Chrétien gives western chivalry a historic precedence. The Byzantine Empire had existed long before Chrétien's time or the emergence of a knightly class in Western Europe. Therefore, the existence of Byzantine princes in England illustrates the transference of chivalric values to the west. Chrétien explicitly states that the concept of chivalry emerged in Greece, before passing on to Rome before it finally found a home in the courts of France (in the form of Chrétien's romances, which he chooses to set primarily in England).[88] Furthermore, recall the tension that existed between the Byzantine Empire and Western Europe set up at the beginning of the chapter. *Cligés* gives Western Europe supreme chivalric authority by placing Cligés and Alexander under the command of King Arthur, who despite being a fictional monarch, is undoubtedly a western, non-Byzantine one. *Cligés* therefore accomplishes two things in its opening pages. It highlights the superiority of western knights for their chivalric valor, and it gives thanks to clergy for reinterpreting ancient stories into tales worthy of knightly chivalry. If it is the knights who enact chivalry, then it is the clergy who can preserve their deeds.

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[87] Kelly, "Chrétien de Troyes," 171.

Such a distinction raises an important point concerning the relationship between knights and clergy. Bouchard's analysis of the relationship between the nobility and the church notes that the process of sending a son to join the church was a common enough practice among the nobility, although the trend differs depending on the family in question. Indeed, many families were liable to end their dynastic line by sending all their sons to become celibate clergymen or monks,[89] leading in part to the higher number of noblewomen available for marriage seen in Chapter 1. In comparison, M.T. Clanchy's exhaustive research on the history of medieval documentation notes that there were many knights educated with some form of classical education, with particular emphasis on the ability to read and write in Latin. Thus another adjective for the *miles* emerged, that of the *miles litteratus*, the “literate knight.”[90] Likewise, as knighthood spread amongst the nobility of Europe, there appear many knights who received the title, but in actuality had very little to no genuine experience in combat and were somewhat derisively referred to as “Holy Mary’s knights.”[91] In these situations, knighthood became little more than a title devoid of its original militaristic connotations. These particular, martially-untrained knights went against the valorous aspects of chivalry discussed so far, merely using the term knight as a title that elevated them above the other classes of medieval society. Such a concept does not appear in Chrétien de Troyes’ romances. His knights are indeed educated members of a social class above those of peasants or even lesser knights, but they constantly display their martial prowess throughout their respective journeys.

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[88] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, 123.

[89] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 140-50.

While Chrétien de Troyes focuses more on the militaristic and courtly aspects of chivalry, religious chivalry, in the form of a knight being a good Christian, does find its way into his stories. Generally speaking, Chrétien’s knights are benevolent men, coming to the aid of any kidnapped maiden, lonely hermit, or besieged village in need of help. More importantly, Chrétien’s romances also introduce the theme of the knightly quest, in which a knight travels far and wide in search of a special object, usually in the form of a Christian relic. Of Chrétien’s five known romances, *The Story of the Grail* (*Perceval*) has the greatest connection with religion in regards to chivalric conduct and the knightly quest. The connection centers on, as the title suggests, Perceval’s encounter with the Holy Grail, which in this story is presented as a bowl or serving dish rather than is traditional chalice form. As Perceval dines in the mysterious hall of the Fisher King (so named for his love of fishing, perhaps a reference to St. Peter as a "fisher of men"), two items of particular importance are presented before him. The first is a white lance that bleeds from its tip, supposedly the Lance of Longinus that pierced Christ's side during the Crucifixion. The second is the Grail itself, made of pure gold and inlaid with precious gems, which causes the entire hall to shine brighter than the sun.[92] Although Perceval wishes to ask about the significance of the two objects, he refrains from doing so; and when he goes to sleep that night, he wakes to find the entire castle abandoned.

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[90] Clanchy, *From Memory*, 232. It is worth mentioning that the term “literate” was ambiguous in the Middle Ages, referring both to a person’s ability to write as well as someone who has received some form of education.

[91] Clanchy, *From Memory*, 228. Similarly, there were many illiterate clergy according to the same source, Nigel de Longchamp of Canterbury.

Perceval receives clarification on what transpired at the court of the Fisher King when he meets his cousin in the following scene. On a side note, this is also the point where Perceval is given his name.[93] Previously, words like boy or knight were used to identify him. Witnessing the Lance and Grail is such an important moment that it merits his new identification as a named individual. According to his cousin, Perceval is unfortunate for not asking the Fisher King why the Lance bleeds and who is served the contents of the Grail, for if he had done so, the Fisher King would have been instantly healed of a long-time, debilitating injury. She further states that Perceval's hesitance to ask stemmed from the fact that when he first began his journey to become a knight, he failed to turn back to help his fainting mother, who feared that her son would die on his quest.[94] The implications of this sin are further expounded when Perceval meets another damsel, who reports to him that the entire kingdom suffers because of his hesitance: "Ladies will lose their husbands, lands will be laid to waste, and maidens will remain helpless as orphans;

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[92] Chrétien de Troyes, *The Story of the Grail (Perceval)*, in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William Kibler (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 420.
[93] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 425.
[94] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 425.

many a knight will die. All these troubles will occur because of you."[95] The sin of one knight has the potential of disrupting the entire social order, and this is the first and only time sin figures prominently as a disruptive and chaotic factor in Chrétien's romances.[96] In response, Perceval makes an oath to himself to find out the answer to the questions he did not ask to the Fisher King.

Perceval's story picks up five years later, during which time, as the romance states, he has forgotten God as well as his oath to find out why the Lance bleeds and who the Grail is served to.[97] That is not to say that he is no longer chivalrous. Perceval continues to display incredible acts of bravery and valor by undertaking difficult adventures and capturing over sixty enemy knights.[98] Yet his purpose in life is incomplete because of his unresolved sin. It is only when Perceval encounters his pious, ascetic-living uncle that he gains some of the answers he is looking for. Once again, Perceval's sin (not helping his heartbroken mother) is reiterated as the reason why Perceval failed to ask about the Grail and the Lance, which in turn lead to hardship in the Fisher King's lands. However, Perceval's uncle reveals that his mother prayed for his safety before her death, and that prayer moved God to keep her son safe throughout all of his adventures.[99] Furthermore, his uncle gives Perceval the answer to his question about the Grail; its contents, the host (the sacramental bread of the Eucharist perhaps, the text is unclear), is served to the Fisher King's father, who is revealed to be Perceval's maternal grandfather.[100] In regards to Perceval's sin, his uncle advises he attend church every day in order to receive penance and to help the poor and orphaned. Doing so will absolve him of his sin.[101] In terms of Perceval's chivalry, religion is a crucial factor to consider, for while it does not directly impact his ability to perform physical feats of bravery, his faith in God is a necessity for the safety and security of his soul. Likewise, Perceval being a good Christian knight is beneficial to the world around him, as is will prevent him from making a similar mistake to the one that put him in his current distress.

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[95] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 438.
[96] Kelly, "Chrétien de Troyes," 172.
[97] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 457
[98] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 457.
[99] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 459.
[100] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 460. The question concerning why the lance bleeds is never answered, although Gawain is tasked with retrieving the lance and is told that one day it will be used to destroy Arthur's kingdom.

The only other noteworthy example of religion in Chrétien de Troyes' romances comes in the form of the enemies a knight must fight as well as the compatriots who fight with him. *The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)* is particularly noteworthy, since in one scene Yvain must combat two demons armed with spiked, wooden clubs who are in the service of an evil lord.[102] Yvain's companion in the fight, as the title of the romance suggests, is a lion, whom Yvain saved earlier from a fire-breathing dragon, a creature clearly synonymous with demons.[103] Be it dragon or demon, both enemies are creatures of malevolence and serve as the perfect antithesis to Chrétien's pious knights (Figure 5). Yvain's leonine companion is a particularly informative example of Christian chivalry. Lions in the biblical tradition are creatures of nobility,[104] and the lion in *Yvain* is no less. Take, for example, the way it reacts after Yvain kills the dragon: "it stood up upon its hind paws, bowed its head, joined its forepaws together and extended them towards Yvain, in an act of total submission. Then it knelt down and its whole face was bathed in tears of humility."[105] The lion performs an act of homage to Yvain, in effect becoming his vassal. Such a pose—kneeling with head bowed and clasped arms outstretched—was a common symbol of submitting oneself to vassalage (Figure 6). In fact, Constance Brittain Bouchard notes that this pose—on one's knees with hands clasped and upraised—developed into the common posture for prayer. Previously, people would prostrate themselves or stand with arms outstretched, but the concept of vassalage influenced Christian prayer practices enough to insert its own methods into the mix.[106] Representing a biblical symbol of Christian nobility, the lion in *Yvain* submits itself to Yvain, thereby highlighting his own Christian worth as a worthy companion.

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[101] Kelly, "Chrétien de Troyes," 172.
[102] Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain*, 364-65.
[103] Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain*, 337.
[104] Bruckner, "Chrétien de Troyes," 87.
[105] Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain*, 337.

Religious imagery and artifacts find their way into the *chansons de geste* (songs of heroic deeds) as well. The fabled Lance of Longinus, which is so prominent in Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*, also appears in *The Song of Roland*. In this story, the spear point is housed within the pommel of his sword, Joiuse (vv. 2504-06). The focus on the Lance in both the *The Song of Roland* and *Perceval* may speak to events recorded during the First Crusade. In the summer of 1098 C.E., the crusaders were besieged in the city of Antioch by Arab and Turkish forces. The situation was dire until a soldier by the name of Peter Bartholomew reportedly received a vision which led him to find the Lance within the city walls. The discovery improved the moral of the crusaders so much that they were able to break the siege and go on to conquer Jerusalem one year later.[107] The inclusion of this particular artifact in *The Song of Roland* is therefore appropriate; just as the crusaders use the Lance in their greatest time of need, so too is the Lance mentioned in *The Song of Roland* to inspire Charlemagne's knights after the death of his nephew.

The Lance of Longinus is just one example of divine inspiration within *The Song of Roland*, and that inspiration is given further emphasis in the form of divine protection. Recalling Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont, in which any knight who went on crusade gained absolution of sin and immediate entrance into heaven upon death, *The Song of Roland* features a similar figure in Archbishop Turpin. Before the Battle of Roncevaux, Turpin has the 20,000 Frankish knights kneel before him in order that he may bless their souls: “If you die, you will be blessed martyrs” (vv. 1134). Roland for his part proves himself such a worthy knight, vassal, and defender of Christianity that, upon his death, the archangels Michael and Gabriel carry his soul into heaven (vv. 2374, 2390-96; Figure 7). After Roland’s death, God helps ensure Charlemagne’s victory over King Marsile and the forces of the North African emir, Baligant: God stops the sun from setting so that Charlemagne’s army can pursue and defeat Marsile (vv. 2458-59), and He keeps Charlemagne alive after suffering a severe blow to his head (vv. 3609-11). Divine protection from God is not dependent upon knights fighting non-Christian enemies, however, for at the end of the poem, Charlemagne’s champion Thierry is given divine assistance to defeat Ganelon’s champion during his trial (vv. 3923). From the point of view of *The Song of Roland*, Christian piety works alongside knightly valor to uphold justice.

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[106] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 45.
[107] Burgess, *The Song of Roland*, 8.

Compared to *The Song of Roland*, *The Song of the Cid* features many similar examples of divine assistance. Archbishop Turpin is replaced in *The Cid* with Bishop Don Jerónimo, whose arrival to Valencia to become its bishop is elevated to a joyous event for all of Christendom (2.79). Looking at the Cid himself, the titular hero is frequently referred to by his epithet, “born at a lucky hour” (1.5). Everything about the Cid’s character and actions has a sense of predetermined greatness due to him being a loyal vassal and devout Christian. In one of his moments of piety, he vows to keep the monastery that cares for his wife and daughters well-funded while he lives in exile (1.15). Furthermore, Gabriel appears in a dream to comfort the Cid early in his exile, telling him that he will be successful in any endeavor he undertakes (1.19).

The nature of the enemies encountered in *The Song of Roland* and *The Cid* is worth mentioning in order to better understand a knight's role as a holy warrior. Obviously, the primary opponents in both poems are Muslims, and overall, they are depicted pejoratively. *The Song of Roland* in particular is clear in the way it depicts Muslims as outsiders. Firstly, their physical features are described in such a way as to make them appear unnatural; the Muslim warrior Abisme is described as having skin, "as black as molten pitch," (vv. 1474), and the race of people from a land known as Occian the Desert forgo wearing armor because their skin is as hard as iron (vv. 3246-3250). Secondly, many of the Muslims depicted in *The Song of Roland* are noted for their violent tendencies and moral failings. Abisme, for instance, "had no greater villain in his company /… / He loves treachery and murder" (vv. 1471, 1475). Coupled with these traits is either a lack of knowledge of, or deliberate attempt to degrade, the faith of Islam. Rather than worship Allah, the Muslims in *The Song of Roland* worship the long-dead bodies of Muhammad and Apollo,[108] and when they begin to lose their battles against the Christians, they toss the bodies into a ditch in anger (vv. 2585-91). Recall how in his speech at Clermont, Pope Urban II refers to the Seljuk Turks as an, "accursed race."[109] *The Song of Roland* has a similar attitude in mind, promoting a Christian militarism directed against non-Christian enemies.[110] *The Cid*, due to the stronger cultural exchanges between Muslims and Christians in Spain compared to France, is more forgiving of Islamic culture. The Cid does not force conversions in the towns he conquers, and some towns even prefer his rule over their previous Muslim rulers because he grants them some of his wartime profits (1.46). From the point of view of *The Cid*, his knightly generosity is more favorable than religious partisanship.

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[108] A common Christian conversion practice was to depict pagan gods as long-dead humans who were given deified status by their descendants. Due to Islam being a monotheistic religion that worships the same god as Christianity, the *Roland* diverts attention from Allah to Muhammad, a man, and Apollo, a god whom Christians had much experience converting people away from. See "The Correspondence of St. Boniface," *Fordham Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Paul Halsall, ed., accessed 19 May, 2015, http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/boniface-letters.asp.

[109] Urban II, "Council of Clermont."

[110] George Fenwick Jones, *The Ethos of the Song of Roland* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963), 146.

As Pope Urban II's speech has shown, crusaders were to look to Charlemagne for inspiration. *The Song of Roland* adheres to this trend, for its representation of the Carolingian emperor as a Christian conqueror.[111] There is frequent emphasis on the lands he has conquered (see Chapter 1), but just as important is his role as a source of Christian morality. He is source of conversion, as seen when Queen Bramimonde, King Marsile's wife, along with over 100,000 pagans, convert near the end of the poem (vv. 3671-74). Furthermore, he is a figure tasked by God to continue expanding his empire for the sake of Christendom. At the conclusion of the poem, to his amusing distress, Gabriel appears before him and tells him to rally his army to help a city besieged by pagans (vv. 3993-98). In the end, Charlemagne becomes a figurehead in service to Christianity, God, and by extension the Catholic Church, as well as a focal point that Christian knights were to look towards as they conquered foreign lands in the name of Christ.

Despite the insistence in crusader literature that Muslims (and non-Christians in general) are unnatural either in appearance or belief, there are many instances in *The Song of Roland* or *The Cid* where Muslim enemies are presented as having noble qualities. In *The Song of Roland*, Blancandrin, King Marsile's advisor, the emir from Balaguer, and Marcule from Outremer ("Across the Sea," another name for the Holy Land, specifically the crusader states set up after the First Crusade) are all described as physically strong, handsome fighters who would make perfect barons if only they were Christian (vv. 24-26, 895-99, 3156-64). Christianity is therefore not a necessary requirement to be chivalrous in terms of martial skill, but it is a requirement to be a fully competent vassal. Like in Chrétien's *Perceval*, proper adherence to faith is a fundamental aspect of being an overall excellent knight. *The Cid* takes this one step further with Lord Abengalbón, a Moorish (North African) and Muslim ruler who is a close ally to the Cid; the Cid himself refers to Abengalbón as, "an ideal friend!" (2.84). Overall, this treatment of Muslims highlights the fundamental difference between *The Song of Roland* and *The Cid*. *The Song of Roland* is much more focused on Christian supremacy over the forces of non-Christians, while *The Cid*, due to its closer proximity to Islamic culture in Spain, is more aware of the cultural interplay between Spanish Muslims and Christians.

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[111] Charlemagne was not the only defender of Christianity in his family; his grandfather, Charles Martel ("the Hammer") was famous for stopping a Muslim raiding expedition at the Battle of Poitiers in 732 or 733 C.E. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 270.

As crusader literature, why then does *The Song of Roland*, and *The Cid* to a lesser extent, treat some of their Muslim opponents with respect? Peter Haidu, in his study of *The Song of Roland*, notes that knights achieve honor through, "the faithful pursuit and murder of the infidel."[112] Noting the quandary between the disdain Muslims receive as a religious group and the respect certain Muslim warriors receive, Haidu writes that this paradox is a, "projection of the self on the screen of the Other."[113] An enemy's presentation as an outside is a common theme in the *chansons*,[114] but to the knights who would have heard *The Song of Roland*, there is a form of chivalric respect found in the favorable representation of Muslim's like Blancandrin and Balaguer. Being able to test oneself in the heat of combat against a worthy foe was the ideal goal of chivalric warfare. By presenting non-Christians with noble qualities, Christian knights like Roland can fully display their talent as skilled warriors. Furthermore, Charlemagne's ultimate victory over the Muslim forces reinforces the idea that it is their Christian piety reinforcing their martial prowess that allows them to carry the day. By the end of *The Song of Roland*, it is not the martial knight who is victorious, but the Christian one.

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[112] Haidu, *The Subject of Violence*, 206.

[113] Haidu, *The Subject of Violence*, 36.

[114] Sarah Kay, *The Chansons de Geste in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 177.

There is no better figure in the history of the crusades who represents a Muslim warrior generally respected by Christians than the Kurdish general Al-Nasir Salah ad-Din, known popularly in the West as Saladin. A skilled military leader, Saladin successfully defeated a crusader army at the infamous Battle of Hattin in 1187 C.E. during the Third Crusade (1189-1193); he fought the Christian forces of Europe, led most famously by King Richard the Lionheart of England, to a stand-still.[115] Despite the fact that he was a living symbol of the difficulty crusaders had in holding onto the Holy Land, Saladin nevertheless is frequently presented as a wise and thoughtful individual rather than a villainous infidel. For example, in a thirteenth-century Old French poem titled *Ordene de chevalerie* (*The Ordination of Knighthood*), a Christian knight captured by Saladin speaks to the Muslim general almost as an equal, answering his questions on how knights are made.[116] Essentially, Saladin requests to become, or at least be seen as, a knight due to their reputation as valorous, noble warriors. Marianne J. Ailes postulates that these positive representations of Saladin stem from the tradition of the *chanson de geste*, which as stated above, present some Muslim warriors and leaders as being worthy of respect.[117]

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[115] Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 283.

[116] E. Jane Burns, “Shaping Saladin: Courtly Men Dressed in Silk,” in *Shaping Courtliness in Medieval France Essays in Honor of Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner*, ed. Daniel E. O’Sullivan and Laurie Shepard (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 243-44.

[117] Marianne J. Ailes, “The Admirable Enemy? Saldin and Saphadin in Ambroise’s *Estoire de la guerre sainte*,” in *Knighthoods of Christ: Essays on the History of the Crusades and the Knights Templar, Presented to Malcolm Barber*, ed. Norman Housley (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 52.

Be it real-life Saladin or a fictional warrior from *The Song of Roland*, it is clear from these examples that crusading knights were meant to view their Muslim opponents at least individually as enemies worthy of respect. Nevertheless, they were an opponent that needed to be defeated for the sake of Christendom. As such, some churchmen and secular nobles in the early twelfth century began to believe that the system of knighthood at the time was insufficient in protecting the newly acquired crusader states and its inhabitants. Rather than having knights aligned solely to the will of secular lords, these individuals proposed a new knighthood, part warrior and part monk, aligned with no group except the Catholic Church. Among the new knightly orders that formed around this need, no group is more synonymous with religious chivalry than the Knights Templar, due in no small part to their passionate spokesman, St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

## Bernard of Clairvaux and the Knights Templar

Among the knightly orders, which include groups like the Knights Hospitaller and the Teutonic Knights, no order was as powerful or as famous during the Middle Ages as the Knights Templar. Their continued reference in conspiracy theories like Dan Brown's famous book *The Da Vinci Code* and its film adaptation speaks to the legend surrounding this group of knights. Indeed, the Templars have this air of mystery around them because they were so different from any form of knighthood that came before. The Knights Templar (The Poor-Fellow Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon) formed in 1120 C.E. when nine knights, led by the French nobleman Hugh de Payens, approached the clergy of the kingdom of Jerusalem and their king, Baldwin II, at the church council of Nablus in what is now the modern-day Israeli controlled

West Bank.[118] Named for their headquarters in what is now the Aqsa Mosque which sits atop the Temple Mount, the Templars were formed in order to protect pilgrims travelling throughout the Holy Land, particularly after 100 pilgrims travelling from Jerusalem to Jordan were attacked by Muslim raiders the previous year.[119] As knightly monks, the Templars wore a habit, lived a communal lifestyle, and obeyed a monastic rule based off of the *Rule of St. Benedict*.[120] The Templars had relatively little support outside of the Holy Land for the first few years of their existence, so sometime in the late 1120's or early 1130's, they contacted Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh de Payens' cousin, to craft an exhortation in favor of the Templar cause.[121]

Bernard's response to Hugh's request, the *De laude novae militae* (*In Praise of the New Knighthood*), is both an exhortation to promote the Templars as well as a discouragement for what he calls the "worldly knighthood."[122] To these worldly knights, Bernard has nothing but scorn. He criticized the extravagance that some knights put into their armor and clothes, believing it affected their ability to move and fight freely. They fight for the wrong reasons in a vain attempt to gain more earthly possessions. By not placing their lives into the service of the Templars, they risk the safety of their immortal souls when they kill others in battle. All in all, the worldly knights are a force more in service to the devil than God. He even gives a name to these types of knights, calling them *malitia* (malicious) as a play on the word *milites*.[123] Therefore, the lay knight unaffiliated with the church was by definition a bad knight in the eyes of Bernard.

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[118] Helen Nicholson and David Nicolle, *God's Warriors: Crusaders, Saracens and the Battle for Jerusalem* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 140.

[119] Marie Luise Bulst-Thiel, "The Influence of St. Bernard of Clairvaux on the Formation of the Oder of the Knights Templar," in *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. Michael Gervers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 57.

[120] Nicholson and Nicolle, *God's Warriors*, 140.

[121] Robinson, *Dungeon, Fire and Sword*, 36. It is likely that Bernard's exhortation was written sometime around 1129 C.E. when the Templars received official papal recognition as a knightly order.

[122] Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, *ORB Online Encyclopedia*, Conrad Greenia, ed., accessed 20 August, 2015, http://www.theorb.net/encyclop/religion/monastic/bernard.html.

Opposing the *malitia* is the *milites Christi*, the knights of Christ who represent the best of the martial qualities of lay knights and the spiritual fortitude of monks. To Bernard, this new form of knighthood which the Templars represent is unheard of in history, unique in its role of martial spirituality:

> It ceaselessly wages a twofold war both against flesh and blood and against a spiritual army of evil in the heavens. It ceaselessly wages a twofold war both against flesh and blood and against a spiritual army of evil in the heavens. When someone strongly resists a foe in the flesh, relying solely on the strength of the flesh, I would hardly remark it, since this is common enough. And when war is waged by spiritual strength against vices or demons, this, too, is nothing remarkable, praiseworthy as it is, for the world is full of monks. But when the one sees a man powerfully girding himself with both swords [spiritual faith and martial skill] and nobly marking his belt, who would not consider it worthy of all wonder, the more so since it has been hitherto unknown? He is truly a fearless knight and secure on every side, for his soul is protected by the armor of faith just as his body is protected by armor of steel. He is thus doubly armed and need fear neither demons nor men. Not that he fears death--no, he desires it.[124]

In the same manner as Pope Urban II's promise of forgiveness of sin, the ideal Christian knight has no fear of death since his soul is secure in Christ's service. Furthermore, the said knight glorifies Christ with every pagan he kills, and every pagan he kills helps ensure the safety of Christians living in the Holy Land. Under Bernard's ideal system, the Templars become the greatest force in Christendom to combat the Muslims. Therefore, when the Second Crusade (1147-1149) failed to retake lost crusader lands, Bernard, who had avidly preached that crusade, could safely argue that it was because the crusaders were too prideful of themselves and did not display the same piety as their Templar brothers.[125]

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[123] Grabois, "*Militia* and *Malitia*," 49.
[124] Bernard, *In Praise*.

## Conclusion

Religious chivalry is a complicated topic within this broader discussion of knightly chivalry. Nonetheless, religious chivalry was based upon absolute service to God and the Catholic Church. Like the militaristic/secular chivalry of Chapter 1, religious chivalry stressed obedience to a higher power. Ideally, militaristic service was meant to be absolute, but as the examples of Hugh of Lusignan and Roger of Mortemer have shown, feudal ties in practice could lead to violence between knights and nobles. Religious chivalry was meant to fix this by finding common comradery in the service of God. Likewise, it promoted the idea of the knight as a defender of vulnerable Christians in need of protection. Those knights that disagreed and continued attacking peasants, merchants, and church-controlled lands risked serious repercussions in the form of excommunication and being labelled *malitia*.

As church and papal power grew over the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries, bishops and popes became more and more involved in controlling knightly violence, choosing to model the image of knights as defenders of the weak and faithful. Eventually, knightly violence was redirected outside of Christian Europe in the form of the crusades. *Chansons de geste* like *The Song of Roland* and to a lesser extent *The Song of the Cid* promoted this crusader mentality through its treatment of the Muslim other. Chrétien de Troyes' romances, particularly *Perceval*, highlighted the knight's need to be a pious individual, for being pious contributed to a knight's overall ability to be chivalrous. Likewise, *Cligés* shows prominently the strong connection between knights and clerics, who preserved ancient texts in such a way to inspire chivalric deeds. Finally, Bernard of Clairvaux presents a chivalry in opposition to the secular chivalry that lay knights subscribed to, for only by joining the Knights Templar could a knight truly be chivalrous and pious in the eyes of God.

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[125] G.R. Evans. *The Mind of St. Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 35.

Ultimately, the idea of knights as warrior-monks ended when it became clear that fighting Muslims in the Holy Land was a fruitless endeavor. The Knights Templar, despite their popularity, was destroyed not in battle defending Christendom, but by the king of France, who outlawed the order in the early fourteenth century under charges of conspiracy and performing sacrilegious rituals. Despite this, religious chivalry as a whole held themes that existed in the other aspects of chivalry, namely that knights must submit themselves to a power worthy of their service, whether it is their secular liege lord or a religious figure like God or the pope. Within the subject of chivalry, one more force was worthy of a knight’s attention: his lady. Around the time Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade, a new movement was forming in southern France in the form of the troubadours and troubairitz, who, influenced by the ancient Roman past and contemporary Muslim literature, slowly spread poems of love and adoration across Western Europe. Later on, authors like Chrétien de Troyes, Andreas Capellanus, and Marie de France would take up the mantle of the troubadours in their own romances, treatises, and poems, transforming the idea of the medieval lady into a figurehead with authority rivaling any secular lord or religious figurehead.

## Chapter 2 Images

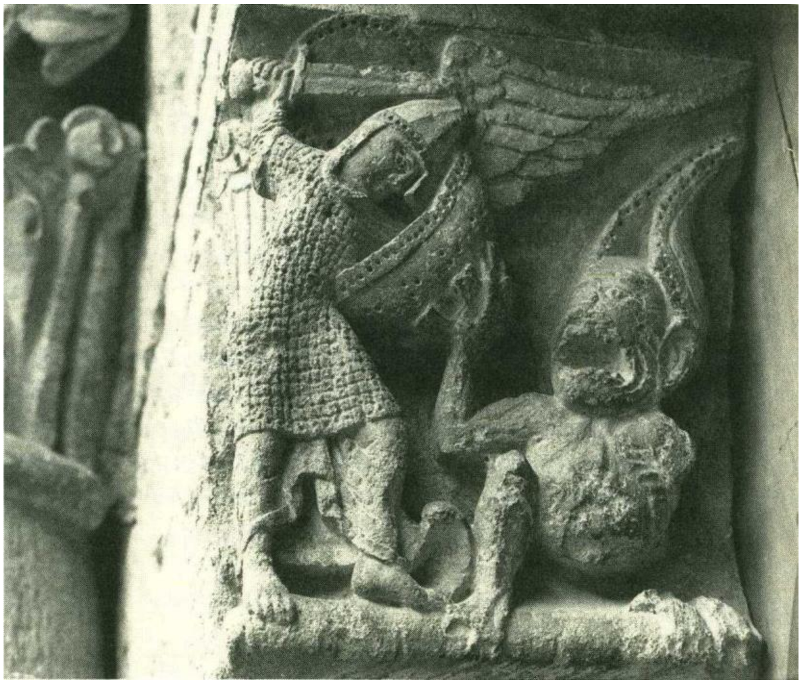
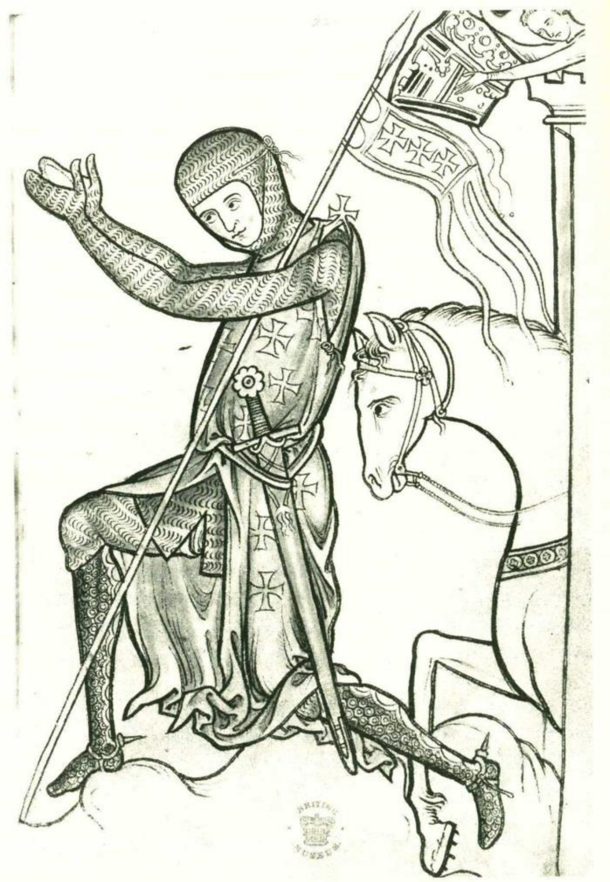


**Figure 5:** The archangel Michael, dressed as a twelfth-century knight, combats the devil on the façade of the church of Anzy-le-Duc in Burgundy.

**Figure 6:** A knight preparing to leave on crusade posing in an act of homage.



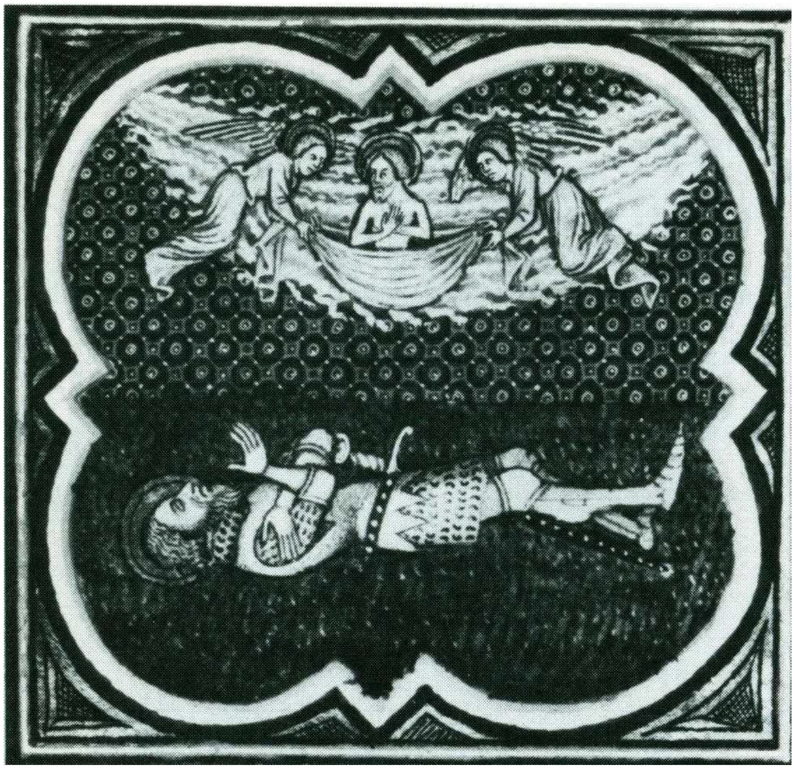


**Figure 7:** Angels carry Roland's soul into heaven.

# CHAPTER 3

## “Let Love do with me what he will”:

## Courtly Love and Chivalric Romance

Following the influences of secularism and religion, the latter half of the twelfth century saw the maturation of courtliness within the chivalric ideal. Out of all three influences, courtliness or courtly love is perhaps the most difficult aspect of chivalry to understand. By comparison, the secular and religious influences are fairly straightforward. By being loyal to one’s liege lord and orthodox Christian practices, both of which were analogous to one another, a knight could remain noble and chivalrous. But courtliness served as a complication to this match-up. If medieval romances are to be believed, the only way to truly be in love was to offer that love to an already married lady. To make matters even more difficult, the said lady would often be the wife of the lord to whom that the knight paid homage. At this very basic level, it is easy to see how difficult it was to be loyal to one’s lord, God, and lady at the same time.

French scholar Gaston Paris first coined the term ‘courtly love’ (*amour courtois*) in 1883; fifty-three years later, C.S. Lewis popularized it in his influential work *The Allegory of Love*.[126] In what would become the textbook of courtly love for the next seventy years, *The Allegory of Love* served as a study between the ideas of the classical world, the dogma of Christianity, and the feudal society in which courtliness thrived. To Lewis, courtly love was not only innovative; it was unheard of, one of only a rare, few times in which “human sentiment” underwent a fundamental change.[127] Courtly love had never been seen before, he argued, and its introduction to Europe would forever influence the way society viewed love. If one doubts the sheer influence that the writers of courtly love had on the western world, these next lines should clear up any doubts:

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[126] Kelly, “Chrétien de Troyes,” 169-170.

> They effected a change which has left no corner of our ethics, our imagination, or our daily life untouched, and they erected impassable barriers between us and the classical past or the Oriental present. Compared with this revolution the Renaissance is a mere ripple on the surface of literature.[128]

This chapter does not fully commit to supporting Lewis' groundbreaking view of courtly love; nevertheless, his viewpoint is understandable. One need not look far to see the similarities between love in the twelfth century and to that of the twenty-first. Instead, this chapter will focus on how and where courtly love developed in the Middle Ages, the major writers who wrote on the subject, and the themes that they introduced.

Much of what exists concerning courtly love survives in the form of court romances, shorter narrative lais, and treatises on love. To be clear, the authors of medieval courtliness could be both beautifully imaginative in their language and extremely offensive in their intentions. Misogyny abounds in medieval works of love, with women often portrayed as temptresses who lead men to all forms of sin. Just as Eve tempted Adam with the forbidden fruit, women in general were a sure way to damnation. Interestingly, the female counterparts of the troubadours, the troubairitz, played with these misogynistic themes by styling themselves not as temptresses, but desirable, cultured women who sought the love of worthy, gentlemanly knights. Yet at the same time, courtly romances told a very different tale; love was something to be treasured, and loving a lady with all of one's heart could make a knight perform feats beyond his natural, human limits. Women, who served as both active and passive characters in these tales, enabled the medieval romance to take place, for without them, the knight had nothing to fight for. It is interesting to consider that the most selfish aspect of chivalry also served as the greatest goal for many knights to pursue.

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[127] C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 11.

[128] Lewis, *Allegory*, 4.

Even before the flourishing of courtliness during the latter half of the twelfth century, glimpses of the selflessness that love could inspire had already begun to appear. The ending of *The Song of Roland* shows one such example. Following Charlemagne's return from Spain and his retribution for Roland's death, Aude, Roland's fiancée, approaches the emperor asking of her beloved's whereabouts. Overcome by grief once again, Charlemagne tells Aude of Roland's fate and offers his own son, Louis, the successor to his empire, as a replacement. Aude's response, if one takes the theme of courtly love into account, is expected: "May it not please God or his saints or his angels, / That I live on after Roland's death!" (vv. 3717-18). Heartbroken, she promptly falls dead at Charlemagne's feet. Aude's cause of death—dying rather than live without one's love—is not without its own predecessors, especially if *The Song of Roland* is compared to ancient works. Just as Evadne in Classical Greek tragedy threw herself into her husband's funeral pyre,[129] so too does Aude follow Roland into death. Unlike Evadne, however, her instantaneous death conveniently avoids the religious complications that would have arisen had she committed suicide. Overall, such a theme—loving another with all one's heart so that living without your beloved is impossible—would become a hallmark of courtly love, the true origin of which can be found in the medieval counties of southern France.

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[129] Euripides, *The Suppliants*, ed. E.P. Coleridge, in the *Perseus Digital Library*. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0122%3Acard%3D1.

## Troubadours and Troubairitz: Origins and Influences

For all their influence in establishing courtly love as a crucial aspect of chivalry, it is important to note that writers like Chrétien de Troyes, Andreas Capellanus, and Marie de France were by no means the first to do so; that particular honor goes to the troubadours—the poets, singers, and song-writers of what is now southern France, then known as Occitania. The image of the troubadours and their female counterparts, the troubairitz, as wandering entertainers seeking payment for their services in the courts of Europe is almost legendary (Figure 9). Yet while that factoid of information is certainly open to debate, what is clear is that by the beginning of the twelfth century, over fifty years before Chrétien, Andreas, or Marie penned their *magna opera*, the troubadours of Occitania had already begun to formulate the themes and structure of courtliness.

The reason for the troubadour's creation of courtly love is not well known and has been debated by medieval scholars for decades. Medievalist Sidney Painter offers two theories concerning this development. The first is that the cultural environment of southern France itself, with its strong connection to its Roman past and the initiative of the troubadours, led to the spontaneous development of the ideas of courtliness.[130] This is certainly a real possibility; medieval France had a strong connection to Roman literature concerning love through the works of Ovid. In the Roman poet we can see some similarities to the courtly love of the Middle Ages, though with some particular peculiarities: to be a lover is to be a soldier in the army of Cupid; it is purely extramarital and sensual; men should obey the orders of their ladies (within reason) and show their devotion constantly.[131] Overall, jealousy is paramount; if the man could not convince the lady that he loves someone else—whom he probably did—she would surely lose interest.

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[130] Painter, *French Chivalry*, 110.

However, while Painter places more faith in this theory due to the scholarship on the subject at the time, it seems relatively implausible thanks to new research on the troubadours. Painter in particular seems to depict the troubadours in their stereotypical role as wandering, hungry minstrels, who invented the idea of praising high-born women in order to win their supper for the night.[132] The fact that many of the troubadours and troubairitz, or at least the ones whose works have survived, were well-off members of the Occitanian nobility already makes this theory doubtful. Fortunately, Painter's second theory on the origin of courtly love offers an interesting alternative.

The second and far more tantalizing hypothesis presented is that the themes and structure of courtly poetry were influenced by Arab culture, to which Western Europe had connections through Muslim Spain and the Middle East.[133] A look into the life of one of the more famous troubadours, Guillem de Peiteus, shows that this theory is not without merit. Also known as Guilhelm de Poitou or William IX of Aquitaine, Guillem, the seventh count of Poitiers and the ninth duke of Aquitaine, was one of the most powerful nobles of southern France. In regards to his connection with Arabic poetry, Guillem had more than enough opportunities to become intimately acquainted. For one, Guillem's father had been an active participant in the

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[131] It is ironic that Ovid is such a source of influence to medieval courtly authors, considering he himself was banished to the Black Sea by Emperor Augustus due to "a poem and a mistake." It is assumed he had written something about the emperor's own family that Augustus found disagreeable. For Ovid's viewpoints of love, see John Jay Parry, introduction to *The Art of Courtly Love*, by Andreas Capellanus (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 4-5.

[132] Painter, *French Chivalry*, 111.

[133] Painter, *French Chivalry*, 110-111.

*Reconquista* of Spain, and the captured Moorish singing girls brought back to the family palace would have been an endless delight for the then adolescent troubadour.[134]

Guillem's second encounter with Arabic culture occurred during his travel to the Holy Land following the First Crusade. Unlike some of his fellow nobles, Guillem was initially unmoved by the religious fervor following Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont. Rather than take up the cross, he instead used the opportunity to take over the nearby lands of the now-absent lords. However, when he heard the rumors of the treasure the crusaders had acquired following the capture of Jerusalem, Guillem quickly returned the land in exchange for the money necessary to fund his expedition east.[135] On the way, his army was annihilated by the Seljuk Turks, forcing him to seek temporary refuge in Antioch. There, he no doubt would have been entertained by the sounds of Eastern music, and it is possible that he took the experience back home following his successful arrival in Jerusalem.[136]

Not only did Guillem control roughly a third of modern-day France, he also wrote poetry, earning him the title of the First Troubadour. If the description of Guillem above depicts him as a particularly randy and impulsive individual, it is because he generally was.[137] Much of his poetry, despite its lyrical elegance, frequently refers to his sexual escapades. His blatant talk of sex, "God grant me only that I live / To get my hands beneath her clothes!" ("A New Song for New Days"), is common.[138] He was also unabashed in referencing other lovers on the side: "And who cares, for / I know a nicer, fairer one / Who's worth a lot more" ("The Nothing Song").[139] Indeed, his poem "The Ladies with the Cat" is little more than a story to entertain his friends, in which he describes being raked by a monstrous cat in order to prove to two ladies that he can keep silent about their subsequent days of intimacy. Such imagery is hardly the stuff of noble, chivalrous love. Nevertheless, Guillem, when not writing about sex, could express love as beautiful allegory, comparing love to a branch that can withstand any storm.[140] Furthermore, his elaboration on concepts like daydreaming and heartbreak when thinking of love would become common topics for the multitude of courtly writers to follow in his wake.

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[134] Robert Kehew, ed., introduction to *Lark in the Morning: A Bilingual Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 9.

[135] Kehew, introduction, 9.

[136] Kehew, introduction, 9.

[137] He is described by one medieval chronicler as a *vehemens amator foeminarum*—a lustful lover of women—and faced excommunication from the church more than once for his womanizing reputation. See Kehew, *Lark*, 20-21.

[138] Guillem de Peiteus, "A New Song for New Days," in *Lark*, 23.

Another reason to support the Arab theory of courtly love comes from the writings and poetry of Moorish and Muslim writers of the eleventh century. Scholars such as Meg Bogin, Robert Kehew, and John Parry all refer in particular to the book *The Dove's Neck Ring* by the Cordovan Muslim poet Ali Ibn-Hazm, who wrote over fifty years before Guillem de Peiteus penned his first bawdy verses. Unlike Guillem, Ibn-Hazm's view of love is a form of servitude. Lovers have to be submissive to their ladies and humiliate themselves before them to show their devotion.[141] At its most basic level, true love is a reunion of souls that had been separated during the creation of the world; love is not just a passing fancy, but a destined, indescribably emotional event. There are further differences as well. Unlike the troubadours and their successors, Ibn-Hazm believed that love could be given to a woman of any rank, be she a princess or a slave. And more importantly, love could not be found with a woman who was already married.[142] That is not to say that Ibn-Hazm's view was universally accepted among his peers, but it is a noticeable distinction when compared to the verses of the troubadours and some of their successors.

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[139] Guillem de Peiteus, "The Nothing Song," in *Lark*, 27.
[140] Guillem de Peiteus, "A New Song for New Days," in *Lark*, 23.
[141] Kehew, introduction, 10; Meg Bogin, *The Women Troubadours* (New York: Paddington Press LTD, 1976), 45-46.
[142] Parry, introduction, 8-12.

The language that the troubadours and troubairitz use in their poetry is worth mentioning to clarify their own ideas of courtly love. Two words in particular are noticeable: *fin' amor* and the *midons*. *Fin' amor* translates literally as fine or pure love. The distinction that the love of the troubadours was of a specific quality is noteworthy; they never speak of the "courtly love" that exists today. *Fin' amor* would have been the closest analogy, and it was an adulterous love reserved for only the high-born of medieval society.[143] But while the end result of *fin' amor* was sensual pleasure with another man's wife, it was not the sole objective. *Fin' amor* was not just about the destination, but the journey to it. The secret glances, the heart-felt pain, the fear of rival suitors and spies—all these cloak and dagger activities were crucial to those partaking in *fin' amor*. Andreas Capellanus, discussed below, expands upon this concept further in his *The Art of Courtly Love*.

*Midons* is the second word that has significant meaning to courtly love, for it reflects the culmination of the various factors that influence courtly love's development. *Midons* is the title given to the women who were praised by the troubadours, and it comes from the Romance language of *lenga' doc* (also known as Occitan or Provencal). It translates as "my lord". However, the word is linguistically awkward because the two words that make up *midons* are opposite in gender. *Mi* comes from the feminine possessive adjective *mia,* while *dons* is derived from the Latin *dominus*, a masculine noun.[144] What is to be made of this oddity, where the subject is clearly identified as feminine but is described as a lord in the masculine sense? If one looks at the various influences to courtly love that have been discussed so far, the answer becomes clear. *Midons* and *fin' amor* reflect the amalgamation of the Ovidian and Arabic influences that preceded the beginning of courtly love. Ovid's model of love as sensual pleasure and Ibn-Hazm's belief in the utter devotion to one's destined lover had become one. Furthermore, this new sense of secretive, sensual servitude to one's lady took on a distinctly feudal air. The lady, who had to be of noble birth, became the only lord worth serving. Winning her love was all that mattered, and a knight's duty was to become her vassal in order to do so.

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[143] Kehew, introduction, 2-4. The common belief in this adulterous nature of *fin'amor*, and by extension courtly love, is usually traced to the Roman Catholic Church's negative view of sex within a legitimate marriage. As a result, the sexually repressed nobles of medieval Europe turned to *fin' amor* for release.

Perhaps the most startling feature of the troubadours is their different views of love compared to that of their female counterparts, the troubairitz. To the male troubadours, the courtly love and *fin' amor* put forth by Guillem de Peiteus caught like a flame to dry tinder. The great poets of southern France placed women above themselves, the poets, as objects of worship. Noble ladies became the *midons*, the poets their humble vassals. To love was to make oneself a better person. Take, for example, the following lines by one of the most famous troubadours of the late twelfth century, Arnaut Daniel, in his "Canzon: Of the Trades and Love": "Each day finer I refine me / And my cult and service strain them / Toward the world's best, as ye hear."[145] The very act of loving makes him a better, purer man, able to weather the harshest of storms with the thoughts of his lover on his mind.

The troubadours were well aware of love's position within the borders of chivalry. Love was not only a service to one's lady, but a battleground to hone one's skill at poetry by proving one's worth as a better lover, both emotionally and physically, over other suitors. The troubadour Peire Vidal expressed this viewpoint in the following lines:

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[144] Bogin, *The Women Troubadours*, 50.
[145] Arnaut Daniel, "Canzon: Of the Trades and Love," in *Lark*, 219.

> No matter what I do, I look like a knight,
> For I am a knight, and in love I am the master of the craft,
> And of everything that is so proper when a man is with a woman;
> There never was a man so pleasing in a chamber
> Or so savage and excellent in armor,
> And so I am loved and dreaded by such as do not even see me
> Or hear my words.[146]

Once again, the troubadour praises his sexual and physical prowess, which had now become of equal importance. Vidal was also conscious of love's place within the feudal system, comparing the love for his *midons* to the service to his liege lord. In his poem "To Provence I Can Return Now," he states that just like a vassal expects compensation from his lord, so too does a lover seek, "reward and words of grace / For his service and true faith."[147] Love in this instance could be seen as a means to an end, in which the troubadour (as a knight) could increase his prestige and wealth.

The poems discussed so far have focused particularly on love as a kind of game that men played to improve their own social standing or character. However, to be clear, this was not the only kind of love they wrote about. The troubadours just as often praised the sheer passionate joy that love could bring to life, as well as the heartache of a love unfulfilled or betrayed. Some of the greatest examples of troubadour poetry focus on this theme of lost love. In a poem that could rival the emotional force of Shakespeare, the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn describes the impact that unrequited love has had on his life:

> Tristan, you'll hear no more from me:
> I leave to wander, none know where;

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[146] Bogin, *The Women Troubadours*, 52.
[147] Peire Vidal, "To Provence I Can Return Now," in *Lark,* 239.

Henceforth all joys in love I'll flee
And all my songs I now forswear.[148]

This chapter has neither the time nor space to describe the sheer richness of the troubadours' poetry. To do so would be a book unto itself. To describe the variety of the troubairitz would likewise be a monumental endeavor, for their poetry and ideas of love are noticeably different from those of the troubadours.

Nonetheless, some comments of the troubairitz are fruitful. Whereas the male idea of love was one of empowerment and idealization, the troubairitz described love on a much more personal (one could even say "human") level. Of course, just like the troubadours, there are variations depending on the author. Some prefer the power, sexual or otherwise, that courtly love had granted them. Others simply enjoy being noticed by someone other than their apparently absent husbands. Jealousy and worry toward cheating or uninterested knights is common. What is most interesting is that the troubairitz and their male counterparts were aware of this difference. The troubairitz Maria de Ventadorn, Guillelma de Rosers, and Domna H. each engage in poetic debates with their troubadour lovers, where they question the men on the correct practice of love.[149] Witty word-play and verbal blunders are a common theme among the troubairitz, with the women usually winning the argument.

An example of a troubairitz's poetic wit can be found in Maria de Ventadorn's conversational poem with a certain Gui d'Ussel. The poem itself is short, with both parties debating if a lady and her courtly lover should treat each other as equals, or if the lover should treat his lady as his lord. Maria supports the former option while Gui speaks in favor of the latter. These positions are common among the few poems that survive in which a troubadour and troubairitz debate. Returning to the specific language used in the poem, Maria uses language that specifically highlights the role of a male lover as a servant of his lady first and foremost. Below is the *lenga' doc* version of her debate with Gui, along with its English translation, to highlight her use of rhyme and imagery:

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[148] Bernart de Ventadorn, "The Skylark," in *Lark*, 77. Tristan is a reference to the popular Arthurian tragic romance of Tristan and Isolde. It is worth noting that, according to his *vida*, Bernart was apparently born to a poor family but won the favor of his lord thanks to his poetry. For the entirety of "The Skylark," see Appendix A.

[149] Maria de Ventadorn, "Gui d'Ussel, be.m pesa de vos," in *The Women* Troubadours, 98-101; Guillelma de Rosers, "Na Guillelma, maint cavalier arratge," in *The Women Troubadours*, 134-137; Domna H, "Rosin, digatz m'ades de cors," in *The Women Troubadours*, 138-143.

> "Dompna, voillatz que.us serva francamen
> cum lo vostr' om," et ell' enaissi.l pren;
> ieu lo jutge per dreich a trahitor,
> si.s rend pariers ei.s det per servidor.
>
> "Grant that I may freely serve you, lady,
> as your man," and she receives them;
> thus to me it's nothing short of treason
> if a man says he's her equal *and* her servant.[150]

Moving on to Guillelma de Rosers, her debate with a troubadour by the name of Lanfrancs Cigala is particularly important, for it highlights the general difference troubairitz and troubadours had toward love. The argument goes as followed: two lovers are travelling at night when they come across a group of despondent knights. While one lover turns back to help the men, the other continues on to meet his lady. The question is: what was the correct course of action? What was most chivalrous? Guillelma believes that the lover who continued on towards his lady was in the right; as a lover he gave his word to serve her. Furthermore, a knight is most chivalrous when in service to his lady, and every noble man should, "change his attitude / that very day, and swear allegiance / to a noble lady, beautiful and rich." Lanfrancs, on the other hand, has the opposite opinion; the lover who helped the knights chose the correct course. The said gentleman honors the love he has towards his lady through such chivalric actions. By acting in service to others, he improves not only his own reputation, but the reputation of his beloved as well.[151]

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[150] Maria de Ventadorn, "Gui d'Ussel," 101.

This conflict between private and public love within the confines of chivalry becomes a common theme in the writing of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France. Whereas men often describe their love as a service that benefits both parties, a tool of empowerment for a higher cause, women writers sought acknowledgment as individuals and desired to control the nature of their relationships in their writings.[152]While there is simply not enough space here to describe in detail the variety and power of the troubairitz, it is important to note that their poetry, alongside the poetry of the troubadours, would serve as a guidebook for later writers of courtly love. And if the geography of southern France helped facilitate the arrival of the troubadours, than the characteristics of where courtly love moved to next would prove to be equally important

## Champagne: Chrétien de Troyes and the Arthurian Romance

The latter half of the twelfth century saw the emergence of courtly love literature outside of the confines of southern France. The fact that the new authors of these works appeared in the fairly distinct regions of northern France and southern England during this time is of particular importance. Writers like Chrétien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus made their careers in the service of the medieval county of Champagne in northeast France under the patronage of women like Countess Marie de Champagne. Champagne (Latin c*ampania*), named for its rolling, open countryside, saw itself as a dominant socio-economic force during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[153] Essentially, Champagne was somewhat of a buffer zone—a border region between the growing Capetian dynasty and Angevin Empire to the west, the Holy Roman Empire to the east, England to the north, and Italy to the southeast (Figure 11).

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[151] Guillelma de Rosers, “Na Guillelma,” 134-137.
[152] Bogin, *The Women Troubadours*, 72.

Champagne's location in Western Europe made it the beneficiary of both cultural and monetary exchange from all corners of the continent. If knight, merchant, minstrel, or pilgrim needed to travel through Western Europe, chances were likely they went through Champagne. To capitalize on the flow of goods, the counts and countesses of Champagne instituted year-long, rotating trade fairs centered in the towns of Lagny, Bar-sur-Aube, Provins, and Troyes (Figure 10). Under the count's protection, merchants and goods—ranging from wool, timber, weapons, furs, metals, and dyes—could travel in safety. With the trade of goods, the trade of ideas naturally followed suit, and it is very likely that troubadours of southern France used these trade routes to spread their ideas of courtly love throughout Western Europe. It is in this environment that writers like Chrétien and Andreas found both the ideas and employment to pen their works.

In all of his surviving Arthurian romances, *Erec et Enide*, *Cligés*, *The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)*, *The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)*, and *The Story of the Grail (Perceval)*, Chrétien is well aware of the conflict that love has on a knight's ability to act chivalrous. There is no single unifying idea of courtly love within his romances; it takes different forms and focuses on different themes in each story. Just as individual troubadours picked different ideals of love to espouse, so too does Chrétien treat love as an evolving, non-uniform entity. Indeed, Chrétien not only wrote in the spirit of the troubadours, he was considered to be one of the first *trouvéres* (a troubadour in the northern French language of *langue d'oïl*), as the ideas of his southern contemporaries spread across Europe.[154]

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[153] For Champagne's socio-economic influence in medieval Western Europe, see Theodore Evergates, *Feudal Society in Medieval France: Documents from the County of Champagne* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

To be clear, Chrétien was not the first medieval writer to compose romances, only the most popular. Earlier romances can be traced roughly 70 years prior to Chrétien at the court of Henry I of England, which had strong cultural ties to France due to the Norman conquest of the island in 1066. Perhaps as early as 1106 the defining characteristics of the medieval French romance were established: the commission of a great lady, a series of quests and adventures to test the hero, and a primarily Celtic setting, like the world of King Arthur and the Holy Grail.[155] Such would be the characteristics of Chrétien's Arthurian romances, in which the various aspects and difficulties of courtly love are fully explored.

### ***Erec et Enide***

Chrétien's *Erec et Enide,* for example, focuses on the conflict between private love and public chivalry that is seen in the argument between Guillelma and Lanfrancs. Even in the beginning of the romance, the audience knows that Erec prefers to be in the service of ladies rather than engage in the hunt for the mythical White Stag. Instead, he chooses to serve as an escort to Queen Guinevere and one of her maidens. Even before this information is given, however, Sir Gawain points out the problem that the hunt poses for King Arthur's court. According to tradition, whoever kills the White Stag receives the honor of kissing the most beautiful maiden in the court. Gawain states that the hundreds of young, beautiful damsels in the castle all hold the favor of some brave knight, "each of whom would want to contend, rightly or wrongly, that the one who pleases him is the most beautiful and the most noble."[156] Not only would such an honor create jealousy amongst the men and women of the court, it would also open up the opportunity for potential dishonesty in choosing the fairest maiden. Nevertheless, Arthur commands the hunt to take place despite realizing the danger. With these few lines of dialogue, the reader is informed of the potential conflict that private love could have with the public, chivalric organization of the court.

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[154] Bruckner, "Chrétien de Troyes," 84.
[155] Clanchy, *From Memory*, 218.

Erec is the focal point of this conflict. Following his rescue of Enide early in the story and their extravagant wedding afterwards, the newlyweds settle down within their castle. Erec chooses to spend his days beside his wife in bed, only rising late in the day to deal with the administrative task of managing the knights under his command. His attentiveness to Enide is exceptional within the confines of courtly love; she is the center of his world and he lives only to please her. However, by solely focusing on his wife, "he cared no more for arms, nor did he go to tournaments."[157] Erec's public chivalry suffers and he is mocked by his fellow knights, although he is too in love to notice. It is only when Enide laments for the loss of her husband's reputation that Erec decides to leave the castle with his wife to regain his honor.

*Erec et Enide* is unique among Chrétien's romances in that a woman quests alongside the male protagonist. Indeed, Erec and the structure of the story are like a pendulum; they swing back and forth on how Enide and love are treated. As they begin their journey, Erec instructs his wife only to speak when given his permission. He is not cruel to her, but as scholars point out, he no longer treats her as his beloved.[158] During the quest, Enide repeatedly breaks her silence in order to save her husband from various threats, including highwaymen, rival knights, and giants. Each time he verbally reprimands her for speaking but never goes any farther in harming her. It is after one violent instance when the near-dead Erec recovers to save Enide from a violent, lustful count that the two renew their love for one another; "My sweet love, I have tested you in every way. Don't be dismayed any more, for now I love you more than I ever did, and am once more certain and convinced that you love me completely."[159] Erec's quest is just as much a test for Enide to prove her love as it is for Erec to prove his knightly prowess.[160] When setting off, Erec assumes he can renew his chivalry on his own. He is difficult to reason with and orders his wife to be silent. However, it is only with the help of his beloved combined with his martial prowess that he can truly complete his quest.

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[156] Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. Carleton W. Carroll (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 37-38.
[157] Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, 67.
[158] Kelly, "Chrétien de Troyes," 138.

The ending of *Erec et Enide* is interesting because it introduces a pair of lovers who serve as a foil to the protagonists. Erec challenges the knight Maboagrain to a trial known as the Joy of the Court. Upon overcoming Maboagrain in combat, the defeated knight reveals that he had unknowingly sworn an oath to his beloved to remain at the court and fight any challenger until his defeat. Maboagrain's love, as he points out, is a prison that diminishes his ability as a knight.[161] Erec and Enide's love, on the other hand, is empowering and allows both courtly love and public chivalry to thrive. By the end of the poem, it is clear that Erec's reputation as a knight is restored, and his love for Enide is now a source of strength, rather than a detriment, to his chivalry.

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[159] Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, 97.

[160] Bruckner, "Chrétien de Troyes," 82. It is unfortunate that to a medieval audience Enide is the one at fault for Erec's loss of reputation.

[161] Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, 112.

### ***Cligés***

Chrétien's romance *Cligés* turns away from the conflict between courtly love and public chivalry and focuses instead on the issue of courtly love's theme of adultery. Before reaching that point though, the first part of the romance describes the love between Cligés' parents, Alexander and Soredamors, the latter whose name Chrétien translates as "gilded over with Love."[162] During Alexander's travels with Arthur's court to fight a rebellious count in Brittany, Chrétien provides a lengthy discourse on how love grows between two people. In short, the physiological reaction of falling in love is comparable to the symptoms of seasickness.[163] Take, for example, the physical reaction that Soredamors feels when she glances at Alexander: "Frequently she grew pale and often broke into a sweat; in spite of herself, she had to love."[164] It is only with the intervention of Queen Guinevere, who persuades the two to marry, that their literal heartache is brought to an end. Only through the realization and consummation of their love can they be at peace.

It is the second half of *Cligés*, which tells of the adventures of Alexander's son, where the issue of adultery is presented. Cligés falls in love with Fenice ('Phoenix'), the daughter of the emperor of Germany (the Holy Roman Emperor of Chrétien's time), who is to marry the young knight's uncle, the Byzantine Emperor. Chrétien avoids the political fallout of actual adultery through the introduction of Fenice's governess, Thessala, who boasts of magical powers greater than the sorceress Medea from Greek legend. Thessala's potions trick Cligés' uncle into thinking that he sleeps with Fenice every night. Cligés, for his part, constructs a secret hideout where the two lovers flee to for privacy. Furthermore, the knight's uncle is portrayed as a wicked backstabber who swore early in the romance to never marry and let Cligés take the throne when he came of age. The marriage between Fenice and the emperor, which is never consummated thanks to Thessala, is therefore treated as illegitimate and the affair is justified.

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[162] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, 134-135.
[163] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 132.
[164] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, 128.

The climax of *Cligés*, where the two lovers are discovered, points to another common theme of courtly love's adulterous nature: the danger of the spy in service to the cuckolded husband. The troubairitz of southern France had a term for these spies: *lauzengiers*. The following lines of poetry by an anonymous troubairitz and troubadour highlight the difficulty the *lauzengiers* posed in the fulfillment of courtly love: "Lady, it's the *lauzengiers*— / our spiteful enemy—who've robbed / my breath and sanity; / because of them, not lack of love, / I don't come near."[165] The threat of discovery, or even the slightest rumor of a possible affair, could lead to drastic repercussions. A well-known example from the twelfth century was the life of Isabelle of Vermandois, wife of Philippe de Flandre, count of Flanders. In 1175, Philippe accused his wife of "encouraging the attentions" of a knight by the name Walter of Fontaines.[166] The handsome, young knight was, as the story goes, violently drawn and quartered. Such was the danger that courtly lovers faced. The slightest gossip of infidelity could have bloody results. What is fascinating is that this same Philippe de Flandre was the very man who funded Chrétien de Troyes' tale *Perceval*. Clearly, Chrétien's skill as a court poet overrode any issues his romances may have caused.

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[165] Anonymous I, "Amics, en gran cossirier," in *The Women Troubadours*, 147.
[166] Parry, introduction, 20.

### ***The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)***

This idea of Chrétien's influence towards the development of courtly love ties into his next work, *Lancelot*, also known as *The Knight of the Cart*. *Lancelot* is by far Chrétien's most well-known romance: it introduces Lancelot as a major figure in Arthurian Literature and brings forth the affair between Lancelot and Queen Guinevere. *Lancelot* is also the only completed romance that Chrétien did not fully write himself; a clerk by the name of Godefroy de Lagny completed the final section of the story.[167] The fact that the plot of *Lancelot* again centers on the adulterous nature of courtly love, and that fact that Chrétien did not finish the romance himself, has led some modern scholars of the Middle Ages to believe that Chrétien may not have been comfortable with the subject matter of his most recent stories. Indeed, he explicitly states that the idea and effort behind the tale were provided not by himself but by his patron, Marie de Champagne.[168] Before discussing if Chrétien truly disliked the idea of courtly love, or at least the courtly love presented within *Lancelot*, a look at the major plot points within the story is in order, for they reveal the very nature of service to one's lady above all other commitments.

More than any other hero in Chrétien's romance, Lancelot is perpetually in the service of his lady and love, Queen Guinevere. As he begins his search to rescue her from the evil Meleagant, he tires out all his horses in his haste to find her. His encounter with the cart is emblematic of the conflict within Lancelot: reason versus love. The cart is a symbol of humiliation for a knight because it is meant only for prisoners. For a knight to ride in one would be the greatest humiliation to one's chivalry and honor. Yet Lancelot must find Guinevere as fast as possible. Indeed, Lancelot's hesitates for a moment as he considers the consequences that riding in the cart would entail, but, “because Love ordered and wished it, he jumped in; since Love ruled his actions, the disgrace did not matter.”[169] For the rest of the romance Lancelot is ridiculed for this action, but his singular drive to find Guinevere proves superior to any humiliation he could suffer.

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[167] Chrétien de Troyes, *The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)*, in *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William Kibler (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 294.

[168] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, 207.

Following a series of adventures, Lancelot arrives at Meleagant’s castle, where he challenges the knight to a duel for Guinevere’s freedom and the freedom of other prisoners Meleagant had taken captive. It is at this point, half way through the text, that Lancelot’s name (“Lancelot of the Lake”) is revealed by the queen to one of her maidens, who in turn tells Lancelot to focus his attention on Guinevere. Up to that point he had only been referred to as the Knight of the Cart for his humiliating decision earlier in the romance. It is with this revelation of identity that allows Lancelot to emerge victorious from the battle; the love within him when he first sees Guinevere ensured his victory against Meleagant.

Despite his heroic rescue, the queen is initially angry at Lancelot for some reason, and Lancelot is so overcome by despair that he contemplates suicide. In his mind, the humiliation of stepping into the cart had destroyed his reputation and therefore ended any chance of Guinevere loving him in return.[170] However, the queen eventually reveals that it was Lancelot’s hesitation to step into the cart which earned him her ire.[171] By hesitating and having to choose between reason and love, he had shown he was not fully committed in loving Guinevere. Fortunately, Lancelot’s sincerity in his love for Guinevere earns him forgiveness. In a further allusion to love’s ability to physically empower its wielder, Lancelot uses superhuman strength to bend apart iron bars that separate him from Guinevere, and the two proceed to consummate their love for one another, “for in no holy relic did he place such faith.”[172] In these few words, Guinevere becomes far more than a simple lover. She becomes a symbol of devotion more powerful than Christianity. Rather than rely on his piety as a Christian knight, Lancelot’s single-minded devotion for Guinevere is what allows him to perform his many extraordinary deeds. Simply being near her empowers him more than anything else on earth. Through this line, Chrétien ensures courtly love’s reputation as chivalry’s dominant force.

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[169] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, 212.
[170] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, 261.
[171] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, 262.

*Lancelot* is unique in its depiction of love as life’s greatest goal. Lancelot chooses love over reason in every situation he comes across, and by choosing such, his chivalric reputation increases overall (despite the occasional moment of humiliation).[173] This is the essence of the ideal knight within literature (or at least within the medieval romance); a singular-minded hero set to rescue his beloved with love as his greatest weapon. When Lancelot fights, it is at the behest of Guinevere; if he is ordered to lose, he loses; if he is ordered to win, he overcomes any obstacle. Under loves guidance, even an adulterous one, personal reputation is unimportant. Only the fulfillment of love matters.

The fact that *Lancelot* was left unfinished by Chrétien creates doubt on his sincerity towards his subject matter. Did he truly grow tired of the adulterous love he apparently extols in *Lancelot* and *Cligés*? Sidney Painter believes this was indeed the case. As a conservative writer, he argues that Chrétien made sure to distance himself from *Lancelot* by placing blame for the creation of the romance on Marie de Champagne.[174] Certainly *Lancelot* is once again unique among the romances in that there is no idea of marriage's role in love.[175] The adulterous love between Lancelot and Guinevere is never truly resolved; the ending leaves the two in a sort of romantic limbo, with Arthur apparently not aware of the ongoing affair. Not even *Cligés* approaches adulterous love in this way; Cligés and Fenice do marry following the death of Cligés' evil uncle. *Lancelot* is on a different level, and much of the confusion for the way it treats courtly love is placed squarely on Marie de Champagne.

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[172] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, 264.
[173] Bruckner, “Chrétien de Troyes,” 85.
[174] Painter, *French Chivalry*, 130.

As the eldest daughter of King Louis VII of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine, Marie de Champagne followed in her mother's footsteps as one of the most powerful and wealthy women of medieval Europe. Her role as a literary patron to authors like Chrétien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus is indisputable. What is most impressive about her life is that she ruled the medieval county of Champagne in her own right for over eighteen years following the death of her husband Henry I ("the Liberal"), when she served as regent for her young sons.[176] She never remarried, though there were failed attempts to negotiate a marriage with Phillipe de Flandre, the same man who had his former wife's rumored lover executed and who sponsored Chrétien's romance *Perceval*. Whether or not this played a hand in the marriage negotiations is unknown.[177]

Despite her role as one of the most influential women of medieval Europe, Marie has been the source of undo criticism for her assumed role in supporting the adulterous love presented within *Lancelot* as well as Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love*. The fact that so little is known of Chrétien's life makes it extremely difficult to assume what his particular stance on courtly love could have been. It is certainly difficult to describe Chrétien's writing as 'conservative,' as Sydney Painter puts it. Furthermore, placing the blame solely on Marie because she is mentioned in the introduction of *Lancelot* is unfounded, for he provides a similar passage of admiration for Phillipe de Flandre in his introduction of *Perceval*.[178] So where does that leave *Lancelot* in the realm of courtly love and medieval literary history? John Benton argues that on one level, *Lancelot* may be a satire of a hero turning away from feudal society due to an improper love, while Gaston Paris, who coined the term "courtly love," believes Marie de Champagne commissioned Lancelot to spread a new doctrine advocating adulterous love.[179] Whatever the case, readers cannot assume that Chrétien left *Lancelot* unfinished based on scant evidence that he disagreed with the tastes of his patron.

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[175] William W. Kibler, introduction to *Arthurian Romances*, by Chrétien de Troyes (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 14.

[176] Marie also served as regent when her husband and sons went on Crusade. See Theodore Evergates, "Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 77.

[177] Kelly, "Chrétien de Troyes," 136. It is postulated that this may have been the moment where Chrétien was introduced to Phillipe.

### *Other Romances*

Chrétien's *The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)* and *The Story of the Grail (Perceval)* offer further examples of courtly love. The theme of *Yvain* is very much in the spirit of *Erec et Enide*, focusing on the conflict between love and a knight's public duties. Following Yvain's marriage to Laudine (almost immediately after killing her husband), the young knight is persuaded by Sir Gawain to leave his love to take part in tournaments. Indeed, it is if Gawain had read *Erec et Enide* himself, for he warns Yvain of the dangers knights face if they lose their adventurous spirit to love; "you would suffer afterwards for her love if it caused you to lose your reputation."[180] When Yvain asks Laudine for permission to take part in tournaments, she agrees on the condition he returns to her in one year. He initially fears that the amount of time away from her is far too long, but as the year goes by, Yvain is so engrossed in tournaments he forgets to fulfill his promise. This prompts Laudine, through a messenger sent to Arthur's court, to withdraw her love for Yvain (with about the same effect a break up through email would have today). Yvain is heartbroken and goes mad, becoming a savage, wild man for a time. In this instance courtly love has a civilizing effect; one goes mad without it. It is also the opposite of the problem Erec faces in his romance. Whereas Erec chooses to give too much of his time to love at the cost of his public honor, Yvain focuses on tournaments and chivalry too much and loses his love as a result. Yvain's solution, though, is the same as Erec's: quest and adventure. By proving himself in countless life-threating situations, he renews his reputation and wins back (partly through the deceit of Laudine's maiden) the love of his wife.

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[178] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 381.

[179] Benton, "The Court of Champagne," 14-15; Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 360.

Chrétien's final romance, *The Story of the Grail (Perceval),* is perhaps the least concerned with courtly love due to its introduction of the Holy Grail into the Arthurian legend. Nevertheless, courtly love does appear in *Perceval* in the form of the knightly youth learning what it means to love. Perceval receives his first lessons of knighthood from his noble mother, who instructs him be a servant to maidens and ladies above all else: "Serve ladies and maidens and you will be honored everywhere."[181] However, being untrained in chivalry and courtly love, he takes his mother's words too seriously and unintentionally assaults the first maiden he sees, kissing her and taking her ring against her will. Like any skill, courtly love requires training along with direct experience, and it is only when Perceval receives a full education later in the romance that he is able to become a true knight and courtly lover.[182]

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[180] Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain*, 326.
[181] Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 387.

Like the troubadours and troubairitz, the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes are phenomenal works of courtly love, featuring subtle references to Classical Epic alongside medieval poetic language. Unfortunately, there are many more examples within these romances that this paper has not the time to explore. Nevertheless, a look into the writing of contemporaries of Chrétien can provide further proof of the sheer variety of stances people had about courtly love in medieval Europe. Across the English Channel, the mysterious Marie de France crafted adventurous and romantic stories similar to Chrétien's, but much like the troubairitz of southern France, her lais present love as a force greater than the martial aspects of chivalry. Andreas Capellanus, writing in Champagne alongside Chrétien, avoids the romantic genre entirely. Rather than focus on a narrative of adventure, his treatise on love explores the carnal, pleasurable aspects that courtly lovers should engage in, and he provides rules and guidelines on how men should go about wooing their ladies.

## Andreas Capellanus and the *Laís* of Marie de France

In many ways, Andreas Capellanus and his work *The Art of Courtly Love* (*De Amore* or *De arte honeste amandi*) are the guidebook in trying to understand the complicated idea that is courtly love. Indeed, *The Art of Courtly Love* is a literal treatise on the proper way a nobleman should go about loving his beloved. The work itself is complicated, featuring contradictions and rehashed themes reminiscent of both Ovid and Ibn-Hazm. The final third of the treatise denounces everything previously stated, calling love an evil force that sends men to hell through the seduction of women. Overall, however, *The Art of Courtly Love* presents themes similar to those of the troubadours and Chrétien de Troyes, where for the most part, love is a beneficial force of joy.

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[182] Kelly, "Chrétien de Troyes," 169.

Andreas' love is solely meant for the young and noble. He clearly stresses an age limit for when love is best suited: fourteen to sixty for a man and twelve to fifty for women (although for men it is best to begin practicing love after the age of eighteen when they have fully matured).[183] Blindness is also an important factor; the acquisition of love is visual, therefore, "a blind man cannot see anything upon which his mind cannot reflect immoderately."[184] These rules are surprisingly realistic, taking into account hormonal development in men and women. Unfortunately, Andreas is constantly aware of the difference in power between the social classes of medieval Europe. Because courtly love is meant solely for the practice of the nobility, love amongst peasants is rare and has the potential of disrupting their productiveness. Andreas is also clear on what a nobleman can do if he falls in love with a peasant woman: "be careful to puff them up with lots of praise and then, when you find a convenient place, do not hesitate to take what you seek and to embrace them by force."[185] Older scholarship is quick to link this statement to the common medieval stereotype of *ius primae noctis* (right of first night), in which the lord is said to have the right to his serf's bride on her wedding night.[186]

Sex is ubiquitous within *The Art of Courtly Love*. The pursuit of pleasure is the lover's chief goal. With that said, Andreas frequently refers back to the common troubadour theme of *fin'amor* (pure love) in contrast to another form of love he refers to as "mixed love":

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[183] Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John Jay Perry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 32-33.
[184] Andreas Capellanus, *Courtly Love*, 33.
[185] Andreas Capellanus, *Courtly Love*, 149-150.
[186] Bogin, *The Women Troubadours*, 25.

> It is the pure love which binds together the hearts of two lovers with every feeling of delight. This king consists in the contemplation of the mind and the affection of the heart; it goes as far as the kiss and the embrace and the modest contact with the nude lover, omitting the final solace, for that is not permitted to those who wish to love purely…But that is called mixed love which gets its effect from every delight of the flesh and culminates in the final act of Venus. What sort of love this is you may clearly see from what I have already said, for this kind quickly fails, and lasts but a short time, and one often regrets practicing it; by it one's neighbor is injured, the Heavenly King is offended, and from it comes very grave dangers. But I do not say this as though I meant to condemn mixed love, I merely wished to show which of the two is preferable.[187]

The difference between pure and mixed love, the final act of intercourse, is in reality almost negligible. However, to Andreas, it is all the difference. Indeed, it is difficult to call his idea of *fin'amor* "pure."[188] At its most basic level, the reason to practice pure love is obvious: it avoids the risk of pregnancy. Nonetheless, Andreas' pure love shows a degree of self-awareness, of knowing one's limits and paying attention to the needs of one's beloved. Obviously, because this love is adulterous and secretive for the safety of the cheating lovers, this point is less than ideal, but is shows that courtly writers were aware of courtly love's limitations and the implications it held to society.

In another reference to medieval social classes, much of *The Art of Courtly Love* is set up in the form of dialogues between men and women of various positions in the feudal hierarchy, ranging from the emerging bourgeoisie middle class to the upper nobility. In each instance, the men, no matter their class, attempt to convince the women to accept their love, usually through the use of wordplay and sly reasoning to make a convincing argument. The ladies in these arguments are largely passive figures who offer simple rebuttals. It is interesting that in each of these arguments, the love is never confirmed. Indeed, the conversations are less a personal confession of love and more an attempt to teach the women about how love is gained (a sort of mini-*De Amore* within the *The Art of Courtly Love* itself). For example, in his dialogue between a nobleman and noblewoman, the nobleman offers a series of rules that all lovers must follow, including: the avoidance of avarice, the importance of secrecy, and the necessity of politeness.[189] Certainly this structure cannot be considered romantic, which begs the questions: Why do Andreas' arguments, in the form they are presented in, end in failure? And why does the final third of his treatise reject everything he has said prior? Like Chrétien, did he disagree with the concepts he put forth, that courtly love had to be adulterous and secretive, or, as a churchman, was he perhaps forced into writing his rejection of love by a disgruntled Christian church?

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[187] Andreas Capellanus, *Courtly Love*, 122.
[188] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 140.

To clarify the argument of Andreas' supposed resentment of adulterous courtly love, prior scholarship has often looked toward a particular segment within *The Art of Courtly Love*. In the dialogue between a high nobleman and a woman of simply nobility (probably the wife of an ordinary knight), the nobleman presents a letter sent by Marie de Champagne, a member of a Love Court comprised of the noblest women of twelfth-century France, who judges cases concerning matter of love. The letter and Love Court are certainly fabrications of Andreas for the sake of his argument, but the argument itself establishes the fictional Court's stance on whether or not love can exist within the bounds of legalized marriage. The Court's decision is unanimously clear: "We declare and we hold as firmly established that love cannot exert its powers between two people who are married to each other."[190]

Like Chrétien's *Lancelot*, is *The Art of Courtly Love* another attempt by Marie de Champagne to promote an ideology of adulterous love in order to undermine feudal marriage?

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[189] Andreas Capellanus, *Courtly Love*, 81-82. For an expanded list of Capellanus' rules of love, see Appendix B.

[190] Andreas Capellanus, *Courtly Love*, 106.

Again, Sidney Painter believes so.[191] However, more recent scholarship paints a different picture. Recent schools of thought debate whether *The Art of Courtly Love* is a literal explanation of courtly love, a humorous, satirical expression of court life, or a direct condemnation of lust, not courtly love.[192] A look at what little is known about Andreas may reveal an answer. As a chaplain (as his last name alludes to), Andreas was a learned individual. As a result, he would have been well aware of the educational practices of his time. With that said, *The Art of Courtly Love* can be viewed as a satirical parody of the scholastic method, in which all sides of an argument are presented in order to reach a unified consensus and achieve reconciliation.[193] By structuring *The Art of Courtly Love* to both promote and repudiate love, Andreas does not overtly show disdain for his subject matter; rather, he presents courtly love from various viewpoints to provide entertainment for his audience. Surely the idea of a female-exclusive Love Court and the futile arguments of the noblemen to woo their ladies would have been comical to anyone listening. Furthermore, this scholastic structure is incorporated by the next major author of courtly love, Marie de France.

From her prologue, Marie tells her audience that she has translated her "Breton lais" for two reasons: to remember these stories of adventure and to provide a means of avoiding vice (vv. 23-42). It is unfortunate that there is no direct complimentary figure for Marie de France in the English court. The many troubadours of southern France have the troubairitz to debate with. Chrétien is considered the first of many *trouvéres*. But Marie de France is alone, the only major figure of twelfth-century England to play a major role in the development of courtly love.[194] The fact that she is a woman, on the other hand, shows that, at least in spirit, her lais are very much in the spirit of her troubairitz cousins.

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[191] Painter, *French Chivalry*, 121-122.
[192] Benton, "The Court of Champagne," 32.
[193] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 141.
[194] Bogin, *The Women Troubadours*, 36.

The twelve surviving lais that can be attributed to Marie de France (*Guigemar*, *Equitan*, *Le Fresne*, *Bisclavret*, *Lanval*, *Les Deus Amanz*, *Yonec*, *Laüstic*, *Milun*, *Chaitivel*, *Chrevrefoil*, and *Eliduc*) are fascinating for their dualistic natures. In fact, literary critics have pointed out that if the lais are read as one entire piece, a full spectrum of love situations and a complete idea of Marie's view of love becomes apparent.[195] Love, in all its scenarios, is presented throughout Marie's lais. Sometimes it is good, sometime it is bad. Depending on the situation, it can create feeling of intense euphoria or lead lovers to an early grave. Just as the other authors of courtly love explored the boundaries and pitfalls of love, so too does Marie de France challenge love as a great and terrible emotion.

In *Guigemar*, for example, love is an emotion to be sought. From the beginning, Guigemar is identified as an excellent knight; he is valorous in combat and faithful to God and his family. However, Guigemar suffers a fatal flaw: "But in forming him nature had so badly erred / that he never gave any thought to love" (vv. 57-58). He is soon wounded by his own arrow after killing a talking white deer (think of the White Stag from *Erec et Enide*), and the only person who can heal him is a woman who loves him above all else. Serendipitously, Guigemar finds his love, via a magic boat, and is healed when they realize their love for one another.

The moment when Guigemar and his beloved confess their love for one another is highly reminiscent of Chrétien's romances and Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love*. Like love's description in *Cligés*, unfulfilled love is an ailment, "that lasts a long time, / because it comes from nature" (vv. 485-86). Once they reveal their feelings, Guigemar offers a short discourse on why their love is appropriate; they are both of good character and have always been faithful (vv. 481-529). After months of romance, the two lovers are discovered by an evil servant in service to the husband of the lady (i.e. the *lauzengiers* featured in the poetry of the troubairitz). After a short skirmish, Guigemar is exiled from his beloved, but the lay is resolved when he returns with an army, kills the husband, and rescues his love.

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[195] Hanning and Ferrante, introduction, 11.

If *Guigemar* presents love as an emotion that offers fulfillment (Guigemar is not a perfect knight until he learns to love), the following lay, *Equitan*, shows that love derived solely from self-indulgence is ultimately destructive. Equitan is the king of Nauns, who falls in love with the beautiful wife of his loyal seneschal. References to Ovid are prominent: "Love drafted him into his service" (vv. 54). The feudal aspects of love are also reflected within *Equitan* when the king confesses his love: "My dear lady, I'm offering myself to you! / Don't think of me as your king, but as your vassal and your lover" (vv. 169-71).[196] The Arthurian lay *Lanval* features a similar appearance of the lady as the feudal lord, who offers the handsome knight gifts and rescues him from death when he is falsely accused of adultery.[197] Returning to *Equitan,* the king promises to be loyal to his beloved alone and never take another wife. The ending of the lay is actually quite horrific; the lovers decide to murder the seneschal by scalding him in a boiling hot bathtub. However, the plan backfires; Equitan jumps into the boiling tub by mistake, and the seneschal drowns his wife when the affair is discovered. Because the love in *Equitan* is solely based on deceit and pleasure, with no physical or emotional growth, it ultimately leads to violent death.[198]

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[196] Bouchard, *Strong of Body*, 133.

[197] Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner and Glyn S. Burgess, "Arthur in the Narrative Lay," in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 194.

Marie de France's views on positive and negative love have strong effects on the progression and tone of her lais. The lais that focus on the negative qualities of love tend to be shorter and have relatively static plotlines. The lais that praise the positive qualities of love, on the other hand, are far more progressive; love allows a protagonist to mature and come into his own.[199] *Guigemar* is a prime example. Two other lais also feature this theme of maturation: *Yonec* and *Milun*. Both plots rely heavily on the use of birds, a common allusion to courtly love reaching back to Bernart de Ventadorn's poem *The Skylark*. In *Yonec*, the titular lover has the ability to transform into a bird in order to reach his lover, who has been locked inside a tower by her jealous husband. In *Milun*, the two lovers communicate through the use of secret messages concealed inside the feathers of migrating swans. Milun's unnamed son holds special significance to the ending of the lay. Milun falls out of contact with his lover and son in order to pursue opportunities that test his martial abilities. Once again, public chivalry wins out over love temporarily, but in a story like *Milun*, love is meant to conquer in the end.[200] Milun's son, who has become a knight even greater than his father, defeats him a jousting competition. The two recognize each other, and Milun is reunited with his beloved. In this particular tale, Marie's idea of chivalry—the pursuit of worldly glory—serves as a barricade that love, whether familial or courtly, must overcome.[201]

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[198] Hanning and Ferrante, introduction, 13.

[199] Hanning and Ferrante, introduction, 16; Logan E. Whalen, "A Matter of Life or Death: Fecundity and Sterility in Marie de France's *Guigemar*," in *Shaping Courtliness in Medieval France Essays in Honor of Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner*, ed. Daniel E. O'Sullivan and Laurie Shepard (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 149.

[200] Painter, *French Chivalry*, 131.

## Conclusions on Courtly Love

This chapter has set out to explain the origins of courtly love, its themes, and the major figures who developed it. With the sheer variety of courtly writers presented thus far—the troubadours and troubairitz, Chrétien de Troyes, Andreas Capellanus, and Marie de France—it is clear that courtly love and courtliness were as complicated in twelfth-century France and England as they are today. Concepts such as infidelity, sex, and adventurous romance, which have all thrives in the twenty-first century, got their foundations some 800 years earlier. Just like modern authors, medieval writers were not sure which theme would be the most popular, the epic rescue of the long-lost love or the back-room love affair. Indeed, the famous courtier Walter Map, who lived and interacted in the court of Henry II (and was perhaps an associate of Marie de France), could not even define the characteristics of the court life he himself was a part of, let alone its literature.[202] The topic is far too broad and engrossing to provide a reliable picture if only looking at one particular author. To begin to form a picture on courtly love and its influences on society, a look at the great corpus of courtly writings is a necessity. With that said, the limitations of this thesis have required the omission of certain influential tales, such as *The Romance of the Rose* and many of Marie de France's shorter lais. If one were to expand the literary corpus into the fourteenth century, Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, with his exaltation of the incorporeal Beatrice, could be included as a continuation of courtly love's influence.

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[201] Hanning and Ferrante, introduction, 17.

[202] Peter Haidu, "A Perfume of Reality? Desublimating the Courtly," in *Shaping Courtliness in Medieval France Essays in Honor of Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner*, ed. Daniel E. O'Sullivan and Laurie Shepard (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 28-29.

How are these works of courtly love meant to be viewed? What purpose did they serve? Was courtly love a tool, similar to the Peace and Truce of God movement of religious chivalry, to provide the knightly class with a means to subvert their violent capabilities? Was it a way for wealthy patrons like Marie de Champagne to introduce a new, radical, adulterous form of romance? Are these stories meant to be taken literally at all, or are the simply entertaining tales meant to amuse the courtly audiences of medieval Europe? For all their references to contemporary historical events and figures, it is important to remember that these works of courtly love, be they poems, romances, or love treatises, are meant for entertainment. Were young, vigorous knights actually meant to spend their days wooing the high-born ladies of Western Europe? No, but medieval authors were certainly aware that the very idea of it was dramatic and scandalous. Following the aristocratic troubadours (although some were more aristocratic than others), writers like Chrétien, Andreas, and Marie de France used their skill in writing to provide the courts they wrote for with interesting, comical stories. Their use of irony, allusion, and the supernatural shows they were very much aware of their role, and the role of courtly love, within a medieval world that frankly would have been quite boring by modern standards. Their works were meant to stir gossip for the sake of publicity, and in that regard, they succeeded brilliantly. Nevertheless, the themes they introduced have become some of the most endearing, important, and controversial aspects of chivalry to survive the passage of time.

## Chapter 3 Images

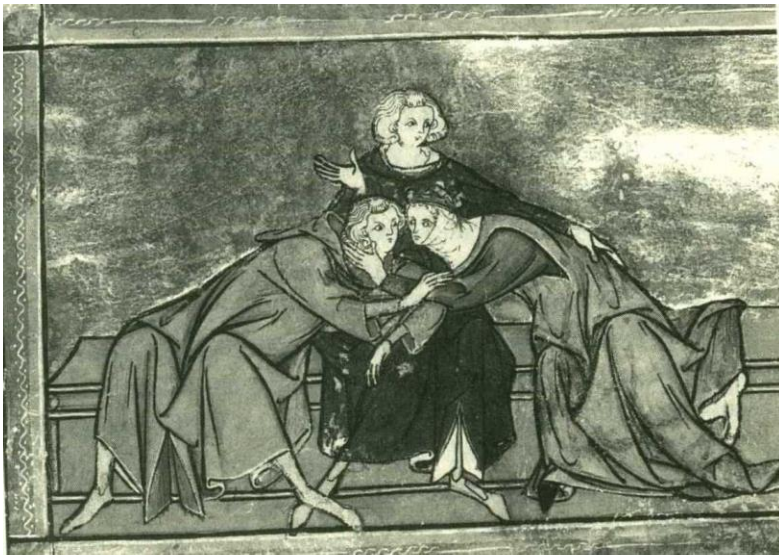

**Figure 8:** Manuscript illumination depicting Lancelot and Guinevere speaking privately as a friend stands guard.

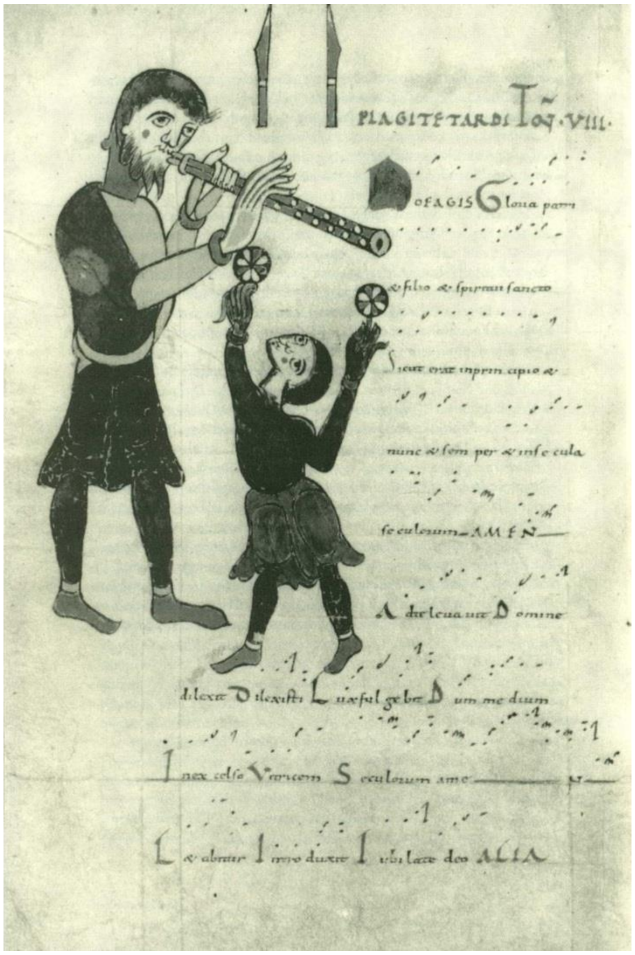
PLAGI TE TARDI
et filio et spiritui sancto
Sicut erat in principio et
nunc et semper et in secula
seculorum AMEN

**Figure 9:** Illustration of a musician (left) and juggler (right) performing.

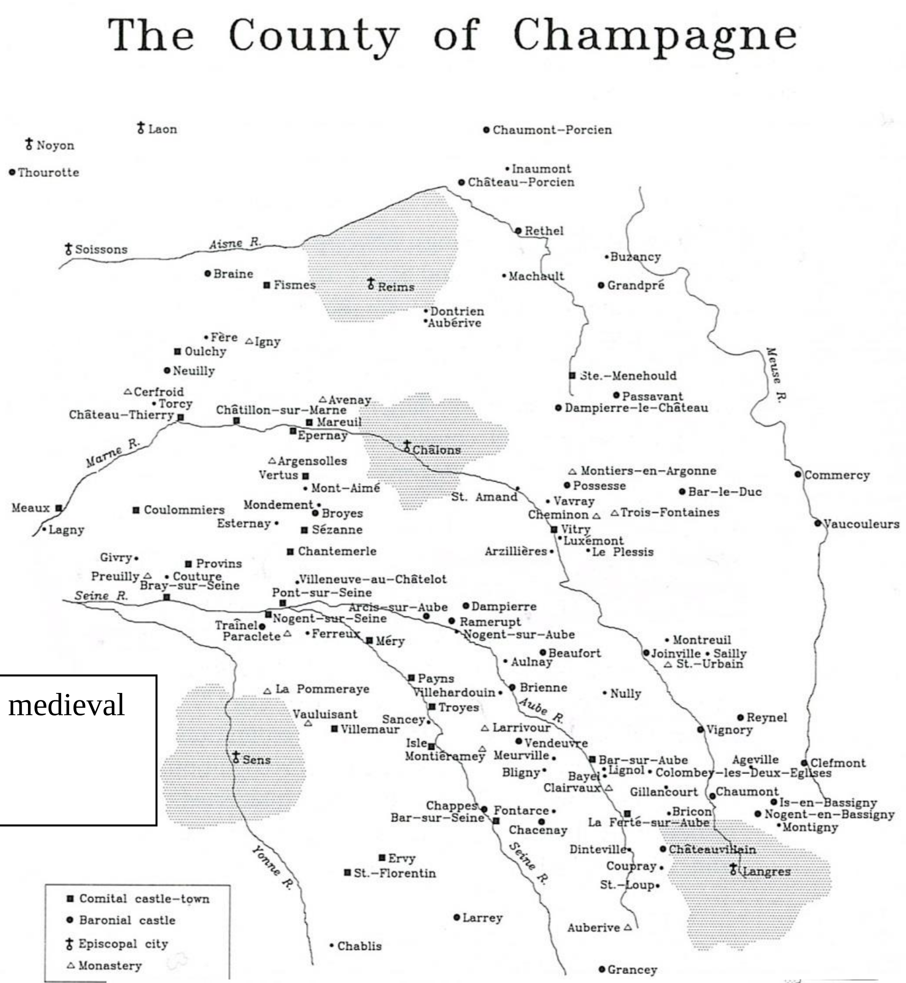
The County of Champagne
Laon
Noyon
Thourotte
Chaumont–Porcien
Inaumont
Château–Porcien
Rethel
Soissons
Aisne R.
Buzancy
Braine
Fismes
Reims
Machault
Grandpré
Dontrien
Aubérive
Fère
Igny
Oulchy
Neuilly
Ste.–Menehould
Meuse R.
Cerfroid
Torcy
Avenay
Passavant
Château–Thierry
Châtillon–sur–Marne
Mareuil
Dampierre–le–Château
Epernay
Marne R.
Châlons
Argensolles
Vertus
Montiers–en–Argonne
Possesse
Commercy
Mont–Aimé
Bar–le–Duc
St. Amand
Vavray
Meaux
Coulommiers
Mondement
Broyes
Cheminon
Trois–Fontaines
Esternay
Vaucouleurs
Lagny
Sézanne
Vitry
Luxémont
Chantemerle
Arzillières
Le Plessis
Givry
Provins
Preuilly
Couture
Villeneuve–au–Châtelot
Bray–sur–Seine
Pont–sur–Seine
Seine R.
Arcis–sur–Aube
Dampierre
Nogent–sur–Seine
Ramerupt
Traînel
Paraclete
Ferreux
Nogent–sur–Aube
Méry
Montreuil
Beaufort
Joinville
Sailly
Aulnay
St.–Urbain
Payns
Brienne
La Pommeraye
Villehardouin
Nully
Troyes
Vauluisant
Aube R.
Reynel
Sancey
Villemaur
Larrivour
Vignory
Vendeuvre
Isle
Sens
Montiéramey
Meurville
Bar–sur–Aube
Ageville
Clefmont
Bligny
Lignol
Colombey–les–Deux–Eglises
Bayel
Clairvaux
Gillancourt
Chaumont
Chappes
Fontarce
Is–en–Bassigny
Bar–sur–Seine
Bricon
Nogent–en–Bassigny
La Ferté–sur–Aube
Chacenay
Montigny
Dinteville
Châteauvillain
Ervy
Yonne R.
Seine R.
Coupray
Langres
St.–Florentin
St.–Loup
Larrey
Auberive
Chablis
Grancey
■ Comital castle–town
● Baronial castle
☨ Episcopal city
△ Monastery

**Figure 10:** Map of the medieval county of Champagne.

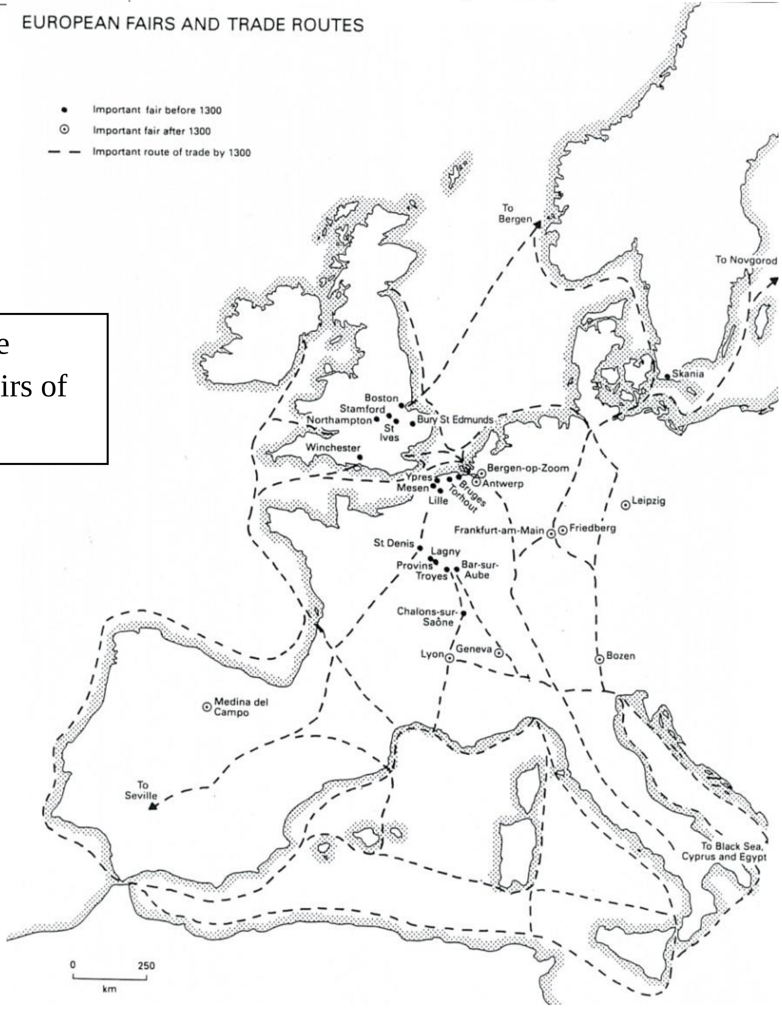
EUROPEAN FAIRS AND TRADE ROUTES
● Important fair before 1300
⊙ Important fair after 1300
– – Important route of trade by 1300
To Bergen
To Novgorod
Skania
Boston
Stamford
Northampton
Bury St Edmunds
St Ives
Winchester
Bergen-op-Zoom
Ypres
Antwerp
Mesen
Bruges
Torhout
Lille
Leipzig
Frankfurt-am-Main
Friedberg
St Denis
Lagny
Provins
Bar-sur-Aube
Troyes
Chalons-sur-Saône
Geneva
Lyon
Bozen
Medina del Campo
To Seville
To Black Sea, Cyprus and Egypt
0
250
km

**Figure 11:** Map of European trade routes. Note the location of the Fairs of Champagne in northeast France.

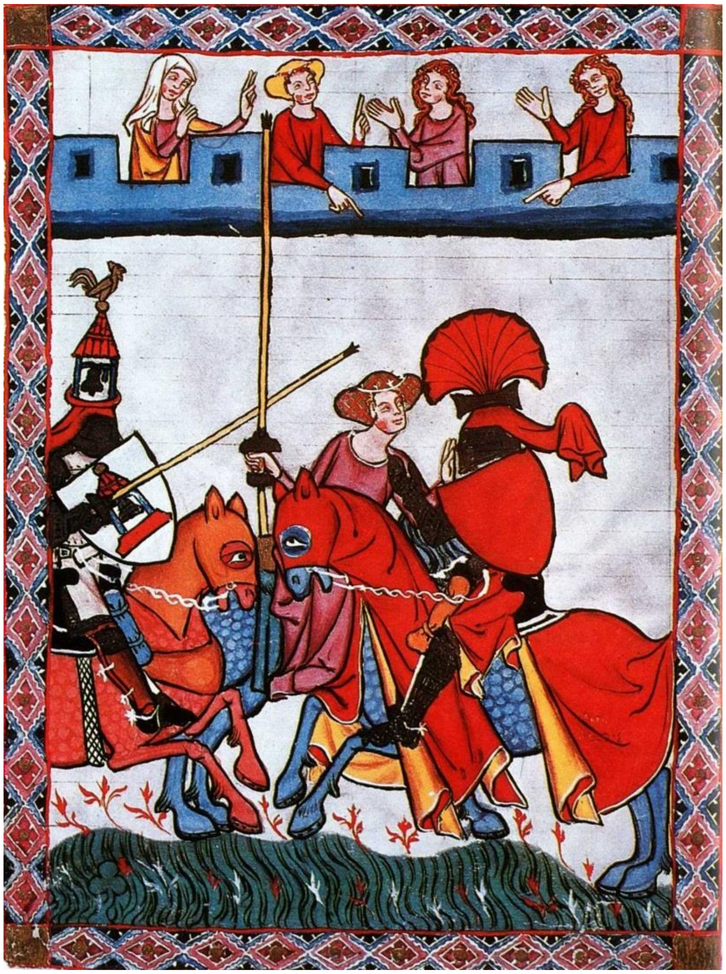

**Figure 12:** A noble lady arms her knightly lover in preparation for a joust.

## Conclusion: The End of Chivalry?

This thesis began its study of chivalry with *The Romance of Morien*, an early fifteenth-century, medieval Dutch romance about a young knight's quest to find his father. The romance itself is particular noteworthy for its short description of the chivalric qualities a knight must uphold: generosity to women and the weak, and valor against the haughty and strong. The *Morien* benefits from roughly 400 years of knightly tradition in Western Europe. As such, *Morien* has many literary predecessors from which to put forth its own version of the knightly code. That said, *Morien*'s description of chivalry is clear and concise, and the rest of the romance is an entertaining story of Morien fighting knights who do not align with this version of knightly conduct. However, other medieval authors have played with the conflicting aspects of chivalry for the sake of storytelling. The fourteenth-century Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is one such example.

The story begins with King Arthur holding court on Christmas.[203] The greatest knights and ladies in the realm are all gathered together, enjoying the revelries, when into the hall rides a giant of a man wearing all green armor. The appropriately titled Green Knight wishes to challenge the greatest knight in Arthur's kingdom in a contest of bravery, but everyone in the court is too scared by the Green Knight's impressive stature to accept. Just as King Arthur is prepared to accept the challenge, his nephew, Sir Gawain, jumps forth in order to keep his lord from potential harm. The challenge is simple: Gawain will strike the Green Knight's neck with an axe, and in one year, the Green Knight will do the same to Gawain. Gawain's axe strike beheads the Green Knight, but the knight's body picks up the still-talking head before riding out of the hall. After almost a year has passed, Gawain sets out to find the Green Knight to complete his side of the bargain. After weeks of fruitless searching, the weary Gawain comes across the castle of Bertilak de Hautdesert, a powerful nobleman who provides directions to where the Green Knight lives. Furthermore, Bertilak offers Gawain a deal: Gawain is permitted to rest in the castle as Bertilak leaves to hunt, and each day the two are to exchange anything they win to one another. Over the course of the three days, Bertilak hunts and kills more dangerous and elusive pray, first a heard of deer, followed by a deadly boar, and finally a fox. Meanwhile, each day Bertilak's young and beautiful wife approaches Gawain, praising him with kisses and sexual advances.

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[203] Larry D. Benson, trans., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Close Verse Translation* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2012).

Gawain plight in dealing with Bertilak's wife is the perfect example of the difficulty with which medieval writers approached chivalry, for it features all three aspects of chivalry that this thesis has covered. For the secular side of chivalry, Gawain is a guest in Bertilak's home. In effect, Bertilak is Gawain's temporary liege lord whom Gawain must respect. Accepting the sensual promises of Bertilak's wife would be tantamount to treason and would give Bertilak sufficient reason to kill Gawain. Furthermore, Gawain is a pious, Christian knight. Adultery is obviously forbidden. But how is Gawain to respond to Lady Bertilak's needs? If Bertilak is Gawain's lord, then Lady Bertilak becomes his lady, and courtly love has shown that a knight is to give his obedience and love to his lady. Gawain understands the conflicting nature of his vows, and he must tread lightly with how far he can satisfy Lady Bertilak's needs. This is made all the worse because of his oath to Bertilak, as anything he does with Lady Bertilak must also be done to her husband. Fortunately Gawain is able to keep from going no further than a few, chaste kisses.

On the final day, Lady Bertilak offers Gawain her signet ring, which Gawain must refuse since he would be forced to surrender it to Bertilak that night, thus revealing their secret correspondence. In place of the ring, Lady Bertilak offers Gawain a green sash, enchanted to protect its wearer from any bodily harm. Gawain, remembering his upcoming challenge with the Green Knight, accepts the sash and keeps it hidden from Bertilak. Returning on his journey, Gawain meets the Green Knight outside of a chapel the next day. Axe in hand, the Green Knight strikes Gawain with just enough force to draw a small trickle of blood from Gawain's neck. The knight then reveals that he is Bertilak, and he drew blood because Gawain kept the green sash hidden from him, although he cannot truly blame Gawain because he was only trying to stay alive. The story ends with Gawain returning to Camelot, wearing the green sash as a symbol of his moral failure for not being honest, and Arthur's knights comfort him by all wearing green sashes themselves in his honor.[204]

Like *Morien, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* benefits from centuries of previous chivalric literature. It is not the only chivalric tale to challenge the secular, religious, and courtly aspects of chivalry, but merely one of the latest. As the previous sources discussed in this thesis have shown, the writers of chivalric literature were either not sure themselves what aspects of chivalry were most important, or deliberately chose certain aspects to focus on. The *chansons de geste* primarily praise the knight's role as a loyal vassal and soldier. The works of Pope Urban II and St. Bernard of Clairvaux saw knighthood as a force in service to God. Chrétien de Troyes, Andreas Capellanus, and Marie de France praised courtly love as the truest embodiment of chivalry. The individual aspects have their own problems, as well. The literature asks questions of courtly love, that we must also ask. Does courtly love enable knights to be better fighters, as

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[204] Benson, *Sir Gawain*.

Chrétien’s romances would assume, or, as Marie de France wrote, is courtliness a goal unto itself, completely independent of a knight’s martial prowess? According to *The Song of Roland* and *The Song of the Cid*, are bishops meant to ensure the spiritual safety of knights as they go into battle, or should knights themselves form their own religious brotherhoods like the Knights Templar?

Where then does that leave the analysis of chivalry, and if the writers of chivalric literature could not decide on a unified code, is it even possible to find an end date to chivalry? In other words, can the influence of chivalry be seen as a definable time period of history? Certainly the beginning of chivalry, with its emphasis on a knight’s martial prowess, emerged alongside the knightly class around 1000 C.E. But as religion and courtliness made its way into the chivalric literary corpus, did chivalry as a whole survive without being torn asunder by its competing aspects? Perhaps chivalry ended along with the military supremacy of European knights following the introduction of gunpowder. Or perhaps it disappeared alongside the Middle Ages with the Renaissance of the fifteenth century. Most strikingly, it is possible that chivalry tied itself not with the knight as a soldier, but the knight as a noble and member of the court. Therefore, chivalry became the inseparable partner of the feudal system, which within the context of French history survived long after the Middle Ages came to an end. As a result, one must look to the events of the French Revolution to begin to find an answer.

On the night of August 4, 1789, almost 800 years after the medieval knight emerged to become part of the feudal system, the National Assembly of France met to discuss the ancient privileges that French nobility and clergy had enjoyed for centuries. Composed of lawyers and liberal-minded young nobles, the Assembly had in the months beforehand curbed the power of the monarchy and abolished the Estates General, the traditional legislative assembly of the

French people. That night, in a rapid series of motions, the Assembly effectively ended the feudal system within France. Ancient privileges of the nobility, including hunting rights, seigneurial rule (a system of land distribution modelled closely off of medieval, feudal practices), and access to certain public professions, were abolished. The tithe owed to the church was also ended. The formal declaration of what transpired on August 4 was published one week later, and it began with a proclamation stating that the National Assembly had entirely destroyed the old feudal regime.[205]

The abolition of privileges that for centuries had belonged to the ancient nobility and knights of France is certainly important in itself, but even more important is the reaction, specifically that of Edmund Burke of England. Burke was one of the greatest conservative orators of his time within the English Parliament, and his influential *Reflections on the French Revolution*, published in November 1790, highlights almost poetically his viewpoint of what the Revolution had done to the ancient system of noble honor:

> But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophists, œconomists [sic], and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defense of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage while it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.[206]

To Burke, chivalry was something completely extraordinary to the history of Europe. It constituted a time period defined by respect and moral freedom to men and women alike, a noticeable difference from the infamous “Reign of Terror” that was to come. Rather than espouse the ideologies of the Enlightenment, Burke wished to look back not to a time of science and reason, but to a time of honor and integrity among men and women of noble qualification. In Burke’s mind, chivalry was a simple but noble ideal that defined an entire age.

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[205] William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 116-17.

[206] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*, in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 442.

But is Burke’s statement accurate to medieval chivalry, as this thesis has presented? It is interesting to consider that Burke’s idealistic opinion of chivalry, rather than the specific viewpoints of chivalry according to medieval writers, has survived into the modern age. Just think of the clichéd phrase that states, “Chivalry is dead.” It is a dream that overlooks the many problems that came with the development of chivalry. Does Burke mention the knightly violence that characterized the early eleventh century? Does he recall the bloodshed caused by crusaders killing in the name of God? Does he bring up the misogyny of treating women like delicate dolls in need of constant protection? No, for that would defeat the purpose of what chivalry was meant to be in spirit.

Much of what the medieval writers viewed as chivalrous behavior has been lost to time. As stated above, the concept of vassalage to a liege lord went out of style with the French Revolution. The crusades, ever a popular topic to novice medieval enthusiasts, ended centuries ago. The concept of holy war is now widely shunned by modern society. Everyone has heard of King Arthur, Lancelot, and the Holy Grail, but few know of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France. Outside of their home countries of France and Spain, how many people know about *The Song of Roland* or *The Song of the Cid*? Crusader figureheads like Richard the Lionheart and Saladin survive in popular legend and cinema, but do Urban II and Bernard of Clairvaux make it to the silver screen?

Ultimately, the problem with chivalry is that it comes in so many forms that it is difficult to piece it together as a whole. The modern age has made chivalry a bit easier to understand thanks to its fascination with romance. Consider that the most well-known knights of the twenty-first century are musician like Elton John and Paul McCartney. Outside of music, popular entertainment like the hit novel and HBO series *Game of Thrones*, and movies such as *King Arthur*, *Kingdom of Heaven*, *Robin Hood* (2010), *A Knight's Tale*, and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, all try to put dramatic, adventurous, and comedic spins on knightly chivalry. And they are not necessarily wrong? The chivalry represented in medieval literature was adventurous, religious, amorous, and at points even hilarious. The key, however, is to understand that different authors portrayed chivalry in different way to suite a particular need or to tell a story. With that said, perhaps chivalry is not dead. Perhaps it exists inside all of us, waiting for a new story to be told.

# Appendix A

## “The Skylark” by Bernart de Ventadorn

Now when I see the skylark lift
His wings for joy at dawn’s first ray
Then let himself, oblivious, drift
For all his heart is glad and gay,
Ay! Such great envies seize my thought
To see the rapture others find,
I marvel that desire does not
Consume away this heart of mine.

Alas, I thought I’d grown so wise;
In love I had so much to learn:
I can’t control this heart that flies
To her who pays love no return.
Ay! Now she steals, through love’s sweet theft,
My heart, my self, my world entire;
She steals herself and I am left
Only this longing and desire.

Losing control, I’ve lost all right
To rule my life; my life’s her prize
Since she first showed me true delight
In those bright mirrors, her two eyes.
Ay! Once I’d caught myself inside
Her glances, I’ve been drowned in sighs,
Dying as fair Narcissus died
In streams that mirror captive skies.

Deep in despair, I’ll place no trust
In women though I did before;
I’ve been their champion so it’s just
That I renounce them evermore;
When none will lift me from my fall
When she has cast me down in shame,
Now I distrust them, one and all,
I’ve learned to well their all the same.

She acts as any women would—
No wonder I’m dissatisfied;

She'll never do the things she should;
She only wants all that's denied.
Ay! Now I fall in deep disgrace,
A fool upon love's bridge am I;
No one knows how that could take place
Unless I dared to climb to high.

All mercy's gone, all pity lost—
Though at the best I still knew none—
Since she who should yield mercy most
Shows me the least of anyone.
Wrongful it seems, now, in my view,
To see a creature love's betrayed
Who'd seek no other good but you,
Then let him die without your aid.

Since she, my Lady, shows no care
To earn my thanks, nor pay Love's rights
Since she'll not hear my constant prayer
And my love yields her no delights,
I say no more; I silent go;
She gives me death; let death reply.
My Lady won't embrace me so
I leave, exiled in pain for aye.

Tristan, you'll hear no more from me
I leave to wander, none knows where;
Henceforth all joys in love I'll flee
And all my songs I now forswear.

# Appendix B

## *The Rules of Love* by Andreas Capellanus

I. Marriage is no real excuse for not loving.
II. He who is not jealous cannot love.
III. No one can be bound by a double love.
IV. It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
V. That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
VI. Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.
VII. When one lover dies, a widower of two years is required of the survivor.
VIII. No one should be derived of love without the very best of reasons.
IX. No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.
X. Love is always a stranger in the home of avarice.
XI. It is not proper to love any woman whom one would be ashamed to seek to marry.
XII. A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
XIII. When made public love rarely endures.
XIV. The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
XV. Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
XVI. When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
XVII. A new love puts to flight an old one.
XVIII. Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
XIX. If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely revives.
XX. A man in love is always apprehensive.
XXI. Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
XXII. Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.
XXIII. He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.
XXIV. Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
XXV. A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.
XXVI. Love can deny nothing to love.
XXVII. A lover can never have enough of the solace of his beloved.
XXVIII. A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.
XXIX. A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
XXX. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.
XXXI. Nothing forbids a woman being loved by two men or one man by two women.

# Appendix C

## *Be•m degra de chanter tener / It Would Be Best If I Refrained from Singing* by Guirant Riquier

It would be best if I refrained
From singing: song should spring from gladness;
But I'm tormented by a sadness
So profound that I'm seized by pain.
Remembering how grim things were
Considering how hard things *are*,
And pondering the by-and-by,
I have every cause to cry.

Thus my song gives me no pleasure,
Since it of happiness is bare;
But God has granted me such share
Of talent that, through music's measure,
Out flows my wit, my joys and follies;
Both my gains and losses, truly.
If not, I couldn't breathe a line—
For I was born behind my time.

For now no art is less admired
Than the worthy craft of song.
These days the nobles' tastes have run
To entertainments less inspired.
Wailing mingles with disgrace:
All that once engendered praise
From the memory has died:
Now the world is mostly lies.

Through the pride and wicked nature
Of so-called Christians, far removed
From God's commandments, far from love,
We are cast out from his sacred
Place and cursed with encumbrances:
It seems that he is loath to face us,
Given our uncontrolled desire,
And presumptuous grasp of power.

Of gravest peril be forewarned,

A double death over us is looming:
The Saracens are overwhelming,
And our God is unconcerned.
Full of anger, soon will we be
Destroyed, our lives wiped out completely.
Our leaders can’t be bothered to
Fulfill their duty, that’s my view.

God in your unity and grace,
Wisdom, power we have faith:
Let your works shine out with splendor,
To attract repentant sinners.

Lady, mother of charity,
Pity us, and intercede
With your redeeming son, and win
Blessings, mercy, love from him.

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# ACADEMIC VITA

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## Education

**The Pennsylvania State University**, University Park, PA
**Major:** History with Honors **Minor:** Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
Anticipated Graduation August 2015

**Relevant Coursework:**

History Courses Completed:
HIST 001 Western Heritage I
HIST 002 Western Heritage II
HIST 020 American Civilization to 1877
HIST 021H American Civilization From 1877
HIST 100H Ancient Greece
HIST 105 History of the Byzantine Empire
HIST 107 Medieval Europe
HIST 121 History of the Holocaust
HIST 134 Introduction to the British Isles, 1400 to 1800
HIST 181U Introduction to the Middle East
HIST 199 Foreign Studies (Roman Cities)
HIST 302M History of American Radicalism
HIST 407 Early Medieval Society
HIST 418 History of the French Revolution and Napoleon
HIST 494 and 494H Independent Thesis Workshop
HIST 496H Independent Study (Substituted for HIST 408 Church and State in the High Middle Ages)

Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies Coursework:
CAMS 010 Mesopotamian Civilization
CAMS 033 Roman Civilization
CAMS 045U Classical Mythology
CAMS 400W Athens and Jerusalem: Wisdom in the Ancient World
CAMS 411W Classical Drama

Other History Related Coursework:
ART H111 Ancient to Medieval Art
ART H112 Renaissance to Modern Art
CMLIT 106H Arthurian Legend
ENGL 129H Shakespearean Literature
ENGL 202B Writing in the Humanities
PL SC001 Introduction to American National Government

**Tamaqua Area High School**, Tamaqua, PA
High School 06/2011
**Honors**: Graduated Valedictorian
**Relevant Coursework, Honors:**
National Honors Society, National English Honors Society – President, Advanced Placement European History, Advanced Placement Spanish Dual-Enrollment credits in Anatomy and Physiology and Calculus through Lehigh County Community College

| Language | Spoken | Written | Read |
|---|---|---|---|
| English | Advanced | Advanced | Advanced |
| Spanish | Intermediate | Intermediate | Intermediate |
| Latin | Basic | Intermediate | Intermediate |

## Honors and Affiliations

Phi Alpha Theta National History Honors Society Member
*Since 2014*
Schreyer Honors College
*Since 2013*

## Leadership Experience

**The Penn State History Roundtable Organization – President** 2014-2015

Worked alongside other officers and members of the History department to plan weekly meetings, faculty talks, and field trips.

**Liberal Arts Undergraduate Council Department Representative** 2014-2015

Served as the History department representative. Worked with other department representatives to advertise events through the College of the Liberal Arts.

**Penn State Schuylkill Lion Ambassador** 2011-2013

Coordinated tours for prospective students and assisted in organizing Open House events and student outreach programs.

## Grants, Scholarships and Awards

| | |
|---|---|
| Liberal Arts Enrichment Fund | 2015 |
| Walter L. Peterson Student Enrichment Fund | 2015 |
| Schreyer College Ambassador Grant | 2015 |
| The Evan Pugh Scholars Award – Junior and Senior | 2014/2015 |
| Chancellor Award | 2011-2013 |
| The President Sparks Award | 2013 |
| Dean’s List | |

## International Experience

Rome: Study Tour of Roman History and Archaeology Summer 2015

## Publications

“Historical Perspective and the *Song of Roland*.” Paper published in Primary Source: The Undergraduate Journal of History at Indiana University, Vol. V: Issue II, Spring 2015.

## Skills

Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint
Proficient in research with primary and secondary sources
Proficient in public speaking

## Research Interest

In terms of historical time periods, my main interests are Ancient Greece, Rome, and the Middle Ages, with particular focus on military and cultural history. I have a strong fascination with literary sources and how they are influenced by historical events and trends.