

Chapter Four



Measuring Conventions
of Courtliness

The relation of baronial ideals to feudal, national, and religious principles is not the only concern of insular romance. A further subject of importance to insular as well as continental poets is ideal love and its relationship to noble life. The ascendancy of romances of love and chivalry in the later Middle Ages has disturbed some modern readers, because it seems to represent a rejection of historical and political concern. W. P. Ker complained that even in the finest twelfth-century romances "the glimpses of the real world are occasional and short . . . and then the heavy-laden, enchanted mists of rhetoric and obligatory sentiment come rolling down and shut out the view." Erich Auerbach found them "entirely without any basis in political reality" and concluded that "courtly romance is not reality shaped and set forth by art, but an escape into fable and fairy tale."¹

The romances of love are indeed conventional, do use artful rhetoric, and do present characters who are idealized—clearly superior to real people in their personal attributes and in their ability to execute their purposes and achieve their desires. These characters, like the stories of their lives, have a perfect, polished wholeness that stimulates admiration and aesthetic pleasure. In contrast to the romances of English heroes and the pious romances, the

1. Ker, *Epic and Romance*, p. 353; Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 133, 138.

Anglo-Norman romances of love have narrators who are strongly conscious of their status as fabricators. They make themselves interpreters of subtle visions of ideal behavior, mediators between their poetry and the audience their poetry fictionalizes. *Tristan and Ipomedon* exist as poetic objects at a considerable remove from historical reality, and their artfulness demands our attention.

Yet Ker's and Auerbach's analyses miss the distinctive and extensive relations these works have with their times. In attending to emotional development and individuality, romances of love engage issues fundamental to the twelfth-century renaissance.² Their concern with personal fulfillment in relation to public duty—with people as social beings—offers far more than mere "escape into fable and fairy tale." Like other romances in this study, the insular romances of love and chivalry assess ideal patterns of behavior (here the cultural formations of *courtoisie* and *fine amor*) in relation to conflicting images of conduct. But the historical situation of these romances changes more than that of other insular romances: the earlier poets of love and chivalry examine an ideal system that had far less importance to social behavior than did religion or feudal and national principles, but their Middle English successors saw literature's courtly ideals widely followed in social practice.

Courtly Literature and the Insular World

The cultures where the poetry of love and chivalry first flourished were distant from England, and twelfth-century poets responded to this literature with both enthusiasm and resistance. On the one hand, Anglo-Norman poets are quick, even precocious, in their acceptance of courtly procedures such as praise of ladies, depiction of rich clothing and objects, and delineation of fine manners and generous behavior.³ Thomas of Britain's version of painful love recalls the troubadours, although transferring that love from lyric to narrative form distances his work from Provençal aesthetics and aligns it with northern French romances. But the insular poets are uneasy about their participation in the literature of love and chivalry. Thomas's *Tristan* and Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon* share a fun-

2. This aspect of romance is treated in different ways by Noltung-Hauff, *Liebeskasuistik*; Morris, *Discovery of the Individual*; Hanning, *Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*.

3. See Legge, "'Courtoisie' en anglo-normand"; Press, "Precocious Courtesy."

damental objection to continental romance that is answered in the later *Amadas et Ydoine* and in Middle English romances. Rejecting the ideal play of reconciliation typical of Old French romances, Thomas and Hue hazard the most extreme tensions between private and public selves and between images of love's code and of human behavior. These Anglo-Norman poets establish an important line of questioning for later poets of love and chivalry in England. In a process similar to their compatriots' incorporation of Christian elements into romance, the insular poets of love at first resist much in courtly convention, then gradually accept it more fully while adapting it to suit insular literary purposes and social ideals.

In saying that these romances diverge from the norms of courtly romance, I do not endorse the widespread judgment that insular poetry often fails to be "courtly" altogether. Constance Birt West, for example, found much in Thomas "non-courtois" and declared of Hue that "though he is familiar with the language of courtoisie, he does not really express its point of view."⁴ W. O. Evans extended to the Middle English romances West's conclusion that Anglo-Norman romances often abandon "*courtois* conventions"; and Gervase Mathew agreed that some English tendencies, such as making lovers equal and showing love in marriage, are "completely un-courtois."⁵ These judgments assume that the literary tradition of noble love is monolithic and proscriptive, an assumption that can no longer be upheld. Andreas Capellanus was not an influential master for poets of love.⁶ Even the strictest canon of Old French romances includes works with conflicting postulates, so that what is courtly cannot be narrowly defined: "There is not one courtly love but twenty or thirty of them."⁷ This conclusion sounds almost paradoxical given the proscriptive history of the term *amour courtois*; thus the terms *fine amor*, *bone amor*, and *veraie amor*, which poets frequently used to describe varied manifestations of refined love, suit better our recognition that love in the romances is not one

4. *Courtoisie*, pp. 29 and 106. More recent critics also find Thomas uncourtly, e.g., Jonin, *Personnages féminins*, pp. 288–335, 452–57; Wind, "Éléments courtois."

5. Evans, "Cortaysye," p. 149; Mathew, "Amour Courtois," p. 129. Gist likewise finds that the ME romances show "little understanding of the French concept of courtly love" (*Love and War*, p. 8).

6. Karnein, "Réception du *De Amore*"; Benton, "Court of Champagne" and "Andreas Capellanus"; Bowden, "Courtly Copulation."

7. Utley, "Courtly Love," p. 322. But Ferrante argues in "*Cortes' Amor*" that the term "courtly love" still has validity. The literature on the subject is enormous; surveys of controversies are Boase, *Courtly Love*; and Kelly, *Love and Marriage*, pp. 19–26.

thing but many.⁸ *Fine amor* is especially evocative in its oxymoronic collapsing of "intense" and "refined" in the adjective *fine*. To describe a love (whether of a woman or of God) that is impassioned but also elevating, poets often choose the collocation *fine amor*.

The Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances have appeared "non-courtois" because they diverge energetically from supposedly rigid generic norms. But on the whole, insular detachment from continental romances of love is not best described as a failure to be courtly. Just as the nature of *veraie amor* is shaped and reshaped in various plots and poetic arguments but retains a general sense of refinement and intensity, so too *courtoisie* varies in specifics from text to text while generally signifying a complex of social and chivalric virtues instilled by noble education and the experience of noble love. Insular poets demonstrate in many ways that they are aware of courtly tradition and committed to producing idealized, inspiring visions of noble life.⁹ In so doing, they resist certain elements of received continental literature and undertake a coherent revision of romance's generic norms.

Part of that revision, as we have seen, reduces tension between the hero and the political structures of his society. While Old French romances and *gestes de révoltés* discover important conflicts between noble aspirations and social restraints, the romances of English heroes tend to equate heroic desires with communal ones. The insular barony's experience of political systematization, particularly in the twelfth century, was less debilitating and contentious than was the continental experience. The romances of English heroes, in turn, could plausibly develop an ideal version of political heroism that located conflict in aberrant forces challenging hero and community together.

With regard to the role of cultural ideals in poetic depictions of noble behavior, the Old French and insular romances diverge again. In French romances dissonances between noble ambition and social restraint can be resolved within ideal chivalry and love. Internalizing the conflicts of violence versus pacification and passion versus control, protagonists work out emotional and behav-

8. Two studies on the limitations and uses of the term *fine amor* that do not appear in Boase's bibliography are Burnley, "Fine Amor"; and Reiss, "Fin' Amors."

9. Continental as well as insular romances can only be read consistently as a series of hypotheses on what *fine amor* and ideal chivalry might be and how they might manifest themselves in different narrative situations. For analyses of the genre from this perspective, see Sklute, "Ethical Norms"; Haidu, "Humor."

ioral equilibria that model resolutions for their society's turbulence. Early insular poets resist these inner resolutions, and later poets modify them extensively.

Fine amor, in continental narratives, tends to provide a positive experience of growth and integration. The fictional lovers are remarkable for the grace of their conduct and the sublimation of their sexual desires. Despite the French poets' tendency to ironize, *bone amor* typically guides its adepts toward perfect happiness and harmony with their world: "Il fallait embellir la vie, lui donner un rythme et des tonalités rares, mais aussi se soumettre à toutes les exigences propres à la rendre collectivement possible, agréable et utile."¹⁰ This process is not primarily or centrally painful, but rather responds to sources of stress by dissolving them. Prowess serves love and quells rebellion, winning union and peace. Lovers engage primarily in self-discovery rather than in collective endeavors. In their high refinement, these works claim to initiate their audience into the "normes d'une manière parfaite d'aimer,"¹¹ and hermetic style expresses their restrictive impulse. The elevated rhetoric of the twelfth-century romances speaks only to "un auditoire initié" that can understand its ornaments and complexities of meaning: "Au 'trobar clus' répond un récit 'clos.'"¹²

Critics argue that these typical features of Old French romance work to validate the condition of the aristocracy and reconcile audiences to that condition. Eugene Vance analyzes the French romances, along with court ceremonies, as "a system of signs that would translate an ideology of supremacy into terms that would engage the acquiescence, if not the collaboration, of other sectors of society."¹³ Reviewing much scholarship on the subject, R. Howard Bloch agrees that romances have "ideological effect" but argues that the effect is ultimately to undermine rather than to support the French aristocracy's desire for military power and class solidarity: through courtly literature, this class "came to embrace the very ideals which assured its own decline"—ideals of peace, individu-

10. Le Gentil, "La Légende de Tristan," p. 126; Le Gentil contrasts the Tristan story to this norm, which "s'accommode mal du tragique et de la violence, reste éminemment sociable" (p. 127).

11. Jauss, "Cinq modèles," p. 155.

12. Vance, "Combat érotique," pp. 553–54; see also Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, pp. 11–30.

13. "Signs of the City," p. 565; Boase's survey concludes similarly that "Courtly Love was a literary movement and an ideology with ethical implications" (*Courtly Love*, p. 128).

alism, and self-development guided by moral principle.¹⁴ Even in their disagreements such analyses insist that Old French romances were not merely escapist entertainments; the pleasure of imagination these romances offered was locked to their ideological function in the world, as markers of class status and value or as agents of change in the aristocracy's gradual submission to monarchy.¹⁵

Insular poets draw unevenly on this literature. Thomas writes an orthodox "récit 'clos'" elevated far beyond simple discourse by its dense rhetorical ornamentation, its terms assigned special and unusual significance, and its doubled meaning in *conte* and *conjointure*. Yet he employs this exclusive style to resist the conventional idea that love is the key to reconciliation between desire and principle and between self and noble milieu. Thomas's lovers must accept their own fallibility and prepare themselves not for social integration but for death. Hue de Rotelande undermines his thoroughly conventional plot with a laughing, casual, often earthy commentary. *Ipomedon* simultaneously endorses and questions the principle that love and chivalry are mutually inspiring. *Amadas et Ydoine* and many Middle English romances tend to avoid high style and to reduce French heroism to something more accessible: in these works, love and chivalry are compatible with domesticity, economy, and good sense.

To some extent these departures from continental norms were invited by poetics. *Translatio studii*, proposing that literature continually reforms itself, encouraged poets to make each romance a new argument on the nature of love.¹⁶ But the departures taken by the insular romances lead in one direction, suggesting that something more than poetic experimentation was guiding them. From Thomas's *Tristan* in the twelfth century through the Middle English romances of the fourteenth, insular romances of love gradually move from resisting courtly tradition's implausible claims about refinement and harmony to perceiving a stronger relationship between courtly literature and practice. The thread uniting all the

14. *Literature and Law*, pp. 215–38 (quote at pp. 223, 225); cf. Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 81–95.

15. Both functions are plausible and not incompatible; Georges Duby stresses the connection between rapid social change and the articulation of ideologies: "Ideological formations reveal themselves to the historian in periods of tumultuous change. In such grave times, the custodians of the word speak incessantly" (*Three Orders*, pp. 118–19; from *Trois ordres*, p. 151).

16. See below, n. 38. See also Freeman, "Translatio Studii"; Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*; Vinaver, *Rise of Romance*, pp. 15–32.

insular poets is their preoccupation with the distance between received courtly ideals and perceived realities of individual and social behavior. Why did they recoil from courtly tradition, and how did they adapt the tradition to insular perceptions? This chapter and the following will attempt an answer in terms of literary and historical developments.

In historical terms French courtly literature was not tailored to English audiences. We have already surveyed the developments that produced in later twelfth-century England a relatively peaceful barony rather than a warring one, a society less rigidly divided by class than continental society, a nobility less threatened by the emergence of royal power, and not so concerned (or so able) to define itself as separate from humanity at large. The conflict between Henry II and his own heir, Henry the Younger, illustrates the differences between England and France in this period. The young Henry died at Martel in 1183, during his second rebellion against King Henry. While he lived he was the darling of northwest France's nobility, who scorned England as a dull place for gentleman farmers where tournaments were forbidden:

en Engleterre . . .
 . . . il n'i aveit nul bon sejour
 Se ce n'esteit a vavasor
 Ou a gent qui d'esrer n'ont cure,
 Mais ki volt mettre peine & cure
 En esrer ne en tornier
 Si le soleit l'om enveier
 En Brutaigne ou en Normandie
 Por hanter la chevalerie.¹⁷

There was no good to dwelling in England except for the gentle landholders and those who cared nothing for errantry; but whoever wanted to excel in errantry and tourneying used to be sent off to Brittany or Normandy in order to practice chivalry.

The younger Henry was an inspiration to the continental cult of chivalry, but also its victim. To maintain the extravagant largesse that followers such as Bertran de Born lauded as noble, Henry went so far as to make war on his father. In war as in his largesse he was encouraged by those who did not want to see Henry II's tight con-

17. *Guillaume le Maréchal*, ed. Meyer, lines 1527, 1537-44; on the *vavasor*, see Coss, "Social Terminology."

trol extended from England into France. Troubadours celebrated young Henry's aggression and his enrichment of small nobles, and greater nobles supported his frivolities and his rebellions insofar as they confounded Henry II's desire to impose "Angevin standards of law and order."¹⁸

Henry II, who was in closer contact with Anglo-Norman society than the rest of his family, was apparently uninterested in courtly fashion.¹⁹ Walter Map's court commentary, *De Nugis Curialium*, contains only one story that might be associated with a lay and mentions nothing of courtly performances or literature in the daily life of the Anglo-Angevin court. Henry seems to have taken a political interest in Arthurian relics and history when they could justify his kingship or win prestige from the Capetian court.²⁰ But his zealous crusade to extend royal power over the barony could hardly endorse the *rois fainéants* of romance, Marc and Arthur, or approve the romances' images of knightly self-determination. He was the England to Henry the Younger's France, the more matured and settled kingdom confronting the rebellious turbulence of an adolescent continent.

From this historical perspective the French romances would have been only slightly more congenial to the insular barony than to Henry II. The crisis gripping the French aristocracy in the later twelfth century as Capetian and Angevin control began to tighten was past history in England, where royal power had been firmly entrenched since the Conquest. Insular audiences, aware that this particular struggle had long since been lost to the king, would have cast a somewhat jaundiced eye on the idealization of that struggle in Old French romances—whether they interpreted the romances as attempts to validate aristocratic claims to power or as attempts to reconcile aristocracy to a new ideal of peaceful order and self-

18. Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 577-93 (quote at p. 579); Moore, *Young King; Guillaume le Maréchal*, lines 2637-41, 5051-68.

19. Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 208, 360, 629; Bezzola, *Littérature courtoise*, part 3, pp. 13-20. But Schmolke-Hasselmann makes a case for the Angevin or Anglo-French appeal of Arthurian romances (legitimation of rule, glorification of a legendary king rivaling Charlemagne); see *Arthurische Versroman* and "Henry II Plantagenêt."

20. *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. James; the story of Sadius and Galo, 3.2, is reminiscent of the *Lai del Desiré* or Marie's *Lanval*. Like *Lanval*, *Desiré* is not Anglo-Norman in dialect. On Arthurian relics, see Fletcher, *Arthurian Material*, pp. 191-92; R. S. Loomis, "Tristram," p. 29. Political motives may have inspired some historical writing on Arthur, e.g., Rickard, *Britain in Medieval French Literature*, pp. 117-20; Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, pp. 49-114.

control. The Anglo-Norman barony, accustomed to royal systematization and to litigation as a means of protecting their families' interests, would have been disposed to dismiss romantic claims for the boundless rewards of individual responsibility and the ineffable joys of morally informed prowess. The skepticism of Thomas and Hue on these points is consonant with the peculiarities of England's situation in the twelfth century.

The early insular poets react to courtly conventions critically and even negatively, but later insular poets gradually develop alternate models of love and chivalry that are more in touch with romance's insular situation. Thus while Hue and Thomas find a troubling and preoccupying disjunction between romance ideals and their assessments of plausible reality, the later poets cheerfully assert a rapprochement of the plausible and the ideal. In part, the ideal was revised; in part, behavior was. What seemed a great gulf between literary model and contemporary practice in the twelfth century was no longer so great by the fourteenth.

In its presentation of ceremony, setting, and behavior, early courtly literature does not reflect but rather transforms noble practice. Courts in England, particularly, did not much resemble those of romance.²¹ In this period tournaments were lethal melees for profit, outlawed where possible by church and state. Yet by the fourteenth century courtiers frequently composed love poems and engaged in such public formalizations of love as the parties of Leaf and Flower (Philippa of Lancaster seems to have been a Flower; Deschamps switched his allegiance from Flower to Leaf; Chaucer refused to take sides).²² Likewise, the tournament changed in these centuries from "a graveyard of good fighters and a meeting-place for rebels" to a carefully controlled "round table" that was "made the occasion of much fantastic pageantry" drawn from romance.²³ Earlier romance poets invented glorious images that represented noble behavior in strictly imaginative terms, but later poets saw those images realized in actual practice—"a curious illustration of

21. See nn. 6 and 24, and Benton, "Clio and Venus"; Remy, "'Cours d'amour'"; Duby, *Medieval Marriage*, pp. 1–22, 83–110; Press, "Precocious Courtesy," pp. 269–70. The Angevin courts outside England were more sophisticated (Lejeune, "Rôle littéraire de la famille d'Aliénor").

22. Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 109–11; *Oeuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, ed. Queux de Saint-Hilaire, IV, 260, 262; Kittredge, "Chaucer"; *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Robinson, *The Legend of Good Women*, F 68–72 and G 61–78.

23. Barber, *Knight and Chivalry*, p. 291; Cline, "Tournaments," p. 206; McKisack, *Fourteenth Century*, p. 250.

Oscar Wilde's famous paradox that 'Literature always anticipates Life,' and that 'Life merely holds up the mirror to Art.'"²⁴

The gap that the earlier poets, Thomas of Britain and Hue de Rotelande, perceive between literature and life is the greater for their double detachment from centers of courtly fashion: England's situation differed from those French ones that courtly romances addressed, and both Anglo-Norman poets seem to have written outside even the continentally oriented Angevin royal courts. Nor was there a strong lyric strain in twelfth-century Anglo-Norman poetry that might have supported the development of an insular courtly ethic. Because Thomas and Hue received continental romance stripped of some of its relevance, they turned its structures to new uses. They take the convention's very inappropriateness as raw material and build their poetic arguments in the space between the framework of received ideals and the substance of social conduct. Their approach to ideal and practice is necessarily indirect, since they can only represent aspiration and its failure through poetry's established verbal resources. Hue interrupts his letter-perfect pastiche of romance topoi in a voice that echoes the fabliaux; Thomas balances poetic traditions of *fine amor* against assessments of human nature that recall clerical writing. The poet works in verbal forms, but poetry's concerns are not thereby exclusively aesthetic. In questioning literary models of lovers' behavior, the insular poets simultaneously question the genre's relationship to personal and social experience in the world.

Thomas and Hue write in an Anglo-Norman of few dialectal peculiarities,²⁵ but Hue articulates his social detachment openly. Writing from a thoroughly provincial setting on the Welsh border, he

24. R. S. Loomis, "Imitations," p. 79. Benton is similarly moved to quotation when noting that "courts of love apparently did exist by the fifteenth century. As Valéry put it, *Imaginer, c'est se souvenir de ce qui va être*" ("Collaborative Approaches," p. 49).

25. Thomas, *Tristan*, ed. Wind; on dialect see pp. 17–23. A translation by A. T. Hatto is published in Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*. Hue de Roteland, *Ipomedon*, ed. Holden; on dialect see pp. 25–35: "Nous tenons ici la preuve que, porté à son niveau le plus élevé, l'anglo-normand se distinguait à peine du français cultivé utilisé dans l'ouest de la France à la même époque" (p. 35).

Bouchard argues in "Nonexistence of Thomas" that the extant fragments of *Tristan*, except for MS C, represent a thirteenth-century poem not by Thomas; but Woledge and Short, "Manuscripts," reconfirm the twelfth-century date of MS Sneyd. Nor should Bouchard doubt Thomas's authorship of the extant fragments merely because later poets do not follow the fragments closely (see n. 38).

comments on local affairs, addresses *Protheselaus* to the local baron Gilbert FitzBaderon,²⁶ and in *Ipomedon* takes a tone of jocular familiarity with his Herefordshire neighbors. Hue's evident devotion to Credenhill and Herefordshire establishes his isolation from even the English royal court, to a degree consonant with his poetry's unconventionality. In contrast, many critics propose that Thomas's *Tristan* was written for the Angevin court, even specifically for Eleanor of Aquitaine. But it is unlikely that *Tristan* was written for this court.

Some critics find analogies between situations in *Tristan* and those of the royal family, and others argue that the Angevins' political use of Arthuriana makes their court a likely milieu for Thomas's romance. One passage in the extant fragments, Thomas's praise of London as a great trading port (D 1379–91), could be suitable flattery in a court work.²⁷ However, attributing the genesis of romances to specific political occasions is problematic,²⁸ and the proposed analogies are weak arguments indeed: Henry II would hardly have approved his equation to either a cuckolded king or an outcast lover, and Thomas's severity toward Isolt could not have been calculated to praise Eleanor's change of husbands.²⁹ Thomas's description of London suggests he wrote for an insular public but does not restrict his work to Henry's or Eleanor's patronage. A poet resident in England long enough to have acquired traits of Anglo-Norman dialect could obviously have visited London's harbor, heard Arthurian stories, and seen Henry's arms without being attached to the royal court.³⁰

The situation of the royal family further undermines the patronage hypothesis. Although Henry II's political program involved

26. *Protheselaus*, ed. Kluckow, lines 12698–741. Hue's second romance will not be considered here since it is less concerned with love than *Ipomedon* and has no ME descendant.

27. E.g., R. S. Loomis, "Tristram"; Wind, edition, pp. 13, 16–17; Lejeune, "Rôle littéraire de la famille d'Aliénor," p. 334; Schirmer, *Patronat*, pp. 19–20. Tristan's coat of arms is not necessarily Henry's (Gay, "Heraldry").

28. For theories connecting political occasions to courtly romance, see Fourrier, *Courant réaliste*, pp. 22–27; Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Narrative Genres"; Köhler, "Quelques observations," pp. 28–30. Such connections are widely rejected, however: see "Quelques observations," Discussion, pp. 31–36 for opinions of Jean Frappier, Aurelio Roncaglia, and Karl Ferdinand Werner.

29. See, e.g., Fourrier, *Courant réaliste*, pp. 43, 45, 54, 64, 95–98; a full argument against royal patronage of *Tristan* is Harris, "Cave of Lovers," pp. 483–500.

30. Many scholars argue for restraint when attributing patronage to Henry and especially to Eleanor: e.g., Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine," pp. 18–19; Richardson, "Letters and Charters"; Broich, *Patronat*, pp. 34–36; Haskins, "Henry II."

him closely in English affairs, his family's interests and many of his own were strongly continental. This royal family was not Anglo-Norman. At his coronation in 1154 Henry held not only the traditional Anglo-Norman lands of England and Normandy, which he claimed through his mother, but Anjou, Maine, and Touraine as well. Through his marriage to Eleanor he had acquired Aquitaine, Poitou, and Auvergne. To control these vast holdings the ruling family was obliged to expend far more energy and attention outside England than had the Anglo-Norman rulers. No longer part of a close-knit Anglo-Norman empire, England now had one of "five quite separate provincial administrations" in a "loose confederation of client states."³¹ The ruling family was culturally and often physically separated from Anglo-Norman society. Henry II did spend nearly half his reign in England, but in the first twenty years of her marriage to him Eleanor paid just six visits to the island, only two of which were longer than a year (1157–58 and 1163–64).³²

The Angevin family seems to have considered England less cultured and less interesting than its continental holdings. When Eleanor was imprisoned in England after her unsuccessful revolt against Henry in 1173, a sympathizer addressed her: "Plange cum rege Hierosolymitano [Ps. 120:5] et dic: Heu mihi! quia incolatus meus prolongatus est, habitavi cum gente ignota et inculta!" [Weep with the king of Jerusalem and say: Woe is me! for my sojourn is prolonged; I have lived among an obscure and uncultured people!].³³ It was under Angevin rule that Anglo-Norman speech and literature began to be ridiculed on the continent and that continental writers resident in England made a point of their noninsular origins.³⁴ The insular traits in Thomas's language, together with his work's substantial differences from Old French romance and the

31. Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 228, 230 (and "Federal Government," pp. 559–93); see also Intro., nn. 2–3.

32. Lejeune, "Rôle littéraire d'Aliénor," pp. 20–21, 50–57. Similarly, Richard patronized continental writers, tried his hand at Provençal poetry, and spent less than six months of his nine-year reign in England: see Appleby, *England Without Richard*; and Lejeune, "Rôle littéraire de la famille d'Aliénor," pp. 320–22.

33. Continuer of Richard le Poitevin, quoted by Labande, "Aliénor d'Aquitaine," pp. 213–14. On the Angevins' lesser interest in England, see Bossuad, "Institutions," pp. 35–36; and Poole, *Domesday Book*, p. 318. On England's isolation from the centers of love poetry, see Labande, "Aliénor d'Aquitaine," p. 208; Marc Bloch agrees that the social fashion of chivalry flourished only on the continent (*Société féodale*, II, 36–37).

34. Rickard, *Britain in Medieval French Literature*, pp. 163–205; see Intro., nn.

Angevin family's continental orientation, argue that his *Tristan's* origins lie outside the royal court.

Although we know much more about Henry II's court than about other centers of culture in England, it is clear that various cultural milieus did exist. Hereford was one center of learning,³⁵ and Hue de Rotelande writes a romance of great wit and elegance from this provincial setting. Sylvia Harris argues that Thomas composed *Tristan* "within the Earldom of Gloucester rather than at any of the courts of Henry II in England."³⁶ Although Thomas may have drawn some material from works composed for the Angevin court, and Hue may have owed his familiarity with romance motifs to the continental works introduced into England during Angevin rule, both poets write strongly against the grain of convention. Their extraordinary works establish a lineage of romances that measure literary models of love and chivalry against changing social practice in England.

Tristan: Love and Suffering

Thomas and Hue are so different in poetic temperament and approach that their romances sometimes read like opposites. Thomas argues, for example, that Tristan's desire to marry the second Isolt is shamefully false, even though the hero is far from his beloved, despairing of her love, and without any prospect of living near her again. For Thomas Tristan's desire exemplifies the inconstancy of humanity in general: "trop par aiment novelerie / Homes et femmes ensement" [both men and women love novelty too well] (Sn, 292-93).³⁷ Ipomedon similarly finds himself in a land far from his beloved, where a foreign queen gives him goodnight kisses and desires to do more. But when Ipomedon ignores her advances, Hue laughs that he himself, or better his friend Hugh de Hungrie

35. Russell, "Hereford and Arabic Science in England about 1175-1200," in *Twelfth Century Studies*, pp. 142-54 (rpt. from *Isis*, 18 [1932], 14-25); Orme, *Education in the West of England*, gives a general picture of well-developed educational systems in the region.

36. "Cave of Lovers," p. 498. Hunt argues in "Thomas' *Tristan*" that Thomas's alienation from conventional courtly literature may reflect opposition to Henry's quest for power and his relations with Eleanor.

37. The eight extant fragments of Thomas's *Tristan* are abbreviated as follows: Cambridge (C), first and second Sneyd (Sn₁, Sn₂), first and second Turin (T₁, T₂), first and second Strsburg (Str₁, Str₂), and Douce (D).

(516-22), would have known how to handle that queen! While Thomas comments seriously and even ardently on the social and moral issues raised in his story, Hue treats those issues mockingly, sometimes seeming to parody Thomas's very text. Yet the two poets are alike in one respect: both are concerned above all with the distance separating principles of love and chivalry from less idealizing images of behavior.

In *Tristan* the disjunction between flawed and ideal behavior at first seems expressed in the opposition between the received, legendary *conte* and the artful, idealizing *conjointure*. Thomas speaks directly of the interacting forces of story and interpretation in two important passages on his compositional method. Analyzing the first of these passages, Douglas Kelly has shown that Thomas's guiding principle in handling inherited story material is to impose a logic determined by his understanding of the legend (D 835-40): the poet chooses among traditional episodes ("ne vol pas trop en uni dire") and gives the legend his own kind of coherence ("l'uni par mes vers").³⁸ Thomas declares his double allegiance to the legend and to his interpretation but does not discuss the nature of that interpretation. At the end of the poem, however, Thomas again addresses his audience and clarifies his intention in retelling this story:

[Le] milz ai dit a mun poeir,
[E dit ai] tute la verur,
[Si cum] jo pramis al primur.
E diz e vers i ai retrait:
Pur essample issi ai fait
Pur l'estorie embelir,
Que as amanz deive plaisir.
(Sn, 827-33)

I have spoken the best I could, and as I promised at the beginning, I have told the whole truth. I made a verse composition of it: this I did as an example, to embellish the story in such a way that it might please lovers.

Embellishing the story and directing it to lovers do not amount to "tute la verur" of *Tristan*: the legend has in addition its own pat-

38. "Lords, this story is very diversely told, and for this reason I have made it coherent in my verses, and tell as much of it as is right, and leave the rest aside. I do not wish to say too much in a unified work." In "En uni dire" Kelly discusses this passage in relation to numerous episodes altered or omitted by Thomas.

terns that have been truthfully exposed. Telling "the whole truth" is a separate compositional activity of the poet, his adherence to the received "estorie" as opposed to his imposition of the significance that makes the work exemplary. This opposition holds the central challenge to Thomas's art. His "essample" for lovers is not simply a negative one,³⁹ yet his material is only partly suited to the elaboration of a love that could be called *fine*—refined, intense, elevating.

The traditional Tristan episodes show no growth in the social or emotional lives of the characters that might have given Thomas's romance its dynamic. In many twelfth-century romances, love grows through the heroes' experience of noble life, as they discover ways to integrate their loving desire and their station in the world. The Tristan legend is not structured in this way: its love is permanent and unchanging; its events display unending conflict between love and society.⁴⁰

To some extent Thomas can accommodate his material to conventional patterns. Certain episodes become knightly adventures; inexplicable marvels are replaced with psychological motivations; scenes of court society are decked out in fashionable details of luxury, gentle conversation, and chivalrous amusements.⁴¹ Thomas's attention to richness of style, especially his endowment of particular words with profound significance and his long *question d'amor* appealing to the judgment of his audience of lovers, ally him to Provençal and Old French poets of love.⁴² These modifications demonstrate Thomas's interest in conventional love poetry, but they are relatively superficial gestures that do not touch the fundamental difficulties of the story: Tristan and Isolt cannot be reconciled with

39. In arguing that *Tristan* is a "negative exemplum," Hunt takes *fine amor* to be a proscriptive term that cannot conceivably label a love encompassing jealousy, equality between lovers, physicality, or death. But there is strong evidence that the term *fine amor*, like the whole tradition of fictions of ideal love, was not proscriptive.

40. Thomas's work is closer to that of Marie de France in this respect (as in its geographic origin) than to courtly norms: on these see Frappier, "Conceptions courtoises," pp. 145–46; Hanning, "Social Significance." Frappier surveyed and analyzed work on the Tristan legend in "Structure et sens"; postdating Frappier's essay is Eisner's *Tristan Legend*. Beroul accepts the legend's permanent bond of love differently from Thomas, by limiting the duration of the potion's effect and yet continuing the lovers' clandestine relationship after their return to court from the forest.

41. E.g., Sn, 377–84, 781–885; T, 195–256; Str, 25–68; D 797–805; see also Wind, "Elements courtois."

42. T, 71–183, D 1195–205; see also Frappier, "Structure et sens"; Wind, "Elements courtois"; Lazar, *Amour courtois*, p. 166.

Marc; Tristan must marry in exile; the love of Tristan and Isolt must end in death. Repugnant behavior—subterfuge, murder, betrayal, faithlessness—suffuses this material. The lovers' behavior resists idealizing treatment, yet their legendary devotion to each other is striking in the sacrifices it induces, the power it holds over life and death, and the stretch of its influence over decades of the heroes' lives. This love invites poetic idealization. Thomas seeks to synthesize these two elements from the story, fallibility and superlative love, by forging a *fine amor* that recognizes and encompasses imperfection.

However Thomas may have dealt with his material in the lost portion of his text,⁴³ the extant fragments reveal a solution that he locates in the heroes' fatal love. The fragments begin with Marc's discovery of the sleeping lovers and Tristan's departure for exile, where he decides in a long monologue to marry Isolt of Brittany. Then, refusing to consummate the marriage, he spends secret hours in a cave where statues of Isolt and her maid Brangien make a shrine to love. To justify his love to his wife's brother Kaherdin, Tristan takes him secretly to England, where Brangien accepts Kaherdin as her lover. But the two men are slandered, leading Brangien to condemn Isolt, and Tristan suffers deeply before all are reconciled. In Brittany he receives a poisoned wound, sends for Queen Isolt to cure him, but dies when his vengeful wife lies that she has not come. Queen Isolt dies on his body.

In order to make these events more than just reversals and confusions afflicting a uniform devotion, Thomas first turns from the objective realm of events to the subjective, interior realm of thought and feeling. Here he builds a second plot line, parallel to the external structure of episodes. Then, through extended rhetorical analysis, he creates both a progressive development within the emotions of his lovers and a coherent connection between this inner world of significance and the external world of the inherited story material. Thomas becomes a rhetorician of the heart, building in his language a structure that links extremes of feeling and action.

His style is better suited to discussion and debate than to action and external description. He refuses the dramatic possibilities

43. I discuss only the surviving fragments of Thomas's text, in the conviction that reconstructions, including Bedier's, cannot be relied upon. See Gunnlaugsdóttir, *Tristan en el norte*; Cormier, "Roman de Tristan"; Shoaf, "Thomas' Tristan."

of allegorized interior monologue, of physical gesture that might heighten emotive appeal, even of the personification of *amor* into a force or a philosophy independent of the lovers' own sentiments.⁴⁴ The language of argument dominates the poem. Abstract terms, learned syntax, and syllogistic reasoning contribute to a general impression of detachment, of intellectual analysis. Multiple repetitions give almost pedantic emphasis to problems and conclusions. Thomas's *sententiae* are general observations, often clerical in origin, never proverbial in tone; his descriptions and explanations are technical, scrupulously ordered, and probing rather than visual or emotive.⁴⁵

However rigorous Thomas's rhetoric may seem to modern eyes, it is eminently suited to the exposition of a love whose meaning lies in its own dialectic of pain against pleasure, asceticism against passion, jealous doubt against fanatical assurance. This is how the poet makes love the dramatic subject of the Tristan story—not through love's development or its testing, because it is born full-blown and unchangeable, but through an inner dynamic of perpetual conflict between joy and sorrow.

Tristan's decision to marry Isolt of Brittany (Sn, 1–648) illustrates how Thomas draws from his material a particular conception of *veraie amor*. The poet attributes a double motive to Tristan's act of marriage: his sexual need and his jealous doubt that Queen Isolt still loves him. The sexual pressure Tristan feels is reflected in the great variety of terms he applies to satisfaction—*fait, assembler, delit, naturel fait, ovre, faisance* (Sn, 165, 175, 515, 518, 523, 525)—but its source is his very love for Isolt as she is weakly mirrored in Isolt of Brittany, who shares her name and her beauty. These reflected traits and the maiden's desire for Tristan, echoing the queen's love, intensify unbearably Tristan's love-longing (Sn, 197–204, 28–34) and lead him to attempt to reduce his pain by marrying Queen Isolt's shadow. Thus his sexual motive for marrying is a function of his love for Queen Isolt; and only the marriage itself is "encontre

44. On conventional romance gestures (avoided by Thomas) see Lommatzsch, "Trauer und Schmerz"; on the widespread convention of allegorizing or personifying love see Frappier, "D'amors," and Muscatine, "Psychological Allegory."

45. I discuss Thomas's rhetorical procedure more fully in [Crane] Dannenbaum, "Doubling." On rhetorical devices see Bertolucci Pizzorusso, "Retorica"; see also the passages of general and abstract *sententiae*, Sn, 755–64, D 1323–35. Thomas's love of analysis has been called "immodéré," "absurde," "pénible," "exagéré," "artificiel," "précieux" by Jodogne, "Amour de Tristan," p. 106; Lazar, *Amour courtois*, pp. 169–70; and Pauphilet, *Legs*, pp. 136–37.

amur" [against love], a kind of vengeance on his own love-suffering (Sn, 121–22, 160–64, 331–35). Sexual passion is necessary to love: "'ço est que plus alie / En amor amant e amie'" ["that is what most unites a lover and his friend in love"] (Sn, 539–40).

Tristan's longing for Queen Isolt would hardly result in marriage but for his second motive, his belief that the queen has forgotten him. For Thomas jealousy is as constant and integral to love as sexual passion. Both lovers experience jealous doubt in other situations (T, 6–24, 165; D 86–107, 1680–87), and Thomas argues that it is a natural feature of superlative love (T, 51–70). But the strong concentration of rhetorical devices in the argument preceding Tristan's marriage—*expolitio, adnominatio, correctio, sententia, dubitatio, ratiocinatio*⁴⁶—suggests the particular difficulty that Thomas finds in this issue. Jealous doubt and the base marriage to which it leads challenge the ideal status of love in the poem. Nonetheless, that Thomas is able to motivate the marriage to Isolt of Brittany by the double intensity of Tristan's desire for and jealousy of Queen Isolt is a victory for the poet's concept of the legend: the marriage becomes not a forgetful abandonment of love, but a result of love's overwhelming power. In order to accomplish this both sexual need and jealous doubt must be accepted as features of *fine amor*, and Thomas accepts them wholeheartedly.

This incorporation of unattractive emotions into ideal love is consistent with other aspects of Thomas's treatment of the legend. Critics often stress that his approach throughout is rational, historicizing, and attentive to human behavior.⁴⁷ His artistic commitment to the rational and the plausible denies that love could be essentially inhuman—perfectly generous or completely fleshless. Indeed, the poet discovers in his lovers' behavior the truth that they (and all of us) are weak, changeable, pleasure-seeking; the creatures of "novelerie" and "errance" (Sn, 233–304, 345–52; T, 1–70).

Much in the legend is treated in terms of imperfection. Thomas acknowledges the conflicts between the heroes' love and social or moral obligations. Tristan's exile represents an isolation from society that both lovers experience: they must live far from their kin

46. Bertolucci Pizzorusso, "Retorica," pp. 41–42.

47. Fourier, *Courant réaliste*, pp. 22–109; Vârvaro, "Romanzi di Tristano," pp. 1063, 1068. Le Gentil writes of Thomas: "Réaliste et psychologue, il a le souci de rester en contact avec la vie et de scruter les consciences": ("Légende de Tristan," p. 128); Frappier similarly argues that Thomas seeks to make *raison* "signifier comme le verbe de la *fine amor*" ("Raison," p. 176).

and in conflict with their spouses (D 86–92, 102–3, 1124–32). They recognize the legal injustices their spouses endure on their account, Marc by his wife's adultery and Isolt of Brittany by her husband's failure to consummate their marriage (Sn, 165–70, 413–16, 425–28). At times this recognition is colored with heartfelt guilt.⁴⁸ Under the great stress of these felt wrongs, the lovers sometimes regret their love or feel anger and despair over it (Sn, 39–46, 886–88; T, 5–32; D 99–101, 588–90, 604–14).

It can be argued that the tensions between love's demands and all others are merely stages in dialectic processes reemphasizing the supremacy of love.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, in Thomas's inner psychological drama, the lovers' moments of miserable guilt, their fits of anger, their jealousies, doubts, and ill-directed passions challenge ideal love with the ordinary vagaries of living souls. In response Thomas makes a radical attempt to reconcile ideal love with human frailty.⁵⁰ The bridge he builds between them is one of penance, suffering, and death, a bridge perfectly suited to his own sober morality and to the demands of the story material.

Many stories of love have tragic circumstances, but few celebrate a love that itself contains and embraces death. Thomas incorporates this element of the Tristan legend into his version of *fine amor* by extending the idea of ultimate fatality to a corollary idea of temporal suffering in love. A love both painful and fatal is better suited to conveying Thomas's interest in problematic weakness than the *fine amor* of most courtly romances, which tends to remain an optimistic, delicate conception of harmonious existence, "l'affirmation de la volonté, du désir de vivre en beauté; . . . l'acquiescement de l'âme au bonheur."⁵¹ Even the Norman *Tristan* of Beroul denies that

48. Isolt accepts Brangien's accusation that in continuing to love Tristan after her judicial oath she is "Feimentie e parjuree" [oath-breaking and perjured] (D 233–39, 305–6). Tristan fears that if he fails to consummate his marriage, his fault will be moral as well as social: "De ses parenz, des altres tuiz / Haïz e huniz en sereie, / E envers Deu me mesfreie" ["I would be hated and shamed by her relatives and all others and would do wrong before God"] (Sn, 500–502, cf. 525–34).

49. See Frappier, "Structure et sens," pp. 451–54; but cf. Le Gentil, "Mariage de Tristan"; Ferrante, *Love and Honor*.

50. That is, Thomas does not simply stand back and let the legend play havoc with *fine amor*, the accusation of Cazenave, *Philtre*, p. 161; and Bédier, ed., *Tristan par Thomas*, II, 50–52, 318. Nor does he show a lack of concern for morality, as Payen accuses ("Lancelot contre Tristan," esp. p. 622). For Thomas's moral observations on narrative events, see Sn, 233–304, 345–52, 753–80; D 1323–35; also Vitz, "Desire," pp. 225–34.

51. Lot-Borodine, *Amour profane*, p. 31 (her italics).

the lovers suffer; their love easily erases the pain of exile and hardship:

Aspre vie meinent et dure;
Tant s'entraiment de bone amor,
L'un por l'autre ne sent dolor.⁵²

They lead a hard and bitter life, but they love together with such a true love that each feels no pain because of the other.

In contrast Thomas's *Tristan* is a deeply serious, even sorrowful presentation of love's cruelties as well as its joys. Pain is a mortal condition. As such it expresses for Thomas both the humanity of its victims and their desire to transcend themselves through suffering.

The contexts of the terms for love in *Tristan*, "grant amur," "ferm amur," "amur fine e veraie," "fine amur" (D 721, 1152, 1219, 1679), all picture a love that can tolerate great sorrow or pain. In contrast Tristan's act of marriage opposes "fin'amur" (Sn, 319, 329), because it is an attempt to escape or resist love's pains (Sn, 331–35). When Isolt acts as a "veire amie" (D 756, Sn, 807) she accepts particularly great sacrifices, self-mortification and death. Pain is an inextricable part of the love experience,⁵³ and as the romance progresses pain becomes more important to love than pleasure.

A vast vocabulary of affliction records this development in the love affair: *tristur, peine, angoisse, travail, ahan, dolor, turment, ennui, pesance, destreit, mesaise, grevance*. Adjectives and verbs translate quiet, undemonstrative affliction: *chaitif, pensif, deshaité, soi doloir, souffrir, pleurer, plaindre, suspirer*.⁵⁴ This vocabulary suggests emotional states that are not pathetic or dramatic but private and almost devotional: they are states of love's refinement. Through this process Thomas reconciles the truth of his ideal to the fact of human

52. *Tristan*, ed. Ewert, lines 1364–66, further emphasized at lines 1649–55, 1783–87.

53. More than half the lines ending in *dolor* are coupled with lines ending in *amor*, a connection sustained through the poem's final couplet. When Kaherdin admonishes Isolt "'Ore vus membre des granz amurs / E des peines e des dolurs / Qu'entre vus dous avez suffert'" ["Now remember the great love and the troubles and sorrows that the two of you have suffered together"] (D 1465–67), the verb of suffering applies equally to love and to pains and sorrows. Isolt similarly animates all the joys and sorrows of love with the single verb *plaindre* (Sn, 794–97).

54. Approximate equivalents for these terms are: sadness, suffering, anguish, toil, travail, pain, torment, trouble, affliction, difficulty, distress, grief; unhappy, pensive, disheartened; to lament, suffer, weep, complain, sigh. This vocabulary is collected and discussed by Johnson, "Dolor," pp. 546–54; see also Lavis, *Affectivité*.

weakness. Suffering becomes an ascetic discipline, the reverse face of love's pleasure. For the fault of his marriage, Tristan imposes upon himself the "penitance" of chaste contact with his wife, hoping that its double pain will permit Queen Isolt to pardon him (Sn, 570–88). When she comes to understand his state, Isolt "Partir volt a la penitance" [wishes to share the penance] (D 746): she foregoes many pleasures and wears an ascetic's leather corselet beneath her clothes (D 741–71). The religious terminology, the corselet, the physical torment on which the actions turn, and the greater spiritual happiness to which the lovers aspire associate their discipline of suffering to religious purification.⁵⁵ The devotional quality of the lovers' penances is further suggested by the strict secrecy with which they are performed. Through these penances Thomas unfolds his comprehensive *fine amor* into its exalting and debasing movements, and shows these movements achieving a higher plane of balance. "Partir volt" is repeated three times in presenting Isolt's action (D 746, 748, 751): the lovers' secret sharing of penance forms a bond of communication between them during their long separations. At this stage their love, by mortifying its weaknesses, begins to resist the physical in anticipation of its final state. Temporal suffering unites human nature to ideal love, but death is the form the fully realized union takes.

In Thomas's version of the Tristan story love and death are inextricable because Tristan and Isolt are unable to exist outside their relationship. Whether as cause or only by metonymy, the love drink gives form to their fatal interdependence as well as their devotion: "El beivre fud la nostre mort, . . . / A nostre mort l'avum beü" ["Our death was in that drink, . . . to our death we drank it"] (D 1223, 1226).⁵⁶ Waiting for Isolt, Tristan complains that without her he cannot survive and that he continues to live only in hope of her arrival (D 1544–53). Just as waiting for her keeps him alive, believing she will not come kills him: "Quant a moi ne vomez venir, / Pur vostre amur m'estuet murrir" ["Since you do not wish to come to me, I must die for love of you"] (D 1761–62). Isolt's knowledge of healing arts is only an external manifestation of her vital role in

55. The Hall of Statues provides an earlier context for Tristan's demonstrations of devotion (perhaps modeled on devotions at a saint's shrine) and for his willing submission to the pain of love (see Ferrante, *Love and Honor*, pp. 82–83).

56. See also D 1219–26, 1440; T, 122; Sn, 805; Bedier, ed., I, 258 (Gottfried quotes two lines probably from Thomas, "Isolt ma drue, Isolt m'amie, / En vus ma mort, en vus ma vie").

love; Tristan's physical ailment is subsumed within his spiritual need for her presence.

How perfect a resolution does this love reach in death, since even their great suffering, their intense passion, and their awe-inspiring devotion cannot keep the lovers from dying, indeed from dying through their own incapacity? The two sails of the legend, one black and one white, symbolize for Thomas not so much the two possible answers of Queen Isolt as the double qualities of doubt and faith in Tristan's love that allow him to believe his wife's lie. There is throughout the fragments a sense of strain, of a great gap to be bridged between the lovers' humanity and their impulse toward perfect love. One example is the ironic episode of Tristan's death wound, in which Tristan le Nain asks the aid of "Tristan l'Amerus" (D 927) in rescuing his *bele amie* from seven giants. When Tristan accepts the adventure but asks for a delay in setting forth, Tristan le Nain denies that so hesitant a reply could come from the real Tristan: "Jo sai que, si Tristran fuissét, / La dolor qu'ai sentissét" ["I know that if you were Tristan, you would feel my suffering"] (D 979–80). Not only is pain the essential mark of love, but Tristan, already legendary in stature, is the one lover who above all others lives that truth. Tristan's apparent insensitivity to sorrow therefore negates his very identity, as he himself realizes: "Par grant reisun mustré l'avez / Que jo dei aler ove vus, / Quant jo sui Tristran le Amerus" ["You have shown most reasonably that I must go with you, since I am Tristan the Amorous"] (D 1012–14).⁵⁷

As Tristan loses or only uneasily keeps contact with his epithet "l'Amerus," Thomas strains to hold the legend and his ideal of love together. Often his voice is his only recourse and only his words seem to argue, analyze, or gloss great love and natural frailty into harmony. The poet's own struggle is one source of the romance's power: "Cette insécurité latente, loin de nuire au texte de Thomas, l'enrichit au contraire de résonances humaines plus vraies et plus profondes."⁵⁸ Thomas does not find transcendence in the lovers'

57. Tristan's own myth similarly outstrips his present self in the *Folie Tristan d'Oxford* (ed. Hoepffner), where the hero's extended narration of his past fails to identify him. In this *lai*, even when Tristan is alone with Isolt and desires genuinely to achieve recognition through his stories, she refuses to believe that he is "Tristran l'Amerus" (712) until he dispenses with the past and uses only his voice and body to convince her. See the fine discussion of Haidu, "Folie Tristan."

58. Le Gentil, "Interpretation," p. 179; see also Le Gentil, "Epilogue." Thomas's commitment to a love that is obviously troubled seems to inform the AN *Donnei des amants* (ca. 1180), ed. Paris. In this dialogue two lovers compare each other to Tristan

story, but he insists on its "verur" and "confort" (Sn, 828, 836). If the lovers' death is not the apotheosis of perfect love, it does mark the point at which fallible romantic love finds its absolute achievement. Tristan and Isolt are by this episode so entirely focused on each other, so perfectly free of impulses other than toward union in love, that the element of frail mortality in their love frees them from mortality itself.

During the last hours of their separation, Tristan's anguish is such that "A poi que del desir ne muert" [he nearly dies of his desire] (D 1738), echoing the anguish of Isolt who "A poi ne muert de sun desir" (D 1728). Their communion in suffering now expands to a final communion in death, as both die by choice, unable to tolerate their isolation from each other.⁵⁹ Isolt's last words declare that her death is an act of *veraie amor*—"jo frai cum veraie amie: / Pur vos voil murir ensement" ["I will behave like a true lover: I want to die likewise for you"] (Sn, 807–8). Their final embrace unites physical love to death:

Embrace le, si s'estent,
Baise la buche e la face
E molt estreit a li l'enbrace,
Cors a cors, buche a buche estent,
Sun esprit a itant rent,
E murt dejuste lui issi.

(Sn, 809–14)

She embraces him and stretches herself out, kisses his mouth and face and draws him tightly to her, body to body, mouth to mouth she lies; now she gives up her soul and dies thus next to him.

The sober and even clinical precision of these verses gives great authenticity to a love so intense that Isolt seems physically to draw Tristan's death into herself.

That Thomas considers this version of *fine amor* to be a valid ideal is less clear in the death of the lovers, which is both attractive and frightening, than in the poet's final address to his audience, "As

and Isolt, "Ke deit a essample estre treit" ["who should be taken as an example"] (658, also 430). Yet the example they offer is of suffering and risk so great that the dialogue's lovers are not confident of living up to it. Is the lady willing to risk all for love (404–20)? Is her friend as long-suffering as Tristan, or false like Eneas (663–84)?

59. When Isolt arrives only moments after Tristan's death, she laments that he died because she could not arrive in time, "a tens" (D 1815; Sn, 790, 802, 817). But in fact Tristan died not from the delay but by conscious choice (D 1761–62).

penitens e as amerus, / As emvius, as desirus, / As enveisiez e as purvers" (Sn, 822–24): he writes for those who suffer, those who live in desire of love without possession, and those who wrongly seek only pleasure.⁶⁰ The very variety of lovers addressed, including those who sin against love, completes Thomas's demonstration that "amur fine e veraie" (D 1219) can comprehend human weaknesses and yet transcend them. Thomas insists in his closing address that his heroes are a consolation even for deeply flawed lovers and for those imprisoned in reality who will never achieve so perfect a union as Tristan and Isolt:

Aveir em poissent grant confort,
Encuntre change, encuntre tort,
Encuntre paine, encuntre dolur,
Encuntre tuiz engins d'amur!
(Sn, 836–39)

From this they may take great comfort against changeability, against error, against trouble, against sorrow, against all the vagaries of love!

These changes, wrongs, pains, and vagaries resonate in significance from legend to text to listeners. Retrospectively, these terms recall the external vagaries of fate that opposed the happiness of Tristan and Isolt in legend. With regard to Thomas's interpretation of the legend these terms retrace the lovers' own wrongs that have struggled against love's merits and the pains that have accomplished love's penitential purification. In addition, as Thomas directs these terms prospectively to his listeners' experience, their meaning extends to all sorrows as they oppose lovers' happiness in general. But in this final passage, they are no longer active forces; their power is checked in the face of, "encuntre," love's power to comprehend them. Thomas's *fine amor* now reaches its fullest expression, as it incorporates not simply joy but life's central difficulties—suffering, wrongdoing, mortality. In confronting these forces and subsuming them, the love of Tristan and Isolt reaches the heights of power: it is proof against the very changes, wrongs, pains, and vagaries that it has enclosed.

60. These interpretations of *enveisiez* and *purvers* are worked out by Baumgartner and Wagner, "'Enveisiez.'" Even if the passage is interpreted more strictly, the types enumerated are diverse: in A. T. Hatto's translation, "the sad and the amorous, the jealous and the desirous, the gay and the distraught, and all who will hear these lines" (p. 353).

Ipomedon: Love and Pleasure

While Thomas of Britain commits his poetic energies to bridging the gap between images of ideal love and earthly imperfection, Hue de Rotelande observes the same chasm like a casual sightseer and finds humor in the distance separating the realm of romance from his own Herefordshire. His irreverent, even parodic approach in *Ipomedon* differs from Thomas's serious and committed stance, but like Thomas, Hue contemplates the disparity between certain ideal conceptions of romance and his authorial conviction of human folly. Hue refuses until the last moment to synthesize these contradictory movements, juxtaposing romance conventions to an antagonistic vision of experience throughout his elaborate plot.

The date of Hue's *Ipomedon* accounts in part for its perspective on romance. Thomas's *Tristan*, difficult to date but perhaps quite early (ca. 1160), has the exploratory feel of a generative work. Hue's references to contemporary events place the composition of *Ipomedon* in the 1180s, more than two decades after *Tristan*, by which time the genre had accrued a stock of familiar motifs.⁶¹ Some of Hue's episodes appear to be drawn from the romances of antiquity—*Thèbes*, *Troie*, and *Enéas*—but in part through intermediary romances such as *Partenopeus de Blois*. The three-day tournament could be imitated from *Cligès* but also occurs in other romances; *Ipomedon's* skill at hunting and his disguise as a fool recall *Tristan* and the two *Folies Tristan*.⁶² Like his contemporaries, Hue uses traditional material in self-consciously new ways and takes pains to distinguish his production from the corpus of already successful works. Yet Hue is unique to his century in his profoundly ironic detachment from the very traditions he adopts.

Generally in continental romances of the twelfth century ironic perspectives and distancing laughter coexist with serious treatments of ideals of love and chivalry. Literary historians have traced

61. Legge dates *Tristan* in the 1150s (*Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 49), disputing Fourrier's relatively late dating of 1172–74; the 1150s are also favored by Lejeune ("Rôle littéraire d'Aliénor," pp. 33–35) and by Wind (edition, pp. 14–17). Among the information leading Holden (edition, pp. 7–11) to date *Ipomedon* in the early 1180s are the siege of Rouen (1174), lines 5348–58; and the address to Gilbert Fitz-Baderon (died by 1191) in *Protheselaus*, 12699–741.

62. On *Ipomedon* and romances of antiquity, see Fisher, *Narrative Art*, pp. 69, 72, 76; Carter, "Ipomedon," pp. 239–63; Stengel, [Corrections], pp. 9–10; Kluckow, ed., *Protheselaus*, pp. 19–29; Kölbing, ed., *Hue de Rotelande's Ipomedon in drei englischen Bearbeitungen*, pp. xvi–xxx; Gay, "Ipomédon"; L. H. Loomis, *Mediaeval Romance*, pp. 226–29.

romance's ironic effects from their beginnings in rhetorical theory to their parodic inversion and denial of the genre in the thirteenth century.⁶³ Hue de Rotelande collapses this history by juxtaposing serious treatment and parodic inversion well before the turn of the century. Standing at the border of the genre's territory, Hue can endorse romance's power even as he questions its conventional assumptions.

Ipomedon's plot is remarkable for its familiar, even clichéd quality. *Ipomedon*, prince of Apulia, is attracted to the court of the Duchess of Calabria by its reputation for elegance and by the duchess's reputation for pride: her vow to marry only the best knight in the world has won her the nickname of "la Fiere" (the Proud). During three years of anonymous service in Calabria, *Ipomedon* begins to fall in love with la Fiere, but perceiving this, the lady communicates her displeasure that *Ipomedon* shows no interest at all in chivalric exploits. *Ipomedon* departs immediately, though both young people are now deeply in love. On a brief return home, he learns that he has a lost brother who will recognize a ring given to him by his mother. *Ipomedon* travels widely winning prizes at tournaments until he hears that la Fiere, at the insistence of her barons, will take as husband the victor of a three-day tournament. In order to attend the tournament in secrecy, *Ipomedon* attaches himself to the court of Meleager of Sicily in the role of "dru la reine" (3073), a knight who attends the queen and may kiss her once in the morning and once at night. Under the further cover of hunting parties, *Ipomedon* attends the tournament each day in different armor (white, red, and black) and each day is victorious. He lets la Fiere know who he is through her squire each day but always departs without seeing her.

Rather than accepting the marriage he has won, *Ipomedon* chooses to pursue his life of chivalry, even rejecting his father's crown and the hand of a king's daughter won by his prowess. Finally, disguised as a fool from Meleager's court, he returns to Calabria to challenge la Fiere's monstrous suitor Leonin d'Inde Major. He defeats Leonin and prepares to depart secretly again, now disguised as Leonin himself, but Meleager's nephew Capaneus attacks the presumed villain. The two fight until Capaneus recog-

63. E.g., Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*; Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance and "Humor"*; Menard, *Rire et le sourire*; D. H. Green, *Irony*. On *Ipomedon's* precocity, see Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 85; Menard, *Rire et le sourire*, pp. 352, 486.

nizes Ipomedon's ring. Ipomedon then reveals the history of his disguises to his new-found brother and to la Fiere, and the lovers are married.

The assemblage of familiar motifs in *Ipomedon* has led critics to accuse Hue of writing a blindly derivative work, "sporadic" and "manufactured" rather than invented, "a patchwork of incidents and themes borrowed from or suggested by contemporary romance."⁶⁴ Readers who take the plot as the only subject of Hue's attention typically find the work "assez mediocre dans son ensemble" or even pointless and confusing. Of Ipomedon's departure after the tournament, Sarah Barrow protests that "the reader finds the hero's postponement of well-earned happiness almost as arbitrary as it seems to the less enlightened court of Meleager."⁶⁵

Other readers, noting the frequent passages in which Hue seems not so much to imitate contemporary romances as to mock them, treat *Ipomedon* as a "roman burlesque" or a parody.⁶⁶ There are certainly some wonderful passages of parody in the work, for example in la Fiere's stumbling revelation of her lover's identity, Hue's falsified claims to truth, and his obscene epilogue bidding farewell to all lovers. But these parodic moments do not fully account for the work as a whole. They are part of a wider response to romance made up not only of Hue's witty commentary, parodies, and obscenities but of the very conventionality of the plot itself. Hue, like Thomas, builds his romance on the dual levels of story and interpretation, but Hue provides two conflicting interpretations for his material. The plot, easily grasped and even banal, is the occasion for both a sophisticated conventional treatment and a critical re-assessment of romance ideals.

This second perspective in *Ipomedon* reaches us primarily through the voice of the narrator, indistinguishable from that of the poet.⁶⁷ The narrating voice develops the story in traditional terms

64. Carter, "Ipomedon," p. 270; Wilson, *Early Middle English Literature*, p. 79.

65. J. H. Watkins in *Dictionnaire*, ed. Grente, p. 381; Barrow, *Medieval Society Romances*, p. 77.

66. Holden, edition, pp. 54–55 and line 7270 n.; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp. 85, 90; Menard points out parodic passages but avoids calling the entire work a parody (*Rire et le sourire*, pp. 513–21).

67. The poet names himself at lines 33, 7176, 10552–53, and 10561. His poetic personality (laughing, sensual, etc.) may constitute a persona, but as is the case for Thomas, the poet/persona distinction is not as productive in treating his work as the assumption that the poet and audience considered the two functions inseparable: see Rowland, "Pronuntiatio."

and generates another poetic world, located in Hue's version of Herefordshire, which encloses and diminishes Ipomedon's world even as we are drawn into it.

The prologue first signals that Hue may be standing back from his material. Here the standard justification for writing poetry, that wisdom should not be hidden, is arrogantly inflated and concluded by an expansive sixteen-line passage on the importance of speaking briefly (33–48). Inflation also marks the poem's close, as Hue claims that the story he has just told is the source of the *Roman de Thèbes* (10541–50).⁶⁸ Hue takes on and puts off the mantle of authorial dignity more ostentatiously when he interrupts the narrative to declare that he always tells the truth—or almost always—or at least he is no worse a liar than Walter Map (7175–88). Because source-citing and assertions of truth establish validity in romance,⁶⁹ the poet's mockery of these practices shakes the foundations of his work.

The cheerful wit of this "lustiges Weltkind"⁷⁰ enlivens the narration of events and at the same time takes us out of the course of events and into the world of Herefordshire, Credenhill, and their contemporary incidents and personalities. Hue's glib fabulation, mockery, and profane sensuality are rooted in his provincial milieu, where Hereford locals sit around the market stalls all day hearing tall tales.⁷¹ Hue's style often takes proverbial or colloquial turns that suit his informal rapport with story and audience. On la Fiere's anxiety over the baronial demand that she marry, Hue comments,

Ki chaut? Cument k'il seit alé,
Ffemes n'unt pas tut ublie
De purveer lur point avant;
Je qui k'el se purverrat tant
K'el suffrerat la pudre as oilz
E as jofnes e as plus veulz;
Nel ferat pas del tut endart,
K'el en avra mut bien sa part.

68. The prologue claims a Latin source in the same vein (25–39).

69. Von Ertzdorff, "Wahrheit." The same subtle devaluation of truth underlies Hue's "une fable orriez vus, / E cest est tut veir a estrus" [you would listen to a fabulous tale, and this one is entirely absolutely true] (5553–54). To Hue's procedure contrast Benoit de Sainte-Maure, *Troie*, ed. Constans, lines 1–41; *Thèbes*, ed. Constans, lines 1–12.

70. Kölbing and Koschwitz, eds., *Hue de Rotelande's Ipomedon*, p. vi.

71. See lines 5348–58, 5516–22, 7175–88, 8656–66, and 10551–80. Of Hue's technique Ménard observes: "Il faut attendre le XIII^e siècle pour retrouver dans le roman courtois des questions plaisamment posées aux auditeurs, des allusions et des remarques souriantes" (*Rire et le sourire*, p. 486).

L'un dit suvent en reprover,
 Ke teus quide autre engingner
 Est engignez al chef de tur,
 De ren si suvent cum d'amur.
 (2139–50)

So what? Whatever may happen, women haven't entirely forgotten how to take care of their own interests; I think she'll manage so well that she'll blow dust in the eyes of both young and old. Nor will she do it without any punishment, for she will certainly have her part. They say in the proverb that the one who thinks to trick another is tricked in the end; in nothing so often as in love.

The nonchalant question, the generalization on women's wiles, the personal prediction, and the teasing *sententia* that at once summarizes la Fiere's strategy and foreshadows Ipomedon's disguises typify Hue's manner of turning from story to audience and casually holding himself at a distance from his characters.

Although Hue sometimes excuses himself to women, he generally speaks of them almost as of another species and declares repeatedly that love is folly.⁷² His answer to the love suffering of his characters is a resolutely cheerful, rather impersonal eroticism reminiscent of clerical humor or of the fabliaux. He enjoys the spectacle of men confused and agitated by desire (e.g., 2264–98); his female characters find Ipomedon irresistible. When Ismene creeps to Ipomedon's bed to beg his hand in marriage, Hue protests the hero's restraint:

Ismeine l'ad regarde mut,
 Dehez ait il, se il ne la fut!
 Nu l'ait, a deu fei! ke il ne volt
 Pur la Fiere, dunt il se dolt.
 (8647–50)

Ismene kept looking at him: damn him if he doesn't fuck her! Or rather not damned, by God, for he didn't want to on account of la Fiere, for whom he grieves.

As in many other passages, Hue's blunt expression of amoral sensuality coexists with his tolerant explanation of Ipomedon's principled self-denial.

Parodic episodes also juxtapose what we expect of romance with

72. Hue depicts women's cleverness or determination at 1911–24, 2139–46, 2576–82, 5956–60, 6937–40, 8793–804; women's changeability at 830–33, 5447–56, 8656–66. He excuses his attitude at 1916, 5961–66, 8802–4; connects love and folly at 763–68, 801–4, 4312–14, 9095–110, 9123–36.

another, reductive and humorous, approach. Ipomedon's disguise as a fool echoes Tristan's, but no secret suffering, no metaphoric identification of lover and outcast, no compelling need to reach the beloved enrich the disguise: Ipomedon simply keeps his own counsel and mocks the ignorance of all others. His role as the queen's *dru* similarly diminishes its prototypes, the hidden adulterous relationships of Tristan and Lancelot. These and other imitations locate the story of Ipomedon among the romances while also suggesting that its apparent orthodoxy conceals other possibilities.⁷³

From one perspective *Ipomedon* is a handsome treatment of romance's most common subject, the relationship between love and chivalry—or more accurately, the young lovers' growing understanding of what they desire from both emotional experience and public standing in their courtly society.⁷⁴ At first both Ipomedon and la Fiere respond to ideal standards of love and chivalry rather crudely, by swallowing them whole or revolting against them, but eventually the lovers find expressions for their desire that are consonant with the rigid codes of their noble world.

The powerful voice of court society establishes standards of merit in *Ipomedon*: men should engage in chivalry to be worthy of love, and women should accord their love only to the chivalrous. La Fiere subscribes to these standards absolutely in making her proud vow, which even the court finds excessive (133–38), and in rebuking her anonymous *valet* for his lack of prowess (866–918). Refusing to give up the vow because "'Idunc s'en gabereient tuz; . . . A tuz dis serreie hunie'" ["then everyone would joke about it; I would be shamed forever"] (2480, 2484), she makes a second, contradictory vow in secret to marry none but the "vadlet estrange" (1524,

73. On *Ipomedon's* reductive imitations of romance see Menard, *Rire et le sourire*, pp. 348–49, 742–45; Holden, edition, pp. 46–57. Another romance from the twelfth century was probably Anglo-Norman, a *Lancelot* that survives only through Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet*. It too seems distanced from conventions of love and chivalry: the young Lanzelet's paramour is a lady who has unsuccessfully tempted several other knights, and she is only the first of four lovers the hero takes in succession. Certain episodes mock courtiers' weaknesses, and the plot as a whole is reminiscent of *Ipomedon's* in its assemblage of familiar motifs and its ironic potential. One episode resembles the *Lai du Cor*, which survives in an insular manuscript but cannot be definitely classified as Anglo-Norman (Bell, "Lai du Cor").

74. Haidu writes in *Aesthetic Distance*: "The essential conflict is not between the individual and the world, but in what the individual himself desires" (p. 106). Muscatine makes the same point in *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, p. 13. Hanning, *Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, pp. 123–35, provides a sensitive reading of *Ipomedon* in these terms, stressing the challenge that society's ideal codes make to individuality: "As all men are judged by the same external touchstone, private identity is in effect lost" (p. 132).

1555–58). Both vows are exaggerated reactions to the code of love and prowess, the first as completely accepting as the second is rebellious. But subsequently, by manipulating her barons and providing Ipomedon with opportunities to prove himself, she encourages the events that bring her two vows into harmony, allowing her to sustain both her secret love and (after some confusion) her public dignity.

Ipomedon, in response to la Fiere, confronts courtiers' standards of judgment for knights. Stricken with self-reproach for not having shown his prowess (1173–82), the hero withdraws from himself into disguises until his inner conviction of merit matches his record of chivalric successes. But he also asserts his superiority by reproaching noble society even as he fulfills its rigid code. The court's censure, as befits a society of manners, always takes the form of ridicule: its weapons are *ris*, *suzris*, *gabs*; words spoken *en deduit*, *par eschar*, *en ramposnant*.⁷⁵ Ipomedon chooses a response appropriate to this society's own tactic of censure through mockery. Although he accepts the justice of la Fiere's rebuke (1154–55), his life of chivalry turns the courtiers' ridicule—and la Fiere's—back upon themselves. As the queen's *dru* who seems too foppish to risk his skin but in fact wins the three-day tournament, and as the laughable fool-knight who turns out to be the only courtier willing to fight Leonin for la Fiere, the hero continually demonstrates the superficiality of society's judgment: "Teus tent suvent pur fol autrui / Ke asez est plus fol de lui" [often one who holds another foolish is far more foolish himself] (7923–24).⁷⁶

Although *Ipomedon* can be read as a conventional story of two lovers asserting their personal worth while complying with the standards of court society, every turn in this apparently orthodox plot is subverted by misappropriation of stock patterns, parody, and ironic commentary. A rich conventional picture of the young lovers' emotions and symptoms establishes their relationship,⁷⁷ but

75. Laughs, smiles, jokes; speaking humorously, mockingly, insultingly: e.g., 490, 528, 1149–51, 3123–30, 3281–83, 3540–41, 4320; see Menard, *Rire et le sourire*, pp. 420–54.

76. Similar conclusions are drawn from Ipomedon's encounters at 5485–86 ("Cil s'en rient e il dit veir / Mes nul nel sout aparceveir" [they laughed at it and he spoke truly, but none could perceive it]) and 3067–72.

77. E.g., 807–10, 939–1172, 5231–58, 10421–36. Many poets treat young love with some irony (see Frappier, "Conceptions courtoises," p. 150; Susskind, "Love and Laughter," p. 654), but the kind of detachment Hue establishes from his lovers is extraordinary.

Hue's personal, colloquial voice is at odds with the lovers' impassioned flights of rhetoric:

De penser la color lui mue,
Mes qe chaud? Mult par esteit sage
E se combat od son corage.
Dehez eit ore sun granz senz!
(670–73)

Her color changed with her thoughts, but so what? She was very sensible and fought her feelings. Damn her fine good sense!

Tost est l'oil la ou est l'amur,
Le dei la ou l'en sent dolur.
(799–800)

The eye goes quickly where love is, the finger where it hurts.

Ceo say mult bien, de trop amer
Ne vint for mal . . .
(notes to 1111–12)

This I know for certain, only bad ever came from loving strongly.

Hue's description of la Fièrè's beauty extends a scrupulously ordered *effictio* to an indecorous extreme, inviting his audience to speculate on her hidden attractions: "K'en dites vus de cel desuz / Ke nus apelum le cunet? / Je quit qe asez fut petitet." [What would you say of that part beneath, which we call the cuntlet? I think it was tiny enough] (2268–70). Comments like these are pervasive; as Philippe Ménard documents, "aucun conteur n'aime autant dire *je cuit* que Huon de Rotelande."⁷⁸ Nor are these simply the comments of a wiser narrator on the ignorance of young lovers. Hue counters the heroes' high seriousness with casual laughter and their dignity with pure sensuality.

At times the lovers are even put at odds with their own voices. La Fièrè recalls other lovesick heroines when she tries to reveal in sighing syllables that she loves her *valet*. But whereas Lavinia's stammered "E—ne—as" works magnificently, la Fièrè must interrupt her sighing to explain to her maid Ismene that she hasn't finished yet, and then that "Va—ha—let," the syllables plus the sigh, is not a proper name: "'Nai, otez le suspir en mi, / Dunc l'avrez vus bien entendu'" ["No, take out the sigh in the middle, then you'll understand it"] (1518–19). Ismene's comical misappre-

78. *Rire et le sourire*, p. 471; see pp. 471–77.

hension and la Fièrè's technical explanations undercut the emotional intensity that such scenes achieve in other romances.⁷⁹

During the three-day tournament, la Fièrè is similarly vexed. Although she repeatedly and properly speaks of her devotion to Ipomedon and her hope that he will be the victor, she is nonetheless attracted to each of the three anonymous victor knights (who are in fact Ipomedon) and on each day persuades herself that one or the other would be a good substitute for her beloved:

En sun quer mut se cumforta
E mut suvent se purpensa,
Se ele ad sun dreit ami perdu
Del neir vassal ferat sun dru.
(6159-62)

In her heart she comforted herself well and thought often to herself that if she has lost her true friend, she would make the black knight her lover.⁸⁰

Her fickle confusion coexists with her love for Ipomedon, and Hue ironically endorses both her purposefulness (2576-82) and her vacillation (5961-74). Even Ipomedon plays on her shifting affections, by leading her to believe each day that she has lost her beloved and should devote herself instead to the new day's victor.

In all, Hue's romance provides a disorienting set of assertions about love and chivalry. *Fine amor* does operate as a traditionally inspiring and perfecting force in *Ipomedon* (e.g., 7931-36, 8293-96, 10385-404), yet Hue insists that the sentiment is more passionate than refined, more violent than ennobling:

Mut ad grant valur amur fine
Ki set danter rei e reine. . . .
Quant force ne vaut ne beauté,
Sens ne cointise ne bunté,
E qe vaudra dunc cuntre amur?
Certes, ren nule al chef de tur.
(9095-96, 9107-10)

Great is the power of *amur fine*, which can overcome kings and queens. . . .
When strength cannot prevail, nor beauty, wisdom nor prudence nor goodness, what then can prevail against love? Surely, in the end, nothing at all.

79. *Enéas*, *Partenopeus de Blois*, and *Yder* take seriously the topos that Hue undermines here (Holden, edition, pp. 55-56; Fourier, *Courant réaliste*, p. 335; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp. 92-93).

80. With this passage compare 3755-72, 3865-78 (la Fièrè's attraction to the white knight) and 4793-806 (attraction to the red knight).

The consistent mark of love's power is that it cannot be manipulated as a reward for merit, even when women seek consciously to do so. Like la Fièrè, the queen of Sicily and Ismene are determined not to love the hero in his disguises as coward and fool, but they are unable to resist.⁸¹ Both their courtships belie models of women's aloofness in love, of love as a pervasively refining principle, and of reciprocity between male chivalry and female mercy. J. D. Burnley observes that for Hue "*fine amor* has the intensificatory significance which is found in the *fabliaux*," manifesting "the wryly humorous, gently cynical, treatment of consuming sexual passion."⁸² This effect moves from minor to major characters: the queen's inability to dose her love according to chivalric merit parallels la Fièrè's inability to resist the appeal of nameless knights, and Ismene's essentially physical desire foreshadows the lovers' happy marriage, in which Ipomedon and la Fièrè "se entretaint tant par amur / Ke il se entrefoutent tute jur" [love each other so truly that they fuck all day long] (10515-16).

The three female characters, unable to make faithful love consonant with proofs of valor, act out a dislocation between love and chivalry. Male characters, for their part, experience the relation of love and chivalry as annihilating—perpetually violent rather than constructive. Grisly carnage at the tournament for la Fièrè's hand in marriage is the ironic fulfillment of the knights' sensual desire (2264-66, 2555-62):

N'i ad si membré ne si sage
Ki gueres penst de mariage . . .
Teus quidout espuser la Fere
Ke l'um d'eloc porte en sun bere;
Unc nocés si cher achatees
Ne furent ne tant cumperees.
(4935-36, 4941-44)

81. The queen's unfortunate love is a source of much humor for Hue, who often describes her desire bluntly (3277-80, 3337-38, 4305-14, 5451-56, 5509-22). Her initial aloofness, when she cannot love her servant because he is not valorous (3085-86), only emphasizes her love's irrational disregard for the reciprocity of prowess and esteem; in the end she adores the hero "Coment k'il fut de hardement. . . . Amur ne quert fors sun delit, / Mult valt le juster enz el lit" [regardless of how brave he was. . . . Love seeks only its own pleasure; jousting in bed is what counts] (4308, 4313-14). Similarly, Ismene is ashamed of loving a fool and afraid he will kill her, but she creeps up to his bed in spite of herself, obliging Ipomedon to drive her off by pretending to want to eat her hand or to cut it off when she touches him (8837-56, 9149-72).

82. "*Fine Amor*," p. 140.

There was none, however wise or prudent, who gave any more thought to marriage. . . . Some who had thought to marry la Fièrre were carried from there on their biers; never was a wedding bought or paid for so dearly.

The knights' violence and in particular Ipomedon's death-dealing answer la Fièrre's demand that love spring from evidence of valor, but expose the destructiveness latent in such an ideal of love. For Ipomedon submission to the ideal is isolating rather than integrative. He refuses to claim la Fièrre as prize of the tournament because he believes it would interfere with his prowess (6650–52); soon after, he even refuses to claim his patrimony because he prefers to wander "cume soldeer / Ke pris e los vult purchacer" [like a professional soldier eager to win renown and praise] (7239–40). For Ipomedon to choose the life of a mercenary at this point is an alienated, aggressive rejection of his properly won place in society.

Readers who consider the romance to be traditional argue that Ipomedon's departure after the tournament shows him "making amends for his earlier unsatisfactory conduct" or "compensating for his initial lack of fulfillment" of the vow.⁸³ A conventional and pleasing whole inheres in this distention of the plot only to the extent that Ipomedon and la Fièrre achieve subsequently a better understanding of their love and a fuller concord between emotional life and action. The second half of the romance, in Ipomedon's chivalric progress from tournaments to war to defense of la Fièrre's people, who pray for him (9415–20) and for whom he feels "mut grant pité" (9625), is reminiscent of how Chrétien gives Yvain a course of greater service to good causes.

But again, despite the plot's fully orthodox possibilities, Hue's presentation offers a second, fully ironic reading as well. Ipomedon's good causes are oddly subverted. To succeed the carnage of tournaments, he joins a war against Daire of Lombardy—who was apparently already killed by the hero himself during the three-day tournament, a striking instance of Hue's "attitude désinvolte" for narrative integrity (note to line 7270). His next cause, the defense of la Fièrre and her people against Leonin d'Inde Majeur, is functional and meritorious. Yet despite his pity for the people as he fights, Ipomedon conceals his victory and even teases the citizens and la

83. Spensley, "Ipomedon," p. 351; Bruckner, *Narrative Invention*, p. 165; see also Hanning, *Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, pp. 126, 134, and 268 n.38, on the growth of Ipomedon and la Fièrre through their experiences.

Fiere cruelly by pretending to be Leonin himself and to have vanquished their champion:

As portes vent de la cite,
A haute voiz ad apele
E sovent a la Fiere escrie:
'Bele, or vus avrai a amie,
N'en poez mes fere danger,
Vencu ai vostre chevaler;
Ffetes tost si vus aprestez,
En Inde ensemble od mei irrez!
(9931–38)

He came to the gates of the city and called loudly, crying often to la Fiere: 'Beauty, now I will have you for my lover, you can't put me off any longer—I have conquered your knight. Hurry and get yourself ready: you'll go with me to India!'

The citizens are left weeping, tearing their hair, falling in faints, crying and groaning (9939–54)—hardly the responses an orthodox protector would strive to inspire in his beneficiaries.

La Fiere is similarly shaken by her encounters with Ipomedon. She does abandon her heritage rather than marry the supposed Leonin, but she appears more to be fleeing Leonin's monstrousness (7701–12) than affirming her love for the hero. Were it not for Hue's assurance that she, like all women, is more than capable of looking after her own interests (1911–24, 2139–46, 2576–82), the course of events would seem to reduce her to a powerless walking irony, a mere antiphrasis, as she continues to be known only as "the Proud" even after reforming this quality in herself (4584–614, 5237–58, 6359–72). Like the condition of her people, la Fiere's total humiliation hardly seems the objective of a benevolent hero.

What, then, is the relation of Ipomedon's love to his actions? With great artfulness the poet has given us two answers at once, two readings of Ipomedon's life. In one reading, Ipomedon is motivated by love for la Fiere and a need to fulfill her vow,⁸⁴ and he is so consumed by those desires that only the rediscovery of his own blood (when Capaneus reveals they are half-brothers) can bring him to awareness of his achieved identity as perfect chivalric lover. But in another reading, Ipomedon is a detached manipulator of literary ideals and of the public that propounds them. This is the hero

84. E.g., 1173–91, 6712–24, 7624–30, 7931–36, 9473–76, 10385–91.

who controls multiple disguises, makes la Fièrè believe over and over that she has lost him, and warns Leonin that "De parfunt sens ad cil petit / Ke creit quanke femme li dit'" ["he has little wisdom who believes everything a woman tells him'"] (9489–90). The double capacity of Ipomedon to act as faith-holding lover and as disabused educator makes him an elusive, even paradoxical hero.

Ipomedon's doubleness dramatizes the work's two narrative stances as well as connecting the story's two meanings. The protagonist is a vehicle for Hue's serious commitment to his material, but also for Hue's detached manipulation of traditional patterns. The poet, like the hero, is elusive. That Hue invents multiple disguises and evasions for Ipomedon expresses in the plot his own relationship to courtly material as outsider, mocker, and dissembler. Yet despite his air of nonchalance Hue says much about human weakness that Thomas of Britain says too: that people are by nature changeable, self-ignorant, weak of will, and sensual. The resonances between humor and insight, and between the coherent image of noble ideals and the vivid depiction of foolish conduct, enrich the work just as the hero is enriched by the confluence in his character of starry-eyed dedication and informed disenchantment.⁸⁵ There is no separating these paradoxical elements in *Ipomedon*. They coexist throughout, and Hue finally constructs between them a rapprochement of sorts, though hardly on Thomas's model.

In part Hue's portrayal of selfishness and folly within a conventional scheme of ideals seems to please him just for its incongruity, its feast-of-fools confounding of system and order. But in part as well Hue may acknowledge the power of natural impulses so cheerfully, rather than somberly as Thomas does, simply because he finds the fulfillment of those human impulses adumbrated in the ideal. Perhaps, Hue suggests, traditional *fine amor* and ordinary

85. Ménard refuses to believe in Ipomedon's dedication to love, regarding his justifications as false: "en fait, Ipomedon n'a rien du parfait amant qui pense par la souffrance mériter la merci de sa Dame" (*Rire et le sourire*, p. 354). Hanning, on the contrary, refuses to believe in Ipomedon's free manipulation of roles: Ipomedon suffers "victimization by prowess," from which he is unable to release himself (*Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, pp. 133, 134–35). The two forces (engagement/detachment) in Ipomedon's character can seem mutually exclusive, but both are genuinely present. Hue uses both to explain the hero's behavior, e.g., "Mut aime lealment sa amie" [he loves his lady very loyally] (7932) as against "Mut esteit veciez e sage, / Asez covre ben sun curage" [he was very wary and wise; he covers his thoughts very well] (5335–36).

selfish desire are not contradictory forces. Perhaps they share a secret kinship. R. Howard Bloch finds the same connection in the thirteenth-century fabliaux, *Roman de Renart*, and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*: despite the elements that distinguish these works from courtly literature, "the selfish individualism of rapacious animals, promiscuous wives, luxurious priests, and deceptive suitors is nonetheless latent in the alienation of the chivalric hero and lyric lover."⁸⁶ Hue anticipates the discoveries of his successors without abandoning the structures of romance. He reforms romance's typical premise that the lover's search for selfhood is essentially a journey toward responsible maturity and social integration.⁸⁷ For Hue the full discovery of selfhood invites the freeing of love's energy in purely autonomous gratification. This is what Hue's epilogue states more directly than the work as a whole. Rather than urging on us, as Thomas does, lovers who scourge the fallen soul to make it ready and clean for love, Hue reveals that promiscuous enjoyment is the lesson of Ipomedon's story.

In what appears to be an imitation of Thomas's parting words to lovers,⁸⁸ *Ipomedon* concludes:

Ipomedon a tuz amanz
Mande saluz en cest romanz,
Par cest Hue de Rotelande;
De part le deu d'amur cumande
Des or mes lealment amer. . . .
(10559–63)

Ipomedon sends greetings in this work to all lovers, through this Hue of Rhuddlan, and commands them on behalf of the God of Love to love loyally from now on.

The God of Love, excommunication, and absolution make of the epilogue a little allegory of love that recalls Thomas's congregation of devout listeners. Thomas avoids openly religious analogies but does invite his audience to absorb his work as proof against love's wrongs and changes, as if his text could be distributed like the Host to renew both faithful and faltering lovers. *Ipomedon* closes with a similar claim, but the soaring desire for purification in *Tris-*

86. *Literature and Law*, p. 227.

87. *Ille et Galeron* and *Partonopeus* can illustrate the convention as well as Chretien's romances; see n. 74 above.

88. Cf. "Tumas fine ci sun escrit: / A tuz amanz saluz i dit . . ." [Thomas ends his work here; now he says farewell to all lovers] (Sn, 820–21fr). Holden argues that Hue consciously imitates this passage (edition, pp. 51, 56).

tan dives now toward insouciant sensuality; Thomas's congregation of lovers re-forms into a sequential line of sexual partners. In Hue's allegory timid lovers are to be excommunicated until promiscuity absolves them,⁸⁹ or in the case of ladies, until Hue himself pardons them. This private pardon for women replaces Thomas's text as Host with a text as phallus:

A Credehulle a ma meisun
Chartre ai de l'absoluciu;
Se il i ad dame u pucele
U riche vedve u dameisele
Ne voille creire ke jo l'ai,
Venge la, jo li mustera;
Ainz ke d'iloc s'en seit turné
La chartre li ert enbrevé,
E ço n'ert pas trop grant damages
Se li seaus li pent as nages.

(10571–80)

At Credenhill in my house I have a license to give absolution; if there is any lady or virgin or fine widow or maiden who does not want to believe that I have it, let her come there, and I'll show it to her: before she turns from there the document will be pressed upon her, and it won't be too bad if the seal hangs from her ass.⁹⁰

This boisterous conclusion derives from the premise that the romance hero is self-determining. The miniature allegory of love's God, excommunication, and absolution that closes Hue's work recalls the rigid social code to which *Ipomedon* and *la Fièvre* gradually accommodate their desires, like many other romance heroes facing constructs of ideal love and chivalry. But Hue is convinced that ro-

89. "And if anyone withdraws from loving before achieving his goal, then such a one will be excommunicated and will have full permission to take his pleasure where he can; he who gets the most will be absolved" (10565–70). Holden notes the apparent illogic of these verses (edition, p. 571), which is surely part of Hue's joke: in this religion of love, promiscuous abandon is the man's atonement for living with restraint. See also Susskind, "Love and Laughter," p. 657.

90. The document in this phallic metaphor is a letter patent with bishop's or pope's seal granting power of absolution, such as Chaucer's *Pardoner* carries: "'Oure lige lordes seel on my patente, / That shewe I first, my body to warente'" (*Works*, ed. Robinson, *Pardoner's Prologue*, lines 337–38). Such documents were rolled to the seal, as shown in the Reims cathedral fresco reproduced by Jadart ("Peinture murale," pl. VII, p. 38: a scribe holds a rolled letter with pendent seal). The phallic sense of the passage as a whole is clearer than the sense of *enbrevé* (10578), which Holden takes as *embriever* (to inscribe), resulting in some obscurity; but which Godefroy's *Dictionnaire* interprets also as *embriver* (to rush into, cast upon). The second interpretation offers a more consistent "métaphore scabreuse" (Holden, edition, p. 572n.) than does *embriever*.

mance's versions of achievement disguise or evade the true character of personal desire. Thus his final allegory refuses to elevate the envisioned reconciliation between desiring individual and demanding social code. Instead, his machinery of idealization merely facilitates the self-determined sensual fulfillment that his lovers truly seek.

Thomas of Britain and Hue de Rotelande adopt conventional romance patterns but question and reform them. Jean-Charles Payen even sees Thomas's work as a provocative challenge to courtly literature in general. Subsequent romance writing, he argues, must be understood as a series of attempts to exorcise the Tristan story, to demystify it and to substitute for it more satisfactory courtly models of behavior.⁹¹ M. D. Legge attributes *Ipomedon's* popularity with Middle English adapters to the fact that it "is a parody of the courtly romance" and thus well suited to the general English detachment from French romance.⁹² Both assessments exaggerate Thomas's and Hue's resistance to courtly convention, but both perceive that the Anglo-Norman poets are significantly isolated from that convention.

To be sure, the clerical milieu that accounts for both Thomas's moral sensitivity and Hue's goliardic laughter is shared by continental poets, and that milieu affects twelfth-century romance in general: D. H. Green concludes in his wide-ranging study that the "hero's distance from the court, implying his ability to transcend it, thus reflects the poet's critical aloofness from courtly values." Clerics of this period constitute an international community vital to cultural development, yet their ecclesiastical training and relatively low social status encourage their literary stances of self-conscious detachment and reflectiveness.⁹³ In their learned romances, images of refined sentiment and behavior may be undermined by authorial comment, or interrupted by "comically realistic passages," or even vitiated by characters' inabilities to meet the standards they set for

91. "Lancelot contre Tristan"; Le Gentil answers this article persuasively in "Epilogue." Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit*, p. 85, and Ferrante, *Love and Honor*, p. 16, believe the Tristan story is inherently anticourtly; see also n.4. But for evidence of the story's acceptance, see Sudre, "Allusions."

92. "Rise and Fall," p. 4.

93. D. H. Green, *Irony*, p. 363; Auerbach, *Literary Language*, pp. 237–338; Gallais, "Mentalité des romanciers" (1970), pp. 333–38; Uitti, "Clerkly Narrator"; Köhler, "Sistema sociologico."

themselves.⁹⁴ In the end most critics see continental romances balancing these inner conflicts and affirming the value of their ideals for their audience, but some critics insist on the romances' simultaneous awareness that the opposition between individual and community is not fully resolvable and that the lover's desire for resolution is thus troubling and isolating.⁹⁵

These features ally *Tristan* and *Ipomedon* to romance tradition but are greatly extended and modified in the two insular works. Thomas makes an inescapable contradiction of the latent tension between public and private loyalties, refusing optimistic harmony for a tragic vision of love refined by inner torment. His strained but magisterial union of humanity to absolute love recognizes an opposition deeper than the typical interplay of courtly code and adventuring knight. Hue's treatment of the interdependence of love and chivalry strikes at the motif's heart by reading the plot doubly and by giving the alternate reading a world of its own, a local milieu that engulfs the traditional reading. There is nothing in twelfth-century romance to match Hue's full context of anecdotes and attitudes enclosing and commenting on the characters' world.

Yet Thomas and Hue remain committed to the principle of heroic self-determination and to the process of confronting heroes with challenges raised by their own aspirations. That commitment allies them with the deepest impulses of romance, making their doubts about the means and processes of heroic achievement the more striking. While *courtoisie* and *fine amor* may have functioned metaphorically as cultural ideals or as social resolutions in the continental provinces of their origin, they did not carry immediate conviction for Anglo-Norman poets. Soon, however, Thomas's doubt and Hue's laughter were to fade from the insular poetic repertoire, as poets gradually turned from resisting courtly tradition to reforming it.

94. Susskind, "Love and Laughter," p. 657; see also n.63 above and Hanning, *Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, p. 135.

95. Muscatine (*Chaucer and the French Tradition*, pp. 14, 42–57) and D. H. Green (*Irony*, pp. 389–93) regard irony as subordinate to the acceptance of courtly ideals; Kohler (*Ideal und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 66–128) and R. H. Bloch (*Literature and Law*, pp. 215–48) posit that romance's oppositions are not fully resolvable.

Chapter Five



Adapting Conventions of Courtliness

Two young men seeking brides illustrate what happens to ideas of love and chivalry between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. The first, Arnulf of Guines, pursued a very wealthy widow, Countess Ida of Boulogne. The Guines family chronicler recounts baldly that Arnulf either loved Ida—or only pretended to love her "virili prudentia et cautela" ["in his masculine sagacity and cunning"] because "ad terram tamen et Boloniensis Comitatus dignitatem, veri vel simulati amoris objectu recuperata ejusdem Comitissae gratia, aspiravit" ["in seeking the favors of the countess by this true or pretended love, he aspired to the land and the dignity of the county of Boulogne"].¹ Arnulf's conventional gestures (exchanging secret love-messages with Ida) are merely implements of his calculated acquisitiveness.

Substantially different is the conduct of William Marmion just over a century later, during Edward II's Scottish wars. While this Lincolnshire knight sat feasting, "un damoiseil faye" [a fairy damsel] presented him with a golden helmet and "vn lettre de commandement de sa dame qil alast en la plus perillous place de la graunt Bretagne et qil feist cel healme estre conuz" [a letter of

1. Lambert of Ardres, *Chronicon Ghisnense et Ardense*, ed. Meniglaize, pp. 205–7; trans. in Duby, *Medieval Marriage*, p. 108. Duby comments, "All the posturing ultimately served only as a cover for the ruthless pursuit of a policy strictly designed to further the interests of the lineage" (p. 109).