The friar follows in the footsteps of an elf who persists in the Christian image of the incubus and its imitator the friar. Sexuality moves irrevocably across genders from the elf-queen and her company (ladies all when they later appear) to the ravishing friar and knight, and back again to the hag who smiles as her captive husband "walweth and he turneth to and fro" (III 1085). These crossgenderings recall the carnival spirit in which the feminine grotesque usurps masculine sexual aggressiveness.

The hag's ability to enforce sovereignty, in physical terms at least, further associates woman's empowerment with an unrestrained exercise of female sexuality. The connection between feminine magic and sexual license emphasizes the freedom from containment that each implies. Even at the tale's conclusion this fairy wife like others of romance is not entirely in her husband's control, bound only by her own will to obey.

In Middle English romances, then, the possibility of intimacy with woman does not cancel her strangeness. These narratives trace the manifold difference in woman, her consequent liminality, yet also her consequent resistance to dismissal on the one hand and to appropriation on the other. Uncanniness expresses particularly well the troubling oppositions that mark the feminine at the deepest levels of conception: we might say that shape-shifting naturalizes woman's contradictoriness, and that magical power essentializes her otherness. Feminine uncaniness is enfolded in intimacy as the unheimlich depends for its sense on the heimlich: woman once familiar and domestic now also disturbingly unheimlich—not at home, on the margins, undomesticated, unfamiliar.

ADVENTURE is the critical term most specific to romance, indicating the arbitrary, the random, and the unmotivated that divide the experience of romance from the clear necessities of epic struggle, the transcendent assurance of hagiography, and the instructive designs of chronicle. The French noun aventure has from before the twelfth century implications of fate and foreordination, as does its use in English, but its dominant later medieval meanings revolve around chance and accident [see Godefroy, Kurath]. Romance draws on both senses of the noun in foregrounding the unexplained strangeness of adventurous encounters yet intimating that they have a hidden design. Morton Bloomfield, using adventure to define the difference between romance and other genres, recognizes this double sense of adventure in describing "inexplicable events which seem to have their center above and beyond the poem. . . . Something is happening about which we cannot be clear" [106]. Magic and divine forces have a place in adventure not only to signify that apparently random encounters partake of some larger mysterious design but also to heighten the value of characters' success at encountering the unknown. Douglas Kelly argues that it is not merely "aventure" but "aventure merveilleuse" that marks romance, that there is an exceptional quality about the unmotivated challenge whether in its magical or divine origin, its reversal of natural law, or merely its extreme difficulty [146-204]. Only beginning with the wonder of talking to birds, the Squire promises to go on "To speken of aventures and of batailles / That nevere yet was herd so grete merveilles" (V 659-60). Thopas's dream of an elf-queen, the Wife of Bath's knight's encounter with a shape-shifting creature, and the "monstre or merveille" of the disappearing rocks in the Franklin's Tale (V 1344) instantiate the extraordinary nature of adventure in many romances.

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Adventure is so deeply associated with romance as to become virtually synonymous with it, particularly in lays using Celtic material. Marie de France’s description of the Bretons making lays to record important adventures (“pur remembrance les freint / Des aventures k’il oirent,” Prologue, 35–36) yields to her designating her own accounts directly as adventures in such formulations as “Vos moosterai une aventure” (I will show you an adventure) and “L’aventure d’un autre lai, / Cum ele avint, vus cuneterai” (I will tell you the adventure of another lay just as it happened) [Guigemar, 24; Lanval, 1–2]. The Gawain poet similarly calls his work “his laye” and “an outrage aventur” in the same passage (Sir Gawain, 29–30). The Franklin’s Prologue is sensitive to this conjunction, perhaps specifically to its formulation in the prologues to Sir Orfeo and Lai le Freine, in recounting that “Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes / Of diverse aventures maden lays” [V 799–10]. In equating their full narrative scope with adventure, the lays expand the concept from the narrower sense some romances convey of a specific test of merit occurring outside the bounds of the daily life of courts. Guy of Warwick “wendep in-to fer lond, / More of auentours for to fond,” and Colgrevance “rade allane” (rode alone) in Ywain and Gawain “toro seke aventurs . . . My body to asai and fande” [Guy, Auchinleck MS, 1063–64; Ywain and Gawain, 154–55, 316]. But the dragon that attacks England in Guy of Warwick, the theft of Herodis from her own garden in Sir Orfeo, and the fairy mistress who seeks out Sir Launfal illustrate that the challenging and transforming wonders of adventure need not be solicited on arduous journeys. Jill Mann’s analysis of Malory’s procedure could, stated in its general terms, apply to much of romance and to Chaucer’s use of it: for Malory, Mann argues, adventure is not a specific encounter isolated within a “special period of time” but refers instead to “the mystery and power in the ordinary operations of chance” that require of the adventurer “an attempt to stretch the self to embrace the utmost reach of possible events” (‘Taking the Adventure,’ 89–90). A marvel of some kind may emphasize the mystery of chance, but an ongoing responsiveness to unforeseen challenges constitutes the sense of adventure. Aurelius’s shifting responses to his situation are more importantly his adventure than the illusion sought in Orleans; the knight’s change of heart in the Wife of Bath’s Tale is a more significant transformation than his wife’s change of shape.

Adventures commingle unpredictable hazard with concrete gain. In some lights the adventures young men undertake seem extravagant, even wasteful. Leaving the safety of home or court to find trouble is a sort of conspicuous consumption for knights that lies beyond the means and understanding of their inferiors. Guy’s and Colgrevance’s active search for adventure is a class-specific behavior distinguished by its gratuitousness as well as its dangers. Sir Thomas’s insistence on sleeping outdoors plays up this will to expose oneself: “And for he was a knyght auntrous, / He nolde slepen in noon hous, / But liggen in his hoode” [VII 909–10]. The knights’ uncommon self-risking takes institutional form in the openness of Arthur’s court to pleas and challenges from strangers: in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Arthur declares “pur3 no-belay” (through his nobility) that he will not eat on Christmas until he has heard of or met with “sum aventurs hyng” (91, 93). Yet adventure does bring tangible rewards. Indeed, Michael Nerlich’s Ideology of Adventure argues compellingly that the knighthood is direct ancestor to the merchant-adventurer, and that the twelfth century is thus the source of an ideology of adventure characteristic of the modern world. This ideology, according to Nerlich, interprets adventure in opposed but overlapping terms as both a virtually philosophical search for revelatory experience and, in contrast, a great risk taken with a view to great material profit. Instances of the term *aventure* used to designate rents, incomes, and return on investment are attested from the thirteenth century, but even in the earliest romances knights are already winning wives, titles, and lands through their success at adventure. The marriage projected as the Squire’s fragment ends, the signs of masculine rivalry between Arveragus, Aurelius, and the

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1 To the Franklin’s Prologue compare Freine, II, 1–20, and the prologues to Sir Orfeo in Harley 3810 and Ashmole 61 (Bliss edition).
Clerk of Orleans, and the politically charged relations of Theseus and the lovers over how to “darreyne” Emelye [I 1609, 1853] point to the substantial benefits at stake in these plots.

This chapter takes two perspectives on the ways gender figures in adventure. The first section traces the alien and appropriated status of the feminine in the Knight's Tale. Adventure's imbrication of concrete gain and unpredictable hazard points to this first gendered interaction in adventure: often undertaken on the chance of winning a woman in marriage, adventure as often proves to be not a departure from woman but an experience, if only metonymic, of her femininity. Bertilak's wife teaches Gawain that the “lei layk of luf” is the very “lettrure of armes”: “Hit is be tytelet token and tryxt of her werkkez, / How ledes for her lele luf hor lyuez han auntered” (1513, 1515-16). Gawain might reply that his adventure demands chastity rather than love, but it nonetheless draws him into substantial and telling contact with the feminine rather than leading him away from it. Moreover, in romance the experiences of woman and of adventure similarly commingle challenge and accommodation. Encounters with threatening, magical, or exotic forces, like encounters between men and women, do not tend to be simply adversarial. Bevis of Hampton defeats a pagan giant, Ascopart, who then follows him across Europe as faithfully and meekly as Guy of Warwick’s lion follows him. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight the magic that seems to doom Gawain proves to be strangely benevolent. Courtship, whose vocabulary is so often that of combat, is the central adventure of many romances. The adversarial alterity of women's resistance resonates with the unpredictable and exotic forces encountered in other adventures, forces that like the beloved both resist and attract the hero. These adversaries may remain irreversibly strange, yet adventure often culminates not simply in conquest but in appropriation—in marrying the woman, seizing the enemy's lands and titles, converting the pagan, taming the animal. At the culmination as throughout, adventure's validity inheres in that alienness which provides occasions for self-testing and self-discovery.

The chapter closes by returning to the question of crossgendering that introduced the first chapter. Male characters take on an apparently feminine vulnerability in making themselves available to adventure. Guigemar's slumber as the magic boat carries him to his future love in Marie de France's lay, Gawain's white neck bared to the Green Knight's ax, and countless lovers' importunities that prepare for Aurelius's to Dorigen and Palamon's and Arcite's to Emelye demonstrate that adventure demands a conjoined boldness and subjection. The encounter with femininity that adventure figures seems to require men to behave in some ways like women. Conversely, women, so involved in the idea of adventure, can have adventures themselves. These occur in the shadow of masculine endeavor and conflict with it. Women's oppositional experience, while ultimately bending to the course of men's adventures, establishes a feminine subjectivity that questions and relativizes those adventures. Through the gender reversals and expansions of adventure, romances complicate their own dominant paradigms of masculine and feminine behavior.

**ADVENTURE AND THE FEMININE IN THE KNIGHT'S TALE**

The Knight's Tale is not so evidently indebted to the adventures of romance as other tales; here the lovers do not ride out in imitation of the "knyght autrous" as does Sir Thopas, nor are they confronted with magical gifts and tests as are Cambyuskan's children and the Wife of Bath's knight. The lovers do undertake in the tournament a "greet emprise" (V 732) to win Emelye as do Arveragus and Aurelius to win Dorigen, but the tale's persistent concern with ordering and Theseus's concluding assertion of a preordained design are not consonant with the sense of chance that informs adventure. In Lee Patterson's memorable formulation, "the shape of the narrative argues that what appears to be 'aventure' or 'cas' is in fact 'destynee.' . . . Events that might in other stories be considered to be random are here revealed to be part of a master plan that has been, we are encouraged to think, in force from the beginning" (Chaucer, 208). A.C. Spearing argues that "we must recognize in Chaucer, wherever we look, a contempt for romance of all kinds" ([Medieval to Renaissance], 36). A. J. Minnis, Derek Brewer, Robert Frank, and J. A. Burrow have also noted Chaucer's lack of interest in or sympathy for romance, especially for its narrative illogicalities and unmotivated
much in the Knight's Tale is not best understood in terms of romance, for example, emphasizing Chaucer's classicism illuminates ideas about order and justice in the tale, and focusing on the use of Boccaccio's Teseida clarifies Chaucer's narrative strategies. Readers have nonetheless long recognized that the romance genre informs the Knight's Tale more fully than does any other genre. Spreading concurs with earlier critics in calling the tale a "classical" or "philosophical romance," a generic modification that simplifies and clarifies plot and makes wonders explicable or historicizes them as part of the religion of the classical past (Medieval to Renaissance, 38-39; see also Minnis, Frost; Halverson). Chaucer's generic revisions, in this view, free the Knight's Tale from disorder and irrationality, precisely the qualities that characterize romance from the classical perspective.

Yet I will argue that adventure offers a way into the Knight's Tale's affiliations with romance, and that Chaucer's sense of adventure's illogicalities and marvels contributes to his treatment of gender, social order, and destiny in the Knight's Tale. The scene in Diana's temple, which seems from classical and Boccaccian perspectives to be marred by a number of compositional weaknesses, is particularly meaningful when considered in terms of romance. In this scene and beyond, romance informs the tale's representation of Emelye as an occasion for adventure. Both Emelye and Diana contradict the tale's governing ideals and structures and do so in the unmotivated mode of adventure. Emelye expresses a desire not to love or be loved that may seem simply coy, but that does not make easy sense in relation to her other manifestations in the tale. Diana's manifestations are similarly imponderable. Around both figures Chaucer has generated illogicalities from Boccaccio's more coherent presentation. The omens Diana shows Emelye, for example, predict a future that Diana should not know. Chaucer attributes an unexplained prescience to Diana by temporally relocating the scene in her temple; rather than following the gods' determinations as in the Teseida, it occurs just before Arcite's prayer to Mars and the ensuing dispute among the gods. This and several similar compositional adjustments to the Teseida might be thought careless or insignificant for their illogicality, but I would like to reconsider them as aspects of a romance sensibility that permeates the Knight's Tale.

In the Knight's Tale, aventure evokes both the Boethian hierarchy of apparent causes, as a near synonym for "sort" and "fortune," and the generic field of romance, as the term of choice for substantial encounters with the unforeseen. The former sense operates in lines such as "Were it by aventure or destyne" and "For falyling nys nat but an aventure" (I 1465, 2722); the latter as Arcite's "For which I tolde thee myn aventure" and "Thyne is the victorie of this aventure" (I 1160, 1235). The significance of adventure in romance differs from, indeed reverses, the significance assigned it in Boethian philosophy, where all apparent accidents are subsumed in a providential design. In romance there may well be a sense of design, even a belated explanation of the marvelous adventure, but the sense of mystery predominates over the philosophical drive to clarify. The scene in Diana's temple particularly endorses adventure's romance associations over its rationalized philosophical ones.

The mystery inherent in romance adventure associates the feminine with adventure itself. Romance establishes a masculine narrative perspective that specifies the feminine as that which is beyond the lover's experiential knowledge and the plot's discursive anticipation. Jean-Charles Huchet resists the early critical position that by representing women romances enhanced the status of historical women; he argues that "la prise en compte de la femme par le roman ne s'est jamais donnée pour la reconnaissance de la spécificité d’une différence, mais pour l’introduction en son sein d’une métaphore de l’altérité qui permette de parler au roman de s’écrire" (in taking women into account, romance is not seeking to recognize their specific difference, but to adopt a meta-

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3 Minnis, 7-8, 113; Brewer, Symbolic Stories, 92-97, 99; Frank, 111-33; Burrow, "Canterbury Tales," 109.

4 An earlier version of the following discussion was published as "Medieval Romance and Feminine Difference."
phor of alterity that permits speech, and permits romance to be written) [Roman médiéval, 218]. As the “metaphor of alterity,” woman is the locus of the impossible demand, the uncanny intuition, the unimaginable passion. Narrative and lover move toward encompassing her through adventure: in countless romances women who, like Emelye, embody love and impersonate Venus occasion plots concerning their lovers’ courtship and experience of love.

Courtship in the Knight’s Tale begins with Palamon and Arcite interpreting their own desire as the onslaught of a life-threatening adventure. As we have seen in chapter 2, from their first sight of Emelye the lovers perceive her attractiveness as aggression. Their unreturned gaze upon her becomes her act upon them: “I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye / Into myn herte, that wol my bane be,” Palamon declares, and Arcite later echoes, “Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye! / Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye” (I 1096-97, 1567-68). The narrator’s presentation is rhetorically consonant with the lovers’ in these respects. He praises Emelye’s beauty; he compares her to an angel and cannot judge between the rose and her complexion, rather as Palamon compares her to Venus and cannot distinguish between her womanhood and divinity, and he concurs with the lovers’ sense of victimization by love: “with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so, / That, if that Palamon was wounded sore, / Arcite is hurt as muche as he, or moore” (11114-16). In terms of romance’s conventions of courtship, whether the Knight’s Tale narrator is at every moment the Knight or entirely a Chaucerian narrator created before the composition of the General Prologue or a complexly mingled presence is not relevant. The narrating voice is importantly masculine throughout, and when Emelye first appears, the consonance of narrator and lovers helps naturalize the lovers’ sense of victimization and license their consequent passivity toward Emelye herself.

Palamon and Arcite experience Emelye in lyrical self-absorption for some years. It may seem that their imprisonment enforces a distant and unchanging experience of desire, but their prison “evene joynant to the gardyn wal” (11060) has more metaphorical than circumstantial meaning [Kolve, 85-105]. Later the disguised Arcite enforces silence on himself, expressing his love only in the name Philostrate and in complaints voiced alone. Palamon and Arcite perceive Emelye as all-powerful and free in contrast to their own imprisonment by love, but the distance they maintain from her identifies the experience of love as their own and not hers. Why exclude her? For a Gaston Paris or a C. S. Lewis the lady’s apartness encouraged the lover’s improvement; recent and not entirely incompatible interpretations are that the lady’s apartness allows lovers to project what is lacking in themselves onto the concrete distance separating them from their goal, or into the unresponsive passivity of the beloved lady. 7 In the latter readings the lover’s sense of improvement may be delusory, but the distance between lover and lady remains crucial to the claim that male desire is an improving experience. Palamon and Arcite are willing to die to determine whether Emelye is “my lady” or “thy lady” before she has responded in any way to their love ([I 1581, 1617, 1619]. In the end each man does win Emelye’s answering devotion, Arcite at the time of his victory and death and Palamon at his marriage. For the space of the plot, however, the difference between the masculine and the feminine experience of courtship generates adventure. Her lovers’ detachment determines a social passivity in Emelye as in other courted ladies, but feminine passivity is less important to understanding romance than is the striking difference that woman embodies in the genre despite her relative inaction, despite a process of courtship that absents her from the narrative and reconstitutes her to the specifications of her lovers’ desire. 8

In her configuration as a ground of adventure for male protagonists the beloved lady acquires an oppositional identity that challenges their courtship. Emelye’s most overt opposition, her assertion to Diana that “I / Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf, / Ne

7 To Lewis and Paris compare Roy-Haud, Johnson, 3-20; Huchet, Roman médiéval.

8 Minnis, 133, argues that Emelye’s passivity is importantly pagan rather than courtly and that it “becomes comprehensible only if it is placed in its historical perspective and related to her fatalism.” I argue that the classical and Boethian material in the Knight’s Tale interacts with paradigms of courtship drawn from romance. The classicizing impulse heightens Emelye’s passivity and her lovers’ detachment over the norms of romance, revealing the genre’s tendency to subsume the feminine within the masculine experience of love.
nevere wol I be no love ne wyf" (I 2304-6), exemplifies a perpetual contradictoriness that makes her finally indecipherable. Emelye is the most evident instance of a multivoiced ambiguity that characterizes the Knight’s Tale and that for romance has its origin in gender difference. Theseus as well as Emelye speaks differently from the lovers, but Theseus’s perspective is normative insofar as it tallies with the narrator’s perspective and invokes common sense, chivalry, and an idea of order.

Emelye’s resistance, like adventure itself, is unmotivated: acquiescing to Theseus’s plan for giving her away but then praying to remain a virgin, lamenting Arcite’s death but then loving Palamon, she is as diffused in her scattered manifestations as the subdivided heroine of the Romance of the Rose. Several explanations might be proposed for Emelye’s dispersed gestures, and I review them briefly in sequence to suggest that Emelye is constituted by unverifiability, rather than by the text’s validation of one explanation over another.

Some readers conclude that Emelye “fears the primal curse of childbearing” and “is afraid to enter on the next stage of life, marriage, with all that that signifies”: she is an affectionate but timid young woman. Boccaccio’s Emilia, so young that “non chiede amore intero” (she does not seek a mature love) (bk. 3, st. 19) fits this explanation in asking Diana for protection from both men yet admitting that, if she must have one, “io nol so in me stessa nomanre, / tanto ciascun piacevole mi pare” (I don’t know myself how to choose, each one seems so pleasing to me) (bk. 7, st. 85). Emelye, in contrast, is unexplained. Given that she represents virginity as her chosen way of life and expresses no desire for her suitors, her prayer is in itself unambiguous and considered, however much it differs from her expressions elsewhere. But in the absence of textual cues it is possible to imagine her motive to be a momentary fear or coyness.

On the scant evidence of the tale, we could just as plausibly (or implausibly) say that Emelye is Athenian in manner but still Amazonian within, behaving properly to all appearances but tacitly maintaining her independence and her “compaignye” of maidens for as long as possible (I 2307). In this view the public plea for mercy on Palamon and Arcite in which Emelye participates would illustrate the braking function of “verray womanhede” (I 1748) in chivalric literature as in history, a function that provides masculine war making and justicing with opportunities for peacemaking and mercy. Emelye’s private prayer for virginity would in contrast recall the independence of Amazonian life that for Boccaccio was unnaturally masculine in requiring “virile animo . . . uomini fatti, non femine” [virile courage . . . deeds of men, not of women] (bk. 1, st. 24). If the prayer does express an Amazonian sensibility, it neutralizes Boccaccio’s condemnation by encompassing a “womanly” request for “love and pese bitwixe hem two” (I 2317) and by aligning isolation from men with chastity and maidenhood rather than with “virile” aggression.

A third version of Emelye’s behavior might be based in the couplet that glosses the “frenedlich ye” she casts on Arcite at the end of the tournament: “For wommen, as to speken in comune, / Thei folwen alle the favour of Fortune” (I 2680-82). The couplet does not appear in several manuscripts including Hengwrt, Ellesmere, and Cambridge Gg.iv.27; if it is Chaucer’s, it seems to come to us sous nature, or it might represent an early copyist’s attempt to make sense of Emelye. Linking Emelye to Fortune explains her reversals as inexplicable—no more than accidents—and at the same time integrates her inexplicability into the tale’s broader concern with the place of accidents in the providential scheme. In this reading Emelye presides over the circular tournament ground as Fortune over her wheel, or at most as Venus over lovers and Diana over maidens: apparently mistresses but finally handmaiden of destiny. The couplet’s dubious authority is appropriate both to the tale’s evasion elsewhere of interpretive comment on Emelye and to the suppressed but still operative role of misogyny in romance, where the challenge a beloved lady embodies can seem at once an inspiration and a capricious folly typical of womanhood.

These explanations are obviously not compatible in most respects, and they illustrate how Emelye’s unmotivated nature can
make her a site for our projections of motive as she is for her lovers' (e.g., "Venus, if it be thy wil / Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure"); "She that dooth me al this wo endure / Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete," I 1104-5, 2396-97). Explaining Emelye's few manifestations in terms of each other is so conjectural that her significance is surely not in any unified personality but in her very contradictions. That is where all critical attempts to understand her coincide: she is changeable, and in that she is feminine—she is like "wommen . . . in comune." In relation to her lovers she is both attractive and resistant, elusive and threatening, as befits the terrain of adventure in romance.

The scene in Diana's temple clarifies that Emelye's strangeness is not idiosyncratic but feminine. Complementing Emelye's desire that Palamon's and Arcite's love be extinguished or turned away from her are indications that her opposition is related to her gender, to a community of difference. Her only words in the tale are spoken as part of a maidens' ritual that sets her apart from men. The narrator's refusal to describe Emelye's rite of bathing could express a distance from the pagan past, as Spearing and Minnis argue (Spearing, Medieval to Renaissance, 41-42; Minnis, 108-9). But since other pagan rites and myths are described without demur, the narrator's "I dar nat telle" (12284) suggests that in this case gender distances him from the rite. His refusal resonates with Actaeon's punishment for seeing Diana bathing. The narrator avoids making Actaeon's error, as if recalling the painted depiction on the temple wall:

Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,  
For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked;  
I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught  
And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.  

[I 2065-68]

Emelye's bathing ritualizes a division between female and male that her Amazonian past, her prayer for virginity, and Diana's vengeance on Actaeon reinforce. Although the assertion that "it were a game to heeren al" (I 2286) does not take the situation seriously, the rite's gendered oppositions continue in a closing explanation cast in the masculine: "To hym that meneth wel it were no charge; / But it is good a man been at his large" (I 2287-88). The meaning of "at his large" is problematic (out of prison? free to imagine?), but more important is the vaguely antagonistic distance between the maidens in Diana's temple and the masculine observer who edits out Emelye's body. The prohibition implicit in "I dar nat telle" and the transgressive pleasure in "it were a game to heeren al" both recognize feminine separateness and adumbrate its violation.

I believe that the gendered narration in the temple scene invokes the sexual connotation of the word _queynte_, which is repeated five times in Emelye's prayer and its answering omens. Larry Benson has argued that _queynte_ cannot carry a prurient second meaning in this scene because the term can be a sexual euphemism only when the context invites it: "If we are led to expect the obscenity and hear _queynte_ instead, we have a pun. Unless we are led to expect the obscenity, no pun is possible with this word" ("'Queynte' Punnings," 45). _Queynte_ has primary meanings that are not euphemistic, like the modern _Peter_ or _pussy_. Benson argues that, since the word _queynte_ does not function euphemistically by replacing a sexual term in the temple of Diana scene, _queynte_ means here only "strange" and "extinguished":

- But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,  
- For right anon oon of the fyres queynte  
- And quyked agayn, and after that anon  
- That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;  
- And as it queynte it made a whistelyngc. . . . (I 2333-37)

The context does not equate the word with its sexual referent, but such referents do not always behave so politely as to sit still until expressly invited to come forward. I believe that punning occurs in this passage despite the double obstacle of syntax (_queynte_ in adjectival and verbal form rather than nominal) and the absence of obscene meaning for entire phrases. According to Benson, punning is impossible in these circumstances, but his closing paragraph illustrates on the contrary that a generally suitable context invites obscene connotations: "Should [those finding obscene puns in Chaucer] publish, should they expose themselves in public, let us screw up our courage. Let us say with the accused in Trial by Jury: 'Be firm, be firm, my pecker.' And let us collectively put an end to the punsters!" ("'Queynte' Punnings," 47). "Let us screw up our courage," for example, is only an approximate pun,
depending for its obscene implication on context and the euphemistic sense of the morpheme *screw* alone, not on the phrase’s syntax (“screw up”) or an evident obscene meaning for the entire phrase. But the exhortation is clearly a double entendre and would make an entirely recognizable medieval one: Charles Muscatine notes Gautier le Leu’s puns on *con* within verbs such as *consentit* and *conquis*; Frederick Ahl analyzes many approximate puns in Ovid, Isidore of Seville, and other Latin authors; R. A. Shoaf writes of “the dual and duel of sounds” in John the carpenter’s unconscious pun “Allas, now comth Nowelis flood” [I 3818].

I suggest that in Diana’s temple double meaning does arise from the conjunction of context and the morpheme *queynte*. The narrator’s opening recognition of gender difference and his double assertion that “I dar nat telle . . . and yet it were a game to heeren al” prepare rhetorically for a pun. The context is that of a prayer for virginity that is being answered in the negative; Emelye admits the relevance of her lovers’ “hoote love and hir desir” [I 2319] but seeks to withhold her body from them as from the sight of all men during these rites. Even (or especially) her refusal itself invites the unruled connotation from the morpheme’s many repetitions. If the passage were modern and the omens were talking pussycats, even the most sober readers might sense a surreptitious unveiling of the female body that was earlier forbidden to us. The tale’s normative perspective is masculine, Emelye’s rites are feminine, and the disparity between perspective and rites makes Diana’s temple a scene of difference that clarifies woman’s absence from the masculine experience of love in romance.

Outside the temple Emelye is Theseus’s “suster” and Arcite’s “wyf” [I 1833, 3062, 3075], recuperated into the program of courtship that Palamon and Arcite initiate and Theseus modifies. Only in the temple does she dissent from courtship, in the company of maidens and the presence of Diana. The context of Emelye’s resistance suggests that her gender accounts for the disparity between her perceptions and those of her suitors.

To this analysis it might be objected that Emelye aligns herself with Actaeon, in praying to Diana, “As keepe me fro thy vengeaunce and thyne ire, / That Attheon aboughte cruelly” [I 2302-3]. In a scene illustrating particular gender divisions, the equivalence Emelye finds between her fate and Actaeon’s may seem out of place, but in effect the story of Actaeon reiterates gender difference with peculiar force. The trope of invoking the divinity’s own record while asking for divine protection parallels Palamon’s request that Venus aid him “For thilke love thow hastest to Adoon” [I 2224] and Arcite’s request that Mars “rwe upon my pyne / For thilke pyne and thilke hoote fir / In which thow whilom brendest” with desire for Venus [I 2382-84]. The two men ask for aid in winning Emelye with reference to stories of divine passion, and Emelye asks for aid in remaining a virgin with reference to a story of divine chastity. Still, it might seem more appropriate for Emelye to imagine herself as a new Daphne than as a new Actaeon. How is his situation like Emelye’s? In terms of Palamon’s and Arcite’s courtship, Emelye’s fear of Actaeon’s fate reinterprets the familiar poetic image of courtship as hart hunting, illustrated in the allegorical frame for the *Book of the Duchess* [348-86, 1311-13] and in many contemporary works [Thiébaut, 115-27, 144-66, 244-46]. The image of lover-hunters in pursuit of the women’s heart reverses the aggression that Palamon and Arcite have attributed to Emelye’s wounding beauty. More important, the specific instance of Actaeon’s death alters the conventional image of love’s hunt from a desirable to a horrifying situation: according to the story Emelye chooses, her very identity is in jeopardy, her pursuing lovers bestial and unable to perceive her humanity. The parallel Emelye draws between herself and Actaeon is not gender-neutral in terms of her situation; indeed, Emelye’s reinterpretation of love’s hunt by means of Actaeon’s story sets her again in gender-determined opposition to the lovers.

The scene in Diana’s temple is further set against the normative masculine world of the tale by the goddess’s uncanny prescience. Like a heavenly Cassandra, Diana is unable to affect the course of events that she foresees. She recounts Emelye’s fate as a decision beyond herself and seems forbidden even to articulate all she knows, yet her knowledge is peculiarly complete. One of the fires
on Diana's altar seems to go out, then burns again; the other fire goes out and bloody drops run from the extinguished sticks. Emelye weeps in alarm and Diana comes to console her,

And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word writen and confermed,
Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
That han for thee so muchel care and wo,
But unto which of hem I may nat telle.
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
The fires which that on myn auter brenne
Shulle thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."  

Boccaccio's gloss to the omens notes that the first fire represents Palamon's briefly quenched and then rekindled hopes when Arcite wins the tournament but then dies, and the second fire represents Arcite's death.12 This meaning is easy to deduce, recalling similar wonders in the Aeneid, Metamorphoses, and Inferno, but it is obscured in the Knight's Tale by a double displacement: Diana's words connecting the two suitors to the two fires follow the omens' appearance on the altar, rather than preceding it as in the Teseida; and Chaucer has shifted the whole scene in Diana's temple from its chronologically plausible site in the Teseida to a much earlier moment, before Arcite's prayer to Mars, the dispute between Venus and Mars in heaven, and Saturn's ominous forecast of a solution that will settle the dispute.

Yet, as in the Teseida, Diana asserts that the fires on her altar reveal the future. I believe that Chaucer's relocation of the scene responds to a romance imagining of the "aventure of love," and particularly to adventure's components of the mysterious and the unmotivated. Diana's foreknowledge does not submit to rational explanation. Some editors propose that Chaucer relocates Boccaccio's scene in order to place it at Diana's astrological "houre in-

12 For the text of Boccaccio's gloss see Teseida, 484; see also the Riverside Chaucer explanatory note to I 2339-40; and Boccaccio, Chaucer's Boccaccio, trans. Havely, 133-35, 209n. Pratt argued against Chaucer's knowledge of Boccaccio's glosses; Boitani, 190-97, makes the case for Chaucer's knowledge of the glosses.

13 I have not found any analysis of the resulting prevenience of Diana's omens, omens that in Boccaccio merely report the solution that has just been worked out among the gods. We might dismiss the omens' revelations in Chaucer as a compositional error introduced by the relocation of the scene, but Chaucer's further relocation of Diana's speech, to follow rather than precede the omens, suggests that his reorderings are deliberate attempts to render the omens wonderfully strange, and strangely out of place.

Deliberateness is perhaps the wrong characterization for a compositional process that introduces inconsistencies and errors into a handsomely ordered tale. This process more sensitive to mystery than to accuracy might account as well for the erroneous translation of Boccaccio's "Fu mondo il tempio e di bei drappi ornato" (the temple was clean and decorated with fine hangings) [bk. 7, st. 72] into the wonderfully evocative "Smokynge the temple, ful of clothes faire" (I 2281). Most editors posit that Chaucer mistook fu mondo for fumando (smoking), in contrast, J.A.W. Bennett suggests a deliberate attempt to condense Boccaccio's long account of sacrificial fires into one phrase (136). Between simple mistakes and deliberate revisions is the romantic possibility of meaningful error, an errant uncanniness that helps make Diana's temple a site of women's difference. According to Spear-}

14 Editors also note the inversion of order within the scene, Diana's speech following rather than preceding the omens; on both reorderings see the comments in the Canterbury Tales edition of Tyrwhitt and Clarke, 1:208, and the Knight's Tale editions of Bennett, 135-37, and Spearing, ed., Knight's Tale, 181; see also Kovetz.

14 A complication similar to Diana's foreknowledge but without narrative implications is the depiction of Caesar's and Nero's deaths on the walls of Mars's temple (I 2031-38).
loved confuses the image of courtship in the tale, Diana's reply disrupts the progression of surrounding episodes, not only chronologically but metaphysically. Diana should not know the outcome at this moment, and more important, she should not know it at any moment.

Diana's assertion that there is an "eterne word writen and con-

15 Blanch and Wasserman argue for the "ontological unity of white and red" in the Knight's Tale (184 et passim).

16 Brooks and Fowler, 127; Spearing, ed., Knight's Tale, 181. There is a muted suggestion that Venus in some sense knows the outcome as well, in that her omen to Palamon "shewed a delay" (I 2268) that presages the lapse of time between tournament and marriage. Although Venus does not elsewhere seem prescient (perhaps because of her association with Palamon rather than a feminine cult), her omen suggests like Diana's a gender-related foreknowledge.

formed" does have precedent in the Knight's Tale. Often charac-
ters vacillate between resigning themselves fatalistically to a fixed destiny and applying to capricious gods who may be swayed to intervene in earthly events. Arcite muses that love has wounded him so terribly "that shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte" (I 1566), yet he asks Mars to intervene in the tournament. Palamon believes that the future is "written in the table of atthamaunt" (I 1305) but prays for Venus's intercession. Reading the Knight's Tale for its classicizing but Christian perspective, Minnis and others make sense of the tale's metaphysical scheme by establishing a distinction between the capricious accidents that the gods seem to control and God's serene providence that guides the universe but that even Theseus's final speech can barely articulate. Thus Theseus's positive vision of a "wise purveiaunce" (I 3011) informing the universe can be reconciled with the squabble among the gods and the resolution culled together by Saturn: from Chaucer's Christian perspective, as in Theseus's partial understanding, events apparently at the whim of the gods are in fact providentially designed. The characters in the tale, Minnis concludes, are "benighted pagans . . . wasting their devotions on false gods. The implicit Christian standard in The Knight's Tale is thereby indicated, and a focus provided for Christian distrust of the 'rytes of payens'" (135; see also Kolve, 136-49).

Diana's words to Emelye break down these metaphysical distinctions. Providence is within Diana's purview, an "eterne word writen and confirmed" in the pagan heavens, "among the goddes bye." Her access to this eternal word and the accuracy of her omens are at odds with the strife-torn and capricious behavior of the gods in surrounding scenes. Those gods exist chronologically in relation to the world, arguing and weeping into the lists until Saturn brings about his catastrophe, whereas Diana is already living in a harmonious sempiternal order in which all is foreseen and foreordained.

Diana is Emelye's celestial complement, feminine in romance's terms through her contradictory manifestations as well as her articulated contradiction of the celestial order that is projected elsewhere in the tale. Outside the temple, Diana like Emelye seems in consonance with the orderly Athenian court that Theseus heads, "for after Mars he serveth now Dyane" (I 1682) in sociable hunting parties. Diana's oratory is located between the temples of Mars and Venus and is built "of alabastre whit and reed coral" (I 1910), suggesting that she may mediate between the lovers who fight under the red banner of Mars and the white banner of Venus. Retrospectively it seems that Emelye's red and white complexion and the red and white flowers she wove together in her green garden adumbrated a concord in marriage that Diana's temple expresses in its very architecture. But Diana's connections to concord, mediation, and stasis are countered in the images of her vengeance and changeability: she stands on a phasing moon, she transforms her victims. In a final contradiction, the temple's images of change are themselves reversed in Diana's knowledge of the eternal word.

Diana's foreknowledge is so disruptive of the tale's metaphysical design that critics tend not to notice or believe in the omens' prediction of Palamon's and Arcite's fates, glossing the fires and the bleeding sticks instead as representations of Hymen's and Venus's torch, "the blood shed in menstruation, defloration and childbirth," or "the loss of virginity." If the omens predicted only Emelye's marriage, Diana would still know a future to which she should not have access, but denying the omens' relation to Palamon and Arcite mutes the scene's disturbing prescience to some degree. I would like to emphasize that prescience, because it is a complication that typifies the procedure of romance. Like Emelye's resistance to love, Diana's foreknowledge exemplifies
the genre's juxtaposition of contradictory voices. Such juxtaposition, writes Stephen Nichols, "calls into question the very possibility of erecting a unified philosophical system within the romance narrative. The dialectical indeterminacy of romance made it by nature a genre subversive of the privileged discourse requisite for unity in the totalizing systems favored by medieval society" (50-51).

Two privileged discourses are at issue in Diana's temple, that of chivalric courtship and that of metaphysical order. Although the Knight's Tale cannot be treated solely in terms of the romance genre, courtship and social order are central concerns of that genre, not least because they are central to the validation of the nobility as the estate that "does justice and keeps it." In romance (as in wider cultural expressions) the nobility's ordering and rationalizing identity is specifically masculine. Chivalric courtship designs sexual relations and dynastic succession around masculine endeavor: Palamon, Arcite, and Theseus all assume that Emelye will marry and disagree only on how to "darreyne hire" (I.1609, 1853). Social and metaphysical ordering in romance involves distinguishing what is just, virtuous, or Christian from the unjust, evil, or pagan. Again Palamon, Arcite, and Theseus are aligned in their preoccupation with such distinctions, from the first dispute over priority in love to the final discourse on heavenly and earthly order.

It is particularly Chaucer's identification of feminine positions located outside the masculine designs of courtship and social order that expresses in the Knight's Tale the romantic sense of adventure. Emelye's experience of courtship differs from that of her lovers: she prefers not to be won and prays to remain a virgin. Her prayer immediately meets omens of refusal that Emelye might indeed understand as a phallic drama of impregnation. In these smoky omens the romance dynamic of feminine aloofness overcome by persistent courtship is elevated to the status of holy mystery and foreordained design. Yet Emelye's pleading for virginity and her terrified weeping at the omens reveal in courtship a coerciveness that contradicts Palamon's and Arcite's stances of respectful worship. Similarly, Diana's serene prescience disturbs the tale's metaphysical distinction between the classical gods and Christian providence. Her words collapse the antique heavens into the medieval Christian universe, according a providential design to the former and leaking intimations of chaos into the latter. The Knight's Tale becomes, here as elsewhere, not just an antiquarian exercise but a subversively anachronistic exploration of accident and disorder in all or any time.

The feminine ritual in Diana's temple contradicts the tale's rituals of courtship and justice, not in open argument and refutation but surprisingly and mysteriously. In such adventures romance questions its every ideal and refuses a reductive evasion of difference. To deny the Knight's Tale its romantic complications and irrelevancies is to mute the tale's most profound interrogations and to elide its gendered oppositions.

CROSSGENDERING IN ADVENTURE

Adventure also challenges the gendered oppositions it stages. Male characters experience, particularly in adventures of love, an apparently feminine subjection and passivity. Female characters transgress their more typical quiescence to experience challenging adventures themselves. Crossing gender boundaries in these ways does not finally threaten the heterosexual binary but does assert a certain mobility in gendered behavior. Adventure, I will argue, provides men with a positive experience of femininity by protecting them from the taint of resembling women. Women's adventures are peculiarly at odds with, and concealed within, the dominant adventures of their lovers. In narrating feminine adventures, romances propose a distinctiveness but also a certain parity between masculine and feminine experience.

Masculine adventures hold the dominant position in romance and yet ask men to take on personal qualities associated with women. Chapter 1 traces how virtues such as compassion may seem to be feminine but come to be understood as subordinate aspects of masculinity, identifying the masculine with the universal experience. The same chapter argues that courtship is closely modeled on chivalric competition, incorporating the pursuit of
love into other masculine interactions. Adventure is often a clearly masculine pursuit in which to be helpless is not to be feminine. Cleomades swept away by the magical horse, or Gawain and his fellows but "berdlez chylder" before the Green Knight [280], do not appear feminine in their incapacities. They are immature aspirants facing the unknown, as Fredric Jameson notes, "a casual glance at the traditional heroes of romance . . . suggests that the hero's dominant trait is naïveté or inexperience, and that his most characteristic posture is that of bewilderment" ("Magical Narratives," 139). When this inexperienced youth faces the "aventure mervelleuse" that is most fully embodied in women, however, he risks appearing not simply naive but feminine. Yvain in need of Lunete's help to win Laudine's hand, Arcite serving Emelye anonymously and expressing his woe only to himself, Aurelius languishing for two years in bed for love of Dorigen, and all such "drooping courtly lovers" seem to have taken on feminine traits in becoming lovers of women.18

It is certainly the case that a range of writers (and genres) find contact with women to be a substantial threat to masculinity. For Orderic Vitalis the threat is not one to which the active and militant men of earlier times were subject. At the end of the eleventh century young men first "grew long and luxurious locks like women, and loved to deck themselves in long, over-tight shirts and tunics . . . Our wanton youth is sunk in effeminacy [feminam mollitiem], and courtiers, fawning, seek the favours of women with every kind of lewdness" [4:188-89; see Farmer]. Contact with women brings on effeminate imitation of them as well as luxurious desire for them. The Parson's Tale similarly critiques men's dress, claiming that when men wear fashionably tight hose "the buttokes of hem faren as it were the hyndre part of a she-ape in the fulle of the moone" [X 423]. The male body when dressed to reveal its sexuality appears instead inappropriately crossgendered. Both passages argue that masculine display is unavoidably if inadvertently feminine.19 John Gower declares in Vox Claman-tis that knights afflicted with sexual desire ("amoris voluptas") adopt womanish ways ("femineos mores") and consign their reason to the role of an abased handmaiden: again, feminine imagery expresses the distortion of masculinity that contact with women risks.20 The diverse contexts of these medieval pronouncements endorse Sigmund Freud's perception of a durable, even transhistorical masculine fear of feminine sexuality: "Perhaps this dread is based on the fact that woman is different from man, for ever incomprehensible and mysterious, strange and therefore apparently hostile. The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her femininity... In all this there is nothing obsolete, nothing which is not still alive among ourselves" ("The Taboo of Virginity," 198–99).

Rather than simply expressing this danger of infection by femininity, romances imagine the "incomprehensible and mysterious" woman successfully confronted through adventure. I have argued with regard to the Knight's Tale that courtly behaviors serve a similar protective and distancing function for male lovers. The love to which courtship submits young men is intensely ideological and self-isolating, largely removing them from engagement with the feminine. For Palamon and Arcite, idealizing Emelye distances the threat that her adversarial voice might indeed pose to their suit. Courtship and adventure overlap in this respect, adventure serving not only to distance suitors quite literally from contact with women but also to provide them with a productively metonymic experience of the feminine in their encounters with the unknown. Examples from two Middle English adaptations of

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18 The quotation is from Hansen, 17; Hansen's argument for the "feminization" of courtly lovers contrasts interestingly with that of Jill Mann in Geoffrey Chaucer: for Hansen, feminization is "a dramatized state of social, psychological, and discursive crisis wherein men occupy positions and/or perform functions already occupied and performed by women" [16]; for Mann feminization improves men and "does not marginalise woman, but centralises her, making her experience the exemplar for male heroism" [181].

19 Lacan attributes this effect to the woman's masquerading response to desire: "The fact that femininity takes refuge in this mask . . . has the strange consequence that, in the human being, virile display itself appears as feminine" [85]. On masquerade, see chapter 3, pp. 85–92.

20 Gower, Vox Clamantis, bk. 5, l. 225–40. Roger Bacon endorses the teaching attributed to Aristotle "quod coitus est destructio corporum et abbreviatio vitae, et corruptio virtutum, legis transgressio, femineos mores generat" (that sexual intercourse brings about the destruction of the body, the shortening of life, the corruption of virtues, the transgression of law, and the adoption of effeminate manners) pt. 7, sec. 3, chap. 5 (2:273). See also Wack.
highly artful French texts can illustrate how persistently adventure transforms the threat of feminization into productive masculinity.

_Ywain and Gawain_ and _Lybeaus Desconus_ differ strikingly from their French antecedents, Chrétien de Troyes's _Yvain_ and Renaut de Beaujeu's _Le Bel Inconnu_. Their differences are most visibly losses: Derek Pearsall notes that _Ywain and Gawain_ "is less interested in sentiment, and not at all interested in Chrétien's psychological speculations"; similarly, _Lybeaus Desconus_ "is a good example of the way in which passionate erotic romance in French is emasculated into innocent knockabout in English" ["Development," 103, 113]. Despite their quickened pace, directness, and relative simplicity of expression, however, the English texts find ways to convey the neutralizing of a feminine threat to masculinity.

In _Yvain_ the subordinations of courting Laudine are part of the larger adventure of the magic spring that Laudine's husband defends and Yvain subsequently defends against his mocker Kay in view of all Arthur's court. Winning Laudine's hand substitutes for the trophy Yvain had hoped to seize from Esclados when pursuing him back to his castle [Yvain, ll. 891–99]. Yvain's marriage and hospitality to Arthur put him in charge of Laudine's body and land, an outcome the court understands as Yvain's victory. _Ywain and Gawain_, while halving the length of Chrétien's episode, places heightened emphasis on Ywain's shaming of Kay and the role of his marriage in his success: Ywain tells Arthur's courtiers "With be knight how bat he sped, / And how he had be lady wed" and invites them to "wend with me to my purchace, / And se my kastel and my towre" (1361–62, 1368–69).

Despite their differences in subtlety and elaboration, both works incorporate Yvain's subordination to Laudine into his ultimate success at achieving the adventure of the magic spring.

Gawain most directly articulates the risk that intimacy poses to masculinity in urging Yvain to join him at tournaments after his marriage:

"Comant! scroiz vos or de çax,"
Ce disoit mes sire Gauvains,
["What, are you going to be one of those," said my lord Gawain, "who is worth less on account of his wife? May he be shamed by Saint Mary who grows worse for marrying!"]

"Bat knyght es nothing to set by,
bat leves al his chevalry
And ligges bekeand in his bed,
When he haves a lady wed." (1457–60)

Here is the danger of feminine contact articulated by Orderic and Freud, but _Yvain_'s plot develops a positive space for Laudine's influence. What undoes Yvain's identity altogether in madness is not marriage to Laudine but forgetting to return to her, and what reestablishes his merit is a series of adventures that take into account the distress of women, the right and wrong of competing claims, and the pressure of time, three concerns that were lacking in his insouciant life with Gawain and that were implicit in his wife's reproach for his forgetfulness. Yvain's adventures take place in the absence of Laudine but respond to her in metonymic interactions with other potential wives and women in distress. These interactions are, moreover, constructive sources of self-definition for Yvain, who reshapes his identity into the "Chevalier au lyoun . . . / qui met sa poinne a conseillier / celes qui d'ai ont mestier" (the Knight with the Lion, who strives to help women in need). Far from eliding this argument in its condemnations, _Ywain and Gawain_ emphasizes the place of feminine influence in Yvain's transformation. For example, the English reductor adds a speech soon after Yvain returns to his senses from madness, articulating his loss of identity and its relation to his loss of Alundyne:

_I was a man, now am I nane;_
_Whilom I was a nobil knyght_
_And a man of mekyl myght;_

_Yvain_, ll. 4810–15; cf. _Ywain and Gawain_, ll. 2804–6: "he knyght with be lyoun: / He helpes al in word and dede, / bat unto him has any nede."
I had knyghtes of my menge  
And of roches grete plente;  
I had a ful fayre seignory,  
And al I lost for my foly.  
Mi maste sorow als sal pou here:  
I lost a lady bat was me dere.  

Alundyne's loss is both the greatest of all and a curiously belated notation following Ywain's account of losing manhood and knighthood and property "for my foly." This rhetorical structure manages simultaneously to suggest and to suppress the possibility that Alundyne's loss is pivotal to Ywain's loss of manhood. The speech encapsulates the plot's analogous procedure of placing Laudine at the origin of Yvain's madness but displacing her from the chivalric adventures that culminate in regaining her. She represents all that Yvain strives for, but at such a remove that achieving her is equivalent to masculine achievement in general. As the English text clarifies at the lovers' reconciliation, "he knyght with he liown / Es turned now to Syr Ywayne / And has his lordship al ogayn" (4020-22). In a different register, Chrétien's profoundly ironic presentation of both Yvain's courtship before marriage and his reconciliation with Laudine establishes an affective distance between the lovers that displaces Laudine to the periphery of Yvain's wider program of achievements. For the English redactor, irony appeared not so crucial to Chrétien's endeavor as did the more deeply emplotted indications that, negotiated through adventure, relations with women can consolidate masculine identity and control.

The final adventure in Lybeaus Desconus illustrates in small compass the unmanning that femininity accomplishes but also the incorporation of that reversal into productive masculine achievement. At the decisive moment in his fight with two magicians who have imprisoned the lady of Synadoun, Lybeaus turns from the slain body of one to hunt for the other, who has disappeared after Lybeaus wounded him. A huge serpent with a woman's face bursts into the hall and advances on a Lybeaus now frozen with fear:

So sore hym gan agryse  
bat he ne mygt aryse

The kiss transforms the serpent into the lady of Synadoun, who reveals that only a kiss from Gawain or one of his kin could break the magicians' spell and that her transformation indicates that both magicians are dead (Cotton MS, 2020-31, 2064-67).

Lybeaus's passivity and fear before the serpent are startlingly inappropriate to the combat he was engaging (what if the serpent had proved to be the second magician returning to kill Lybeaus?) yet his passivity and fear are necessary to the adventure's happy resolution in that they prevent him from killing or driving off the enchanted woman. She, in turn, quickly glosses Lybeaus's incapacity as a heroic action she must reward:

And for pou saust my lyf,  
Casteles ten and fyf  
J 3eue be wyth-outen ende,  
And Y to be by wyf,  
Ay wyth-out stryf,  
3yf hyt ys Artours wylle. (Cotton MS, 2032-37)

Lybeaus's momentary incapacity thus leads to establishing his identity as Gawain's son and to winning a wife and property. The corresponding scene in Le Bel Inconnu is less important to cross-gendering the young knight: he moves to attack the serpent but it makes signs of submission that stay his hand; the knight is suspicious of the kiss and repudiates it (ll. 3127-3211). Le Bel Inconnu develops a pervasive threat to the Inconnu's masculinity through his vacillation between two lovers, the lady of Synadoun and a fairy mistress. Lybeaus Desconus dismisses the fairy mistress as a mere troublemaker (Cotton MS, 1423-34) but preserves the challenge to masculinity in revising the lady of Synadoun's rescue.

The Knight's Tale draws on this widely expressed understanding that adventure engages the mysterious feminine, not deleteriously but in a positive process of masculine gain and self-definition. Adventure's trajectory of achievement faces down the
danger of lost manhood. Arcite, for example, begins the tale as a
Theban warrior but becomes a pseudonymous courtier unable
even to declare his love. His incapacitation derives from his love
as if by infection from Emelye's own passivity. But Theseus
frames and diminishes the lovers' bootless suffering in his speech
of pardon and reminiscence: "A man moot ben a fool, or yong or
oold— / I woot it by myself ful yore agon, / For in my tyme a
servant was I oon" [I 1872-14]. His tolerant irony tallies with that
of the tale's narrator and recalls the voices of Chrétien, Renaut,
and many others. In that detached perspective love is appropriate
to youth, part of the masculine experience, and subordinate
within Theseus's mature masculinity. The tournament will begin
the process of containment by transmuting the lovers' desire into
the terms of chivalric endeavor and closing their courtship in
marriage.

We have seen how Palamon and Arcite's love for Emelye chal-

leges and finally enriches their friendship and their standing as
knights. Evading contact with her, the lovers submit themselves
in isolation to the new affective experience Emelye represents. In
accepting the unpredictable fortunes of the tournament, the lov-
ers again submit not so much to her will as to the unknown in
adventure; they take up an inquiring and responsive stance to-
ward a mysterious universe. Arcite's death speech derives this re-
sponsiveness from his love for Emelye:

Alias, the wo! Alias, the peynes stronge
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Alias, the deeth! Alias, myn Emelye!
Alias, departyng ofoure compaignye!
Alias, myn hertes queene! Alias, my wyf,
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? What asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone, withouten any compaignye.  [I 2771-79]

The extraordinary beauty of this passage's formal construction—
its sorrowful anaphora on "alias" made lyrical in perfectly iambic
lines, its shift from exclamation to question made urgent by the
shift from iambic to first-syllable stress on "what" and "now,"
and its striking return to iambic liquidity in the last line's echo of
"allas" in "allone"—confers a dignity on Arcite's speech that is in
striking rhetorical contrast to the immediately preceding account
of his body's disintegration. Arcite's lament to Emelye earns its
high rhetorical status by conjoining the commitment to love that
persists as his body collapses to a search for meaning in the acci-
dents of his life. This search contrasts to his earlier conviction
that he could make assertions about how Fortune and the gods
operate. Whether his conviction of the moment was that the gods
provide for humans "Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse" or
that Mars should answer his prayer and "do that I tomorwe have
victorie" [I 1254, 2405], here in his only interview with Emelye
Arcite's assurance first yields to interrogation. His deeply affect-
ive sense of mystery in this speech springs from his experience of
love and provides him the full experience of adventure. Arcite's
speech complements Palamon's eventual consolidation of his vic-
tory in marriage; taken together, the youths' encounters with love
in adventure both render them helpless before the unknown and
productively shape their identities.

Many further aspects of the Knight's Tale and other tales draw
on the strategies by which romance represents and controls the
dangers of femininity through adventure. Aurelius's relation to
Arveragus recalls Palamon and Arcite's to Theseus; each man in
the Franklin's Tale negotiates his subordination to love within a
larger process of self-definition. John Fyler has extended the con-
nection between courtship and adventure to the Squire's Tale
in proposing that the Squire's youthful love informs his attempt
at "Domesticating the Exotic," appropriating the adventures of
Mongols, women, and birds by telling his tale. Thopas and the
Wife of Bath's knight both love an elf-queen, quintessential figure
for the disarming alienness of women and adventures. Sir Tho-

pas's suspended narration fixes Thopas in perpetual passivity, his
unresolved love-longing and his retreat from Oliphant retro-
actively casting a suspicious femininity onto such details as
his climbing into the saddle, his small sides, and his white skin
[VII 725, 797, 836]. This parodic tactic in Sir Thopas recognizes
that male characters do undergo some crossgendering in romances,
however firmly it may be suppressed under the sign of
an enhanced masculinity. Such crossgendering enlarges the space for imagining intimacy between two genders that romance defines first of all in opposition to one another.

If adventure is the masculine experience of a mysterious and often overtly feminine unpredictability, can it be said that women have adventures of the same kind? Certainly they can act in consonance with their lovers: Marie de France's Guigemar and his lover both wear chastity tokens and find each other through a magic boat, William of Palerne and his lover Melior together disguise themselves in bearskins to escape her arranged marriage, and Florete even helps her husband to kill a dragon in *Floriant et Florete*. Ydoine of *Amadas et Ydoine* demonstrates her loyalty to Amadas, preserves her chastity for him, and rescues him from madness before they are finally married. In such plots women's actions, ostensibly at least, answer their lovers' desires by paralleling and repeating their actions. But there is a countertendency in romances that imagines women's experience in opposition to men's, not just in the static resistance to men's desire that drives courtship but in challenges that differ from and even contradict those faced by men. Women's adventures, as I will call these oppositional experiences, complicate the predominantly masculine orientation of romance and enrich the image of femininity that romance projects.

One of the alterations Chaucer makes to Boccaccio's scene in Diana's temple allows for a double reading of her omens. In the *Teseida*, Emilia notes that "per Arcita ci si pone / 'l una, e l'altra poi per Palemone" (for Arcita one [fire] has been set and the other for Palemone) and she asks Diana specifically to show her which of the two she will marry, if that is to be her fate. Diana's maidens reply that Emilia will indeed marry and that the fires will answer Emilia's question: "tosto vedrai cio che per te s'aspetta . . . ma celato / poco ti sia qual debbia esser di loro" (you will soon see what lies ahead for you . . . but it will be partly hidden from you which one of them it is to be) (bk. 7, sts. 86-89). Boccaccio's gloss noting which fire stands for which man is virtually superfluous, the briefly quenched and then rekindled flame that represents Palemone contrasting evidently to the bleeding sticks and extinguished flame that represents Arcita. In Chaucer's version, as we have seen, neither Emelye nor Diana indicates that the fires represent the lovers; Diana says more obscurely that "I may not telle" to whom Emelye will be married but that the fires show "Thyn aventure of love" [I 2357].

Although the most evident reading of the fires remains their revelation of Palamon's and Arcite's fates, Chaucer's refusal to specify what the fires represent licenses readings that have to do instead with Emelye's fate, her own "aventure of love" [I 2357]. As well as the defloration and childbirth that modern critics find in the bleeding sticks of the second fire, both fires could represent the outcome of Emelye's desire "nought to ben a wyf" even as they represent her lovers' contrary desire to win her. The briefly quenched fire would then stand for her hope for maidenhood threatened in Arcite's victory but rekindled by his death; the extinguished and bleeding fire would stand for the loss of that hope in her marriage to Palamon. Emelye's adventure would then involve recognizing that her will to independence must submit to the pressure of events. Jill Mann argues that such is the trajectory of adventure itself, as Theseus illustrates most fully in his "readiness to move with the course of events, to match their change with his own. . . . And this responsiveness encompasses not only human beings but also events, the 'aventures' which the romance hero allows to dictate the pattern of his life, accepting the destiny they forge" (Geoffrey Chaucer, 176, 178). According to Mann, Emelye models the feminine patience and pliancy in adventure that Theseus imitates.

In discerning the stance of submissiveness that adventure requires, Mann reveals an important connection between Emelye's and male characters' experiences in the *Knight's Tale*, but I do not see in Emelye's adventure the full equivalence, indeed the priority, that Mann finds in it (Geoffrey Chaucer, 180-82). It is true that Emelye recognizes in her prayer that she may "nedes have oon of hem two" [I 2324] despite her desire for virginity, and that

23 Susan Arvay has suggested this reading to me; its strengths are that it accounts for both fires in terms of Emelye's desire and matches the chronology of events (whereas the fires as they represent the lovers' fates are temporally reversed). If the fires can represent her fate in terms of her expressed wish for virginity in the temple, the ensuing contradictions of her smile of favor to Arcite and her happy marriage with Palamon remain unresolved.
she does finally accommodate herself to marriage, as Theseus does to Arcite's unforeseen treachery, Palamon's escape, and Arcite's death. What distinguishes Emelye's adventure is that it is both like men's and consistently encompassed by men's adventures. Theseus's response to Arcite's death is richly articulated; Emelye's appears only in an *occupatio* that notes we will not hear "what she spak, ne what was hir desir" [I 2944]. Theseus requests her consent to marriage—"Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee" [I 3083]—but that pity is first and most importantly his own. Chapter 1 argues that the *Knight's Tale* ascribes pity to women in order to suggest its subordinate role in masculine justicing. The tale's last scene even more than its earlier ones locates pity first of all in Theseus's own urge to turn Arcite's death to good; Emelye's accord is a highly circumscribed, even preordained recognition of Theseus's thoughtful gesture. "Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord," he prefaces his request [I 3081]. Like the omens that most evidently refer to her lovers' hopes but might also refer to her own, Emelye's "aventure of love" is both at odds with and contained within the more fully articulated adventures of male characters.

Two lays of Marie de France, *Eliduc* and *Fresne*, can illustrate how characteristically women's adventures both differ from and take place within men's. Eliduc, in disfavor with his king, leaves his wife at home and falls in love with the daughter of a king he serves in Logres. Torn with regret for wronging his wife but unable to give up his love for the maiden, Eliduc brings her back to his country where she falls into a deathlike trance on hearing that he is already married. Eliduc's wife finds the hermitage where he has been lamenting over the maiden's body, sees a weasel revive its dead companion by placing a red flower in its mouth, and restores the maiden with the same flower. Then she reassures the maiden that Eliduc loves her despite his deception, asks Eliduc's permission to take the veil, and retreats to allow the two of them to marry. After some time Eliduc also retreats to religious life and the second wife joins the first in her establishment.

This lay begins and ends with a struggle over its naming. Titled *Eliduc* in the unique manuscript, Harley 978, the text nonetheless opens by asserting the priority of the women's names over the man's:

D'eles deus ad li lais a nun
*Guildeleuc* ha Guilliadun.

*Elidus* fu primes nomnez,
Mes ore est li nuns remuez,
Kar des dames est avenu
L'aventure dunt li lais fu... [21-26]²⁴

[From the two of them the lay is called *Guildeleuc* and *Guilliadun.* At first it was called *Eliduc* but now the name is changed, because the adventure the lay is about happened to the women.]

The assertion that the adventure is the women's, already countered by the title chosen in the manuscript, surrenders to compromise in the lay's closing lines: "De l'aventure de ces treis / Li aunčien Bretun curteis / Firent le lai pur remembrer" (the old courtly Bretons made a lay to commemorate the adventure of these three) [1181-83]. In its conflicting sites of naming, this lay both raises and suppresses the possibility of a distinction between Eliduc's experience and that of Guildeleuc and Guilliadun.

The suppressed distinction between the women's adventure and the man's encourages a double reading of the lay's pivotal marvel, the deathlike trance of the maiden broken by the wife's discovery of a way to restore her. The more evident reading centers on the two women's conflicting relations with Eliduc and the dilemma of his divided allegiance. In this reading the wife's great generosity and pliancy toward her husband's new love resolves the dilemma. The weasel lamenting its dead companion and reviving it with the magical flower recalls the main plot and indicates its resolution: in Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante's reading, "the lover who grieves for his dead mate seems to represent Eliduc, but the 'flower' he finds to bring her back to life is his wife's charity" [Lais of Marie de France, 225n [their italics]]. Deborah Nelson similarly argues that the wife's gesture has Eliduc as its object: in grieving for and resuscitating Guilliadun, the wife "makes the sacrifice necessary for his salvation" from adultery and falseness [40].

²⁴ Rychner's note, *Lais*, 281, argues that "aventure" can be both the subject of "est avenu" and the object of "cunterai" in the following line, "Si cum avint vus cunterai" (just as it happened I will tell it to you).
At the same time, the two weasels are grammatically feminine and do not necessarily represent a heterosexual couple: "une musteile" is killed by the wife's valet as it runs through the chapel and across the maiden's body, then "sa cumpaine" laments over her and fetches the reviving flower (ll. 1032-53). The weasels' grammatical gender calls to mind Guildeluec and Guilliadun and the wife's own lament for the maiden on finding her body: "Ele cumencet a plurer / E la meschine regreter" (she began to weep and mourn for the maiden) (1029-30). The wife's sorrow for Guilliadun's apparent death prepares for their retreat from the world together at the end of the lay:

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El la receut cum sa serur
E mut li porta grant honur.
De Deu servir l'amonestra
E son ordre li enseigna.
Deu priouent pur lur ami
Qu'il li feist bone merci,
E il pur eles repreiot. (1167-73)
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[She received her as a sister and showed her great honor. She urged her to serve God and taught her the rules of her order. They prayed to God that he show mercy to their friend, and he prayed for them too.]

If the two weasels can represent the wife and maiden, they point to a meaning that pushes Eliduc aside in favor of their feminine similarity in name, in affective relation to Eliduc, and subsequently in spiritual sisterhood. The feminine adventure of the lay would then be a discovery that charitable cooperation links women productively within the imperatives of heterosexual relations. That is, Guildeluec is both a submissive wife to Eliduc in reviving his lover and withdrawing from marriage, and a feminine companion to Guilliadun in mourning her, reviving her, and eventually living happily with her. The women's second identity as companions resides within their first identity as Eliduc's lovers, determining the lay's titular and closing suppression of its claim that "des dames est avenu / l'aventure dunt li lais fu" (the adventure of the lay happened to the women). But the double, gender-crossing possibilities for reading the marvel of the weasels' companionship endorses feminine community in a plot most clearly about feminine sacrifice.

Marie's only lay titled for a woman, Fresne, provides its heroine with a similarly double experience of heterosexual love and feminine community. Fresne's mother, having slandered a neighboring woman by saying that the woman's twins must be the result of adultery, feels compelled to abandon one of the twin girls she subsequently bears. Raised in a convent, the abandoned Fresne loves and agrees to live with the young nobleman Gurun, but eventually Gurun’s followers convince him to marry a legitimate heiress, Fresne's twin sister Codre. Fresne makes no protest, courteously prepares the house, and because Gurun's bedcovering is old she decorates the wedding bed with the silken cloth in which she was wrapped when abandoned; "Pur lui honurer le feseit" (she did it to honor him). The girls' mother recognizes the cloth and reveals Fresne's parentage; Fresne is married to Gurun and her sister is richly married to another.

This plot, like that of Eliduc, expresses the value of submissiveness in love. Fresne and Guildeluec, by yielding to Gurun's and Eliduc's new bond with another woman, prepare for happy resolutions to their beleaguered situations. In Fresne it is the framing situation of the mother's slander and ultimate reunion with her daughter that introduces a second value for Fresne's crucial gesture. Placing her brocade on the marriage bed honors Gurun's new wife as well as Gurun, canceling the potential rivalry between Fresne and Codre and reversing the slander their mother committed against her neighbor when she bore twins. Here the silken cloth becomes a token of acceptance rather than of division and loss as it was when Fresne was abandoned in consequence of the mother's slander. The mother's lament at the birth of her twins prepares for this meaning: "jeo meiismes me jugai, / De tutes femmes mesparlai" (I condemned myself in speaking badly of womankind) (79-80); in the Middle English version, "Ich have

15 Eliduc could perhaps be represented in the valet who strikes the weasel senseless as she runs across Guilliadun's body (as Guilliadun is stricken by hearing that Eliduc is married). Gautier d'Arras' slightly later work Ille et Galeron relates a similar plot concerning the son of Eliduc, attesting to the influence of Marie's lay or its avatars.

16 Fresne, l. 405. The end of the Middle English Lai le Fteine is lacking in the Auchinleck manuscript.
but it is "Cambalus, / The kynges sone" who will get the falcon's healing knowledge, a compassion the falcon calls "wommanly," directly in its events. The encounter demands her sympathy and female companions along flowery paths in a park. Like her brothers, Canacee is led to adventure by her magical gift; her own exotic encounter is a muted version of masculine adventure in that transmutes riding out Squire's Tale experience is both highly exotic and sympathetically patterned on knightly adventures. The Squire's Tale, where Palamon and Arcite, goes to her temple not alone but with "Hir maydennes, that she thider with hire ladde" [I 2275]. At other pivotal moments women act in concert as well. The widows of Thebes kneeling two by two, the interceding women in the grove where Palamon and Arcite are fighting, and of course the Amazons whose defeat opens the tale provide a context for Emelye's prayer to Diana that she be allowed to remain "of thy compaignye" [I 2307]. Emelye's allegiance to women is, in the plot of the Knight's Tale, incompatible with the desires of Theseus and her lovers. Its value is thus less evident than in Eliduc and Fresne, where feminine community is a shadowed potential that sustains the more salient concerns of courtship and marriage. The conflict between Emelye's allegiance to women and men's desires has the effect of devaluing the former, indeed of rendering it virtually irrelevant to the course of events. Her allegiance nonetheless entails representing in the Knight's Tale a distinctively feminine experience of community that contrasts with yet persists within the experience of heterosexual courtship.

That women's adventures are distinguishable from men's sustains gender difference, estranging women in the ways chapter 2 explores. At the same time, representing women's adventures makes a space for imagining a feminine subjectivity. Canacee's experience is both highly exotic and sympathetically patterned on knightly adventures. The Squire's Tale transmutes riding out alone from court to wilderness into Canacee's walking out with female companions along flowery paths in a park. Like her brothers, Canacee is led to adventure by her magical gift; her own exotic encounter is a muted version of masculine adventure in that she hears a story of turbulent love rather than participating directly in its events. The encounter demands her sympathy and healing knowledge, a compassion the falcon calls "wommanly," but it is "Cambalus, / The kynges sone" who will get the falcon's lover back for her [V 486, 656-67]. Brother and sister both aid the falcon, the former in action and the latter in her attentive sympathy. As in Marie's lays and the Knight's Tale, women's particular experience of adventure involves forming feminine allegiances within a context of masculine endeavor.

Another recurring feature of women's subjectivity as represented in their adventures is the high value they place on preserving their chastity for their lovers. Ydoine, married against her will in Amadas et Ydoine, uses sorcery and tears to persuade her husband not to consummate their marriage; in Erec et Enide the faithful wife warns Erec of one count's designs on her and resists marriage to a second count after Erec's apparent death. Dorigen's situation illustrates that the feminine endeavor to preserve chastity may be, again, both in consonance with and opposed to the course of events in which men's adventures engage them. At stake in Dorigen's case is the conflict between a bodily faith and a faith to pledged word, such that Aurelius can remind Dorigen of her oath to love him with the formula "I speke it for the honour of yow" [V 1331] while Dorigen understands herself to be faced with "deeth or elles dishonour" [V 1358]. In her view, surrendering her body to Aurelius would dishonor her, rather than preserve her honor by fulfilling her word.

This distinction between a feminine commitment to chastity and more public masculine commitments has wide social currency. Chaucer's use of Jerome's Adversus Jovinianum for Dorigen's reflections on "deeth or elles dishonour" explicitly raises the issue of whether her feminine sensibility can be distinguished from the prescriptions of a masculine tradition. As befits that tradition's gender polarities, Dorigen has not had a successful time with words, pledging her "trouthe" to Aurelius has betrayed her into a painful situation. Now she traces Jerome's argument that her concern should be with her bodily honor: in killing herself she "wol be trewe unto Arveragus" [V 1424]. Dorigen, however, comes to resist this line of thinking. She refers to a feminine community, "many a noble wyf" [V 1364] whom she proposes to herself as her sisters in suicide, but she remains divided from them in not killing herself, nor apparently desiring to do so. A certain detachment marks her recollection of "thise stories" [V 1367], a distance not only of time and space but, I have argued in chapter 3, of alienation from the patristic version of womanhood that Chau-
cher's use of Jerome evokes. Her lengthy and ever-widening list of examples both urges and uneasily interrogates the parity between Jerome's stories and her own. Distancing herself from the suicide that would guarantee her honor, she puts her chastity at risk before Arveragus does.

But in avoiding suicide Dorigen does not reject her devotion to chastity. She laments Arveragus's command and attributes valuing verbal troth to him only in declaring she acts "as myn housbonde bad, / My trouthe for to holde—alias, alias!" [V 1512-13] She is alienated from her husband's exhortation as well as from Jerome's. Arveragus indeed more clearly asks her to act against her commitment to chastity in demanding her crossgendered commitment to the pledged word. Dorigen is to behave like a man instead of following a man's counsel to suicide. Her crossgendered guise does finally preserve her chastity, but a disparity opens between her subjectivity and masculine values as she resists suicide yet continues to value her chastity rather than her oath to Aurelius. The disparity restores the gender-specific sense of "man" to Arveragus's universal maxim "Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe" [V 1479]. The muted difference between Dorigen's and Arveragus's experience of "this aventure" [V 1483] constructs a feminine sensibility that opposes but finally participates in the tale's predominantly masculine negotiations. Like other women's adventures in romance, Dorigen's reveals the gendered specificity of men's experience by contrasting with it, yet also requires that she accommodate her sensibility to men's desires.

Both arguments of this chapter concern experiences of adventure that are peculiar to one gender and common within it. Palamon and Arcite share perceptions of Emelye that define their masculinity and set them apart from her femininity. Emelye and Dorigen alike have adventures that parallel yet differ from and even oppose the trajectory of masculine adventures. I emphasize the gendered distinctiveness of men's and women's adventures in order to pursue my wider argument that romances participate in defining heterosexuality as the oppositional and even adversarial differentiation of masculinity from femininity. Here I can only suggest that within the constraints of the heterosexual paradigm there is also room for a diversity of experience that remains importantly gendered. Theseus's, Palamon's, and Arcite's responses to Emelye may all be in distinct contrast with one another yet may all express aspects of masculine identity. Emelye and Dorigen could illustrate contrasting degrees of pliancy and resistance, chastity and submission that remain markers of femininity. Here I have stressed the similarities that unite the experiences attributed to men and contrast them to women's experiences in romance. Likewise, I have sought the common ground among diverse literary texts in order to argue for the influence of a romance sensibility in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Yet romances are so diverse, and their generic boundaries so fluid, that I could as well have worked out the contrasts as the similarities among Chaucer's tales with regard to romance.

Arcite's dying speech, which I have characterized above as his fullest experience of adventure, holds a place in the Knight's Tale that is emblematic of both the space for and the constraints on romance in the Canterbury Tales. Arcite's sense of life's mystery as he dies soon yields to Theseus's closing statement of philosophical assurance and soon after to the bluntly physical universe of the Miller's Tale, in which Arcite's touching apprehension of an eternity "Allone, withouten any compaignye" describes a student fortunate enough to have a room to himself [I 2779, 3204]. Low in generic status in relation to philosophy and epic, romance has nonetheless an important place among the genres that make up this "noble storie" [I 3111]. Commingled with those higher genres, romance in the Knight's Tale does not enjoy the high profile of fabliau in the Miller's Tale or saint's legend in the Second Nun's Tale. Perhaps medieval writers conceive romance to be a feminine genre to imply not only its relatively low status but further its elusiveness, its protean capacity to reshape itself in relation to other genres. Like the version of the feminine it promotes, romance evades definition, thrives in subordination, embodies contradictions and mystery, and stages a richly affective experience for its admirers. And like its image of women, the genre deserves our efforts to discern its identity, value its difference, and describe its place in the ideological formations of the late Middle Ages.