themselves. 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.

These features ally Tristan and Iseut 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 adventurous 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 courtly and fine amour 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.

95. Muscatine (Chaucer and the French Tradition, pp. 14, 41-57) and D. H. Green (Irony, pp. 389-93) regard irony as subordinate to the acceptance of courtly ideals; Kohler (Literature and Law, pp. 315-41) 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 "virile 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"]. Arnulf's conventional gestures (exchanging secret love-messages with Ida) are merely implementations 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 damoisel faye" [a fairy damsel] presented him with a golden helmet and "un lettre de commandement de sa dame qil alast en la plus perillous place de la grant Breaigne et qil feist eel helm estre conuz" [a letter of
command from his lady that he go to the most dangerous place in Great Britain and that he make this helmet known. Those at the feast decided that Norham Castle on the Scottish border was presently the most dangerous place, so Marmion went there, agreed with the garrison commander that he would face the enemy alone, and rode into a crush of knights who wounded and unhorsed him before the garrison came to his rescue. At mortal risk, Marmion submits to his lady's command in an obvious imitation of romance heroics. Yet the chronicler does not condemn Marmion's fanciful escapade, whereas the Guiness chronicler found Arnulf's detachment and even falseness entirely suitable.

These two courtships trace a change in the relation of literary ideals and historical practice, from superficial imitation to serious and life-risking engagement. Critics have attributed the change itself to royal programs of control and to increasing economic constraints on the barony, as well as to the stimulus of chivalric literature. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the landholding class lost economic ground to the expanding mercantile sector and later to labor, and yielded political terrain to the crown. France's nobility resembled England's in these losses, for the turbulent relations between king and nobles that characterized France's twelfth century settled into firmer royal control in the thirteenth, while in England the exceptional wealth and security of the earlier barony gave way to harder economic times and greater pressure for rights and power from competing social groups. In adopting the pageanties and the principled behaviors of literary knights, the barons affirmed their original status as heliatores but also established a more sophisticated and less refutable claim to superiority than simple military rights—which they had never enjoyed freely in England anyway. The prestige of a complex courtly ethos seemed to replace the barony's eroded economic and political power with cultural power. In France the process benefited king and commons as well, by encouraging the aristocracy to curb and reform its violent tendencies. In England the barony's increasingly cultural identity similarly facilitated royal control and in addition provided the higher strata of commoners with a ground they could share in some ways with the nobility. England's fluid social categories permitted the literature and history of courtly ideals to reach beyond the barony itself.

This marked change in the social context of courtly writing allowed later insular poets to express fuller confidence in the practical meaning of literary ideals. Melior et Ydane, an Anglo-Norman poetic debate of the thirteenth century, argues that the clerk is a superior "fyn aumant" (235, 337-38) not only for his virtues but for the social value of his writing:

... de clerfs vient toust nostre bien:
Tresout le sen de nostre vie,
Queintise e curtoisie,
Valoure e amour e droierie,
C'est escrit de clerie.'

(330-34)

All our good comes from clerks: all the sense of our life—prudence and courtliness, worthiness and love and romancing—is written by clerks. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, insular poets of love, like the Melior poet, came to represent writing about "curtosis" as writing in valuable relation to social activity. They were no longer aloof and critical observers, but engaged and useful members of an important movement.

A courtly ethos had begun to develop in the twelfth century, as nobles divided themselves from commoners by claiming superior military standards, uncalculating generosity, and finer emotional sensitivity. These claims were soon greatly elaborated. Prowess unfolded in practices of dedication, honor, loyalty, and fairness that were as visible during peace as in war. Increasingly complex social standards of grace, spiritual generosity, education, and relations between men and women further distinguished the aristocracy. For English and French barons alike, this system of virtues associated with knighthood and courts provided an ideology pertinent to their losses of power. This ideology countered the barons' dimin-
lished status by locating merit within character and personal conduct, and it explained their remaining rights over commoners by pointing to behaviors that continued to distinguish noble from common life in many respects. Literature’s idealized representations of courtly virtues became one source for these claims to value. In the later Middle Ages courtly literature provided scripts for noble endeavor—for behavior between lovers, among knights, to prisoners, and to enemies in war. By the fourteenth century, “the Arthurian Oath was a living reality that governed behavior more strictly than any precept in the Bible.”

A rich culture grew around knighthood in these centuries. Tournaments imitated those of romance, as did feasts and pageants and Edward I’s vow on his roasting swans. Secular chivalric orders such as the “chevaliers du Bleu Gérint,” the Round Table built by Edward III for his knights, and the badge of the White Hart awarded to knights by Richard II at a Smithfield tournament united barons and king in bonds of honor and ritual rather than mere obligation. The pomp and the literary cast of these new practices should not mislead us into thinking they were only games or poses. Their political function was genuine, as was their cultural function in demonstrating noble merit. Their idealism took conduct beyond the merely practical into principled service, sacrifice, and even death. William Marmion survived his adventure, but at Mauron in 1322, eighty-nine knights of the new Order of the Star were massacred only because they held to an oath of the Order that they would never retreat in battle. Such oaths, adventures, fairy messengers, and round tables derived from imaginative writing and were adopted in these centuries as regular and serious expressions of chivalric life.

6. Harvey, Black Prince, pp. 138–20, 148 (quote at p. 139). Barnie, War, pp. 58–96 examines some relations and some differences between chivalric ideals in romance and in practice. On the early development of these ideals, see Duby, European Economy, pp. 257–70. Hunt surveys recent work in “Emergence of the Knight.”


8. This essential point is argued strongly and at length by Barnie, War, Keen, “Chivalrous Culture,” M. Vale, War and Chivalry, and Benson, “Morte Darthur,” pp. 137–201. It modifies earlier treatments such as Hazenkamp’s Writing of the Middle Ages and Kilgour’s Decline of Chivalry.


In England two changes in the later courtly romances accompany these social changes. The earlier poets’ ironic detachment from literary ideals diminishes, and later poets adapt those ideals to extant social standards. For example, heroic love is less often adulterous and marriage more often emphasized. The God of Love in a thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman Art d’amour instructs the “fine amant” in the traditional virtues of courtesy, loyalty, and modesty but stresses above all that “bone amour ne quier pêche.” [True love does not seek to sin]. Consequently lovers will serve God and do no more than kiss their ladies until marriage. The Art d’amour could be a program for Amadis and Ydoino, so compatible are their versions of good love.

Some literary historians hold that such changes reject the literary tradition of courtliness. So believing, C. B. West repeatedly opposes the “human” to the “courtiois”: Amadis et Ydoino, integrating love with social virtues and marriage, is “an account of human rather than courtiois relations.” In Old French romances the “human” and the “courtiois” are often in tension but are not antithetical; Thomas of Britain and Hue de Rotelande are particularly concerned with that tension, which later insular poets seek to reduce. Courtly ideals do not constitute a static code. They rather epitomize, through various formal strategies, strong cultural convictions about the value of noble life. Adulterous love could well stand for self-determined, aspiring desire in formal metaphoric terms, but when life began to draw actively on literature, forbidden models gave way to socially acceptable models. It is inaccurate to label those romances with Anglo-Norman roots it is more accurate to label Amadis and Ydoino’s concern for propriety “un-courtiois” or to call the Middle English Ipomadon and Sir Degrenor bourgeois because they end in marriage. Much of the difference between earlier and later insular romances springs from the changing relation of romances to social practice, rather than a changing class of audience.

Some change did occur in that audience, although in the case of those romances with Anglo-Norman roots it is more accurate to imagine the audience broadening downward in rank than shifting downward and away from the barony. It is important to remember,
as for the romances of English heroes, that considerable mobility linked England's barony to professional and mercantile circles. And, once chivalry was no longer a strictly military matter, chivalric society no longer began and ended with those who engaged in military activity. To his great Windsor tournament of 1344 Edward III invited "omnes dominas australiam partium Angliae et uxores burgensiunum Londoniensium" [all the ladies from the southern part of England and the wives of Londonburgesses]. Esquires and even non-knightly landowners began in the fourteenth century to use heraldic arms on their seals, and by the end of the century "the esquires had inherited some of the chivalric aura that had long surrounded knighthood." Powerful merchants also used armorial bearings; their presence at the royal court may explain why Edward III, his sons, and nineteen other nobles found it appropriate to disguise themselves as the Mayor and aldermen of London for a tournament in the week following John of Gaunt's marriage. Indeed, leading burgesses often achieved knighthood under Edward III and his successors. Geoffrey Chaucer, despite his identifications with trade and civil service, testified in the 1380's "Court of Chivalry" to the Scrope's true coat of arms; the proceedings describe him as "armeez pour xxvii ans" [having been armed for twenty-seven years]. In sum, England's chivalrous society encompassed people of diverse background and station. Better than trying to fix a narrow audience for the Anglo-Norman and related Middle English romances of love and chivalry is to recognize that these works expressive of court values could appeal as well to groups outside baronial circles.  

The later courtly poets enjoy a new and strikingly privileged position. They need not concoct elaborate (and ironic) confections to dignify, or criticize, or disguise harsh aristocratic realities, for they find themselves in "a golden age of chivalry, a time when men at least tried to be chivalric knights" as never before. After the twelfth century, insular romances of love and chivalry continue to present images of remarkable achievement, but instructive tones supplant ironic ones, homely naturalism tempers fanciful discon- 

cern for plausibility, and authorial claims about courtly exclusivity yield to claims that the heroes are imitable and useful models. These claims are perplexing in that the scale of heroic accomplishments remains enormous in the later romances. But the changes in courtly treatment and tone, far from signaling a lack of sympathy for literary ideals, speak to a society assimilating literary ideals into practice. The romances' changing voice speaks especially clearly in those works that respond to or descend from Anglo-Norman works.

Tristan Revised

Two insular works from the thirteenth century, *Amadas et Ydoine* and *Sir Tristrem*, respond directly to *Tristan's* vision of love. Both works are dependent on *Tristan* for plot motifs and for images of noble love, but both react against Thomas's argument that sin and isolation lie at the heart of love's self-discovery. *Amadas et Ydoine* responds with a model of virtuous, socially integrated love, while *Sir Tristrem* unselfconsciously resists Thomas's ideal through its mis-apprehensions and faltering reformatons. These revisionary tendencies reach their full expression only in the fourteenth century.

Like Ippolit, *Amadas et Ydoine* places itself in a tradition of similar stories, building a composite but generally familiar plot and referring to other heroes to help define and distinguish the story of Amadas and Ydoine. But these references go beyond Huon's ironic mockery: *Amadas et Ydoine* counters the tradition directly in order to revile and correct it. As she falls in love, Ydoine regrets having to dignify, or criticize, or disguise harsh aristocratic realities, for they find themselves in "a golden age of chivalry, a time when men at least tried to be chivalric knights" as never before. After the twelfth century, insular romances of love and chivalry continue to present images of remarkable achievement, but instructive tones supplant ironic ones, homely naturalism tempers fanciful discon- 

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been extremely harsh to Amadas, "Plus que unc mes ne fut meschine" ["more than any other maiden ever was"] (G, 28), and Amadas accepts her love with the same consciousness of a romantic community: "Tuz amanz vus en render grez" ["All lovers give you thanks"] (G, 104). Neither of these generalizing comments is carried into the complete Picard version; the few Anglo-Norman fragments reveal a strong preoccupation with the difference and superiority of Amadas and Ydoine's love that the continental redactor has toned down but not effaced. In their devotion these lovers

Sormontent tous autres amans
Qui sorr et qui or ont este,
Dont on avra dit et conte
Ne en estoire n'en cancon.

(ex 4868–89)

exceed all other lovers who are or who have been, those of whom people will speak and recount whether in stories or in songs.

The Amadas poet both emulates and strives to surpass the Tristan story in particular. Young Amadas falls in love with the daughter of his lord, suffering "tel dolur quo unches Tristran / Ne sufri pur Isoude la bloie" [such sorrow as Tristan never suffered for fair Isolt] (V 430–31). The pain of love recalls Thomas's conception and sometimes his wording. Amadas pleads, "Ma vie est en vus et ma mort" ["My life is in you and my death"] (V 799); his love is "Duce dolur melle a ire, / A volente fine martire" [sweet sorrow mixed with rage, complete and tender martyrdom] (V 285–86).

When Ydoine takes pity on him, their first embrace gives rise to a natural love superior to that of the Tristan story:

Love grew naturally in them from the bones; they didn't swallow it from a drink, from food, from fruit, like Tristan and so many others of whom you've heard.

Ydoine, like Isolt, must marry another. She preserves her virginity nonetheless and sickens for love "plus . . . / Que ne fist Tristran

19. Further echoes of Thomas are suggested by Adams, "Amadas et Ydoine."

pour Yseut, / N'ele pour lui quant l'amra plus" [more than Tristan did for Isolt, or her for him when she loved him most] (2883–87).

With exemplary loyalty, Ydoine seeks out and cures Amadas, whose thwarted love has made him insane. A magical knight then tests Amadas's loyalty by making it appear that Ydoine has died and that she was unfaithful in life. Deeply shaken, Amadas first reflects that his plight unites him with other deceived lovers, of whom "li cortois Tristans" (5833) headed the list, but then he denies the evidence and defends Ydoine's body from the magical knight. This knight declares Amadas to be more loyal than "tous les amans / Qui sont et qui aront este" ["all the lovers who are and who will be"] (6356–57). Ydoine awakes, arranges to divorce her husband, and marries Amadas, "Leur amors fu tos jors estavle / Et fine et vraie et bien duravle" [their love was always stable, refined and true and very lasting] (7873–74).

The suggestive parallels in plot reinforce the direct references to Tristan's story. Virgin marriage, divorce and remarriage correct adultery and tragic death; the lovers' unshakable loyalty ["fine loial amour"] [1177] contrasts with Thomas's image of a fine amor suffering from weaknesses and inconstancies. In addition, the plot of Amadas et Ydoine proposes madness and death as responses to love's pain, only to reject both. Satisfied by these revisions, the poet endorses the lovers and shuns the ironic perspectives characteristic of Hue's and Thomas's narration.

When Ydoine appears to be dying, Amadas plans to share death in "grant dolor / Ensemble o vous par grant amor" ["in great sorrow with you, for great love"] (5209–10). So strong is his desire that Ydoine must go beyond merely urging him to marry another (5015–17): she invents a tremendous sin in her past that she begs Amadas to help her expiate through his lifelong prayers (5232–49): she invents a tremendous sin in her past that she begs Amadas to help her expiate through his lifelong prayers (5232–36). As we have seen, Tristan's death results from his failure of faith in Isolt: he believes his wife's report that Queen Isolt has not come to save him. But even the magical knight does not break Amadas's faith in Ydoine's love, despite what seems to be evidence of her betrayal.

Ydoine's loyalty passes a similar test when Amadas loses his mind for her love. Many poets of fine amor use madness to represent the social marginality of love: frustrated lovers whose fulfill-
ment seems impossible, criminal, or merely offensive may go mad. At first Amadas’s love has this potential, when his unreciprocated feeling tortures him with “la fine rage d’amours” [the perfect madness of love] (1044). 20 But the romance changes its initial direction by reacting again to the Tristan story—this time not so directly to Thomas’s interpretation, however, since his ideal of fine amour excludes folie and encompasses raison. 21 Nonetheless, the fated, death-enclosing love of Tristan and Isolt can easily express itself in madness, a condition the Folies Tristan explore.

The Anglo-Norman Folie Tristan d’Oxford identifies madness with Tristan’s access to Isolt. 22 “Pur vos amor sui aloez” [“For your love I am maddened”] (175), Tristan recognizes as he adopts the identity of fool. 23 This madness opposes the lovers to Marc and disrupts their own interactions. Tristan’s public discourse emphasizes that his love offends Isolt in her status as Queen and as Marc’s beloved; then, alone with her, Tristan desires recognition and reunion with her yet fears her “desdein” and “feintise” [scorn, deception] (690-700; 854-56, 938). The Folie Tristan d’Oxford’s brief representations make up a “table des matières” for Thomas’s version, 24 with Tristan’s folie expressing the pain of dislocated identity and social ostracism. Even alone with Isolt, Tristan cannot easily shake free of his disguise, as pressing the pain of dislocated identity and social ostracism. Even

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Ydoine. When the “(lo volat)” [mad desire] (V 1040) of his youthful passion changes to insanity, Ydoine cures him with loving words, especially her own name: “Per le nom d’Ydoine amie / Li tres-passas la doreves” [His insanity leaves him because of his friend Ydoine’s name] (3347-48). The repeated insistence that Ydoine’s name is restorative (3318-414), like the emphasis on her loiauté when she seems to be dying, also resonates suggestively with the Tristan story. Tristan was partly misled, partly tempted by the recurrence of Isolt’s name in Brittany. In Amadas et Ydoine the beloved’s name is no longer a cause for pain and transgression, but a cure and a blessing. “Com uns des nons Nostre Signour” [like one of the names of Our Lord] (3399). Ydoine stretches her body along Amadas’s to cure him, but she inverts bolt’s death embrace by recalling Amadas to sanity. He, in turn, recalls her to life after proving his loyalty to the magic knight, rather than sharing death with her. 

Amadas and Ydoine refuse madness and death for reason, life—and marriage. Ydoine prays to God after curing Amadas that her love may be fulfilled “Sans repartance de folie” [without any more talk of madness] (3714): 

"raisnavlement
Quide aciever tot son talent
D’Amadas et de son signour,
Que’le ne doit des Cretours.
Ne de la gent mal gre avoir.
(3715-19)"

She hopes reasonably to achieve all she desires from Amadas and from her husband, in such a way that neither her Ctisate nor her people should find fault with her.

Raison, throughout the romance, signals moderation, foresight, and especially accommodation to the extant social order. Lovers’ conduct ought not offend the church, nor their parents, nor “la gent” in general. After rescuing her Amadas proposes that they run away together and live in adultery, but Ydoine “[l]e moustre raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without sin . . . Not sin, nor ill, nor crime”] (6726-30). Ydoine’s divorce strikes the poet as “raisnavlement / Raison” [reasonably shows him the reason] (6678-79) that they should rather work to be united “Sans pecié . . . Que nus i puisse vilounie / Noter, ne mal, ne felonnie” [“without s...
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Here the contrast to Cligès is inescapable. Both Cligès and Amadas et Ydoine set out to revise the Tristan story of adulterous and fatal love, but Chrétien de Troyes presents his lovers with consistent irony: Fenice’s feigned death parodies the Crucifixion; Cligès’ knightly prowess has little to do with the lovers’ escape, which is extraordinary for its bold rejection of all that is holy, matrimonial, and even sociable. Amadas et Ydoine differs from Cligès in endorsing the lovers’ problem-solving as exemplary and successful. In this respect it is closer to Tristan than to Cligès. Thomas’s irony expresses the difficulty of establishing a harmonious poetic union between ideal love and human nature, yet Thomas does believe that his fine amour forged in the extremes of suffering can encompass the problems of folly, weakness, and sin. Amadas et Ydoine seeks to establish that harmonious union with more assurance, by significantly revising literary convention. But Amadas’s revisions move in the opposite direction from the revisions of earlier insular poets.

Thomas and Hue, questioning received courtly ideology, exaggerated two conventional structures to reveal their difficulties. Thomas chooses a story of absolutely irreconcilable adultery, and Hue fabricates as his hero’s object a lady so haughty her only name is la Fière. The Anglo-Norman poets’ radical versions of adultery and love-service clarify that these conventional structures associate love with alienation and violence. This association expresses the abductive impulse endemic to the continental aristocracy. For that audience, writes Georges Duby, the poetry of adultery translates “profound hostility to marriage,” that state of achievement which was often refused to young nobles except by theft and abduction. The later continental poetry of chivalric service winning a proud lady merely disguises the “fundamentally misogynous” character of the old abduction pattern: “Woman was an object and, as such, contemptible.” 2 Eugene Vance corroborates Duby’s historical de-

25. Since Amadas effectively corrects difficulties raised by Cligès as well as by Tristan, the common hypothesis is that the Amadas poet knew Chretien’s poem; see A. Micha in Grundriss, ed. Frappier et al., p. 470. Reinhart, Old French Romance of Amadas, pp. 27–30, 175. But while Amadas refers freely to surpassed heroic (locally Tristan and Isolt but also Enide and Lancelot, Gawain, Poictes, etc.), there is no mention of Cligès or Fenice.


28. With reference to this error, René de Châteauneuf Aquin’s judgment that a falsehood may be justifiable “if the end intended be not contrary to charity” (Cite and Punishment, pp. 103, 137, 20).

29. The reading “paonage” is corrected to “parentage” by Labande, [Corrections], p. 435.

30. The reading “parage” is corrected to “parentage” by Labande, [Corrections], p. 435.

31. For a recent survey, see A. Micha in Grundriss, ed. Frappier et al., p. 470. Reinhart, Old French Romance of Amadas, pp. 27–30, 175.
coding by connecting early lyrics of adultery to romances of love-service: throughout, love's poetic expression is typically "le combat érotique," an aesthetic of antithesis recognizing the violence that is veiled by the mystified perfection of fine amour. Thomas is troubled, hue bemused, by the latent sexual conflict and social alienation in courtly poetry, and their structural exaggerations prepare for their detached assessments of continental norms. The Amadas poem, in contrast, seeks to resolve those problems by adjusting the norm toward moderation and inner harmony. First, in Amadas et Ydaine, fine amour is considerably tamed. These lovers are not locked in metaphorical combat; they are allies in complicity to get married. Even in Clige's lovers' complicity is antisocial, and Christien favors plots that drive the sexes into fuller "combat érotique." Love in Amadas et Ydaine, however, resembles other kinds of relationships. Not mad or antisocial, this love can be actively, overtly integrated with familial and feudal allegiances.

The socializing of fine amour is complemented in Amadas et Ydaine by a gentler assessment of human nature. The moral profundity Thomas and Hue share, their awareness of the subtle contradictions between self-interested indulgence and ideal principle, has no place in the simple permanence of a love that grows "Naturellement . . . es on" [naturally from the bones] (G, 73-74). Unlike la Fiere, Ydaine is capable of unsinkable loisir, unlike Tristan, Amadas trusts his beloved even in the face of evidence that she is false. The answers are simpler for this romance because the problems are simpler: the ideal is more accessible, and the characters more empowered to try for it. This solution to the challenge of romance convention becomes widespread and is essential to Middle English romance in the fourteenth century. Sir Tristrem, perhaps because of its early date, fails to find this way out of Thomas's dilemma.

"Tout est dit sur l'étrangeté et l'incohérence du poème anglais. A quoi bon les décrire?" Joseph Bédier's frustration typifies modern reactions to Sir Tristrem (ca. 1280). This is a dismaying poem, but its odd misapprehensions and omissions help to map the direction of insular reactions to twelfth-century courtly ideology. Sir Tristrem's incoherence is the more surprising for the poem's close relationship to Thomas of Britain's Tristan. Eugen Kolbing proposed that Sir Tristrem was written from memory of Thomas's work, thus explaining many of the English poet's confusions, but Bédier argued that it could equally well have been written with direct reference to a copy of Thomas's poem. Probably there was between the Anglo-Norman Tristan and the Auchinleck Sir Tristrem a thirteenth-century intermediary, a Northern Tristan poem by an English Thomas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I was at Erbeldon,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I spoke there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Le nere y rede in roune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>read from writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Who tristrem gat and bare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>begot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tomas telles in toum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>His aventure as pai ware.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1-4, 10-11)

This "Tomas" has been diversely identified as the author of Sir Tristrem's English source, the author of Sir Tristrem speaking about himself in the third person, and a confusion of the author's contemporary, Thomas of Erceldoune, with his actual source, Thomas of Britain. Sir Tristrem does follow Thomas of Britain closely, but the English poem treats this cited "Tomas" (2, 397, 412, 2757) as a contemporary and as the immediate source of Sir Tristrem. Another contemporary writer, Robert Manning of Brunne, substantiates this association between the Tristan story and Erceldoune, in addition to lamenting the story's degenerate form. 36

35. Kolbing, ed., Tristanasage, I, 106; Bédier, ed., Tristan, II, 97-98; also on the relation to Thomas's poem, see Rengereau, "Tristan"; and Bennett, Légende chrétienne, pp. 131-32, 135-43.
37. The Chronicle of Robert Manning of Brunne, ed. Furnivall, lines 97-100: I see in song, in sedging tale of Erceldoune and of Kendale, Non pam says as pai laume weight, And in pari saying it seems weight; but may hou here in sir Tristrem, our alle that is in war, if men it sayd as made Thomas.
Sir Tristrem condenses faithfully, if not intelligibly, the events and sometimes the rationalizations of Thomas's text. The whole of Tristrem's debate on whether or not to marry Isolt of Brittany (Sn, 1-364) is distilled into one stanza:

Tristrem a wil be inne;
Has founden in his jouste;
Mark, my nem, hal sinnen,
Wrong be hye wynge:
Ich am in serwe and pine,
Per to hye wynge me brouȝt,
Her leve, y sey, is mine,
By boke sey it is nouȝt:
Wip wolle,
Be maide hie se wolle.

For se be ysonde boȝt,
Becaus / was named 

These lines proffer tiny souvenirs of Thomas's monumental conceptions: that wilde ('wil') opposes Tristan to his own love, that social and even religious fault is the inescapable condition of this fine amor, and yet that love's own ascetic discipline can reverse social right so that it is truly Marc who sins against love. But in the English stanza, outside the dialectic structure of Thomas's long debate, these conceptions pass by too quickly to make sense: 'wil' has no place in an analysis of Tristrem's state of mind; Mark's 'sinnen' and the rights of marriage are simply contradictory. As the awkward turn of the first two lines suggests, inner debates and authorial dissertations are of no interest to the poet of Sir Tristrem. This vestigial monologue simply introduces action, rather than analyzing its meaning or its motivation.

Meaning and motivation often disappear in the English account. Since Ysonde expresses no anger at Tristrem's flight from her tent (3147-57), his return as a leper makes no sense as a gesture of supplication, nor does his "sorwe" (3296-344) provide the circumstance for the hero's fatal wound, but the encounter no longer vibrates with Thomas's implications of psychological doubling and identity-questioning. Occasionally, flashes of Thomas's interpretation do seem to appear. Tristrem's sudden and unique statement when wounded by Moraunt, "In sorwe ich haue ben ay / se[n]e [since] ich alie haue ben" (1138-39), may translate Thomas's idea that an ultimately fatal love should express itself in temporal suffering. A few more passages seem to draw on Thomas's pain-encompassing love:

Rai wonde hie ise 20033.  
Certes, it nas nouȝt so.

Her weynge was al wouȝt.
Their hope / false

Vntrue to them.

Aljyn in langoure 20033.
Each fell into sorwe

And token rede to gec. 
 decided

And selȝen ysonde boȝt.
Then

Wip wolle.

(1728-36)

This dramatization of feelings alternating between joy and sorrow, hope and disappointment nearly captures Thomas's idea that love's contrary movements are reciprocal and inseparable. But the English poet does not pursue the interpretation consistently. Often Sir Tristrem just drifts with the narrative current, often both narrative and interpretation have a cursory evasiveness that Bedier labeled "le logogriphe du conteur anglais." 40

This is the kind of Middle English romance that critics shrug off as popular oral composition or as a crowd-pleaser for an excessively simple audience. Neither explanation is plausible for Sir Tristrem. The work does appear to imitate or descend from minstrel recitation, although its calls for attention, rhetorical questions, and vacuous line fillers are entirely characteristic of Middle English written style. 41 One unusual stanza describes listeners questioning Ysonde's censure. The eponymous Tristrem (3296-344) provides the circumstance for the hero's fatal wound, but the encounter no longer vibrates with Thomas's implications of psychological doubling and identity-questioning. Occasionally, flashes of Thomas's interpretation do seem to appear. Tristrem's sudden and unique statement when wounded by Moraunt, "In sorwe ich haue ben ay / se[n]e [since] ich alie haue ben" (1138-39), may translate Thomas's idea that an ultimately fatal love should express itself in temporal suffering. A few more passages seem to draw on Thomas's pain-encompassing love:

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(1728-36)
So complete an evocation of oral delivery is rare in Middle English romance. However, Sir Tristrem's close relationship to a lengthy written source makes oral composition unlikely. Oral recitation may well be part of Sir Tristrem's history, but the poem's lapses of sense and losses of significance cannot be explained away by presuming even a highly dramatic performance. "The gesture, the facial expression, the vocal cadences and modulations of a skilled reciter" could hardly supplant deleted motivations or untangle mistakenly ordered episodes.

Nor is it satisfactory to propose that Sir Tristrem's audience was ignorant or coarse. This argument is dangerously fluid: no sooner have we explained a poem's awkwardness by hypothesizing an "uncultured" audience than we find ourselves demonstrating the existence of the uncultured audience by using the poem's awkwardness as evidence! The circularity of the argument is in any case broken by Sir Tristrem's preservation in the Auchinleck manuscript, in company with other adaptations from Anglo-Norman. An audience capable of enjoying the length and thematic complexity of Beves of Hamtoun, Guy of Warwick, and Amis and Amiloun cannot be invoked to explain the extraordinary reductions and simplifications of Sir Tristrem.

Robert Manning of Brunne provides a more likely explanation. He blames corruption of a Northern "sir Tristrem" on its "strange Inglis," its difficult verse and language. He, Robert, will write "In sympe speche . . . be luf of symple men," too difficult for his listeners is the Tristrem poem "in so quante Inglis / jat many one wate not what it is [many do not understand it]." He claims that the original "sir Tristrem" was excellent, but that those who disseminate it refuse to simplify its language "for pride & nobleye, / bat non were suyk as bei" [out of pride and haughtiness, as if none were such as they are], leading to many errors of transmission. We see that Robert does not think of this Tristrem poem as a popular work and contrasts its intended audience to his own intended audience of "fewed men." His account of ambitious retellers who are not quite able to handle difficult English versification or Thomas's subtle treatment of the legend can explain both the clumsiness of the extant Sir Tristrem and its niche among more sophisticated poems in the Auchinleck manuscript.

This erratic text does share certain revisionary tendencies with other romances of its period. Most important, Sir Tristrem does not conceive of the heroes' love as Thomas of Britain does. Indeed, the poet has so little affinity for Thomas's 'fine amor' that he reduces the lovers' encounters to entirely physical "playing," and he even allows Tristrem's dog Hodain to lap a bit of the love drink and share the passions resulting from it:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pe coupe he licked bat tide} & \quad \text{time} \\
\text{It dou down it sett bringwain:} & \quad \text{When} \\
\text{Hai loued al in lide} & \quad \text{all together} \\
\text{And ber of were hai fan:} & \quad \text{glad} \\
\text{Hai loued wip al her mî3t} & \quad \text{their} \\
\text{And hodain dede al so.} & \quad \text{1675-78, 1903-94} \\
\end{align*}
\]

It is possible that Brenngwain joins the loving couple here and certain that Hodain does. This startling equation of human and animal sens-
tirement is hardly justifiable as "an obvious attempt to give some rational explanation for the unusual faithfulness of Tristrem's dog." The English poet evade a problem central to the story, the lovers' fatal interdependence, by treating the episode as if mere affection were its subject.

Strange as Hodain's participation is, it reflects a late insular tendency to portray lovers' commitment coexisting easily with other kinds of devotion. Another animal friend, the lion in Yvain, shares the lovers' joy in Yvain and Guain. In his conclusion Chretien de Troyes distinguishes between Yvain's "joie" and Lunete's "eise" at having helped; the heroine Laudine's reaction, perhaps ironically, goes unrecorded. The English version makes all three principals, and the lion, share an apparently equal happiness ever after:

And so Sir Ywain and his wife
In joy and bliss did have a life,
So did Lunet and be lown
Until [hat ded have daven bydown."

Similarly, Amadas et Ydoin replaces Tristan's isolating, antisocial love with a love encompassing family and social proprieties. The Anglo-Norman Horn gives a ring in token of love to Rigmel, whereas his English counterpart gives one ring to Rimenhild and one to his friend Abulf. Gui de Waerenc integrates romantic love with marriage, nurturance of a hero-son, lifelong friendship for Terri, and devoted service to God as well. Admirable love, for these later romances, does not exclude lovers from any other relationships, but rather facilitates complete engagement in life.

This context illuminates why Sir Tristrem avoids Thomas's emphases on how at odds with society or how laden with inner tension the love of Tristan and Isolt is. Often these elements lose their sense in Middle English. The hall of statues in Brangien's anger (2804-49) stops short of this ceremony, narrating only Tristan's tangible success over his detractors replaces the Anglo-Norman examination of "estrange amor." Tristrem is also a hero of English custom and history, as the originator of hunting and gaming practices (484, 1273-74) and the defender of England against Ireland (1033-34). His gaming skill is matched by his generosity (320-41 and notes); he bears himself nobly (1222) and stands in contrast to those who butcher deer like common "husband men" (455). In these passages exemplary ability or breeding, or bearing substitute for Thomas's exploration of fatal love as the significance of the Tristan story."

But the English poet does not consistently accommodate the story's central love affair to these interpretations of Tristrem's heroism. Nor can the poet's gestures toward revising Thomas's interpretation of the lovers' love be trewe, accepting the issue of faith in love but evading Thomas's emphasis on failures of faith: his Tristan is "l'Amerus" but hardly "be trewe." In each case, as in the love-drink episode, Sir Tristrem avoids Thomas's preoccupation with the problems of love. What was central for Thomas is peripheral for the English poet.

Strengthening this tendency in Sir Tristrem are some gestures toward giving positive interpretations to the story's episodes. Not only do Brangoin's revelations to Mark somehow signify a victory for Ysande, but Tristrem becomes something more of an adventuring hero, one who succeeds at whatever he attempts. His wife's brother feels shamed by the unconsummated marriage to Ysande, but upon seeing the hall of statues he declares, "'Tristrem, we ar wode [crazy]. 'To spoken ojain j[against your] wille'" (2991-92). Tristrem's tangible success over his detractors replaces the Anglo-Norman examination of "estrange amor." Tristrem is also a hero of English custom and history, as the originator of hunting and gaming practices (484, 1273-74) and the defender of England against Ireland (1033-34). His gaming skill is matched by his generosity (320-41 and notes); he bears himself nobly (1222) and stands in contrast to those who butcher deer like common "husband men" (455). In these passages exemplary ability or breeding, or bearing substitute for Thomas's exploration of fatal love as the significance of the Tristan story."

But the English poet does not consistently accommodate the story's central love affair to these interpretations of Tristrem's heroism. Nor can the poet's gestures toward revising Thomas's interpretation of the lovers' love convince us that the heroes' love is natural and untroubled. The Tristan story has lost the significance developed for it by Thomas, and it has not gained a new one.

48. Tristrem also shows he 'honour can' [understands honor] in his treatment of guines (46): he prays for aid or in thanks (390-96, 1484-86, 2351-54, 2751-80). Rumble would have it that the prayers show "character development." "Sir Tris­ trem," p. 225 since they occur in three of Tristrem's four combats and not in the first. But since Tristrem's longest prayer for aid (390-96) predates his first combat, he is never a godless youth.
Yet Sir Tristrem's half-articulated penchants for ingenious and integrating love are precisely those of thirteenth-century insular romances as a whole. In Floris and Blancheflor, another very early English romance about love, Floris's affection grows in him like a plant, developing as naturally as his sense of taste:

| Looe is at his hert roote | But no bing is so soothe: | sweet
| Is not so soothe as hur louse is. |

This natural love, in contrast to Tristan's, faces surmountable obstacles and reaches a happy, sociable resolution.

Guy de Warewic, from the earlier thirteenth century, resists in a more general way than Sir Tristrem the romance structures that troubled Thomas and Hue de Rotelande. The poet of Guy is interested enough in conventions of love to depict at length the young heroes' developing feelings and courtship, with Guy's pain echoing Tristan's: "'beu ai ore iel beivre, / Que mielz aim la mort que la vie'" ["suche a drinke me is yive, / That y ne kepe noo lenger lyve"]. Further analogies with Tristan's situation emphasize the problems love brings, as Guy must oppose his parents' wishes and see his friends die in order to fulfill Fidelis's command that he become the best knight in the world. Guy's regrets and his protest against the isolating tendency of love (see pp. 62–63) call to mind Tristan's laments and prepare for a central episode in which, like Tristan, Guy remembers his beloved just as he is marrying a foreign lady (AN 4235–50; ME A 4193–216). But in Guy's case the ceremony is not quite over, so he can escape unmarried; the strong family context of his subsequent marriage to Felice reverses the os­tance. Not all the implications of these patterns are faced in the fourteenth-century works, but in Guy's case the story, like Tristan's, takes the suit of love is ideally compatible with feudal achievement, and feudal achievement with Christian principle. The tournament developed from a "miniature war" of profit-taking chaos into the ceremonial "round table" with its blunted weapons, judges and regulations, and Arthurian pageantry. Participants began to disguise themselves as literary characters. Edward III rode incognito in a Dunstable tournament of 1334, identified in its records only as Sir Lynel, a cousin of Lancelot. He seems to have extended the connection by transferring the arms he used there to his son Lionel of Antwerp, born four years later. In such actions Edward perpetuated his grandfather's close and practical engagement with Arthurian legend: responding to Boniface VIII's charge that he had violated Scotland's liberties, Edward I defended his actions by invoking King Arthur's subju-
Adapting Conventions of Courtliness

By the time an English poet adapted Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon* into the tail-rhyme *Ipomadon* (ca. 1375), the pageantry of literature was entering more fully into English baronial life. The middle and later fourteenth century saw extensive interactions between chivalric literature and social behavior, and the nature of these interactions is important to assessing the claims to exemplarity so often made by fourteenth-century poets. Imitating romance topoi, knights of this period took vows, accomplished adventures, and proclaimed pas d'armes in which they faced challengers for a fixed number of days. Elaborate tournaments and military successes. In an English diplomatic mission of 1377 several young men wore patches over one eye, et dissoit on qu'il avoient vu entre les dames de leur pays que jamais ne verroient que d'un œil, jusques à tant qu'il avoient fait aucunes process d'armes ou royaume de France, laquelle chose ilz ne vouloient pas confesser à ceux qui leur demandoient. and it was said that they had vowed to the ladies of their country that they would see with only one eye until such time as they had performed feats of arms in France, and this they did not wish to reveal to those who inquired about it. Like Guy and Amadas, these young knights test themselves through the service of ladies, and the congruence of their personal oaths creates a fraternal body that shares in chivalric experience. The young men's reticence signals that their motive is serious and not vainglorious, yet it is also essential that their vow become known, to be held a "grande merveille" and recorded by Jean le Bel. This process imitates the characteristic romance sequence in which a hero's isolated self-improvement is finally published to the court, reintegrating heroic individuality into a noble community. Fourteenth-century knights were linked to literature by their imitations, and further by their elevation to literary record in the works of chroniclers and poets. The great 1358 festival of the Knights of the Garter was said to be "invisa a tempore regis Arthuri," of a kind unseen since the reign of Arthur. A combat of 1351, arranged between thirty knights on the English side and thirty on the French during a truce in the general hostilities, was celebrated in verse and prose as "ung moult merveilleux fait d'armes que on ne doit pas oublier" [a most wonderful feat of arms that should not be forgotten]. Far from breaking off the encounter when one of the participants was killed, the knights "se maintinrent noblement d'une part et d'autre aussi bien que tous fussent Rolant ou Olivier" [carried on as nobly on both sides as if they had all been Roland or Oliver]. As the Chandos Herald asserts in his *Life of the Black Prince*, of such lives as these "homme en purroit faire un livre / Bien auxi grant comme d'Artus, / D'Alisandre ou de Clarus" [one could make a book as long as that of Arthur, Alexander, or Clarus]. Literature in this period commemorated as well as inspired chivalric behavior. Some historians claim that such behavior was empty show, but these knights did risk their lives to act on principle. Even in the newly controlled tournament, fought for honor rather than gain, men were killed with some regularity. Honor was also important to conduct in war and sometimes led men to death where military strategy would have dictated restraint or retreat. The knights who swore oaths over roast pheasants and swans were risking their lives

57. *Chandos Herald* describes the period after the victory of Poitiers as Arthurian: "Dameur et chacier et voler, / Faire guerre et dresser et jouer, / Faire feu et jouer en regne d'Artur / L'espace de quatre ans ou plus" [for four years or more, they danced and hunted and hawked, held great feasts and jousted, as in the reign of Arthur].
to imitate literature, and the captains who arranged the Combat of the Thirty are said to have chosen combat over jousting in order to win greater “conseur” and “pris” from their deaths. It was not for mere show that knights were willing to die, but for a chivalric honor of which public ceremony and literary celebration were part.

Defining knighthood as a complex of social and military virtues was largely new to social practice, but not to literature. The concept’s sources were religious writings about ideal knighthood, chronicle accounts of legendary heroes, and romance visions of self-discovery through the service of love. Like William Marmion, Eustace d’Aubrichecourt imitated love service from literature. According to Jean Froissart, this Garter knight loved the niece of Queen Philippa, Jean le Bel, Chronique, ii. 195. See pp. 175–79 above; Barber, Knight and Chantry, pp. 150–46. R. F. Green, “Chaucer’s Knight,” and Orme, “Courtier,” discuss courtly literature’s influence on education of the aristocracy. Barber, pp. 207; Dembowski, p. 201.

In contrast the twelfth-century chronicler Lambert of Ardres and his subjects do not seem to take courtly behavior seriously. According to Lambert, Arnulf courted Ida uncouthly because of his wise detachment. Arnulf’s ancestor Sigfried also behaved opportunistically rather than humbly; he exchanged some secret messages with a certain Elstrude and then “nolenti velle, immo nolle volenti, sine te tutam, suovel volens impregnavit” [she unwilling to be willing, indeed willing to be unwilling, in sport he attacked her by force without violence and secretly impregnated her]. Lambert treats Sigfried’s courtship, like Arnulf’s, as calculating and manipulative rather than idealizing. In the later Middle Ages, however, the sympathy of the cultural record and the deeper engagement of knights with courtly ideology mark a shift from accepting the distance between literature and life to seeking to unite the two.

In this union writers come to associate the transforming power of love closely and regularly with marriage. Sir Thomas Gray attributes David of Scotland’s marriage with Margaret de Logy to love alone—“cest matrimoigne fust fait soulement per force damours, qe toutz veint” [this marriage was accomplished only by the power of love, which conquers all]. Praise of love in marriage was the subject of many lyrics written by courtiers; Eustache Deschamps involves several of his friends in a ballade asking whether it is mance because Froissart assists in the imitation. The vocabulary of virtues and the syntax of love’s relation to prowess are drawn straight from literature; in his second version Froissart adds the thoroughly romantic hyperbole, “ne nuls ne durant devan lui, car il estoit jones et amoureus durement” [nor could anyone withstand him, for he was young and deeply in love]. Froissart and Eustace strive in their different ways to demonstrate that life can fulfill literature’s ideal of self-improving service to love.

To other knights he was an example of wisdom and chivalry, of learning and courtly, of nobility and generosity. . . . He often sent her messages about his acts of the aristocracy. For example, Jean de Joinville, a certain Elstrude and then “nolenti velle, immo nolle volenti, sine te tutam, suovel volens impregnavit” [she unwilling to be willing, indeed willing to be unwilling, in sport he attacked her by force without violence and secretly impregnated her]. Lambert treats Sigfried’s courtship, like Arnulf’s, as calculating and manipulative rather than idealizing. In the later Middle Ages, however, the sympathy of the cultural record and the deeper engagement of knights with courtly ideology mark a shift from accepting the distance between literature and life to seeking to unite the two.

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better to marry a young or an older lady. His refrain makes Sir Lewis Clifford author the authority on this question *d’amour*: "m’escripvez vostre accort; / Et s’avisez n’esiez de la partie, / Demandez ent a l’amoureux Clifford." [write me your decision; and if you aren’t informed on the question, ask the lover Clifford about it]." Deschamps’s strategy asserts that literary topoi (the young versus the older woman, the question *d’amour*) can be illuminated by Clifford’s personal experience as a lover. Similarly, Chaucer’s elegy for Blanche of Lancaster treats her husband John of Gaunt as the living embodiment of literary love-conventions; and the Chandos Herald presents the Black Prince’s wife complaining to a literary fabricator’s strategy asserts that literary topoi (the young versus Des-64 in informed on the question, ask the lover Clifford about it]. Lewis Clifford the authority on this question d’amour) becomes itself a literary convention in the fourteenth century, one that recognizes and encourages the contemporary practice of imitating literature.

It is quite true, as historians like Huizinga and Kilgour demonstrate, that in many instances noble behavior did not live up to the standards proclaimed by the age. However, the issue is not on whether nobles invariably bowed their actions on literary ideals, but whether on the whole they believed that these were worthy ideals whose pursuit was validated in life.6 This they did believe. Commemorated by writers, praised by society, rewarded with status, the imitation of literary love and chivalry became an important feature of fourteenth-century experience.

Romances were part of this world of literary imitations. The English romances of love and chivalry vary widely, but Ipomadon illustrates a dominant tendency for the more accomplished works of the century. These works revise earlier literary ideals of behavior to make them more accessible in many ways. Continuing in the directions established by Amades et Ysiane’s and Sir Tristrem’s revisions of Tristan, Ipomadon and similar romances alter their sources sufficiently to permit an authorial stance of endorsement rather than ironic distance. Their revisions reduce tension and increase exemplarity, move style toward naturalism, and in general assert that romance heroes are understandable and that we can learn from them.

These alterations align poetry with the growing impulse toward imitation. Yet the late romances’ naturalism is highly selective, and their didacticism is couched in hyperbole and fantasy. They expand their claims to practical value at a time when the barony’s economic and political power was actually diminishing. These developments are not so paradoxical as they seem. Rather than attempting a direct correlation between represented and real noble behavior, the assertions of the later poets confer a metaphoric and cultural value on the barony that fills in for its losses in concrete power. The experience provided by these English works is quite different from that of early romances, but that experience continues to relate ideals about courtliness to perceptions about noble status and behavior.

Ipomadon provides a striking example of the process because it adheres so closely to its source, Hue de Rotelande’s Ipomadon, and yet revises that source so consistently.6 In general Ipomadon reproduces Hue’s text sympathetically.

64. Oeuvres complètes, ed. Quevauviller de Saint-Hilaire, III, 371; Goover’s "Cinkante Balades" and "Traité pour essampler les amantz marietz" also exemplify the century’s tendency to link love with marriage (The Complete Works of John Goover, ed. Macaulay, I, 335–94).

65. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Robinson, pp. 270–73. Via du Prince Noir, lines 203–14. The Chevalier de la Tour Landry describes his courtship of his wife in literary terms—he served love devotedly and was rewarded with a beautiful and virtuous lady to whom he wrote many lyrics (Chevalier de la Tour Landry, ed. Montaignon, pp. 1–2). Burnet’s comesthen (War, p. 88) that romances could not guide life because their view of love was counter to marriage seems to refer to OE rather than ME works.

66. See n 8 above.
This is a faithful rendering, but its slowed tempo deflects the extravagant, even comical impact of Hue's chopped dialogue. The English poet tends to revise any element of style, commentary, or plot that could undermine the story's validity.

The most obvious change, since it involves many deletions through the whole work, is that Hue's bantering asides, pointed ironies, and insouciant sensuality virtually disappear from Ipomedon. Gone are Hue's speculations on la Fiere's hidden beauties, on the queen's secret desires, on his lovers' virginity, and on how he himself would pardon ladies hesitant to love. Other reductions move in the same direction. Lovers' monologues, especially the more tortured and hopeless ones, shrink or become calmer. Exotic love-symptoms such as turning black and livid largely disappear from the English text.

These reductions all contribute to the English poet's effort to alter fundamentally the tone and thematic focus of Ipomedon.

When Hue's ironic commentary does move into English, it can be so transformed that blame becomes praise:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Celui ke plus femme harra,} \\
\text{Quant sun quer li rechangera} \\
\text{Pus ert cil de li amez plus;} \\
\text{E si runt eles un autre us:} \\
\text{Celui ke eles plus amerunt} \\
\text{Pur poi de achesun plus harrunt,} \\
\text{Ki a poer l'avreit servi,} \\
\text{Jo en sai le veir, pur co le di.}
\end{align*}
\]

(8657-66)

When a woman's heart changes on her, the man she hates most becomes the one she loves most; and they have another habit too: the man they love most, they'll hate most with little justification, such that they become distant more quickly than would he who wished to serve her as best he could. I know the truth of this, that's why I'm saying it.

A woman is both warre & wyse, perceptive
Grette loue & lykyng in them lyse.

69. Some love symptoms are deleted from Ipomedon (ed. Holden): lines 765 (trembling), 734-35 (heart leaving body), 1100-1101 (swelling and changing color), 1494 (turning black and livid), and 8733-48 (various; vs. ME 7122-26). Reduced monologues are AN 951-1508 vs. ME 911-1034, AN 4584-614 vs. ME 3414-17, AN 5237-58 vs. ME 3993-95. A few of Hue's comments appear almost unchanged in ME. 356-90, 312-15, 750-34, 797-808, 8586-88, 6468-71, 7740-54.

70. Other examples of la Fiere's vacillation are AN 3765-66, 5087-94; of her devotion strengthened by adversity, ME 4546-52 vs. AN 6157-62, 3870-75.
through the plot itself, sometimes Middle English reformatations coexist with original versions of episodes in a confusing way. The Anglo-Norman hero, wary of women and ready for adventures, tricks la Fiere into believing that her monstrous suitor Leoni has won her kingdom—a surprisingly cold-hearted deception. The English poet explains that Ipomadon wore armor like Leoni's not to hurt the Fiere but to spare her pain if he should be defeated (762-700); the hero leaves for further adventures after his successful combat because “evermore in his heart he thought: ‘Till [to] her vowe corde [accord] I sought, / Therefore I will wytndrawe’” (8159-61). Unfortunately these justifications sit oddly with a passage retained from Anglo-Norman in which the disguised Ipomadon taunts the Fiere: “To morowe in to Yndde ye shall wyth me, / For I haue slayne youre knyght!” Usually the translator's revisions are more coherent, but occasionally Hue's subversions still trouble the English text.  

Most effective in establishing a new coherence for Ipomadon is the English poet's use of a central motif from Ipomadon, la Fiere's proud vow to marry only the best knight in the world. In Hue's poem Ipomadon's appearances suggest that his conduct was too proud (136-48); several new passages stress that Ipomadon’s respect for the vow is so strong that it inhibits him, against the wishes of his heart, from ending his search for “losse and price” [praise and merit]:

*But euer more in his herte he bought, / Yet till her asow corde he sought, / did not accord to Here husband for to bee; / That made hym often tymes fro her fare.* (2068-103)  

The English poet praises Ipomadon's dedication (992-97), and even the Fiere's courtiers, who first condemn the vow as in Hue’s work (AN 134-38, ME 121-26), later are so impressed by the heroine that they concede, “‘No wonder, yf she be daungerus [hazardous] / To take an oworthy spousse’” (2058-59).  

73. For a comprehensive list of alterations to Yvain, see Stevens and Gawain, pp. xxi-xxiv. Stevens attributes ME reductions in irony to the poets' aversion to the vow’s “wonder, yf she be daungerus [hazardous] / To take an oworthy spousse” (2058-59).  

74. “Repose le train et le chevalier... Gardez que les vents ne me repiquen.” Bisson particulier mon cher compagnon” (1500, 1350-11).

75. Stevens, Medieval Romance, p. 79; Pearsall, Middle English, p. 147.
to be more sensitive to romance ideals than Ystyn simply because it rejects irony and conflict in those ideals. But English romances are differently sensitive, committed to reducing the extravagances and relaxing the tensions that arose in the irony of earlier poets.

Even in *Guy of Warwick*, which follows closely an Anglo-Norman romance attuned to later insular developments, some changes smooth over conflicts between ideals of life. When Hue determines to use his prowess to serve God rather than to serve Felice, she protests. "Avez mei vus dune en despit?" ["Do you scorn me then?"] (7636), and Gui explains, "Pur vus al fai maint grant pecche'
["For you I have sinned greatly"]; (7674). The Middle English poem reshapes the encounter so that Guy's new life seems more to improve on than to conflict openly with his past life. Guy's explanation, "Y schal walk for mi sinne" ["I will walk for my sin"]; (A 29.8), displaces the wrong from the love relationship to Guy's own soul, and Felice no longer feels scorned. Most striking, the poor Anglo-Norman wife sees herself as God's rival when Gui departs: "Cest anel d'or vus portez. / Pernez de mei quant le verrez. / Que vus pur Deu ne me ublez." ["Take this gold ring with you, think of me when you see it, so that you don't forget me for God"] (7722-24). But the English Felice understands Guy's departure as a new stage of self-improvement that does not deny his past: of her gold ring she says, "When jou er in fer curtne / Luke heron, & jenck on me. / & god ye pe bitche [commend you to God]"; (A 33.7-9). Felice remarkably extends the convention that love improves knights when she connects Guy's love for her to service of God.

Felice's acquiescence erases the conflict her Anglo-Norman counterpart experienced between love and faith by revising her own role as proud heroine (she, like la Fiere, had demanded that her lover become the best knight in the world). Hue questioned the validity of that role through his rough treatment of la Fiere, and the later insular romances prefer to show lovers in sympathy with each other, working productively to achieve their happiness. The English Ipomedon's willing acceptance of the Fere's vow eliminates the tension Hue builds between the lovers, and the English poet further declares (despite the plot's dependence on the convention of

76. Earlier in Guy's courtship, an added ME passage (A 627-24) explains that Felice's demands are principled rather than cold, preparing for her submission to Guy's new life. Camargo, *Metamorphosis*, finds similar alterations of the AN *Alexander in Alcuaxader* (pp. 101-11).
collapse from love. "She tombyled doun upon her bedde" (1406), does translate "Vent a son lit si chet enverse" [she comes to her bed and falls backward on it] (1463), but the English gesture is less historic, requires no premeditation, and therefore seems more heartfelt as well as more plausible. Critics often remark the shift from a mannered and even hermetic style to a natural and even colloquial style in the Middle English romances; William of Palerne, Yvain and Gawain, and Floris and Blanchefleur are other obvious illustrations. But the shift does not imply a loss of idealism despite the changed understanding of love and chivalry. Rather, in the later Insular romances, principled love and chivalry come to be presented as natural practices rather than held at a distance through the twin and opposed motions of irony and elevation. The naturalness of Ipomadon's presentation is part of its argument that these lovers are understandable even in their excellence—they are the ideal made accessible.

Part of the English romances' accessibility lies in their didacticism, their gestures toward helping the audience step from admiration to imitation. Ipomadon begins, "Off love were lycynge of to lere" [it would be pleasant to learn about love], and executes its teaching almost programmatically by transforming many of Ipomadon's episodes into lessons. Where Hue mocks women's incomprehensibility, the English poet invites us "to lerne at there lore" [learn from their wisdom] (1420). Where Hue exposes chivalrous society's pretensions through Ipomedon's disguise as a coward, the English poet finds a lesson in manners verbalized by the chastised mockers themselves:

All that ever to skorne hym lough,
Off them self thought skorne inough
And sayden on their advise:
"Off a straunge man in uncovthe place,
In them self thought skorne inough
Leste off nurture lyse!"

The concern for "norture" is characteristic of the later romances, where "cortaysye" has become a matter of social education in a broad sense. To instruct us, the poetic world strives to make itself like our own world and not difficult to understand. Thomas and Hue find human nature more perplexing and draw from continental tradition their sense that romances are poetic artifacts existing separately from daily life. The English romances, without claiming to be realistic in plot, introduce this new kind of practical admonishing.

And yet the exemplary quality of the English romances, striking as it is, cannot account convincingly for their success. Only when we take exemplarity as one manifestation of what is more fully and forcefully implicit in their natural style, their revised ideals, and their refusal of ironic distance can we see how these romances worked for their audience.

Middle English romances deny to traditional Old French courtliness something essential: its elitism, its hermetic reserve. Twelfth-century courtliness functioned ideologically by exclusion. In love and chivalry were worthy of celebration in part because of their distance from and superiority to life. This literature did not strive to be accessible. It was \textit{necit clas} and as such was emblematic of the aristocracy's claim, however futile, to economic and political autonomy. But in England in the fourteenth century, literature itself provided a means of demonstrating superiority. Barons sought to take hold of literature's cultural status by imitating art in life and by generating new texts out of their exploits. English romances facilitate the barony's claim to status by their very openness, by advertising the naturalness and imitability of their new courtly love and chivalry.

\textit{In Few Wordes Ys Curtesye}

This shift in the function of courtly literature is the culmination of literary and social changes that began with Anglo-Norman responses to Old French romance. Thomas of Britain's Tristan and Hue de Rotelande's Ipomadon establish an approach to continental convention that is continued in the Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The later works tend to concentrate, like their predecessors, on the degree of reconciliation possible between ideal models and observed realities but "or bei wer wed, / bei speryd nat jare" (\textit{ed. Casson)}, lines 3599-40), and \textit{Knight of Curteisy} turns the adulterous tragedy of the OF \textit{Childe de Gis} into an entirely chaste love affair, "\textit{For houe our bodis to kepeth cleere}" (ed. McCausland, line 491). See also Courtesy and Nurture, ed. Painors.
of human behavior. Despite the differences in temperament that separate Thomas from Hue, this concern unites their convictions that, on Thomas's side, "une ne sot que fus amor, / Ne put sayer que est dolur" [one who has never known love cannot know what sorrow is] (D 991-92), and on Hue's side that "Amur ne quert fors sun delit" [love seeks only its own pleasure] (4313). To argue that fine amor is shot through with pain or that it is above all sensual and selfish is in both cases to recognize the contingency of refined love upon lovers' merely physical being. The recognition anchors disembodied courtly ideals firmly in mortal clay, resisting conventional hermeticism and hyperbole.

Thomas and Hue handle their powerful images of noble extremists of love with skeptical detachment, while thirteenth- and fourteenth-century poets are able to handle their less problematic versions of courtliness with glad confidence. They make literary principles more compatible with ordinary social conviction, associating ideal love to many other fulfillments and chivalric ideals to military practice, sensible moderation, and politeness. This adaptation greatly reduces the tension between courtly image and ordinary humanity that troubled the earlier Anglo-Norman poets. From Amadas et Ydoine on, a strong current in insular romance finds a solution to love's antisocial potential in the natural sympathy of lovers and their complicity in seeking a good life. In Sir Tristem as well, love becomes a simpler, more accessible good (unfortunately accessible even to a dog), and the heroes grow more able to control events. Ipomadon revises its source's ironic discord between love and lengthy adventures into a delicate symbiosis that requires separation and adventure to nurture the natural slow growth of love.

In terms of literary history, then, the later insular poets answer their Anglo-Norman predecessors coherently and purposefully. The course of generic development also makes sense in terms of the barony's growing social engagement with patterns of behavior from literature. Fourteenth-century poets' assertions that their heroes are explicable and imitable are not naive; these poets "wrote about chivalrous ideals that were neither a pose nor the exclusive property of a narrow caste, but rather about ideals which they knew as a living and powerful force or ethos." In this context it is not surprising that romance should begin to look almost nonfictional. Ipomadon's explanation for his disguises might apply directly to the English knights who wore eyepatches abroad but would not discuss their vows.

In few wordes ys curtseye:
Lette his dedes bere wittenes, why
He shulde be louyde agayn! ... in return
And ay the moste man of price of greatest worth
The leyste of them selfe wille sayne!

(2339-41, 2346-47)

Hue and Thomas attempt poetic connections between ideal systems and their authorial perceptions of human nature, but this English passage even moves toward linking poetry and history. The many words of romance, superfluous to behavior, make themselves mere vehicles for a lesson that demands "few wordes" and many deeds. In this period living knights treated literature as a guide to behavior, and literature actively provided them with instruction.

Readers may lament, for poetry, that cultural history moved in this direction. The later romances of love and chivalry work changes on courtly ideology that are more aesthetically troubling than the changes worked on religious and national ideology in other romances, because these changes are to some degree at odds with the literary project itself. The English adapters' refusal of difficulties in the fine amor of their sources may strike us as a refusal of imagination. Consistently smoothing over a source's thematic tensions often gives the Middle English redactions a flat, riskless quality. Hardly any problems are left to be resolved, and those remaining have solutions that are taught to us as if they were simple matters. Even in the context of what has been called a golden age of chivalry, this teaching may seem facile. To provide exempla of politeness is one thing, but these romances even assert that the enormous deeds and extraordinary careers of their sources are not distant in their perfection but are instead open lessons for the attentive. It is puzzling that the romances changed at the cost of aesthetic subtlety, even when revisions were undertaken carefully and consistently as in Ipomadon. That the English romances of love and chivalry so often reflect
historical practices and so often take a stance of exemplarity is misleading; however, they ignore reality too persistently to be considered mirrors of their time and simplify life's problems too drastically to be satisfying as exemplary texts.8 They deliberately evade the tough issues of their sources and ignore the turbulent age around them. Rather, the consistent revisions that these works perform—their naturalism and exemplarity, their release of tensions and problems within plots, their refusal of ironic detachment and mystifying elevation—attempt to provide the audience with access to the ideals the text encloses. The later poets maintain not that there is no difference between the world of romance and the historical world, but that poetic ideals can be possessed and used. This claim, imaginative as it may be, is breaks down the hermetic exclusiveness that was essential to twelfth-century French romances' defense of the aristocracy's specialness. That exclusiveness was alien to Anglo-Norman romancers and quickly attacked by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century poets.

Poetic resistance to the hermeticism that made twelfth-century French courtly ideology powerful is consonant with the insular barons' social position in the later Middle Ages. From the Conquest, England's was a relatively open nobility, quite firmly controlled by the crown. By the fourteenth century the class was even less exclusive and its economic and political power were steadily declining.9 One source of status that the barony could still call on was cultural, and the proliferation of tournaments, orders of chivalry, courtiers' lyrics, and chivalric biographies in this period exercised the barony's claim to be the living embodiment of courtly and chivalric ideals. Literature provided support for the claim to cultural importance partly by altering courttoisie in ways compatible with social behavior, but more pervasively by simply taking a stance of im-

8. Even the more successfully sophisticated works of this tontry tend to "link up with the age's deeper currents of social unrest" (Medieval Readers; Their pervasive refusal of confrontation must be recog-

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Adapting Conventions of Courtliness

The barons' victory over decline was only partial, however, for displacing their merit from concrete toward cultural grounds made something of their merit available to all who had access to culture. Emphasizing their cultural superiority distinguished them from those merchants and professionals who could match barons in wealth and influence, yet that emphasis was itself vulnerable to middle-class ambition. Merchants who adopted coats of arms, attended tournaments, formed poetry-writing fraternities, and even achieved knighthood were encroaching on new territory in the fourteenth century, the very territory barons were attempting to occupy as their political and economic dominance gradually faded. And the audience for later courtly romances broadened just as participation in courtly behaviors expanded in the fourteenth century; indeed, the attempt in the late romances to confer courtly standing on listeners served competitive commoners better than it served the barony, insofar as it freely offered them a kind of status previously closed to them.

Although congenial to the middle class, the late romances of love and chivalry address primarily the aristocracy's deteriorating situation. Their naturalism, like their exemplarity, associates ideal to practice, endorsing the single change that seemed to improve the barony's position in this period—active imitation of literature in life. Their images of resolved tensions and easy victories are escapist but also laudatory and optimistic. More significantly, these elements taken globally provide a wellspring of renewed merit for the barony.

For in the later Middle Ages, knights in disguise at tournaments, ladies sending them tokens and fairy messengers, and nobles joining quasi-Arthurian orders of chivalry profess the same thing the late romances profess: that living persons can lay claim to the dignity of courtly ideology. When Froissart treats Eustace d'Aubriche-court as if he were a figure from romance, or when Ispamond's final lesson for lovers is "[that for a litle lette ye noughte]{you don't give up}:/ Sertes, no more dyd hee" (883-84), we need not conclude that Froissart was a crazy dreamer or that the Ispamond poet was hopelessly simplistic. Rather, such claims that romance and life are at one establish a new topos for courtly writing, a figurative assertion that life takes courtly ideals seriously and has absorbed the value of romance. This new topos is part of a historical process that allowed England's courtly society to reshape its identity and reaffirm its dominance in troubled and changing times.