ABSTRACT

Unwillingness to Love in Medieval English Romance:
Consent, Coercion, and the Conventions of the Genre

Unwillingness to love is a widespread motif within medieval English romance, which has been somewhat overlooked in previous scholarship. This thesis explores the presence of unwillingness to love across the tradition of medieval English romance, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, from the Breton *lai* to Arthurian prose romance, and from canonical to lesser-known works. I investigate the functions unwillingness to love serves as a literary device, particularly the extent to which it can be seen as a subversive or conservative motif, upholding, undermining, or questioning socio-cultural expectations of love, marriage, and gendered conduct. The first two chapters of this thesis focus on what I call 'romantic a(nti)pathy', instances of unwillingness to love or marry in general, which both reveal and question the gendered constraints upon love and conduct in medieval literature and life. The subsequent three chapters explore unwillingness to participate in particular kinds of relationships: interclass marriages (Chapter 3), interfaith or interracial relationships (Chapter 4), and adulterous relationships (Chapter 5). While resisting these relationships reasserts conventional social and moral boundaries, the episodes I discuss also pose more complex questions by interacting with and reflecting upon the contrary romance motifs of love across social divides, religious conversion and interfaith relationships, and adulterous love. Across its various manifestations, unwillingness to love often elicits connections between romance narratives and their readers' own concerns and experiences, I suggest, particularly in relation to issues of consent and coercion. Unwillingness to love offers a middle ground for reconsidering approaches to consent and coercion: positioned between *raptus* and mutual consent, it can reveal more of a varied and complex range of experiences. Drawing upon scholarship on marriage, gender, medieval readers, and queer theory, this thesis investigates the diverse functions of unwillingness to love as a romance motif.

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Unwillingness to Love in Medieval English Romance: Consent, Coercion, and the Conventions of the Genre

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For Granny,
who loves poetry and stories.

INTRODUCTION

Love is central to medieval romance: the semantic connection between these two words today reflects and derives from the prominence of love within medieval romance literature.[1] Although *romanz* initially referred to stories told in the vernacular (the romance languages), the term developed into a generic marker as well as a linguistic one.[2] In keeping with Helen Cooper's observation that '*any* of the features that might be taken as definitive for the genre may be absent in any particular case without damaging that sense of family resemblance', some romances do not concern themselves with love.[3] However, love is prominent enough within romance literature for Cooper to claim that 'almost all romances are narratives either of courtship leading to marriage, or of the trials that part a loving married couple', while Erich Auerbach famously declares that '[o]nly two themes are considered worthy of a knight: feats of arms, and love'.[4] There is a strongly political element to romance's focus on love, as Cooper notes: 'procreation was the means by which dynasties and great families maintained their existence. Female sexuality was therefore a matter of direct high economic and political concern'.[5] While Cooper focuses on the desirability of female desire, male desire was also politically important. In contrast to the asceticism of many religious works, romance literature emphasises and celebrates sexuality within marriage, endorsing the importance and value of love within secular society. Yet love can be a socially subversive as well as conservative theme: while the

[1] The *OED* suggests that the meanings of 'romance' as a 'love affair; a romantic relationship', a 'story of romantic love, esp. one which deals with love in a sentimental or idealized way; a book, film, etc., with a narrative or story of this kind. Also as mass noun: literature of this kind' 'all arose (apparently within English) ultimately from being characteristic of the style or content of the literary works denoted by senses A. 1 [A medieval narrative (originally in verse, later also in prose) relating the legendary or extraordinary adventures of some hero of chivalry] and A. 3 [A fictitious narrative, usually in prose, in which the settings or the events depicted are remote from everyday life]'. See 'romance, n. and adj.1', *OED*.

[2] See Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 8, 10–11.

[3] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 9. Romances that are not concerned with love include several crusading romances, such as *Richard Coeur de Lion*, *Roland and Vernagu*, *The Siege of Milan*, and *Capystranus* (while the Otuel romances include only a very minor focus on love and marriage); religious and penitential romances, such as *The Siege of Jerusalem* and *Titus and Vespasian* (which are also associated with crusading romances), as well as *Robert of Cisyle* and Henry Lovelich's *History of the Holy Grail*; and other outlying romances such as *Gamelyn* (which includes a marriage at the end, but not much focus on love).

[4] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 28; Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, intro. by Edward W. Said (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003; first publ. 1953), p. 140. Nicola McDonald suggests 'Romance is [...] always preoccupied with desire', while Geraldine Heng similarly argues romance is 'identified by the *structure of desire* which powers its narrative': 'Desire Out of Order and *Undo Your Door*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 34 (2012), 247–75 (p. 252); Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 3.

[5] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 222.

importance of love accords with secular expectations of marriage, procreation, and dynastic continuation, love can also be a disruptive force, which allows women significant agency and resourcefulness, and at times – although by no means as often as has previously been claimed – incorporates transgressive, adulterous desires.[6] Nicola McDonald argues that 'what distinguishes desire', which she sees as the driving force and primary subject of romance (as distinct from, but related to, love), 'is that it is inherently disruptive': it necessarily interrupts the status quo, although romance also 'order[s] [...] desire into culturally sanctioned ends'.[7] The romance genre's explorations of love could uphold or undermine social norms; this varied and dynamic capacity no doubt contributed to the thematic prominence of love in a genre that both endorses and interrogates ideals of human behaviour.

These observations about love in medieval romance also apply to the motif of unwillingness to love, which has so far been underexplored in literary scholarship. While not as central to the genre as the theme of love itself, unwillingness to love recurs in a huge range of medieval romances, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century (and beyond, although sixteenth-century romance and the works of Shakespeare are outside the scope of this study), from 'popular' to 'courtly' narratives, and from Breton lays to Arthurian prose romances. Unwillingness to love partly functions as a plot-generating device: Susan Crane argues that

> Later romances, particularly under the influence of the *Romance of the Rose*, develop a strongly narrative impulse within courtship by relocating the difficulties that divide the knight and his beloved from external circumstances to the lady's own resistance. With this development, refusal becomes an integral part of courtship, an expected first response that the lover's efforts can overcome.[8]

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[6] See further Cooper, 'Desirable desire: "I am wholly given over unto thee"', in *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 218–68; Flora Alexander, 'Women as lovers in early English romance', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 24–40; Judith Weiss, 'The wooing woman in Anglo-Norman romance', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1991), pp. 149–61; and Judith Weiss, 'The power and the weakness of women in Anglo-Norman romance', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, pp. 7–23. C. S. Lewis's claim that 'courtly love' must be adulterous in nature has now been widely discredited. For Lewis's argument, see *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; first publ. London: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 2–3, 15, 30–45; for more recent counter-arguments, see Corinne Saunders, 'Love and Loyalty in Middle English Romance', in *Writings on Love in the English Middle Ages*, ed. by Helen Cooney (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 45–61 (pp. 46–47); Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 307–19; Neil Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches, 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 1, 5–7, 24–32, 44–47.

[7] 'Desire Out of Order and *Undo Your Door*', pp. 253, 255.

[8] *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 63.

Crane rightly notes that unwillingness to love is a narrative device, placing the emphasis upon the lover's efforts to overcome resistance: this focus means that the trope lends itself to explorations of gender, as it contributes to constructing (and sometimes deconstructing) masculine and feminine identities by presenting rejections of love, and attempts to overcome such rejections, differently according to gender. However, Crane underestimates the variety of manifestations of unwillingness to love in romance literature. Unwillingness to love does not just occur in later romances influenced by the *Roman de la Rose*, nor does it solely locate resistance in a female protagonist. Unwillingness to love can be represented in different ways: through general resistance or apathy to romantic relationships (discussed in the first two chapters), or through resistance to particular relationships on specific grounds such as status (discussed in Chapter 3), race or faith (discussed in Chapter 4), or adultery and infidelity (discussed in Chapter 5). In all its various forms, unwillingness to love, like love itself, can function subversively or conservatively. Unwillingness to love can be both a narrative necessity (the obstacle required to generate the plot) and a narrative problem in romance, offering a way to challenge and disrupt the genre's usual celebration of love and marriage, and the concomitant emphasis on a mutual and desiring consent that may not have been reflected in readers' own experiences of love and marriage. Unwillingness to love can expose the fantasies of other romances as precisely that – fantasies – opening up space in which the gap between fiction and reality can be bridged, and the socio-cultural conditions affecting readers' lives acknowledged. However, unwillingness to love can also function conservatively: in most narratives, unwillingness to love is eventually overcome, and unwilling lovers sometimes transform into mouthpieces for the importance of normative desires. Alternatively, unwilling lovers may be punished for their resistance to love, upholding the importance of love and marriage by negative example. These subversive and conservative functions of unwillingness to love are not mutually exclusive: often, romances use unwillingness to love to raise questions about marriage, consent, and gender, while ultimately upholding marriage as a desirable norm and a means of narrative resolution. A normative ending does not necessarily silence the questions raised by the initial inclusion of unwillingness to love: romances often gesture towards alternatives to and criticisms of normative practices even while they appear to uphold the very same

normative practices.[9] The socially conservative *and* subversive potential of unwillingness to love suggests that this motif deserves scholarly attention.

Considering unwillingness to love in medieval romance offers a way to reappraise issues of consent, coercion, desire, and gender. These are subjects that have received considerable attention in recent decades, but a study of unwillingness to love offers a fruitful addition to current understandings.[10] Previous work on consent and coercion in romance has concentrated most often on the extreme ends of this spectrum of experiences: Kathryn Gravdal, Corinne Saunders, and Amy Vines have focused on instances of *raptus* within romance, while Cooper has emphasised the genre's celebration of mutual and free consent.[11] These studies have yielded vital insights but, as Vines notes,

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[9] See further Cooper's discussion of romance as 'a secular forum analogous to academic debate': *The English Romance in Time*, p. 13.

[10] For consent and coercion, see below. For some particularly influential discussions of desire, see Lucy M. Allen-Goss, *Female Desire in Chaucer's 'Legend of Good Women' and Middle English Romance*, Gender in the Middle Ages, 15 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2020); McDonald, 'Desire Out of Order and *Undo Your Door*'; Rosalind Brown-Grant, *French Romance of the Later Middle Ages: Gender, Morality, and Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Cooper, 'Desirable desire'; Nicola McDonald, 'A polemical introduction', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. by Nicola McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 1–21; Peggy McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects: Gender, Heroism, and Desire in the Grail Quest', in *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. by Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger, Medieval Cultures, 27 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 123–42. Much has been written about gender in romance: for a recent overview of scholarship on gender in Arthurian romance, see Carolyne Larrington, 'Gender/Queer Studies', in *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature*, ed. by Leah Tether and Johnny McFadyen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 259–72. See further Amy Burge et al., 'Introduction: New Approaches to Medieval Romance, Materiality, and Gender', in *Gender and Materialism*, ed. by Amy Burge et al. (=*Medieval Feminist Forum*, 56.1 (2020)), pp. 5–17; Siobhán M. Wyatt, *Women of Words in 'Le Morte Darthur': The Autonomy of Speech in Malory's Female Characters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Amy Burge, '"For You Are a Man and She Is a Maid": Gender and the East', in *Representing Difference in the Medieval and Modern Orientalist Romance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 71–101; Amy N. Vines, *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance*, Studies in Medieval Romance, 15 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011); Joanne Charbonneau and Désirée Cromwell, 'Gender and Identity in the Popular Romance', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton, Studies in Medieval Romance, 10 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009), pp. 96–110; Simon Gaunt, 'The Knight Meets His Match: Romance', in *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Cambridge Studies in French, 53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 71–121; Crane, *Gender and Romance*; Roberta L. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance*, Cambridge Studies in French, 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[11] Kathryn Gravdal, 'The Poetics of Rape Law: Chrétien de Troyes's Arthurian Romance', in *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 42–71; Corinne Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent: Middle English Romance and the Law of *Raptus*', in *Medieval Women and the Law*, ed. by Noël James Menuge (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), pp. 105–24; Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001), pp. 187–264, 283–310; Amy N. Vines, 'Invisible Woman: Rape as a Chivalric Necessity in Medieval Romance', in *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, ed. by Amanda Hopkins, Robert Allen Rouse, and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 161–80; Cooper, 'Desirable desire'. See also Suzanne M. Edwards, *The Afterlives of Rape in Medieval English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); and the essays in *Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom: Approaches to Difficult Texts*, ed. by Alison Gulley (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018) and *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose (New York: Palgrave, 2001). Salisbury and Weisl take a somewhat broader view of coercion, but remain largely focused upon male violence against women: Eve Salisbury, 'Chaucer's "Wife", the Law, and the Middle English Breton Lays', in *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. by Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrall

there is a need to consider coercion and sexual violence more broadly, '[r]eading all sexual misconduct, from the innocent yet unwanted kiss to the more overt act of forced coitus' to reveal 'the fundamental place of male sexual aggression in the implicit expectations of medieval chivalric behaviour'.[12] Investigating the motif of unwillingness to love can uncover diverse manifestations of male sexual aggression in the way Vines suggests, but can also go beyond this, as unwillingness to love is associated with male and female protagonists, exposing forms of coercion and sexual expectation that are perpetrated upon as well as by men. Studying unwillingness to love therefore aligns with recent interest in men as victims of sexual violence, in both medieval studies and analyses of sexual violence in the modern world.[13] Unwillingness to love can also mediate between discussions of *raptus* and mutual consent, offering a middle ground between these extremes that can refine our understanding of the variety and complexity of romance representations of consent and coercion. Unwillingness to love reveals more of a continuum between consent and coercion, perhaps offering a model more akin to medieval readers' experiences of love, sex, and marriage.[14]

Of course, the relationship between readers' lived experiences and romance representations is far from straightforward, and perspectives on the intersections between romance and reality vary greatly. Saunders suggests that

> romance straddles the actual and the fantastic, and offers the possibility for both social commentary and escapism. Indeed, the creativity of the genre may be seen as situated precisely in the slippage between the two modes of realism and fantasy.[15]

Llewelyn Price (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), pp. 73–93; Angela Jane Weisl, '"Quiting" Eve: Violence against Women in the *Canterbury Tales*', in *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. by Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), pp. 115–36.

[12] Vines, 'Invisible Woman', p. 180.

[13] Within medieval studies, see David Grubbs, 'The Knight Coerced: Two Cases of Raped Men in Chivalric Romance', in *Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom*, pp. 164–82; Catherine Batt, 'Malory and Rape', *Arthuriana*, 7.3 (1997), 78–99. On modern contexts, see Mithu Sanyal, *Rape: From Lucretia to #MeToo* (London: Verso, 2019), especially pp. 4-8; Aliraza Javaid, *Male Rape, Masculinities, and Sexualities: Understanding, Policing, and Overcoming Male Sexual Victimisation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Michelle Lowe and Paul Rogers, 'The Scope of Male Rape: A Selective Review of Research, Policy and Practice', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 35 (2017), 38–43; and, for some recent statistics, Kevin Rawlinson, 'Half of Men Have Had Unwanted Sexual Experiences, UK Study Finds', *Guardian*, 16 February 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/feb/16/half-men-unwanted-sexual-experiences-uk-study-mankind> [accessed 17 February 2021].

[14] For perspectives on consent and coercion as a continuum, and on the way in which consensual and coercive practices may have overlapped in medieval marriages, see Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature and Practice* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), p. 80; Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 146; Noël James Menuge, 'Female Wards and Marriage in Romance and Law: A Question of Consent', in *Young Medieval Women*, ed. by Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge, and Kim M. Phillips (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp. 153–71 (p. 154).

[15] Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent', p. 105.

In some ways, the romance genre offers an ideal mode through which to reassess the complex interactions between medieval literature and life in terms of their portrayals of consent and coercion. Cooper notes that '[r]omance, as the dominant secular literary genre of the period, was at the heart of [...] self-representation, a means by which cultural values and ideals were recorded and maintained and promulgated'.[16] From this perspective, romance's focus on mutual consent and the punishment of sexual violence can be seen as an idealistic self-representation of the best intentions of medieval society. This aligns with Neil Cartlidge's suggestion that 'the literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries reflects the idealism and psychological subtlety with which western society gradually defined a coherent, optimistic and abiding ideology of marriage in this period'.[17] However, literature does not just reflect societal ideals. As Laine E. Doggett argues, texts are 'indicators of social and cultural phenomena with the potential to shape and change attitudes, not merely [...] record[s] of attitudes', while McDonald suggests that '[r]omance is an enormously powerful cultural discourse; it both scripts our desires, [...] and seeks to organize them into legible and socially acceptable forms'.[18] Romance does not simply replicate cultural conditions: while its focus on mutual consent in marriage may be influenced by canon law, this can also be seen as part of the fantasy of romance as an idealistic medium, which represents how things ought to be (and sometimes how they ought not to be), not just how they are.[19] Yet romance's fantastical nature should not be taken to signify its separation from reality: as Jordi Sánchez-Martí notes, the 'apparent escapism' of romance 'allows for promiscuous roaming in uncharted social territories such as adultery, incest, and rape', 'addressing these familiar issues, and [...] promoting a cultural self-examination'.[20] Sánchez-Martí's focus on the more disturbing aspects of romance offers a useful addition to Cooper's view of the genre's idealism: romance not only records and promulgates cultural values, but interrogates and critiques societal problems. To these models of idealism and critique Tison Pugh adds a view of romance as ideology, enforcing socio-cultural norms and expectations:

> Medieval romances illustrate the ways in which culturally dominant paradigms of sexual identity structure and confine human relationships, thus exposing their audiences to

[16] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 6.
[17] Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage*, p. 1.
[18] Doggett, *Love Cures: Healing and Love Magic in Old French Romance* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2009), p. 6; McDonald, 'Desire Out of Order and *Undo Your Door*', p. 247.
[19] On romance as influenced by canon law, see Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 222.
[20] 'Reading Romance in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Middle English *Ipomedon*', *Philological Quarterly*, 83.1 (2005), 13–39 (p. 17).

> sexuality's often coercive ideological force [...] sexuality serves as a primary measure of romance's ideological complicity with legitimating dominant modes of authority.[21]

Not despite, but because of its fantastical nature, romance is able to refract and influence contemporary practices, values, and ideals. Romance variously endorses, enforces, and critiques socio-cultural ideals and practices, engaging with and offering insights into the medieval world in which it was produced and consumed as well as into the imaginative worlds that captivated medieval (and modern) readers. As Marcel Elias argues, romance is 'polyvocal: it was able to accommodate multiple voices and encourage diverse readings specifically because it was the product of multiple authors, who consciously reworked their source materials in response to changing cultural environments and literary expectations'.[22] These varied qualities of romance make it a particularly apt – if complex – medium through which to reconsider the representations and realities of consent and coercion in the medieval world.

I contend that the motif of unwillingness to love is often used within the romance genre to facilitate a particularly close engagement with the situations, experiences, and expectations of medieval readers. The prominence of unwillingness to love and the combinations of consent and coercion that are often used to overcome it resonate suggestively with the probable conditions for romance readers' own marriages and relationships. Of course, in theory, consent was central to – and constitutive of – medieval marriage:

> When the Church canonists of the central Middle Ages considered the question of what created a marriage between two people, the conclusion that they came to was that it was the consent of the persons to be married which created the marital bond. It was not necessary for a public ceremony to be held, or for their families to consent, although these things were seen as desirable.[23]

However, as Conor McCarthy notes, 'the doctrine of consent was not as absolute in practice as it might appear from reading the canon law texts'.[24] Ruth Mazo Karras suggests that '[a]lthough according to canon law a woman had to consent to her own marriage, in practice the choice was often made by her parents', while Noël James Menuge, writing about the specific context of wardship, argues that the requirement of

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[21] *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents in Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 101.
[22] 'Interfaith Empathy and the Formation of Romance', in *Emotion and Medieval Textual Media*, ed. by Mary C. Flannery, Early European Research, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 99–124 (p. 101).
[23] McCarthy, p. 19.
[24] McCarthy, p. 44.

consent 'implies freedom of choice', but '[a]t best it meant that the parties to the marriage must have agreed to accept the marriage without any undue force or pressure having been applied'.[25] Even outside a wardship context, 'there was a crucial distinction between free consent and free choice', as Cathy Hume argues.[26] The limitations upon freedom of choice would have been particularly significant for the upper- and middle-class readers often associated with romances: Shannon McSheffrey notes that '[e]lite marriages [...] were, not surprisingly, much more closely controlled by the heads of families [...]. An aristocratic woman's husband was chosen for her by her family; at best she could exercise her right to refuse consent'.[27] Gentry families too saw marriage as a means of 'making advantageous alliances', meaning 'personal considerations [...] were probably regarded as subordinate', according to Jennifer Ward, while McSheffrey argues that '[e]lite urban women, daughters of the wealthiest merchants, often followed a pattern similar to that of their gentle and aristocratic counterparts (indeed, they participated in the same marriage market)'.[28] Middle English romances have been associated with gentry and urban middle-class readers (as well as some aristocrats, who seem to have been especially connected with Arthurian romances), although they could have reached lower-class groups, including household servants, through reading aloud.[29] The motif of unwillingness to love may have offered a means for romance authors to engage their readers by portraying relationships and experiences more similar to those of their own lives, offering a bridge between the fantasy world of romance and medieval readers' realities, and between the idealism of mutual consent and the trauma of *raptus*. Unwillingness to love therefore offers not only a way of reconsidering the links between

[25] Karras, p. 146; Menuge, 'Female Wards and Marriage', p. 154.
[26] *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), p. 6.
[27] Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 18. See also Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 12–16.
[28] *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500*, ed. & trans. by Jennifer Ward (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 15; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 17.
[29] See Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Vines, *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance*, pp. 8–10; Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England*, Studies in Medieval Romance, 11 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009); Felicity Riddy, 'Middle English romance: family, marriage, intimacy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 235–52 (pp. 235–39); Carol M. Meale, '"gode men / Wiues maydnes and alle men": Romance and Its Audiences', in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 209–25; Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Bart Besamusca, 'Readership and Audience', in *Handbook of Arthurian Romance*, pp. 117–32; Michael Johnston, 'New Evidence for the Social Reach of "Popular Romance": The Books of Household Servants', *Viator*, 43.2 (2012), 303–31; Ad Putter, 'Middle English Romances and the Oral Tradition', in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. by Karl Reichl (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 335–51; Karl Reichl, 'Orality and Performance', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, pp. 132–49; Ad Putter, 'A Historical Introduction', in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. by Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (London: Routledge, 2013; first publ. 2000), pp. 1–15 (p. 8).

consent and coercion, but also a means of reassessing 'the affects of reading' elicited by romance, and the ways romances use their affective appeal for didactic, conservative, or subversive ends.[30]

This thesis, then, explores unwillingness to love as a motif within the romance genre, particularly the ways in which unwillingness to love reflects, represents, and reshapes ideas about consent and coercion, as well as concepts of gender and desire. My overall argument is that unwillingness to love is a widespread motif within medieval English romance; that this motif is variously used by writers to explore, question, critique, and often ultimately to uphold conceptions of normative desire and gendered behaviour; and that unwillingness to love provides a nuanced view of the romance genre's approach to consent and coercion, and the ways in which they operated in medieval literature and life. More generally, however, this thesis is about the appeal and ideologies of romance literature, the ways in which it can be seen as socially conservative or subversive, and the strategies it uses to engage, teach, and move its readers. Unwillingness to love forms the gravitational centre of this thesis, but the questions it addresses reach out from this motif to reflect more broadly upon medieval ideas about desire, gender, and genre. The remainder of this introduction discusses the terminology used within this thesis, the sources and analogues that may have influenced medieval English romance's representation of unwillingness to love, and the methodology, scope, and theoretical grounding of this project.

TERMINOLOGY

While I have so far been referring to 'unwillingness to love' as if its meaning is obvious, it is worth setting out some of the reasons for my use of this specific term. Today, 'asexuality' and 'aromanticism' positively define alternatives to sexual and romantic desire, rather than explicitly or implicitly positioning these experiences as a lack, absence, or negation, as 'unwillingness to love' risks doing.[31] However, these terms do not map easily onto medieval representations. This is not because they are anachronistic, but because they offer a firmer identification than representations of unwillingness to love in medieval

[30] Corinne Saunders, 'Affective Reading: Chaucer, Women, and Romance', in *Women's Literary Culture and Late Medieval English Writing*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt (=*Chaucer Review*, 51.1 (2016)), pp. 11–30 (p. 14).

[31] For an introduction to and overview of asexuality studies, see Megan Milks and Karli June Cerankowski, 'Introduction: Why Asexuality? Why Now?', in *Asexualities: Feminist and Queer Perspectives*, ed. by Megan Milks and Karli June Cerankowski, Routledge Research in Gender and Society, 40 (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–14.

romance support.[32] Unwillingness to love is not the same thing as asexuality or aromanticism: many of the figures discussed in this thesis do eventually fall in love and end their narratives happily married (and sexually active), while some of the examples I focus on involve rejections of a particular kind of relationship, rather than resistance to love or marriage more broadly. More fundamentally, unwillingness to love is often represented as a choice in medieval romance, which is not the case for what we would call asexuality or aromanticism today.[33] Of course, I am not suggesting that eventual, partial, or apparent adherence to a norm renders it unviable to perceive these figures as approximating queer (asexual or otherwise) desires and identities.[34] Uncovering historical representations of queerness often requires looking at more subtle and provisional forms of these identities and experiences, because of the discrepancy between modern and medieval formulations of sexuality, and because of the sociological forces that encouraged the concealment rather than open representation of queerness in premodern cultures.[35] In some of the examples I discuss, queer potential is more evident than others, and I explore these interpretative possibilities. However, this thesis does not primarily seek to uncover one particular identity or experience such as asexuality, but rather to

[32] Many scholars have argued for the productivity of anachronism in medieval studies. See, for example, Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, 'Preface', in *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. by Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, with the assistance of Kathy Lavezzo (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 11–22 (p. 13); Richard Godden, 'Anachronism as Responsible Pedagogy' (presented at the 48th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 2013) <https://www.academia.edu/3993658/Anachronism_as_Responsible_Pedagogy > [accessed 8 December 2020]; Megan Arkenberg, '"A Mayde, and Last of Youre Blood": Galahad's Asexuality and Its Significance in *Le Morte Darthur*', *Arthuriana*, 24.3 (2014), 3–22 (p. 5). There are some studies that identify asexuality in medieval and early modern literature: see, for example, Arkenberg; Simone Chess, 'Asexuality, Queer Chastity, and Adolescence in Early Modern Literature', in *Queering Childhood in Early Modern English Drama and Culture*, ed. by Jennifer Higginbotham and Mark Albert Johnston (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 31–55. Although she does not use the term 'asexuality', McCracken argues that '[t]he queer hero of medieval grail romances makes visible possible contemporary chaste subjects who are out of place not because they desire outside of normative structures, but because they desire not to desire': McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', p. 139.

[33] The Asexual Visibility and Education Network website notes that '[u]nlike celibacy, which is a choice to abstain from sexual activity, asexuality is an intrinsic part of who we are, just like other sexual orientations': 'The Asexual Visibility and Education Network', 2001-20 <https://www.asexuality.org/> [accessed 30 October 2020].

[34] I am using the term 'queerness' and 'queer' here as a general term for LGBTQ+ identities, including asexuality and aromanticism, in line with Sedgwick's now classic definition of queer as referring to 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't* be made) to signify monolithically': Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 7. I discuss the intersections between my thesis and queer theory in greater detail later on in this introduction.

[35] For discussions of this see, for example, Allen-Goss; Noreen Giffney, Michelle M. Sauer, and Diane Watt, 'Introduction: The Lesbian Premodern', in *The Lesbian Premodern* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1–17 (pp. 8–9); Judith M. Bennett, '"Lesbian-Like" and the Social History of Lesbianisms', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 9.1–2 (2000), 1–24.

investigate the varied interpretative and literary possibilities offered by the motif of unwillingness to love in medieval romance.

'Unwillingness to love' denotes reluctance to love and/or marry, which may manifest as outright refusal or more neutral indifference. I use the term unwillingness to love rather than unwillingness to marry because of its broader applicability: while some instances I discuss are specifically directed at marriage, others are concerned with love more broadly. Unwillingness to love also differentiates my focus from scholarship on virginity: although these categories may overlap at times, unwillingness to love encompasses a greater variety of attitudes to sexuality than simply a desire for virginity, and unwilling lovers in medieval romance need to be distinguished from the virginal martyrs of hagiographies, as different generic and social expectations shape the way such figures are portrayed and received.[36] Unwillingness to love denotes a less absolute position than refusing to love or avowing virginity: you can do something unwillingly, or unwillingness can shift into willingness in the course of a decision (and the boundaries between these two states can be blurred or ambiguous, as is sometimes the case in the romances I will discuss).[37]

'Unwillingness to love' is also an appropriate term for the phenomenon I discuss because it draws attention to the operations of the will and wilfulness. While 'the will' is a much-debated idea in philosophy, Sara Ahmed has argued that '[g]iven that we routinely describe certain experiences by exercising the language of will, the will comes into existence, whether or not something called "the will" exists independently of these modes of address'.[38] Concepts of the will were influential in medieval theology: Augustine engages extensively with the idea of the will, which he perceives as both the capacity for good and for sin, and his *De libero arbitrio* may have shaped broader cultural perceptions of the will, wilfulness, and unwillingness. His suggestion that 'nulla res alia mentem cupiditatis comitem faciat quam propria uoluntas et liberum arbitrium' ['[n]othing makes the mind a devotee of desire but its own will and free choice'] reflects the extent to which

[36] On virginity, see *Medieval Virginities*, ed. by Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003); Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001); Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages*, Routledge Research in Medieval Studies, 2 (New York: Routledge, 2000); *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1999).

[37] Of course, I am not suggesting this applies to instances of sexual violence, where it is extremely problematic to argue that unwillingness can shift into willingness.

[38] *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 24.

medieval ideas of unwillingness to love are *not* identifiable with asexuality, since desire is seen as determined by the will (although Augustine perceives such desire negatively, associating it with sin).[39] In the *City of God*, Augustine presents some slightly different ideas about the will, discussing the way that sexual organs can oppose the will of the mind (which, he suggests, they could not do before the Fall), both by being stirred without the invitation of the will, and by refusing to respond when the mind is willing.[40] While writing about the will in a different, explicitly theological context, Augustine's work illustrates the cultural significance of the will in medieval Europe.

The will was also important to secular writing: Geoffrey Chaucer repeatedly examines the operation of human will alongside chance and destiny, influenced by the Boethian perspective of the human will as part of God's Providence.[41] Writing on the operation of the will in *The Parliament of Fowls*, Kathryn Lynch directly connects the will and love, arguing that '[w]hat ought to have been a decision about merit, which might easily have been determined with the use of reason, gets translated into a question of love, a movement of the will'.[42] Lynch's argument pinpoints the aptness of 'unwillingness to love' as a term: if falling in love is 'a movement of the will', unwillingness to love can be seen as a wilful refusal to be moved to love. This resonates with Ahmed's discussion of the will, unwillingness, and wilfulness: she suggests that 'the judgement of willfulness derives from a social scene: how some have their will judged as a problem by others'; it is particularly 'parts that are not willing the preservation of the whole [that] are charged with willfulness, including nonproductive and nonreproductive parts'.[43] Unwillingness to love in medieval romance is similarly identified with wilfulness, highlighting the way that unwillingness to love can express agency and autonomy, and positioning unwillingness

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[39] Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. by William Green, Corpus christianorum series latina, 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970), I. 11. 7; trans. in Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. & trans. by Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 19.
[40] See Augustine, *City of God: Books 12-15*, trans. by Philip Levine, Loeb Classical Library, 414, 7 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), IV, XIV. 16-17.
[41] For discussions of Chaucer's explorations of the will, see Patrick Timmis, 'Saturn and Soliloquy: Henryson's Conversation with Chaucerian Free Will', *Chaucer Review*, 51.4 (2016), 453–68; Jill Mann, 'Chance and Destiny in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale*', in *Life in Words: Essays on Chaucer, the Gawain-Poet, and Malory*, ed. by Mark David Rasmussen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 42–61; David Raybin, '"Goddes Instrumentz": Devils and Free Will in the *Friar's* and *Summoner's Tales*', *Chaucer Review*, 46.1–2 (2011), 93–110; Elizabeth Robertson, 'Apprehending the Divine and Choosing To Believe: Voluntarist Free Will in Chaucer's *Second Nun's Tale*', *Chaucer Review*, 46.1–2 (2011), 111–30; Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer: Love, Sex, and Agency in the 'Canterbury Tales'*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 55 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kathryn L. Lynch, 'The *Parliament of Fowls* and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part I', *Chaucer Review*, 25.1 (1990), 1–16; Kathryn L. Lynch, 'The *Parliament of Fowls* and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part II', *Chaucer Review*, 25.2 (1990), 85–95.
[42] 'The *Parliament of Fowls* and Late Medieval Voluntarism: Part I', p. 3.
[43] Ahmed, pp. 19, 20.

to love not as a lack but as a desire and agential choice in itself, which can be mobilised to work against societal presumptions about productivity and reproduction.

Although 'unwillingness to love' is not itself a term used within medieval romance, some of the romances discussed in this thesis, particularly William Caxton's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* (1489), do explore the connection between the will and unwillingness to love. The Middle French *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amours* repeatedly relates Eglantine's resistance to marriage to volition, commenting that 'elle na oncques *volu* ne *veult* prester ses oreilles aux offres, prieres ne requestes, que nullui ait fait en amours' [she never wanted nor wants to open her ears to offers, prayers, or requests, that anyone might have made in love].[44] While *Blancandin* frames this in negative terms – Eglantine does *not* wish to listen to offers of love – Caxton's translation goes on to describe Eglantine's unwillingness to love as her 'obstynate wylle' (p. 37), her 'harde herted wyll' (p. 52). Eglantine's unwillingness to love is identified with her will – or her wilfulness – even while her unwillingness has also been defined through negation in the passage from *Blancandin* (unfortunately the leaf missing from Caxton's print means we do not know how Caxton translated this section). Eglantine later yields to love by saying '[n]ow haue I nother power nor wyl to defende me eny more' (p. 69), while the mutual confession of the protagonists' love is marked by their hearts 'fro that oure ab[iding] bothe [...] in one hole wylle' (p. 80), aligning her will not only with her unwillingness, but also with her subsequent willingness to love. Eglantine's resistance to love is aligned with the will, unwillingness, and wilfulness, an intersection aptly indicated by the term 'unwillingness to love'.

While 'unwillingness to love' offers a general term for the phenomenon discussed throughout this thesis, I also use different terms for specific types of unwillingness to love. The first two chapters of this thesis discuss what I refer to as 'romantic a(nti)pathy': that is, apathy (indifference) or antipathy (hostility) to romantic relationships in general. Romantic a(nti)pathy distinguishes the focus of these chapters from the subsequent three: the figures discussed in the first two chapters are marked by an initial indifference or hostility towards romantic relationships in general, while the figures discussed in the last three chapters are unwilling to participate in particular relationships for specific reasons relating to social status, race and faith, or adultery and infidelity. Romantic a(nti)pathy

[44] William Caxton, *Blanchardyn and Eglantine, c. 1489*, ed. by Leon Kellner, EETS, e.s., 58 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1890), pp. 35–36 (my emphasis). Kellner supplies the French text in place of the missing leaf from Caxton. All translations of *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amours* are my own.

describes the general unwillingness to love that the first two chapters of this thesis explore, although I also use the more specific term 'the proud lady in love' (which will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2) to refer to a certain type of female romantic a(nti)pathy portrayed in Middle English romance.

SOURCES AND ANALOGUES

Of course, the motif of unwillingness to love does not suddenly emerge without precedent in medieval English romance. It appears in earlier literature, which contributes (directly or indirectly) to the particular representation of the motif in English romance. The most significant sources and analogues are found in the works of Ovid and in medieval French romance. Ovid's works were known and widely read in the Middle Ages, including by some of the authors discussed in this study: there are clear allusions to Ovid in Marie's *Lais* and in Chaucer, while Caxton was the first English translator of the *Metamorphoses* (from the French *Ovide moralisé*).[45] Ovid's *Amores* portrays love as an experience that initially conquers the heart against one's will, advising that it is wise to yield to love because 'acrius invitos multoque ferocius urget | quam qui servitium ferre fatentur Amor' ['[m]ore bitterly far and fiercely are the unwilling assailed by Love than those who own their servitude'].[46] While the *Amores* uses the literary trope of love as warfare that besieges the unwilling lover more stubbornly (a trope that recurs in romance, particularly works influenced by the *Roman de la Rose*), the *Ars Amatoria* portrays unwillingness as a tactic deployed by the female love-object. Ovid's *praeceptor* claims '[v]ir male dissimulat: tectius illa cupit' ['the man dissembles badly: she conceals desire better'], suggesting '[v]im licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis: | Quod iuvat, invitae saepe dedisse volunt' ['[y]ou may use force; women like you to use it; they often wish to give

[45] On Ovid and Marie see, for example, Tracy Adams, "'Arte regendus Amor": Suffering and Sexuality in Marie de France's *Lai de Guigemar*', *Exemplaria*, 17.2 (2005), 285–315; SunHee Kim Gertz, 'Transforming Lovers and Memorials in Ovid and Marie de France', *Florilegium*, 14 (1995), 99–122; R. W. Hanning, 'Courtly Contexts for Urban *Cultus*: Responses to Ovid in Chrétien's *Cligès* and Marie's *Guigemar*', *Symposium*, 35.1 (1981), 34–56. Much has been written about Ovid's influence on Chaucer: for a summary of some of the most important work in this field, see Jamie C. Fumo, 'Ovid: Artistic Identity and Intertextuality', in *The Oxford Handbook of Chaucer*, ed. by Suzanne Conklin Akbari and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 219–37. In addition to the sources Fumo discusses, see Andrew Galloway, 'Ovid in Chaucer and Gower', in *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. by John F. Miller and Carole E. Newlands (Chichester: Wiley, 2014), pp. 187–201; Kathryn L. McKinley, 'Gower and Chaucer: Readings of Ovid in Late Medieval England', in *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, ed. by James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson, and Kathryn L. McKinley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 197–230. For Caxton's translation of the *Metamorphoses*, see William Caxton, *The Booke of Ovyde Named Methamorphose*, ed. by Richard J. Moll, British Writers of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, 4; Studies and Texts, 182 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies and Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2013).

[46] Ovid, *Heroides. Amores*, trans. by Grant Showerman, rev. by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, 41, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), I. 2. 17-18, trans. p. 323.

unwillingly what they like to give'].[47] This assertion that women like to say no when they really mean yes is now widely recognised as a rape myth.[48] This myth may have influenced and been perpetuated by the portrayals of unwillingness to love in medieval romance: while in most cases unwillingness is not portrayed as feigned, the fact that it is usually overcome may suggest some perception of unwillingness as a stage of courtship.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also engages with the motif of unwillingness to love: figures such as Daphne, Syrinx, Caeneus-Caenis, and Pomona are highly sought after but averse to suitors, offering a potential source for the representation of female romantic a(nti)pathy in medieval romance. Atalanta imposes an impossible condition upon her suitors, prefiguring the recurrence of this strategy in romance – although the condition Atalanta sets, defeating her in a race, is unlike the conditions set by the proud ladies discussed in Chapter 2. Anaxarete offers another model, scorning Iphis's courtship to the extent that he commits suicide. In the *Metamorphoses*, these women often meet tragic endings involving rape, transformation to avoid rape, or, in Anaxarete's case, transformation as punishment for her scorn. These endings are very different to the happy conclusion of marriage that is the most common outcome for instances of female romantic a(nti)pathy in medieval romance, although there are perhaps more similarities between these figures than is initially evident.

An influential Ovidian source for romance representations of male romantic a(nti)pathy is also marked by a tragic outcome that is not carried over into the romance tradition. The myth of Narcissus is narrated in its earliest extant forms in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Konon's *Narratives*. The two works are roughly contemporary: Konon's is potentially the earlier,[49] but Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was known and widely read in medieval Europe.[50] Ovid describes how

> namque ter ad quinos unum Cephisius annum
> addiderat poteratque puer iuvenisque videri:
> multi illum iuvenes, multae cupiere puellae;

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[47] Ovid, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. by J. H. Mozley, rev. by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, 232 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), I. 276, 673-74; trans. pp. 33, 59.
[48] See Sanyal, p. 26; Nicola Gavey, *Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 36, 185; 'Myths about Rape and Sexual Violence', *Rape Crisis* <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/about-sexual-violence/myths-vs-realities/> [accessed 13 July 2020].
[49] *The Narratives of Konon*, ed. & trans. by Malcolm Kenneth Brown (Munich: Saur, 2002), p. 173. Brown notes that although Konon's version may have been earlier, it is unlikely Ovid knew of it: Brown argues that 'both authors took the tale, which probably originated as a Thespian local legend, from a Hellenistic collection of transformation myths': Brown, 'Introduction', in *The Narratives of Konon*, pp. 1–46 (p. 4).
[50] See James G. Clark, 'Introduction', in *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, pp. 1–25.

> sed fuit in tenera tam dura superbia forma,
> nulli illum iuvenes, nullae tetigere puellae.
>
> [Narcissus had reached his sixteenth year and might seem either boy or man. Many youths, and many maidens sought his love; but in that slender form was pride so cold that no youth, no maiden touched his heart.][51]

Narcissus' youth and desirability may offer a model for the pattern of young men's romantic a(nti)pathy, while Narcissus' pride resurfaces in romance literature, although once again the ending for Ovid's unwilling lover is very different to the usual pattern of accepting marriage in romance literature. There were several medieval rewritings of the story of Narcissus, which may also have influenced romance engagements with this myth. The *Roman de la Rose*, discussed below, incorporates the story of Narcissus, specifically describing him as proud and indicating that Narcissus' self-love and resultant death are Love's just punishment for Narcissus' earlier rejection of love. This sense of love as a punishment for earlier scorn does recur in some of the romances discussed in this thesis, which perhaps follow the *Rose* in positioning Narcissus as a warning to women not to refuse love (even though Narcissus himself is male). Other medieval rewritings of the Narcissus myth include the twelfth-century French lay of *Narcisus et Dané*, which William Burgwinkle argues may have influenced Marie's *Lais*.[52] The lay of *Narcisus et Dané* is particularly interesting for its curious combination of what we would now recognise as heterosexual and queer desire. All Ovid's references to same-sex desire are removed, to the extent that Narcisus thinks his own reflection is that of a woman; this, coupled with the increased and active role of Dané in the poem, enacts a kind of heterosexualisation of the myth.[53] However, the reader is aware that Narcisus is admiring his own (male) reflection, and of the ensuing gender play that occurs because of this. *Narcisus et Dané*'s emphasis on pride accords with the portrayal of unwillingness to love in medieval romance: in the prologue, we are told that women 'ne soit pas [...] trop fiere' ['should not be too haughty'] towards their lovers, although within the lay itself pride is identified with

[51] Ovid, *Metamorphoses, Books 1-8*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, 42, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), I. 351–55, trans. p. 149.
[52] Burgwinkle, *Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law in Medieval Literature: France and England, 1050-1230*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 51 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 142. See also Penny Eley, 'Introduction', in *Narcisus et Dané*, ed. and trans. by Penny Eley, Liverpool Online Series, Critical Editions of French Texts, 6 (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2002), pp. 7–30 (pp. 11, 20 n. 25).
[53] See further Eley, 'Introduction', p. 26.

Narcisus' unwillingness to love.[54] John Gower's tale of Narcissus in his *Confessio Amantis* also describes how Narcissus

> of his Pride a nyce wone
> Hath cawht, that worthi to his liche,
> To sechen al the worldes riche,
> Ther was no womman for to love.
> So hihe he sette himselve above.[55]

Gower's *Confessio Amantis* demonstrates the ideas about Narcissus and unwillingness to love that were circulating during the late fourteenth century. The myth of Narcissus, both in its Ovidian form and in medieval rewritings, offers a suggestive source for male romantic a(nti)pathy, even if the outcome of romance narratives is usually rather different.

Ovid's work remains prominent amongst many of the other potential sources and analogues for the motif of unwillingness to love as it appears in medieval romance. The troubadour and *trouvère* poetry of medieval France, itself influenced by Ovid, may have offered another literary model, particularly for the proud lady in love.[56] Simon Gaunt notes that '*trouvères* [...] are best known for their *grands chants courtois*, songs of unrequited *fine amour* ("pure love"), modelled on the Occitan troubadour lyric, and addressed to a haughty noble lady'.[57] Troubadour and *trouvère* poetry includes several of the same features as romance representations of unwillingness to love: women are often presented as undesiring, hard-hearted, or as delaying the fulfilment of desire.[58] The trope of romance authors appealing to their indifferent ladies in narrative asides may also build upon troubadour models.[59] However, romance literature also gives the troubadours' and *trouvères*' lyric portrayals of unwillingness to love a narrative form, opening up different

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[54] *Narcisus et Dané*, l. 22; Eley argues the lay 'is designed first and foremost to serve as an exemplum of the potentially catastrophic consequences of pride in the arena of human relationships': Eley, 'Introduction', p. 27.
[55] John Gower, 'Tale of Narcissus', in *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Russell A. Peck, TEAMS, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), I, I. 2275-2398 (ll. 2276–80).
[56] Peraino notes Ovid's influence on the troubadours and *trouvères*: Judith A. Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love: Song and Self-Expression from the Troubadours to Guillaume de Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 12.
[57] Simon Gaunt, 'The Châtelain de Couci', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. by Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 95–108 (p. 95).
[58] For example, see *The Troubadour 'Tensos' and 'Partimens': A Critical Edition*, ed. by Ruth Harvey and Linda Paterson, Gallica, 14, 3 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), I, pp. 160, trans. p. 161 (PC 77.1); 220–22, trans. 221-23 (PC 101.8a). For discussion, see Helen Dell, *Desire by Gender and Genre in Trouvère Song*, Gallica, 10 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), pp. 80, 89, 93; Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in French, 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 11; Sarah Spence, *Rhetorics of Reason and Desire: Vergil, Augustine, and the Troubadours* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 119.
[59] See, for example, the entertaining example in *The Middle English Versions of Partonope of Blois*, ed. by A. Trampe Bödtker, EETS, e.s., 109 (London: Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1912; repr. New York: Kraus, 1981), ll. 2310–34.

possibilities for exploring the development, experience, and effects of unwillingness to love. In romance, male unwillingness to love, and unwillingness to love predicated upon certain characteristics of a relationship, also become more prominent, expanding this motif and taking the troubadours' and *trouvères*' work in new directions.

The troubadours and *trouvères* in turn influenced medieval romances, including the *Roman de la Rose*, which was also shaped by Ovid's writings, and in its turn significantly influenced later romance literature.[60] Noah D. Guynn describes the *Rose* as 'the most admired, influential, and controversial literary work of the French Middle Ages'; its popularity and wide influence make it a particularly important source for representations of unwillingness to love.[61] The *Rose* is known to have influenced some of the romances discussed in this thesis: Chaucer, of course, translated the *Rose* into Middle English. The *Rose*'s violent characterisation of love has often been commented upon: in particular, its imagery of love as a siege may have influenced some of the more violent portrayals of overcoming unwillingness to love in later romances.[62] The *Rose* also comments on pride in love, not only through the Narcissus story, but in the God of Love's commandments, where he explains that 'Orgueilleus fet tot le contraire | de ce que fins amant doit feire' '[t]he proud man does precisely the opposite of what the true lover should do'.[63] This suggestively parallels the identification of women who reject love as proud in later romances, highlighting the association between pride and transgressions against love. The *Rose* further offers a striking example of the extent to which the consent of the beloved could at times become almost irrelevant in romance literature: although personifications such as Bel Acueil can consent to the lover, the rose itself, as an inanimate object, cannot.[64] Despite – or perhaps because of – the allegorical nature of Amant's quest, the violence of love without consent is clearly described in the graphic account of the plucking of the rose. While, as an allegory, the *Rose* is very different to the romances discussed in this thesis, its popularity and influence were such that it may have fostered a cultural awareness of the violence, persistence, and violation that could characterise

[60] Gaunt, 'The Châtelain de Couci', p. 104; Kay, pp. 171–83; Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 304.
[61] 'Le Roman de la rose', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, pp. 48–62 (p. 48).
[62] On the violence of love in the *Rose* see, for example, Marilynn Desmond, '*Tote Enclose*: The *Roman de la Rose* and the Heterophallic Ethic', in *Ovid's Art and the Wife of Bath: The Ethics of Erotic Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 73–115.
[63] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. by Félix Lecoy, Classiques français du moyen âge, 92, 3 vols (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965), I, ll. 2119–20; trans. in *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. & trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 33.
[64] See further Noah D. Guynn, *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 139.

romance narratives. These features recur to some extent in the focus on unwillingness to love, and overcoming that unwillingness, in the romances discussed in this thesis. However, other elements of the *Rose* are rather different to the romances I explore: while the portrayal of Dangier may seem to indicate the centrality of unwillingness to love in romance, locating unwillingness as a stage in courtship, the romances I focus on portray unwillingness to love as more subversive and problematic. The cultural prominence of the *Rose* may, indeed, explain why unwillingness to love has most often been viewed as merely a stage in courtship and has not, until now, been explored as a topic that reveals new understandings of romance's treatment of consent, coercion, gender, and desire.[65]

Another work influenced by Ovid (perhaps indirectly) – and potentially also by troubadour poetry – Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore*, may offer an additional possible source for or analogue to the motif of unwillingness to love in romance literature.[66] Of course, *De Amore* is a contentious work, with interpretations varying as to whether it is even about love at all; my reading here is limited to its surface discussions and the evidence they provide for contemporary perspectives on unwillingness to love in medieval Europe, rather than engaging with its overall purpose and meanings.[67] *De Amore*'s dialogues, which recount attempted seductions, offer many instances of unwillingness to love. Andreas also excludes some people from love: same-sex relationships are excluded; peasants are not deemed capable of love; and poverty, age (for both the young and old), blindness (because of the central role of sight in Andreas's conception of love), and an excessive focus on pleasure are all deemed romantic impediments.[68] The focus upon poverty parallels unwillingness to love across class divides, discussed in Chapter 3, although Andreas's dialogues also include love between people of different social classes. *De Amore* also offers some parallels to romantic a(nti)pathy, discussed in my first two chapters. In particular, an episode within the dialogue between a noble man and woman resonates with representations of the proud lady in love, as the nobleman describes a vision of the God of Love's treatment of women in the afterlife according to their responses to love on earth. The third group of women

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[65] See, for example, Crane, *Gender and Romance*, p. 63, discussed above.
[66] P. G. Walsh, 'Introduction', in *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, ed. & trans. by P. G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982), pp. 1–26 (pp. 3, 10, 12–16, 23); Kathleen Andersen-Wyman, *Andreas Capellanus on Love?: Desire, Seduction, and Subversion in a Twelfth-Century Latin Text* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 5. *De Amore* does not seem to have been known in Britain during the Middle Ages: see Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 310.
[67] On *De Amore* as a social critique of institutions, see Andersen-Wyman. For a summary of critical approaches to *De Amore*, see Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage*, p. 25; Andersen-Wyman, pp. 18–25.
[68] *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, pp. 35, 223, 37, 39–41.

he describes faces torments and punishments because 'omnes amoris postulantes deservire militiae abiecerunt' ['they repulsed all who asked to serve in the army of Love'].[69] Although they are not directly described as proud here, a variation of this episode in the *Lai du Trot* claims '[o]r lor fait molt chier comperer | Lor grant orgoil et lor posnee' ['[n]ow Love is making them pay dearly | For their great pride and their arrogance'].[70] While it is uncertain whether the *Lai* or *De Amore* is the earlier work, and whether the reference to pride was omitted by Andreas or added in the *Lai*, either scenario could suggest a prominent association between pride and rejecting love characteristic of medieval romances and *lais*, which is developed in greater detail in the motif of the proud lady in love.[71]

In addition to the *Lai du Trot* and the *Roman de la Rose*, other French and Anglo-Norman works also influence the representation of unwillingness to love in medieval English romance. The Anglo-Norman *Guigemar* and *Amadas et Ydoine* are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 for their portrayals of male romantic a(nti)pathy, while the French sources and analogues for the motif of the proud lady in love will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. More generally, many of the romances discussed in this thesis are translations or adaptations of insular or continental French works; these sources are compared with the Middle English works where possible. Particular types of unwillingness to love also build upon certain romance portrayals: representations of unwillingness to love based on social status are influenced by the many portrayals of love across social divides elsewhere in medieval French and English romance, while unwillingness to love because of differing faiths/races is influenced by the French *chansons de geste* and romances that do incorporate interfaith and interracial relationships, particularly the *Fierabras* tradition (the direct source for some of the Middle English works discussed in Chapter 4), but also works like the *Guillaume d'Orange* cycle. Finally, representations of unwillingness to commit adultery develop with and against the motif of adulterous love, which was particularly popular in the French tradition.

Beyond romance, hagiography is another genre that may have influenced representations of unwillingness to love. Rejections of love and marriage are especially

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[69] *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, p. 110; trans. p. 111.
[70] 'Trot', in *Three Old French Narrative Lays: Trot, Lecheor, Nabaret*, ed. & trans. by Glyn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook, Liverpool Online Series, Critical Editions of French Texts, 1 (Liverpool: The University of Liverpool, 1999), pp. 13–43 (ll. 268–69).
[71] For a view of *Trot* as the earlier text, see Walsh, 'Introduction', p. 18. For a view of Andreas as influencing *Trot*, see *Les Lais anonymes des XIIe et XIIIe siècles: édition critique de quelques lais bretons*, ed. by Prudence Mary O'Hara Tobin (Geneva: Droz, 1976), p. 336.

common in the lives of female saints: Larissa Tracy notes that '[f]or female saints, defiance rests in their vocal resistance to authority – which generally begins when an authority covets the body of the female saint and attempts to woo or force her into marriage'.[72] However, virginity is highly prized for male saints as well, and asceticism offers a pattern against which secular unwillingness to love and marry can be defined and understood for people of any gender. To some extent, the model of religious chastity and virginity may have been implicitly invoked by any representation of unwillingness to love in romance, given the prominent celebration of chastity and virginity in medieval culture. Glenn D. Burger describes virginity as '[t]he most fundamental' of the 'dominant sexualities organizing the self-definition and self-representation of medieval subjects in the world', which 'represent[ed] the highest aspirations of the Christian subject'.[73] Some romance portrayals invite more direct comparisons with religious virginity and chastity than others: for example, the Grail Knights' virginity manifests their holiness, while Guy of Warwick's renunciation of marriage and worldliness is inspired by a religious epiphany.[74] However, as discussed above, this is not a study of virginity and attempts to maintain virginity in medieval romance, but rather a study of moments of resistance to the romance genre's usual celebration of love and marriage, and the ways in which reluctance to love gets reincorporated into the genre's normative frameworks. While figures like the Grail Knights provide an important point of comparison, they offer a more substantive criticism of the romance genre's interest in love and marriage: here, I focus upon temporary disruptions to romance expectations, and the ways in which those disruptions are overcome. The Grail Knights certainly have much to add to our understandings of how desire and repudiations of desire operate in romance, but their reorientation of desire towards heaven rather than earth offers a rather different model to the romances I discuss here.[75] Most of the romances I focus on do not explicitly invite identification with religious models; overall, although there are some similarities between the representation of unwillingness to love in romance and the rejection of marriage and

[72] '"Al defouleden is holie bodi": Castration, the Sexualization of Torture, and Anxieties of Identity in the *South English Legendary*', in *Castration and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Larissa Tracy (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 87–107 (p. 104).
[73] *Conduct Becoming: Good Wives and Husbands in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), p. 24.
[74] On the potentially queer resonances of the Grail Knights, see McCracken, who argues that '[t]he chaste grail knights are not like other knights, nor are other knights capable of becoming virgin knights [...] although *La queste* situates the pursuit of the grail in a Christian world and clearly promotes virginity as a Christian value, the status of chastity is still anomalous within the heroic context of romance': McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', pp. 131–32.
[75] See further McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects'.

sex in hagiography, these similarities should not overshadow their more fundamental differences. Where would-be suitors (or would-be rapists) in hagiography are not endorsed by the narrative itself, and the saint's resolve is such that there is no real danger they will accept marriage (or sex), in romance the suitor is usually endorsed by the narrative and marriage is established as an expectation. Perhaps more significantly, it is rare in romance for an unwilling lover to explicitly desire to remain a virgin. Sometimes unwillingness to love is praised as chastity, but virginity is not held up as a goal in and of itself (with the exception of within the Grail Quest); it is rather a way of ensuring fidelity to the lover who will eventually be accepted. The representation of unwillingness to love in medieval English romance, then, draws upon hagiography, classical and medieval Latin literature, troubadour poetry, and material from French romances. However, this thesis focuses on its particular significance in medieval English romance, as it complicates the genre's celebration of love and marriage, offering new perspectives on its representation of consent, coercion, gender, and desire.

METHODOLOGY, SCOPE, AND THEORY

My methodology combines close textual analysis of individual romances, comparisons with sources and analogues, and engagement with theoretical and historical perspectives. Close analysis of the romances I discuss offers new perspectives on individual works alongside a broader reading of the motif of unwillingness to love. Analysis of this kind uncovers moments where romances attend carefully to issues of consent and coercion, sometimes displaying legal knowledge; where they subtly criticise socio-cultural norms; and where they offer didactic, sympathetic, or comic models of behaviour for their readers. Comparing works with their sources or analogues reveals the particular preoccupations of Middle English romances, and the ways that they rewrite the motif of unwillingness to love for different purposes. Theoretical views provide a vocabulary with which to explore ideas about gender, desire, and consent that medieval writers and readers would not necessarily have had equivalent terms for, but which facilitates a more concise discussion. I combine consideration of how medieval ideas of unwillingness to love relate to modern debates about consent and coercion with assessing medieval representations in their own specific legal, social, and cultural contexts; in this respect, I draw particularly upon historical and literary studies of marriage, as well as studies of romance audiences.

Gender studies offers a vital theoretical underpinning for this thesis, particularly the first two chapters' discussion of romantic a(nti)pathy associated with men and women respectively. The foundational work of Judith Butler on gender as 'performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence [...] constituting the identity it is purported to be' has shaped my consideration of gender as a social construct in these two chapters.[76] These chapters also draw upon studies of masculinity, as representations of men who are unwilling to love engage with the relationship between this unwillingness and cultural constructions of masculinity, while women who are unwilling to love are often used to comment upon, question, and sometimes reinforce the construction of masculinities within romance literature. While sexuality and gender are separate concepts, sexuality is often closely associated with ideas about gender in the Middle Ages: as Karras writes, 'medieval people would have assumed that the desire for women came from a masculine body and, in itself, constituted masculine behavior. For them, sexuality was not separate from sex and gender'.[77] Peggy McCracken also argues that 'gender and desire are mutually defining categories in medieval romance', an observation that this thesis explores further by considering the impact that unwillingness to love has upon the construction of gendered subjects and the impact that constructions of gender have upon the portrayal of unwillingness to love.[78]

This thesis also draws upon studies of emotion and affect. While not itself a history of emotions project, investigating unwillingness to love in the romance genre can contribute to our understanding of medieval 'emotional communities', revealing the value placed upon love by indicating the ways in which unwillingness to love was seen as problematic.[79] A study of unwillingness to love can take up Andrew Lynch's investigation of the problematic linking of emotions and productivity, exploring 'in whose interests all this labour might be required' by questioning how and why unwillingness to love is criticised in romance.[80] As Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders write, '[l]iterary texts draw attention to normative behaviours, often modelling

[76] *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 33.
[77] Karras, p. 6.
[78] McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', p. 139.
[79] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 2.
[80] '"What Cheer?" Emotion and Action in the Arthurian World', in *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body, Mind, Voice*, ed. by Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders, Arthurian Studies, 83 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2015), pp. 47–63 (pp. 47–48).

appropriate reactions within the text to guide the audiences' responses'.[81] Unwillingness to love is repeatedly characterised as inappropriate and non-normative, encouraging the readers of these romances to eschew this tendency, and crafting approved emotional and cognitive models. This study thus draws upon and contributes to work on affect and emotion in the medieval period, particularly in terms of the affective connections romances invite from their readers.[82]

My thesis also intersects with queer studies, although not in immediate or direct ways. In itself, the framework of this thesis is heteronormative, investigating gendered constructions of masculinity and femininity and their links to relationships and desires we would now describe as heterosexual. To state that the focus of my thesis is heteronormative is not to suggest that the works discussed are themselves heteronormative, an assumption against which Karma Lochrie and James Schultz have warned. Lochrie writes that 'heteronormativity is [...] irrelevant [...] to pre-nineteenth-century cultures': it is not the organising principle of social relationships or sexual ideals in medieval literature or life, even if the focus upon romantic love and marriage in the works I discuss seems somewhat comparable to the later development of heteronormativity as *the* central sexual norm and expectation.[83] Schultz further cautions that applying the term 'heterosexuality' to medieval subjects 'is *never* trivial', as 'using the term [...] inevitably place[s] th[e] discussion within the modern homo/hetero regime, which [...] holds up heterosexuality as the norm'.[84] In this thesis, I have tried to use the term 'heterosexual' only where it is the best or only term with which to convey the meaning of desire for the opposite sex.[85] I also acknowledge the differences between medieval and modern formulations of sexuality by contextualising my use of this and similar terms, following Lochrie, McCracken, and Schultz's argument that 'the challenge is to look at the Middle Ages without presentist assumptions yet without forfeiting the tools of contemporary theories of sexuality'.[86] A term I do use quite frequently in this

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[81] Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders, 'Introduction', in *Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature*, pp. 1–10 (p. 7).
[82] See further Saunders, 'Affective Reading'.
[83] Karma Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. xvi.
[84] James A. Schultz, 'Heterosexuality as a Threat to Medieval Studies', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 15.1 (2006), 14–29 (p. 20).
[85] One of Lochrie's issues with the term 'heterosexuality' is that it 'is rarely used in its strictly technical meaning of desire for the opposite sex': *Heterosyncrasies*, p. xiii.
[86] Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz, 'Introduction', in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, ed. by Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz, Medieval Cultures, 11 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. ix–xviii (p. ix).

thesis is 'normative', which also requires careful contextualisation, as Pugh notes, arguing that '[i]f normativity is used as a critical rubric in analyses of medieval sexuality, it must be situated among the norms of the Middle Ages'.[87] Considering whether marriage was a norm, Karras writes

> Perhaps it would be wrong to call marriage the norm for medieval people, since many ecclesiastical writers saw marital sex as a necessary evil, but it was certainly the expectation for most. That does not mean that heterosexual desire was a good thing, or even the default condition against which other desires were set; it was 'concupiscence,' the result of Eve's and Adam's disobedience.[88]

The medieval church's view of marital sexuality not as an ideal but as a compromise reveals the inadequacy of 'heteronormativity' in failing to account for the complex, different perceptions of sexualities and sexual acts in the Middle Ages, particularly the significance of chastity and virginity.[89] However, the romance genre – and the audiences associated with it – offers a rather different normative framework. As McCracken argues, 'though of course in some medieval discourses the chaste body is a normative body to the extent that it is idealized as the model Christian body [...] in medieval romances, the chaste body is unusual'.[90] In romance, marriage, desire, and sexuality become an expectation, reflecting the secular and dynastic preoccupations of the upper and middle classes. The expectation of marriage or love within romance has been widely recognised: Crane writes of 'the overwhelming presumption in courtly literature that a woman worthy of courtship will eventually accede to a worthy suitor', while Burgwinkle suggests that there was 'a cultural shift in which some of the complex of practices and desires we know today as heterosexuality [...] were codified in tandem with new models of masculinity at the dawn of vernacular writing in Europe'.[91] The expectation of marriage in romance also mirrors the priorities of the upper- and middle-class readers of romance: Barbara Harris estimates that just under 94 percent of aristocratic women in the late Middle Ages married, while Hume argues that 'marriage was the normative state, and women in particular were brought up to think of themselves as wives'.[92] When I refer to normative expectations of

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[87] Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 9. Miller offers a helpful discussion of and definition of normativity, Miller, pp. 12–16.
[88] Karras, p. 8.
[89] See Burger, p. 24.
[90] McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', p. 136.
[91] Crane, *Gender and Romance*, p. 62; Burgwinkle, p. 5. See further Louise M. Sylvester, *Medieval Romance and the Construction of Heterosexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[92] Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 88; Cathy Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 18–19.

love, marriage, and gendered behaviour, I am defining these as normative within the context of romance and its readers, rather than in relation to religious perspectives upon marriage and sexual desire.

While the framework of my thesis is quite heteronormative, unwillingness to love as a motif offers, if briefly and partially, insights into alternatives to normative expectations of love, desire, and marriage within the romance genre. More significantly, unwillingness to love can critique and deconstruct these expectations. By examining moments of resistance to sexual and gendered norms, particularly in the first two chapters of this thesis, and by considering the extensive and complex connections between consent and coercion in romance relationships, this thesis in part aims to denaturalise the ubiquity of 'heterosexual-like' relationships within the romance genre (to use Lochrie's term), to examine the ideological forces that shape those relationships, and to draw out instances of resistance to these ideologies.[93] While McCracken argues that 'the anomalous and ambiguously defined position of the subject that does not desire [...] shows not only that certain kinds of desire are normative [...] but that desire itself is normative', the representations of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis not only uncover the norms romance upholds, but offer instances of resistance to these norms, and indicate the way in which they are sometimes forcefully maintained.[94] I align this work with queer theory in the same way that studies of whiteness contribute to scholarship on race, and studies of masculinity to feminist scholarship on women and gender: studying the formation and problematisation of marital and sexual relationships in the romance genre, and highlighting moments of resistance to those relationships, can contribute to queer studies by de-naturalising the genre's normative framework and making it the subject of critical inquiry. I do not wish to recentre relationships we would now identify as heterosexual in scholarship on medieval sexualities; rather, I seek to contribute to the discussion of queer identities and sexualities in medieval literature by examining the ways in which gendered and sexual norms are constructed and resisted within medieval romance. While Gaunt has argued that in romance and other vernacular genres (with the exception, he suggests, of hagiography), 'the rituals of (heterosexual) desire are almost always taken for granted', my thesis demonstrates that medieval English romance does not always take these rituals for granted, but both deliberately constructs and offers

[93] Karma Lochrie, 'Preface', in *The Lesbian Premodern*, pp. xiii–xviii (p. xv).
[94] McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', p. 139.

momentary challenges to the desires and expectations it appears to represent as normative.[95]

This thesis investigates five different variations on the motif of unwillingness to love in medieval English romance. The first two chapters consider romantic a(nti)pathy, a general hostility or apathy to romantic relationships, in relation to men and women respectively. This division along gendered lines is a practical way of dealing with a broad subject, and is not intended to be an essentialising or absolute distinction.[96] While I consider the romantic a(nti)pathy associated with male and female protagonists separately in the first two chapters, subsequent chapters approach variations of unwillingness to love thematically. Chapter 3 considers unwillingness to love across class divides; Chapter 4 unwillingness motivated by race or faith; and Chapter 5 unwillingness to commit adultery or infidelity. While partly upholding the social boundaries indicated by class, race/faith, and marriage, romances that depict unwillingness to love for these reasons also open up a dialogue with other romance portrayals of status, race and religion, and adultery, offering different insights into the nuanced approaches romances can take to moral, ethical, and social concerns. Thus, although unwillingness to commit infidelity could be seen more as an issue of rejecting sex than rejecting love, the possibility of adulterous love in medieval romance aligns this motif with other types of unwillingness to love. These variations upon the motif of unwillingness to love also facilitate an intersectional approach to consent and coercion, gender, and desire in medieval romance, revealing the ways in which they are affected by race and class. While my material generally fits into one of these five categories, some examples span different groups, relating to, for example, both romantic a(nti)pathy and social status. In these cases, I discuss each example in relation to the type of unwillingness to love that seems to be most prominent within the romance, so as not to duplicate material.

The range of types of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis is not comprehensive. Instead, I have selected variations upon this motif that offer particularly significant insights into romance's ideological investments in representing gender, desire, consent, and coercion. One of the types of unwillingness to love I do not discuss is unwillingness based upon age difference, a motif that appears in romances of the loathly

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[95] Simon Gaunt, 'Straight Minds/"Queer" Wishes in Old French Hagiography: La Vie de Sainte Euphrosine', in *Premodern Sexualities*, pp. 373–411 (p. 374).

[96] Medieval conceptions of gender could and did exceed binary ideas: see *Visions of Medieval Trans Feminism*, ed. by Dorothy Kim and M. W. Bychowski (= *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 55.1 (2019)); *Medieval Intersex*, ed. by Ruth Evans (=*postmedieval*, 9.2 (2018)).

lady, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, and Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, as well as in the motif of the *malmariée* in Marie's *Lais*, but otherwise in perhaps surprisingly few romances, given that this may have been one of the forms of unwillingness to love medieval readers were most likely to experience in their own lives and marriages.[97] However, the possible frequency of age difference in middle- and upper-class marriages may be the cause of its rarity in romance narratives: while romances do engage with difficult social problems, the reality of age difference within marriage may have been a difficult issue for romances to resolve satisfactorily. Another type of unwillingness to love I do not discuss is unwillingness to commit incest, which appears in the Middle English romance of *Emaré*, as well as more briefly in *Sir Degaré* and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, and more disturbingly in *Apollonius of Tyre*, where incest is committed rather than averted.[98] I do not discuss this topic because of its problematic relation to love; its polarised and often violent nature also means that it offers fewer opportunities to explore the nuances of romance's engagement with consent and coercion.

Another type of unwillingness to love I do not include in the parameters of this thesis is unwillingness to participate in queer relationships. This is a relatively rare type of unwillingness to love in romance: queer desires are usually presented subtly, under the surface of romance narratives rather than explicitly within the plot, and as such unwillingness to engage in queer relationships does not occur often, as it requires a more open portrayal of queer desires than usually exists within the genre.[99] There are some isolated examples of resistance to queer desires and relationships, such as the rejection of Queen Eufeme by Silence in the French *Roman de Silence*. However, while the *Roman de Silence* portrays complex and nuanced constructions of gender and sexuality in other ways, its representation of resistance to queer desires is somewhat simplistic: Heldris de Cornuälle states that 'nel consent pas sa nature' [his nature did not consent], and repeatedly refers to Silence as 'li vallés qui est mescine' ['the youth who is a girl'] in this

[97] Carol Meale notes that of the relatively few known female owners of romances, Margery London was the fourth wife of a much older man, William London: Meale, 'Romance and Its Audiences', pp. 222–23. More generally, McSheffrey observes that '[e]lite urban women', like the nobility, often 'marr[ied] young to men much older than they': McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 17. Marriages between those of lower social status seem to have been associated with greater proximity in age, but the gentry and middle-class readers of Middle English romance may have formed marriages with a larger age difference. See P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Marriage, Migration and Servanthood: The York Cause Paper Evidence', in *Woman Is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society, c. 1200-1500*, ed. by P. J. P. Goldberg (Stroud: Sutton, 1992), pp. 1–15.

[98] For a study of incest in medieval literature, see Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

[99] See Allen-Goss.

scene (despite using 'il' pronouns for Silence for the majority of the work).[100] Silence is therefore presented as resisting the Queen's advances at least in part because Silence knows the Queen is pursuing Silence under the impression that Silence is a cis man.[101] Even in this romance, unwillingness to engage in queer relationships is presented somewhat simplistically: the cruder, homophobic ideological functions served by the motif of unwillingness to engage in queer relationships, coupled with the rarity of this motif, means that it is not a primary subject of this thesis. Instead, I focus upon types of unwillingness to love that engage ethical and social questions about gender, desire, consent, and coercion, as well as social status, race/faith, and adultery. These variations of unwillingness to love offer particular potential to explore the nuances of romance ideologies and subversions.

The types of unwillingness discussed in this thesis are also not comprehensive in themselves, because unwillingness to love is so extensive a romance motif. Some chapters take a case study approach, selecting particularly salient examples from a wider motif, while others approach a comprehensive overview of the particular type of unwillingness to love on which they focus. For example, for romantic a(nti)pathy associated with women, I focus only on the specific sub-type of the proud lady in love, a figure who allows recognition of both the subversive and conservative potential offered by this motif. There are a significant number of other female figures who express romantic a(nti)pathy in medieval romance, including Chaucer's Emelye, as well as the group of haughty damsels who scorn unproven knights but do not generally become a love-object for them. However, I focus upon the proud lady in love as a figure who demonstrates the gendered ideological functions of romantic a(nti)pathy. Likewise, unwillingness to commit adultery is relatively widespread within medieval English romance, so I focus on case studies drawn from particular types of romance. My other chapters are more comprehensive: there are relatively few men who are apathetic or hostile to romantic relationships, and so Chapter 1 gives an overview of this variation upon unwillingness to love in Anglo-Norman and Middle English romance from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Similarly, while relationships between characters of differing status, faiths, or races are not uncommon in romance literature, unwillingness to engage in these particular types of

[100] Heldris de Cornuälle, *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. & trans. by Sarah Roche-Mahdi, Medieval Texts and Studies, 10 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), ll. 3824, 3785, and 3763, 3871. See further Caitlin Watt, "'Car vallés sui et nient mescine": Trans Heroism and Literary Masculinity in *Le Roman de Silence*', in *Visions of Medieval Trans Feminism*, pp. 135–73.
[101] *Silence*, ll. 3757–894.

relationship is rarer, and I am therefore able to discuss most examples of these types of unwillingness in my third and fourth chapters.

Most of my chapters focus upon Middle English romance, discussing insular or continental French sources where relevant. However, Chapter 1 includes the Anglo-Norman romances *Guigemar* and *Amadas et Ydoine*. This opens the thesis with a broader overview of one particular form of unwillingness to love, providing a wider backdrop on which the subsequent chapters build. This broader range is enabled by the relative scarcity of male romantic a(nti)pathy in medieval English romance, which suggests a reduced interest in male romantic a(nti)pathy compared to female unwillingness, which may have been seen as a more complex and provocative motif. The only other exception to the focus upon Middle English romance is the inclusion of *Eger and Grime* in Chapter 2, but while *Eger and Grime* is a Scottish romance, it circulated in an anglicised form and context in the Percy Folio (its earlier history is largely unknown), and therefore is included in my discussion of Middle English romances of the proud lady in love.[102] The romances discussed include a mixture of verse and prose, Arthurian and non-Arthurian works. While the differences between these types of romance are significant, part of the point of this thesis is to draw attention to the wide range of romances in which unwillingness to love features as a prominent motif. Thus, the range of sub-genres and forms, as well as the timespan covered in this thesis does not undermine but rather demonstrates the significance of unwillingness to love as a motif, which circulated widely and continuously in medieval English romance.

The works discussed within each chapter are not, then, necessarily directly connected. Some works do share closer affinities: *King Horn, Havelok*, and *Amis and Amiloun*, discussed in Chapter 3, are all early Middle English romances developed from Anglo-Norman sources, and *King Horn* and *Havelok* are further linked by their focus on

[102] *Eger and Grime* is also included by other scholars who focus mostly upon Middle English romance: it is discussed by Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*; Antony J. Hasler, 'Romance and Its Discontents in *Eger and Grime*', in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, pp. 200–18; Lee C. Ramsey, *Chivalric Romances: Popular Literature in Medieval England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 135, 138–43, 148, 150; David E. Faris, 'The Art of Adventure in the Middle English Romance: *Ywain and Gawain*, *Eger and Grime*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 53.1 (1981), 91–100. Of course, it also appears in work on Scottish literature: see Rhiannon Purdie and Katie Stevenson, 'Chivalric Literature', in *The International Companion to Scottish Literature 1400-1650*, ed. by Nicola Royan, International Companions to Scottish Literature, 6 (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2018), pp. 157–72 (pp. 158–60); William Calin, *The Lily and the Thistle: The French Tradition and the Older Literature of Scotland – Essays in Criticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 212–20; Sergi Mainer, '*Eger and Grime* and the Boundaries of Courtly Romance', in *Joyous Sweit Imaginatioun: Essays on Scottish Literature in Honour of R. D. S. Jack*, ed. by Sarah Carpenter and Sarah M. Dunnigan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 77–95.

the 'Matter of England'.[103] However, this chapter also includes Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, which is separated from the other works by its generic affiliations with Arthurian literature, and by at least a century in time. *The Wife of Bath's Tale* indicates the wider range and moral potential of this particular sub-type of unwillingness to love in Middle English romance, but I do not suggest that it is directly connected to the earlier works discussed. On other occasions, the possible links between different romances' representations of unwillingness to love do suggest a relationship of some kind between them – not necessarily a direct line of influence, but perhaps one filtered through similar sources or analogues. Liz Herbert McAvoy's use of Nicholas Royle's and Hélène Cixous's work on textual haunting provides a helpful model here: McAvoy suggests textual haunting offers a fruitful way to investigate the influence of medieval women's devotional writing, moving beyond the idea of the empirical and patriarchal canon.[104] Similarly, the recurrent and yet shifting nature of unwillingness to love as a trope within medieval romance suggests the multiplicity and intangibility of connections between romances, connections which have traditionally been difficult to account for because of the formulaic nature of romance, the sporadic survival of Middle English romances and uncertainties about their transmission, and the widespread medieval practice of borrowing without citation. Textual haunting offers a suggestive model for the recurrence of the motif of unwillingness to love across apparently unconnected romances, revealing a broader nexus of generic connections that spans canonical and non-canonical romances, opening up different comparative perspectives to reveal new insights into the textual situation and inspiration of even some of the most well-known romances.

This thesis explores the romance genre's widespread and varied use of the motif of unwillingness to love. I examine types of unwillingness that function in a socially conservative and/or subversive way; explore complex questions about ethical and social priorities; and nuance ideas about consent and coercion, gender, and desire in the romance genre. These points of focus illuminate why the motif of unwillingness to love

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[103] The 'Matter of England' category is a somewhat problematic one: see Rosalind Field, 'The Curious History of the Matter of England', in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge, Studies in Medieval Romance, 6 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), pp. 29–42. For a recent acknowledgement that it can still be a useful category, see Megan G. Leitch, 'Introduction, Middle English Romance: The Motifs and the Critics', in *Romance Rewritten: The Evolution of Middle English Romance, A Tribute to Helen Cooper*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald, Megan G. Leitch, and Corinne Saunders, Studies in Medieval Romance, 22 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2018), pp. 1–24 (p. 7 n. 21).

[104] Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Textual Phantoms and Spectral Presences: The Coming to Rest of Mechthild of Hackeborn's Writing in England in the Late Middle Ages' (presented at Speaking Internationally: Medieval Women's Literary Culture and the Canon in the Global Middle Ages, Bangor, 2019).

appealed to such a variety of romance writers and, presumably, their readers. The ideological and affective mobilisation of this motif within medieval romance raises questions about the wider functions of romance as a genre, revealing its potential to connect with readers' real-life concerns, and facilitating new understandings of what it is about this genre that held such appeal for readers in the Middle Ages, as well as today.

CHAPTER 1.
'AR YE A KNYGHT AND AR NO LOVEAR?': MALE ROMANTIC A(NTI)PATHY[1]

INTRODUCTION

The Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances that portray male romantic a(nti)pathy form a relatively small but varied corpus, encompassing Marie's *Guigemar*, *Amadas et Ydoine*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Sir Degrevant*, and Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (in its representation of Dynadan). The limited size of this group in comparison with the other types of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis suggests that male romantic a(nti)pathy attracts less interest from authors and readers, perhaps because it is seen as less noteworthy or problematic in terms of its implications for models of gender and sexuality. However, the size of this corpus is countered by the wide range these romances encompass: they span Anglo-Norman and Middle English works from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, from the Breton *lai* to Arthurian prose romance, and from gentry romance to romances written for courtly and royal audiences.[2] While male romantic a(nti)pathy receives less consistent attention than other kinds of unwillingness to love, then, it was nonetheless a subject of interest to romance writers across the period of the genre's greatest popularity, even if this interest manifests somewhat sporadically.

This chapter explores several reasons why male romantic a(nti)pathy appealed to romance writers and readers across the high to late medieval period. In Marie's *Guigemar*, it is not so much the gender of the hero as his age that is significant, I suggest, as Guigemar's unwillingness to love seems to be positioned in terms of sexual development from childhood to adulthood, indicating the ways in which romantic a(nti)pathy might have been a subject of interest (and a cause of concern) to the middle- and upper-class

[1] Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P. J. C. Field (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), p. 549.
[2] Johnston describes *Sir Degrevant* as 'the paradigmatic gentry romance', while Malory's *Morte Darthur* has been associated with the gentry and nobility. Marie's *Lais* are dedicated to a king, probably Henry II or possibly Henry III, and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is associated with a noble and courtly audience. Little is known about the audience of *Amadas et Ydoine*, but Burch suggests it was written 'for the educated courtly public'. See Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 189; Raluca L. Radulescu, *The Gentry Context for Malory's 'Morte Darthur'*, Arthurian Studies, 55 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003); Thomas H. Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience: The Social Reading of Romance in Late Medieval England*, Arthurian Studies, 66 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006); Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, *Marie de France: A Critical Companion*, Gallica, 24 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), p. 3; Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, 'Introduction', in *The Lais of Marie de France*, ed. & trans. by Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 7–36 (p. 11); Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, 'Manuscripts and Audience', in *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 34–50 (p. 44); Barry Windeatt, 'Courtly Writing', in *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, pp. 90–109 (p. 92); Sally L. Burch, 'The Lady, the Lords and the Priests: The Making and Unmaking of Marriage in *Amadas et Ydoine*', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 25 (1999), 17–31 (p. 17).

readers of romance. Marie also uses the motif of romantic a(nti)pathy to raise questions about the nature of love and chivalry, indicating the interrogative and critical function unwillingness to love could serve even from the early stages of romance writing. In *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *Sir Degrevant*, the three central romances discussed in this chapter, a pattern for the use of male romantic a(nti)pathy develops: although unwillingness to love is represented briefly in these works, in each case the unwilling lover is paired with a woman who also resists love, and the different ways these protagonists are represented reveals an awareness of the more problematic nature of female romantic a(nti)pathy, and the ways in which women were more vulnerable to various forms of coercion and persuasion to love. The final section of this chapter considers Malory's Dynadan as rather an outlying figure in the romance tradition (as he arguably is in the *Morte Darthur*): Dynadan, unusually, never accepts love. He therefore offers some alternatives to the usual priorities of Arthurian society, including through his exclusive focus on homosocial relationships, and especially his relationship with Tristram, which develops the queer potentiality of unwillingness to love. While most of these narratives reinforce normative patterns of behaviour within medieval secular society, usually by depicting eventual acquiescence to love, each romance also uses the motif of romantic a(nti)pathy to raise questions about the nature of love, chivalry, consent, and coercion, demonstrating an awareness of how these issues were gendered in medieval literature and society.

'KE UNKE FEMME NULE NE VIT | A KI IL ATURNAST S'AMUR' ['HE HAD NEVER SEEN ANY WOMAN WHOM HE COULD LOVE']: PRESEXUALITY, ASEXUALITY, AND CRITIQUE IN MARIE'S *GUIGEMAR*[3]

Guigemar, the hero of Marie's twelfth-century Breton *lai* of the same name,[4] has received significant scholarly attention for his a(nti)pathy towards love.[5] However, Guigemar's unwillingness to love is less extreme than most of the other examples discussed in this and the following chapter, as Guigemar's unwillingness is not described as a prideful refusal, but simply a lack of interest in love:

> De tant i out mespris nature
> Kë *unc de nul' amur n'out cure*.
> Suz ciel n'out dame ne pucele
> Ki tant par fust noble ne bele,
> Së il de amer la requeïst,
> Ke volentiers nel retenist.
> Plusurs le requistrent suvent,
> Mais il *n'aveit de ceo talent*;
> Nuls ne se pout aparceveir
> Kë il volsist amur aveir.
> Pur ceo le tienent a peri
> E li estrange e si ami. (57-68, my emphasis)
>
> [Nature had done him such a grievous wrong that he never displayed the slightest interest in love. There was no lady or maiden on earth, however noble or beautiful, who would not have been happy to accept him as her lover, if he had sought her love. Women frequently made advances to him, but he was indifferent to them. He showed no visible interest in love and was thus considered a lost cause by stranger and friend alike.] (p. 44)

This emphasis upon Guigemar's lack of interest in love, together with the *lai*'s opening focus on Guigemar's childhood, associates Guigemar's unwillingness with the process of

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[3] Marie de France, 'Guigemar', in *Marie de France: Lais*, ed. by Alfred Ewert (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1995), pp. 3–25 (ll. 130–31); trans. in Marie de France, 'Guigemar', in *The Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 43–55 (p. 45).

[4] I refer to the author of *Guigemar* as 'Marie' rather than 'Marie de France' in this chapter, in accordance with the reference to 'Marie' as the writer of *Guigemar* in London, British Library, MS Harley 978. Although most editions and critical discussions refer to the author of the *Lais* as 'Marie de France', Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has argued that both the canon and the figure of 'Marie de France' are modern constructions, suggesting that '[w]e need to be reserved about making authorial names the founding category of literary production if we are to make sense of a culture where a patron's name can confer more authority on a vernacular text than a writer's, and where authorship is differently conceptualised than it has been since the eighteenth century': 'Recovery and Loss: Women's Writing around Marie de France', in *Women Intellectuals and Leaders in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, and John Van Engen (Cambridge: Brewer, 2020), pp. 169–89 (p. 179); see further Kinoshita and McCracken, pp. 1, 12, 17, 20, 36 n. 30, 203–04, 217–18. There have been many different attempts to determine the identity of a 'Marie de France': for a brief overview, see Kinoshita and McCracken, pp. 1–4.

[5] For example, see Kinoshita and McCracken, p. 119; Karras, p. 188; Adams, p. 301; Rupert T. Pickens, '*En bien parler* and *mesparler*: Fecundity and Sterility in the Works of Marie de France', *Le Cygne*, n.s., 3 (2005), 7–22 (pp. 11–12).

sexual maturation as he reaches adulthood, often understood as a movement from being uninterested in romantic and sexual partners to desiring sexual relationships. Such a reading has been proposed before: Rupert T. Pickens and R. W. Hanning both hint at this by suggesting that 'the *lai* is concerned with the processes by which Guigemar is made conscious of his own sexuality'; 'openness to love is an integral part of his quest for maturity and fulfillment', while T. A. Shippey has interpreted *Guigemar* as a symbolic 'family drama'.[6] However, the significance of reading Guigemar's romantic a(nti)pathy in this way only becomes fully apparent when *Guigemar* is placed in the context of other romance portrayals of unwillingness to love. Although Guigemar's lack of interest in love is perceived negatively within the *lai* (Nature has wronged him – or even he has wronged Nature – and he is considered *peri*), he is not described as proud or wilful, and the *lai*'s readers are not encouraged to condemn Guigemar to the same extent as in narratives of the proud lady in love, as we shall see in Chapter 2.[7] Guigemar is not wilfully resisting love, but is rather indifferent to it, and this more moderate assessment of his unwillingness opens up romantic a(nti)pathy as a state with which readers might identify – perhaps young readers in particular. Although we do not know much about Marie's audience, there is no reason to assume that young people did not listen to and read the *Lais*. The prologue to *La vie seint Edmund le rei* records of 'Dame Marie' that 'mult l'ayment, si l'unt mult cher | Cunte, barun e chivaler'; '[l]es lays soleient as dames pleire, | De joye les oyent e de gré' ['counts and barons and knights love her work greatly and hold it dear'; 'The *lais* often please ladies who hear them willingly and with joy'], while the *Lais* are dedicated to 'a noble king [...] whom most scholars identify as Henry II, suggesting that if Marie did not live at court, she certainly had access to it'.[8] A courtly setting could presumably have included young readers, whose sympathy and identification Guigemar may have attracted as a figure who is reluctant to mature, rather than too proud to consider love. Guigemar may embody young readers' own concerns about entering the

[6] Pickens, 'Thematic Structure in Marie de France's *Guigemar*', *Romania*, 95 (1974), 328–41 (pp. 334–35); Hanning, p. 47; T. A. Shippey, 'Breton *Lais* and Modern Fantasies', in *Studies in Medieval English Romances: Some New Approaches*, ed. by Derek Brewer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 69–91 (pp. 71–74).
[7] Pickens, 'Thematic Structure', pp. 328–30.
[8] Denis Piramus, *La Vie seint Edmund le Rei*, ed. by D. W. Russell, Anglo-Norman Text Society, 71 (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2014), ll. 35, 41–42, 46–47; trans in Kinoshita and McCracken, p. 207. On Marie's courtly audience, see Kinoshita and McCracken, p. 3; Burgess and Busby, p. 11.

adult worlds of love, marriage, and sex (as well as offering a potentially nostalgic figure for older readers).[9]

Focusing on Guigemar's romantic a(nti)pathy as a continuation of childhood presexuality partly aligns with Burgwinkle's perception of *Guigemar* as a text in which

> a queer young buck [is] led to the heterosexual trough and taught to drink. Courtly literature begins to look more like an instructional manual: how to convince your adolescent son, with a little force if necessary, that it is, after all, only a phase.[10]

Guigemar certainly can be read as a queer figure, particularly in view of the gender confusion in the *lai*, embodied in the antlered hind and in Guigemar's thigh wound (as thigh wounds are often associated with sexual transgression or even castration).[11] However, as Burgwinkle himself notes, 'Marie is careful not to identify [Guigemar] as anything other than different. He is not necessarily a sodomite, not even [...] an object of desire to other men. He is just not appropriately heterosexual'.[12] Associating Guigemar's romantic a(nti)pathy with childhood presexuality does not necessarily undermine the queer resonances of *Guigemar*; instead, it could expand our view of these resonances. As Schultz has argued, the assumption that '[r]esistance to one mode of sexuality must mean a commitment to the other mode [...] is only possible if one accepts the principles that [...] everyone has a sexual orientation, that there are only two, that they are mutually exclusive'.[13] Reading Guigemar's lack of desire for women as an indication of homosexuality is a possibility, but this reading to some extent assumes and reinforces a binary distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and does not take into account alternative queer possibilities, such as asexuality. Although this thesis is not primarily focused upon exploring the potential resonances between unwillingness to love and what we would now think of as asexuality, the specific presentation of Guigemar's

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[9] Just as Riddy argues that the knight was 'a focus for the fantasies of people who are not themselves members of the knightly class', young people and their concerns may have held imaginative appeal for older readers too. See Riddy, p. 238.
[10] Burgwinkle, p. 160.
[11] See further Larrington, 'Gender/Queer Studies', p. 262; Logan E. Whalen, 'A Matter of Life and Death: Fecundity and Sterility in Marie de France's *Guigemar*', in *Shaping Courtliness in Medieval France: Essays in Honor of Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner*, ed. by Daniel E. O'Sullivan and Laurie Shepard, Gallica, 28 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 139–50 (p. 144); Hanning, p. 47; Kathleen Coyne Kelly, 'Menaced Masculinity and Imperiled Virginity in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*', in *Menacing Virgins*, pp. 97–114 (p. 111). Perhaps the most famous example of the thigh wound as castration is the Fisher King of the Grail Quest: see Jed Chandler, 'Eunuchs of the Grail', in *Castration and Culture in the Middle Ages*, pp. 229–54; Anna Roberts, 'Queer Fisher King: Castration as a Site of Queer Representation (*Perceval, Stabat Mater, The City of God*)', *Arthuriana*, 11.3 (2001), 49–88; McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', pp. 136–38.
[12] Burgwinkle, p. 151.
[13] Schultz, p. 22.

romantic a(nti)pathy as a lack of interest in love aligns particularly suggestively with ideas of asexuality and aromanticism.

Simone Chess has recently explored the queer potential of male adolescence on the early modern stage in relation to asexuality, arguing that 'in staging disinterest in sex and romance through adolescent and child characters [...] authors could explore the limits and possibilities of asexuality without overtly suggesting it as a life-long option or orientation': 'asexuality in adolescence allows for queer subversion and containment'.[14] Chess's ideas offer a productive framework for *Guigemar* too, as the ambiguity of Guigemar's indifference to love as both a continuation of childhood presexuality (since it is resolved by his later love for the lady) and a subversive manifestation of that indifference to sexuality beyond the age at which it might be expected (since it is to some extent perceived negatively within the *lai*) enacts the 'age drag' Chess perceives in early modern drama.[15] *Guigemar* thus realises a potentially queer asexuality, while enclosing it within the framework of sexual development by depicting it as temporary. While the containment and repudiation of asexuality as a stage in sexual development imposes a normative framework that curbs its queer potential, the *lai* at the same time opens up queer possibilities to wider identification, not condemning Guigemar's apathy towards love, but situating it in the intersection between adolescent development (a stage with which readers might sympathise) and subversive (a)sexuality. In this respect, *Guigemar* is rather different to the works Chess discusses, where asexuality is often played for comedy rather than empathy. *Guigemar* does offer 'a lesson [...] in compulsive heterosexuality as the foundation of Western romantic love', which encompasses rejecting queer (a)sexuality, but the ambiguous intersection between presexuality and asexuality also enables the *lai*'s queer potential to become accessible and meaningful for a wider audience.[16] Guigemar's indifference to love offers a model with which readers who similarly face a transition into sexual maturity may identify, regardless of whether their trepidation about sexuality is temporary or permanent, offering insights into medieval views of and anxieties about the transition between childhood and adulthood, and opening up queer possibilities to wider identification.[17]

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[14] 'Asexuality, Queer Chastity, and Adolescence in Early Modern Literature', p. 32.
[15] Ibid., pp. 34–36.
[16] Misty Urban, 'Sexual Compulsion and Sexual Violence in the *Lais* of Marie de France', in *Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom*, pp. 138–50 (p. 144).
[17] For some recent perspectives on childhood in the Middle Ages, see *Literary Cultures and Medieval and Early Modern Childhoods*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Diane Purkiss (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019);

Because Guigemar's apathy towards love is situated within a context of developing sexuality, Marie's unusual resolution of Guigemar's unwillingness comments suggestively on fears about reaching sexual maturity, adulthood, and marriage, illustrating some of the ways in which the unrealistic scenarios of romance (in this case, involving a talking deer and a magical ship) can, through the motif of unwillingness to love, nonetheless engage with real-world concerns and preoccupations. What is perhaps unique about Marie's exploration of resistance to love in *Guigemar* is that the *lai* becomes, to an extent, a quest for Guigemar to overcome his own romantic apathy. When the antlered hind tells Guigemar of his fate, Guigemar is

> esmaiez.
> Començat sei a purpenser
> En quel tere purrat aler
> Pur sa plaie faire guarir;
> Kar ne se volt laissier murir.
> Il set assez e bien le dit
> Ke unke femme nule ne vit
> A ki il aturnast s'amur
> Ne kil guaresist de dolur. (124-32)
>
> [dismayed [...]. He wondered where he could go to find a cure for his wound, for he did not intend to allow himself to die. He knew full well, and said to himself, that he had never seen any woman whom he could love or who could cure him of his suffering.] (pp. 44-45)

Because he does not intend to accept death, Guigemar wants to find a cure for his wound: in a sense, his lack of interest in love has already been overcome, he has found 'the desire for desire', to borrow R. Howard Bloch's words.[18] Guigemar's practical course of action demonstrates his wish to save his life by discovering love: he knows that he has never seen anyone whom he could love in his own country, and sends his squire away, for '[n]e volt ke nul des suens i vienge, | Kil desturbast ne kil retienge' (143-44) ['he did not want any of his followers to come and hinder him, or attempt to detain him', p. 45].[19] Although the ship that takes Guigemar to the lady with whom he will fall in love operates without human agency, it is Guigemar who rides towards the sea and boards the ship, indicating a level of active participation.[20] Guigemar's journey towards love is characterised by a

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Colin Heywood, 'Conceptions of Childhood in the Middle Ages', in *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2018; first publ. 2001), pp. 20–33; *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

[18] Bloch, 'The Medieval Text – "Guigemar" – as a Provocation to the Discipline of Medieval Studies', *Romanic Review*, 79.1 (1988), 63–73 (p. 70).

[19] Pickens comments on Guigemar's 'presence of mind' here: 'Thematic Structure', p. 336.

[20] Hanning suggests that the ship 'symbolically represents the knight's personal destiny', as well as 'the poet's resources of imagination and control over her story', p. 49. Pickens suggests it may be controlled

complex combination of agency and passivity – a suggestive formula for an experience that is both active and passive, something you can pursue or allow to happen to you, hence 'falling in love' as a non-agential construction. Through his active desire to find a woman to love in order to heal his wound, Guigemar becomes, to some extent, a willing agent in overcoming his own apathy towards love.

In this way, *Guigemar* perhaps offers a model for young people making a similar transition into the worlds of love, marriage, and sex, urging them to accept the need for love and to be open to seeking it out, or to accept the instruction of others who will guide them into the world of marriage, such as their parents – a role the hind may be associated with, as it too is a parent, accompanied by its fawn.[21] In the context of the *Lais*' imagined audience, for whom marriage was an expected social norm that was often determined by political and parental interests rather than solely by personal desires, and where love was seen as something that could develop after marriage, *Guigemar* seems to take on a didactic function regarding young people's role in society.[22] Just as Felicity Riddy argues that later Middle English romances had the task of 'endors[ing], again and again, the view that the supreme goal for boys and men of the propertied classes is to marry and settle down', we can see this function manifesting even in the earliest examples of romance writing.[23] At the same time, *Guigemar* may have appealed to young people because of the veiled nature of this didacticism: Guigemar himself does not marry in the *lai*, so any didactic message is conveyed subtly rather than being overtly moralistic.[24] While these concerns may have been particularly pertinent to Marie's imagined upper-class audience, Andrew Taylor notes that the *Lais*' actual audience seems to have diverged from this imagined readership, revealing the 'first identifiable reader' of Marie to be William of Winchester, a Benedictine

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by God, 'Thematic Structure', p. 338. On the motif of the rudderless ship in romance more generally, see Cooper, 'Providence and the sea: "No tackle, sail, nor mast"', in *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 106–36. For a brief discussion of a possible source, see Sebastian Sobecki, 'A Source for the Magical Ship in the *Partonopeu de Blois* and Marie de France's *Guigemar*', *Notes and Queries*, 48.3 (2001), 220–22.

[21] Donald Maddox and Leslie C. Brook note that the image of the hind is 'familial', while Burgwinkle argues '[t]he fawn's presence is required only to underscore the maternal and paternal functions of the beast': Maddox, *Fictions of Identity in Medieval France*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 28; Brook, 'Guigemar and the White Hind', *Medium Ævum*, 56.1 (1987), 94–101 (p. 95); Burgwinkle, p. 155.

[22] Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 6, 12–18, 21; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 17–21; Karras, p. 146; Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, p. 15. On the development of love after marriage, see Burger, pp. 18, 194–95; Barbara Harris, p. 59.

[23] Riddy, p. 240.

[24] This suggestion accords with Semple's argument that 'the Lays make of questions of sexual desire and erotic love a realm of learning': Benjamin Semple, 'The Male Psyche and the Female Sacred Body in Marie de France and Christine de Pizan', in *Corps Mystique, Corps Sacre: Textual Transfigurations of the Body From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Françoise Jaouën and Benjamin Semple (=*Yale French Studies*, 86 (1994)), pp. 164–86 (p. 178).

monk at Reading Abbey and Leominster Priory.[25] Nonetheless, Taylor's view of William as 'amorous, worldly, and worldly-wise', and perhaps even as learning 'the terms and arguments of *amour courtois*' from the *Lais* narrows the apparent gap between implied and actual audience, indicating the continued relevance *Guigemar*'s portrayal of romantic a(nti)pathy and development into love may have had beyond Marie's initial aristocratic audience.[26]

While *Guigemar* seems to offer a semi-didactic model that indicates the necessity of love, Marie does not simply use Guigemar's initial apathy towards love and his subsequent commitment to love as a way of uncritically reinforcing normative expectations of love, marriage, and reproduction. Instead, through the curious nature of Guigemar's quest, Marie raises questions about love, chivalry, and gendered relationships. The interplay of passivity and activity in Guigemar's journey towards the lady (and thus towards love) is fairly conventional for medieval descriptions of love, but it also draws attention to the odd balance of agency as Guigemar wilfully overcomes his own romantic apathy.[27] Just as Guigemar boards the boat willingly and is then forced '[s]uffrir [...] l'aventure' (199) ['to accept his fate', p. 45], so too does he wish to love in order to heal his wound, while at the same time this goes against his former desires. The complex relationship between love and the will is further problematised when the antlered hind inscribes suffering as central to – perhaps constitutive of – love. The hind declares that Guigemar can only be healed by a woman

> Ki suffera pur tue amur
> Issi grant peine e tel dolur
> Ke unkes femme taunt ne suffri;
> E tu referas taunt pur li. (115-18)
>
> [who will suffer for your love more pain and anguish than any other woman has ever known, and you will suffer likewise for her.] (p. 44)

Positioning suffering as central to love just as Guigemar's lack of interest in love starts to change raises provocative questions about the relationship between love and suffering,

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[25] Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 136, 100, 93.
[26] Taylor, *Textual Situations*, pp. 121, 136.
[27] For example, in *Cligès* the narrator asks 'cil qu'atant et por quoi tarde, | Qui por li est par tot hardiz, | S'est vers li sole acoardiz?' ['why did Cligés hesitate? What was he waiting for? He, whose every deed was emboldened by her, afraid of her alone?']: Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, ed. by Wendelin Foerster, trans. by Ingrid Kasten (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), ll. 3842–44; trans. in Chrétien de Troyes, 'Cligés', in *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, ed. & trans. by William W. Kibler (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 123–205 (p. 169). Cooper notes that the 'sense of *loss* of agency is inseparable from romance love, for both male and female protagonists': *The English Romance in Time*, p. 230.

drawing attention to the most unappealing aspect of love even as Marie indicates that there is no alternative to love for Guigemar. In this way, Marie dramatises anxieties about love and the suffering it entails, while not fully assuaging these anxieties, despite Guigemar's apparent acceptance of the necessity of love.

The evident gender ambiguity of the antlered hind draws attention to the other ways in which these anxieties and questions about love are related to gender roles in the *lai*.[28] While the antlered hind focuses on female suffering when describing love to Guigemar, the episode of the hind itself marginalises the woman who is nominally at the centre of Guigemar's experience of love. Whereas other romances tend to resolve unwillingness to love by introducing an exceptionally desirable beloved (even if this is accompanied by coercion or supernatural agency), *Guigemar* unusually stages a supernatural intervention before introducing the beloved, destabilising the centrality of the beloved to the experience of love. This could indicate the influence of the Narcissus story, where the beloved is literally replaced by the self. Marie is known to have drawn on Ovid in her work, and SunHee Kim Gertz observes 'obvious Ovidian influences' in *Guigemar* in particular, including 'specific parallels to the tale of Narcissus and Echo'.[29] This marginalisation of the lady becomes more explicitly apparent when she is reunited with Guigemar at the end of the *lai* and he is unable to recognise her, declaring '[f]emmes se resemblent asez' (779) ['women look very much alike', p. 53]. As Burgwinkle notes, Guigemar's confusion ensures that '[e]ven the fairy-tale ending is subverted in Marie's telling'.[30] The inclusion of dissonant moments like Guigemar's failure to recognise the lady draws attention to the way in which love can become a construct and an imperative in romance literature, rather than a personal, emotional connection between two individuals. This is particularly provocative in view of the affinities between Guigemar's lack of interest in love and modern concepts of asexuality or aromanticism: the

[28] On the significance of the antlered hind, see H. Marshall Leicester, Jr., 'The Voice of the Hind: The Emergence of Feminine Discontent in the *Lais* of Marie de France', in *Reading Medieval Culture: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Hanning*, ed. by Robert M. Stein and Sandra Pierson Prior (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 132–69; Burgwinkle, pp. 154–57; June Hall McCash, 'The Curse of the White Hind and the Cure of the Weasel: Animal Magic in the *Lais* of Marie de France', in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture*, ed. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 199–209; Brook; Pickens, 'Thematic Structure', pp. 335–36; and, for a relatively new argument, Ashley Lee, 'The Hind Episode in Marie de France's *Guigemar* and Medieval Vernacular Poetics', *Neophilologus*, 93.2 (2009), 191–200. An antlered hind also appears in Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 78.

[29] 'Echoes and Reflections of Enigmatic Beauty in Ovid and Marie de France', *Speculum*, 73.2 (1998), 372–96 (pp. 379–80). See the introduction to this thesis for discussions of Ovidian influences on Marie's work more broadly.

[30] Burgwinkle, p. 160.

undermining of love in the ending of the *lai* seems to highlight the constructed and imposed nature of love in medieval romance, exposing the genre's tendency to erase queerness and impose sexual and marital norms. This unsettling of the emotional and particularised experience of love also seems to bring the expectation of love in romance and the political necessity of marriage in medieval secular society into confrontation, once again revealing the dual nature of *Guigemar* as potentially queer and as opening up its queer possibilities to make them relevant to a wider audience.

Other aspects of the *lai*'s ending further develop Marie's subtle questioning of romantic and chivalric norms, particularly through the violence the ending posits as necessary to romantic love and chivalric masculinity.[31] When Meriaduc refuses to '[r]ende' (842) ['restore', p. 54] the lady to Guigemar, Guigemar gathers all the men who have come to Meriaduc's aid in war and rides to Meriaduc's enemy, offering him their service. Then

> Guigemar ad la vile assise;
> [...]
> tuz les affamat dedenz.
> Le chastel ad destruit e pris
> E le seignur dedenz ocis.
> A grant joie s'amie en meine. (875-81)
>
> [Guigemar besieged the town [...] he starved all those inside. He captured and destroyed the castle and killed the lord within. With great joy he took away his beloved.] (pp. 54-55)

As Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken suggest, 'the lovers' reunion is bought at the cost of a scandalous breach of feudal honor', as 'Guigemar and Meriaduc are not mere acquaintances but "friends and companions"', and 'Guigemar is called upon to pay up an obligation [...] the *gueredun* owed in repayment of an unspecified debt of honor to his "friend and companion"'.[32] Guigemar and his lady's 'joie' also seems 'astonishingly incongruous' with the devastation Guigemar has unleashed upon Meriaduc's people.[33]

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[31] Although Maddox suggests identifying 'instances of deliberate "ironic play" with convention' in the *Lais* is 'perceiv[ing] them anachronistically', this is an underestimation of the *Lais*. Taylor argues the *Lais* 'encourage interpretation that is both attentive and daring [...] licensing us to read beyond the surface meaning', while Perkins comments more generally on how 'some of the first romances are also some of the most self-aware, some of the most funny, some of the most […] undercutting and ironic as well'. See Maddox, p. 32; Taylor, *Textual Situations*, p. 104; Nicholas Perkins, 'Why Should We Study Medieval Romance?', Challenging the Canon, University of Oxford Podcasts <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/why-should-we-study-medieval-romance> [accessed 25 February 2021].

[32] Kinoshita and McCracken, pp. 74, 75. Leicester more briefly notes the 'more realistic political violence that start[s] to push through the surface of a happy ending', p. 139.

[33] Kinoshita and McCracken, p. 75.

Kinoshita and McCracken argue that this violence is 'occluded, first, by the intense compression of these events into a mere three lines and, secondly, by the exigencies of the love story, fulfilled in the narrator's quick cut to the long-deferred happy ending', suggesting that '[a]ll narrative threads are wrapped up with a rapidity that allows no second thoughts on Guigemar's course of action to surface'.[34] However, the earlier questioning of love, power, and gender roles through Guigemar's apathy towards love and the hind's resolution of this seems rather to open up this episode to interrogation and critique. Guigemar's unwillingness to love and the focus on suffering in Guigemar's relationship with the lady raise questions about the attractions of this kind of love and its formulation as an external imperative rather than an individualised attraction; these questions are developed when Guigemar performs the violence that is associated with and to some extent expected of a chivalric lover, no longer embracing suffering as his own model of love, but inflicting it on others. *Guigemar* appears to extol the necessity of love and elevate it above all other preoccupations, but Marie also subtly questions love, through the strangeness of Guigemar's complicity in overcoming his own romantic apathy, the formulation of love as an imperative imposed upon Guigemar by the antlered hind, and the violence associated with love at the end of the *lai*. The brevity and understatement of Marie's narrative style masks the complexity of the issues she raises about love and chivalry.

While *Guigemar* stands out amongst the group of romances discussed in this chapter for its explicit focus upon the supernatural and mysterious, the *lai* also briefly anticipates how the motif of romantic a(nti)pathy will develop in subsequent narratives like *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *Sir Degrevant*, by pairing together male and female unwillingness. When Guigemar asks the lady for her love, she initially demurs, but Guigemar somewhat hypocritically tells her that

> la dame de bon purpens,
> Ki en sei eit valur ne sens,
> S'ele treve hume a sa manere,
> Ne se ferat vers lui trop fiere. (519-22)
>
> [the well-intentioned lady, who is worthy and wise, should not be too harsh towards a man, if she finds him to her liking.] (p. 50)

Guigemar's warning to the lady not to be 'trop fiere' could refer to pride as well as to harshness, indicating that the association between pride and female resistance to love

[34] Kinoshita and McCracken, p. 75.

(which I will discuss in my next chapter) is extant even in early romances and *lais*, as Guigemar himself is never said to be proud.[35] As the lady immediately accepts Guigemar's love in response, this aligns her unwillingness with the idea of 'token resistance' or 'scripted refusal' (saying no to love or sex to accord with cultural scripts rather than because of an absence of desire) far more so than the examples of unwillingness to love discussed elsewhere in this thesis.[36] However, even so brief a pairing together of male and female resistance seems significant in view of how prominent this becomes in the other romances discussed in this chapter.

'C'ONQUES N'AMAI JUSQU'A CEST JOUR, | NE N'AMERAI JA MAIS NUL [...] | AUTRE QUE VOUS' ['UNTIL TODAY I HAVE NEVER LOVED AND I NEVER WILL LOVE ANY [...] BUT YOU']: FIDELITY AND GENDERED DIFFERENCE IN *AMADAS ET YDOINE*[37]

The hero of *Amadas et Ydoine*, a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman romance, is another young man whose aversion to love perhaps dramatises anxieties about entering the adult worlds of love, marriage, and sex.[38] When the narrative begins, Amadas is fifteen, and, like Guigemar, his apathy towards love is directly described:

> Qu'il n'avoit teche, ne mais une,
> Qui pas n'estoit a gent commune:
> Qu'il n'avoit pas ou mont dansele
> Tant courtoise, france ne bele,
> Ne dame de nule devise,
> Ne pour biauté, ne pour frankise,
> Qu'il amast vaillant une alie. (81-87)
>
> [They found only one flaw in him, one that is not common: there was no damsel in the world so courteous, noble or beautiful, no lady so renowned for beauty or for nobility that he would pay her any heed.] (p. 22)

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[35] 'Fer[2]', *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (AND[2] Online Edition), ed. by Geert De Wilde et al., Aberystwyth University, 2021 <https://anglo-norman.net/entry/fer_2> [accessed 7 March 2021].

[36] See Charlene L. Muehlenhard and Lisa C. Hollabaugh, 'Do Women Sometimes Say No When They Mean Yes? The Prevalence and Correlates of Women's Token Resistance to Sex', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54.5 (1988), 872–79 (p. 872). On the terminology 'token resistance' and 'scripted refusal', see Charlene L. Muehlenhard, 'Examining Stereotypes About Token Resistance to Sex', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35.4 (2011), 676–83 (p. 676).

[37] *Amadas et Ydoine: roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by John R. Reinhard, Classiques français du moyen âge, 51 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1926), ll. 1256–58. All quotations from this edition are taken from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 375 (ancien 6987), the Picard transcription but the only complete extant manuscript. Translations are from *Amadas and Ydoine*, trans. by Ross G. Arthur, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series B, 95 (New York: Garland, 1993), p. 39.

[38] On the date of *Amadas et Ydoine*, see Ross G. Arthur, 'Introduction', in *Amadas and Ydoine*, pp. 9–16 (p. 9); William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 71. The poem survives in two extensive fragments from Anglo-Norman manuscripts, and one complete Picard version, which represents a later rewriting of the Anglo-Norman story.

Amadas's unwillingness, however, is directly aligned with chastity, as '[n]e l'ont d'autre chose blasmé | Fors que trop amoit castée' (93-94) ['[t]he knights blamed him only for loving chastity too much', p. 22]. This connection with chastity points to a major function of unwillingness to love in romance literature: while it is not generally used to endorse virginity, it can uphold faithful and exclusive love by effectively guaranteeing virginity and fidelity to the one person an unwilling lover does deign to love. *Amadas et Ydoine* repeatedly draws attention to this: Amadas's companions mockingly nickname him 'le fin amoureus' (98) ['the Perfect Lover', p. 22] because of his resistance to love but, the poet comments, 'ne savoient | Com il verai prophete estoient' (101-02) ['they didn't know what true prophets they were', p. 22], drawing a direct link between Amadas's unwillingness and his later perfection in love. Likewise, Ydoine later tells Amadas, '[c]'onques n'amai jusqu'a cest jour, | Ne n'amerai ja mais nul houme | Autre que vous' (1256-58) ['until today I have never loved and I never will love any man but you', p. 39]. Unwillingness to love becomes both a backdrop against which subsequent passion can be measured, and a guarantee of the exclusivity of that passion. This is particularly evident in moments that directly contrast unwillingness with the sudden experience of love: as Amadas falls in love with Ydoine, the narrator comments '[d]'amer est mervilleuse cose: | Mervelles fait en poi de pose' (291-92) ['Love is a wondrous thing: it can perform miracles in an instant', p. 25], changing 'desirier ire mortal, | De caasté ardeur mult aigre' (300-01) ['desire into deadly distress, chastity into keen ardor', p. 25]. While the narrator's comment that love 'fait amer çou ke on het' (303) ['makes one love what one hates', p. 25] may be ironic, the description of Amadas falling in love also highlights the strength of his love precisely by contrasting it with his former unwillingness and chastity.[39] Like *Guigemar*, then, *Amadas et Ydoine* in part uses romantic a(nti)pathy to explore the nature of love itself, although in this case *Amadas et Ydoine* highlights the overwhelming and sudden power of love by contrasting Amadas's swift conversion to love with his former unwillingness.

Unlike *Guigemar*, however, *Amadas et Ydoine* develops the significance of male romantic a(nti)pathy by contrasting it with female romantic a(nti)pathy, making the difference between male and female unwillingness to love central to the early sections of the romance, rather than being confined to the brief reference to the lady's resistance in *Guigemar*. Comparisons between Amadas's and Ydoine's unwillingness are encouraged by

[39] On irony in *Amadas et Ydoine*, see Calin, *The French Tradition*, p. 74; Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 186.

the structure of the romance, as first Amadas's family situation, his nobility and talents, and reluctance to love are described, then Ydoine's family situation, her beauty and nobility, and her unwillingness to love are presented.[40] The terms used to describe their attitudes to love immediately contrast male and female unwillingness: while Amadas's unwillingness is a 'teche' (81) ['flaw', p. 22], he is 'blasmé | Fors que trop amoit castée' (93-94) ['blamed [...] only for loving chastity too much', p. 22]. In contrast, Ydoine's 'une teche' (171) ['one fault', p. 23] is condemned to a much greater extent:

> D'amour si sourquidie estoit
> Et si fiere et si orgilleuse,
> Vers tous houmes si desdaigneuse,
> Qu'el ne prisoit en son corage,
> [...]
> Nul houme u monde
> [...]
> Mult par estoit de grant orguel. (176-84)
>
> [She was so presumptuous toward love, so proud, so arrogant and disdainful toward all men that she would not give a place in her heart to any man [...] her pride was far too great.] (p. 23)

This contrasting portrayal seems to uncritically reinforce gender binaries, according with the trope of the proud lady in love by associating female unwillingness with pride.[41] However, the proximity between these two contrasting portrayals also opens them up to critique, inviting or enabling the reader to question why the protagonists' unwillingness is described so differently. This is particularly encouraged by the framing of Amadas's unwillingness as chastity: to perceive Amadas as chaste while condemning Ydoine's unwillingness seems strikingly inconsistent, particularly as chastity was so central to female virtue in the Middle Ages.[42] This early contrast between the two protagonists' unwillingness to love sets up the exploration of female romantic a(nti)pathy as a more extreme and problematic reflection of male romantic a(nti)pathy, as Amadas accepts love while Ydoine remains reluctant.

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[40] See *Amadas et Ydoine*, ll. 35–120, 125–90; trans. *Amadas and Ydoine*, pp. 21–22, 23.

[41] *Amadas et Ydoine* is relatively early for an insular romance that includes a proud lady in love (c. 1190-1220 or earlier), although *Ipomedon* (1180s) probably predates *Amadas*.

[42] Karras argues that 'chastity as a life phase loomed rather larger for women than it did for men, because it was considered much more important for them than it was for men to abstain from sexual activity during the time that they were not married'; Cooper comments on 'the high premium on female chastity in the form of virginity before marriage and faithfulness within it'; and Dodson goes so far as to suggest that '*[c]hastity* [...] was the only definition of virtue attributed to women': Karras, p. 36; Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 222; Karen Dodson, 'The Price of Virtue for the Medieval Woman: Chastity and the Crucible of the Virgin', *English Studies*, 99.6 (2018), 593–608 (p. 593).

Amadas's conversion to love occurs immediately when he sees Ydoine and admires her beauty. There is some emphasis on this overwhelming love being 'estre son voel' (235) ['against his will', p. 24], which is continued in his experience of lovesickness, when 'estre son voel est si aquis | Que pres de mort en est souspris' (333-34) ['against his will he was so afflicted that he was close to death', p. 26]. However, Amadas's conversion to love is inspired (or enacted) entirely by his sudden and overwhelming feelings for Ydoine, and not by any other consideration. Ydoine's unwillingness, and her path to accepting love, is rather different. She rejects Amadas outright when he first approaches her (in terms very similar to those of Felice in *Guy of Warwick*), but he petitions her again, and this time asserts that Ydoine '[p]echiet ferés et mult grant tort, | Se me laissiés issi morir' (695-96) ['will be committing a great sin if you let me die like this', p. 31].[43] Amadas repeatedly insists that he will die if Ydoine does not save him: while this emulates the trope of pleading for mercy from the beloved, it also potentially implies an element of coercion by exaggerating the stakes of rejecting love to life and death, and framing it as a moral obligation. In William Calin's words, despair 'does not prevent Amadas from employing traditional male seduction arguments in the face of a recalcitrant female'.[44] This technique of pressurising someone to love by claiming that someone else's life is at stake is later used by Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde* (*Guigemar*, on the other hand, provides another twist here: it is Guigemar's own life that he must save by falling in love).[45]

To some extent it is Amadas's emotive persuasion that wins Ydoine's love, as it is only on his third attempt, when he faints before her, that Ydoine is

> Adont primes pités l'em prent;
> Ne quide avoir confession
> Ja mais a nul jor ne pardon
> Dou grant pechié que ele a fait,

[43] Calin, Wiggins, Legge, and Reinhard all briefly observe that the scenes in *Amadas et Ydoine* and *Gui de Warewic*/*Guy of Warwick* are similar, but do not elaborate on the extent and implications of this similarity: Calin, *The French Tradition*, p. 82; Alison Eve Wiggins, '*Guy of Warwick*: Study and Transcription' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2000), p. 18; M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 163; John R. Reinhard, '*Amadas et Ydoine*: I. Mediaeval Conventions', *Romanic Review*, 15 (1924), 179–214 (p. 195). It seems possible that *Gui* was influenced by *Amadas et Ydoine* or vice-versa to a greater extent than has previously been recognised. Cooper notes that a copy of *Amadas et Ydoine* 'was among the books given to Bordesley Abbey in 1305 by Guy Beauchamp'; Guy also donated a 'volum del Romaunce de Gwy', providing some evidence for the common circulation of the narratives: Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 461 n. 20; Marianne Ailes, '*Gui de Warewic* in its Manuscript Context', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field, Studies in Medieval Romance, 4 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2007), pp. 12–26 (p. 25).
[44] Calin, *The French Tradition*, p. 74.
[45] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Troilus and Criseyde', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 471–585 (II. 321-50, 360-62, 382-85, 432-46).

> Se ele ensi morir le laist
> A grant angousse pour s'amour.
> Et d'autre part ra grant paour
> Qu'el n'en ait blasme et mauvais cri,
> S'en sa cambre muert devant li. (1075-83)
>
> [seized by pity. She thought that she could never be absolved of her great sin if she let him die so painfully for love of her. She was terrified that she would be blamed and defamed if he died in her presence.] (p. 37)

Ydoine then 'alume et esprent dou fu | Dont ele voit celui morir' (1099-1100) ['burned with the same flame she saw consuming Amadas', p. 37], sorrowing and fainting in a way that aligns her experience of falling in love with Amadas's. However, Amadas is shown to be affected only by his sudden passion for Ydoine, whereas Ydoine's love is also influenced by her fear of sin and public blame, just as her first rejection of Amadas partly reflected her concern that she 'blasmee de toute gent, | Car j'ameroie bassement' (536-37) ['would be blamed by everyone, for I would be loving beneath myself', p. 29]. Ydoine's concern with public reputation and sin is repeatedly evident, as she later insists that the couple should 'sans pecié faire' (6727) ['[c]ommit no sin', p. 118], but wait until she can 'serai vostre espousee [...] | Sans pecié a l'ouneur de Dé | Par esgart de crestïenté' (6747-50) ['become your wife [...] with honor from God, with respect for Christianity and without sin', p. 118]. The initial contrast between Amadas's and Ydoine's unwillingness to love, which might appear to uncritically reinforce gender binaries, has developed into a contrast that explores – or at least allows a reader to explore – the different pressures and influences upon men's and women's attitudes to love, highlighting female unwillingness as more susceptible to external pressure. This focus recurs in the description of Ydoine's forced marriage: Doggett suggests that *Amadas et Ydoine* represents this problem as 'gendered female', arguing that '[g]iven that women stood to suffer greatly, both emotionally and physically in cases of abuse, from marriages contracted without taking feelings into account, it is not surprising that romances depict this as a women's concern'.[46] While Amadas's unwillingness to love is short-lived, then, it significantly contrasts with Ydoine's unwillingness, facilitating the exploration of gendered norms and expectations. This pattern is continued in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Sir Degrevant*. While there is no evidence to suggest that Chaucer knew *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Sir Degrevant*'s reference to Amadas and Ydoine elsewhere within the romance does offer some possibility of a direct line of influence. Recognising the significance of unwillingness

[46] Doggett, p. 260.

to love in *Amadas et Ydoine* allows us to re-evaluate the prominence of this romance, which was widely known in medieval England at least in general terms, but which is not often discussed or considered particularly significant as an influence upon later romances today.[47] *Amadas et Ydoine* sets a pattern continued by later romances, which reveals the striking self-consciousness romances can exhibit about the gendered nature of issues of consent and coercion.

'WAS NEVERE MAN OR WOMMAN YET BIGETE | THAT WAS UNAPT TO SUFFREN LOVES HETE': GENDER AND COERCION IN CHAUCER'S *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*[48]

Troilus and Criseyde – a complex work that draws upon romance, tragedy, history, and epic, as well as other genres – is primarily known as the love story of Troilus's 'double sorwe' (I. 1), his desperate passion for Criseyde and his subsequent betrayal by her.[49] Accordingly, Troilus is best known as a lover rather than an unwilling one, and his unwillingness is short-lived, as he falls in love with Criseyde within the first three hundred lines of the poem. However, Troilus's unwillingness is significant, both for the way it is described in the early sections of the poem, and for the way it impacts our reading of the narrative as a whole. Troilus's initial hostility towards love contributes to Chaucer's interrogation of the tropes of *fin amor*, while also developing a significant and sustained contrast to Criseyde's acceptance of love. These topics have been discussed in previous criticism, but recognising the way that Chaucer's construction of Troilus as unwilling to love influences these features can contribute not just to new understandings of how they operate within *Troilus and Criseyde*, but also to recognising the significance and impact of unwillingness to love within the romance tradition more broadly.[50]

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[47] Cooper notes that 'Tristan and Isolde may be more famous, but Amadas and Ydoine were celebrated in England as exemplary lovers alongside or even ahead of them': *The English Romance in Time*, p. 225.
[48] Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, I. 977–78.
[49] See Caroline D. Eckhardt, 'Genre', in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. by Peter Brown, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture, 6 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 180–94 (pp. 183, 185); Corinne Saunders, 'Chaucer's Romances', in *A Companion to Romance from Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 85–103 (pp. 85–86, 96); Andrew Lynch, 'Love in Wartime: *Troilus and Criseyde* as Trojan History', in *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, pp. 113–33; Norm Klassen, 'Tragedy and Romance in Chaucer's "Litel Bok" of *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, pp. 156–76; Barry Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Oxford Guides to Chaucer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 138–79; Barbara Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition of the 'Roman Antique'*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 12, 198–99.
[50] Barry Windeatt has written most extensively on Chaucer's approach to *fin amor* in *Troilus and Criseyde*: see '*Troilus and Criseyde*: Love in a Manner of Speaking', in *Writings on Love in the English Middle Ages*, pp. 81–97; *Troilus and Criseyde*, pp. 212–44; 'Troilus and the Disenchantment of Romance', in *Studies in Medieval English Romances*, pp. 129–47; '"Love that oughte ben secree" in Chaucer's *Troilus*', *Chaucer Review*, 14.2 (1979), 116–31; see also Richard Firth Green, 'Troilus and the Game of Love', *Chaucer Review*, 13.3 (1979), 201–20. On Criseyde's consent, see Elizabeth Robertson, 'Public Bodies and Psychic Domains: Rape, Consent, and Female Subjectivity in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Representing Rape*, pp.

In the early sections of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer enhances and develops Troilus's unwillingness from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, associating Troilus more closely with the trope of romantic a(nti)pathy in medieval romance.[51] In particular, unlike Boccaccio, Chaucer explicitly and repeatedly identifies Troilus's unwillingness as a form of pride. Troilus is 'this fierse and proude knyght' (I. 225), 'as proud a pekok' (I. 210) as any Cupid has caught, while Boccaccio's description of '[h]ow often follow effects all contrary to our intentions!' is extended by Chaucer to reflect specifically on '[h]ow often falleth al the effect contraire | Of surquidrie and foul presumpcioun; | For kaught is proud, and kaught is debonaire' (I. 212-14).[52] Troilus is further aligned with the tradition of unwillingness to love in medieval romance, and particularly with the trope of the proud lady (discussed in Chapter 2), when his pride is directly contrasted with his sudden subjection to love: 'he that now was moost in pride above, | Wax sodeynly moost subgit unto love' (I. 230-31). This contrast also positions Troilus's initial unwillingness as a measure of the subsequent strength of his passion, similarly to Amadas's unwillingness. None of these lines have equivalents in Boccaccio: while Barry Windeatt has noted that '[t]he experienced *Filostrato* poet and his alter ego, the experienced Troiolo, give way to Chaucer's inexperienced Troilus, whose story is narrated by the familiar Chaucerian persona of an outsider to love', Troilus is not just inexperienced in love, but initially averse to it, identifiable with the romance trope of the proud, unwilling lover.[53] This particular emphasis allows Chaucer to develop a contrast to Criseyde's unwillingness later in the narrative, a motif perhaps evolving indirectly from *Amadas et Ydoine*.[54]

Chaucer's depiction of Troilus does contain some elements of violence in his conversion to love: whereas Boccaccio's Troiolo admires Criseida's beauty, not knowing

281–310; Louise O. Fradenburg, '"Our owen wo to drynke": Loss, Gender and Chivalry in *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: 'Subgit to Alle Poesye': Essays in Criticism*, ed. by R. A. Shoaf, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 104 (Binghampton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), pp. 88–106; Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, pp. 291–92; Jean E. Jost, 'Intersecting the Ideal and the Real, Chivalry and Rape, Respect and Dishonor: The Problematics of Sexual Relationships in *Troilus and Criseyde, Athelston*, and *Sir Tristrem*', in *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, ed. by Albrecht Classen, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 599–632 (pp. 603–21).

[51] Given the presence of unwillingness to love in Ovid's love poetry, this also aligns well with Calabrese's argument that 'the *Troilus* evolves from the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Remedia Amoris* into the *Metamorphoses* and the *Tristia*': Michael A. Calabrese, *Chaucer's Ovidian Arts of Love* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), p. 79.

[52] Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio: A Translation with Parallel Text*, trans. by Nathaniel Edward Griffin and Arthur Beckwith Myrick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929; repr. 2016), p. 145.

[53] Windeatt, 'Love in a Manner of Speaking', p. 84.

[54] There is no evidence to suggest that Chaucer knew *Amadas et Ydoine*, so this is probably not a direct development.

'[l]ove with his darts dwelt within the rays of those lovely eyes, [...] nor notic[ing] the arrow that sped to his heart' (p. 147), Chaucer's Troilus falls in love when 'the God of Love gan loken rowe | Right for despit, and shop for to ben wroken' (I. 206-07). Troilus's conversion to love is thus motivated by Cupid's anger and desire for vengeance far more explicitly in Chaucer than in Boccaccio, associating the acceptance of love with violence in a similar way to the hunting episode in *Guigemar*, as well as to some narratives of the proud lady in love. While this replicates the Ovidian and romance trope that '[t]he God of Love, or Cupid, acts by shooting the victim with an arrow, causing pain', Cupid's desire for vengeance because of Troilus's unwillingness is notable: as Cory James Rushton indicates, 'the punishment aspect is obvious, given the eventual fate of Troilus'.[55] However, Cupid 'hitt[ing] hym atte fulle' (I. 209) does not instantly impose love upon Troilus; rather, there is a slight delay until 'upon cas bifel that thorugh a route | His eye percede, and so depe it went, | Til on Criseyde it smot, and ther it stente' (I. 271-73). This delay allows Chaucer to explore the physiological and psychological experience of love rather than representing it solely as an externally imposed force.[56]

In addition to this psychological interest, Chaucer also combines the violence of Troilus's subjection to love with an explicit focus on Troilus's consent. When Troilus has reflected on Criseyde's goodness, 'with good hope he gan fully assente | Criseyde for to love, and nought repente' (I. 391-92). Likewise, in Troilus's song, he asks love

> How may of the in me swich quantite,
> But if that I consente that it be?
>
> And if that I consente, I wrongfully
> Compleyne. (I. 412-15)

And again, when Pandarus urges Troilus to repent his pride towards the God of Love, Troilus proclaims 'A, lord! I me consente' (I. 936). The repeated use of the term 'consent' is striking, and seems to be unusual in a romance context. The *Middle English Dictionary* and *Oxford English Dictionary* both list references to consent that come primarily from religious (and sometimes historical) sources, such as *Handlyng Synne*, *The South English*

[55] Doggett, p. 36; Rushton, 'The Awful Passion of Pandarus', in *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, pp. 147–60 (p. 158).
[56] On Chaucer's exploration of the physiological nature of love, and the importance of sight, see Corinne Saunders, 'Love and the Making of the Self: *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, pp. 134–55 (pp. 140–41); Corinne Saunders, 'The Affective Body: Love, Virtue and Vision in English Medieval Literature', in *The Body and the Arts*, ed. by Corinne Saunders, Ulrika Maude, and Jane Macnaughton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 87–102 (p. 89); Corinne Saunders, 'Hearing Medieval Voices', *The Lancet*, 386.10009 (2015), 2136–37 (p. 2136).

Legendary, and *Cursor Mundi*. Only isolated examples from other romances are cited, such as *Kyng Alisaunder* (which is not referring to consent in the context of marriage or sex, but in the context of political rule).[57] In Chaucer's own work, forms of 'consent' appear most often in *The Parson's Tale* and *The Tale of Melibee*, suggesting that 'consent' did have religious and solemn connotations for Chaucer too (although he also uses the term in his translation of *The Romaunt of the Rose*).[58] Chaucer's repeated and explicit references to consent in *Troilus and Criseyde* therefore seem an unusual use of the term, but their striking nature also provides a model for how easily consent can be clarified and elevated above suggestions of coercion, offering a significant and sustained contrast to Chaucer's treatment of Criseyde's consent.

In opposition to Troilus's clear acceptance of love, Criseyde's consent is much more complex and uncertain. She does experience love for Troilus, asking '[w]ho yaf me drynke?' (II. 651) in a clear allusion to the sudden passion of Tristan and Isolde's love. Chaucer also gives Criseyde an extended monologue in which she debates whether she can love Troilus – a monologue that is similar, if much more practical and measured, to Troilus's earlier musings on his love for her.[59] Yet this monologue consistently reveals Criseyde's indecision about love, and her preoccupation with social concerns, recalling Ydoine's greater concern for social matters in *Amadas et Ydoine*. Criseyde determines she may love, as she is 'naught religious' (II. 759), but then fears the uncertainty of love, the loss of her liberty, and the potential for gossip. Switching between 'hope' and 'drede', 'hoot' and 'cold', Criseyde is still poised 'bitwixen tweye' (II. 810-11) when she abandons her musings to join her nieces. While Troilus commits to loving Criseyde, Criseyde's own feelings for Troilus and whether she desires to act on them are rendered opaque. Criseyde's infamous 'slydynge' (V. 825) is present from the outset of the poem, alongside her love, indecision, and experiences of coercion.

The entanglement of Criseyde's consent with coercion is perhaps most evident in her response to Troilus's insistence that she 'yeldeth yow, for other bote is non!' (III.

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[57] 'Consenten v.', *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Frances McSparran et al., Middle English Compendium (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED9364> [accessed 4 February 2021]; 'Consent n.', *Middle English Dictionary* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED9361> [accessed 4 February 2021]; 'Consent, v.' and 'Consent, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[58] See John S. P. Tatlock and Arthur G. Kennedy, *A Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and to the Romaunt of the Rose* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963; first publ. 1927), p. 164.

[59] Saunders comments that 'Criseyde presents a very different perspective on love, less romantic, less extreme, more pragmatic and perhaps ultimately more tragic': 'Love and the Making of the Self', p. 144. See also Saunders, 'Affective Reading', p. 24.

1208), when she declares '[n]e hadde I er now, my swete herte deere, | Ben yolde, ywis, I were now nought heere!' (III. 1210-11). While Angela Jane Weisl argues that 'this moment separates Criseyde as experienced widow able to control her sexual circumstances from the innocent virgin', Criseyde's words seem rather to point to the ambivalence of her consent, both by posing her consent as a response to a *demand* for consent (and thus, consent given under duress), and by obscuring the precise development of her consent by remaining unclear about when she had yielded, other than 'er now'.[60] As Louise Fradenburg notes, not only Troilus's demand, but other details of this consummation scene call into question Criseyde's consent: 'Criseyde utters the words that might seem to confirm her consent', '[b]ut just previous to this moment, the narrator has posed the following rhetorical question: "What myghte or may the sely larke seye, | Whan that the sperhauk hath it in his foot?"', undermining Criseyde's claim that she has already yielded and is with Troilus willingly.[61] Criseyde's passive declaration that she has '[b]en yolde' is also intriguing in this respect: the *Middle English Dictionary* suggests 'have surrendered' as a translation of 'ben yolden',[62] but Criseyde's words could also imply she has been yielded up by someone else, perhaps a subtle allusion to Pandarus's role in Troilus and Criseyde's relationship.[63] Criseyde's words of apparent consent within this scene are complicated by Chaucer in ways that Troilus's words of consent are not (with the exception of their relationship to Cupid's vengeance). While Troilus repeatedly affirms his consent using that precise word, Criseyde's consent is compromised by the coercive pressure levelled upon her. Although Troilus and Criseyde are both initially unwilling to love, their unwillingness is explored in different ways and to different extents by Chaucer, suggesting an interest in female romantic a(nti)pathy as a more complex or problematic issue than male hostility to love. This may be because of the greater societal constraints on women's roles and conduct: Burger observes that the 'widespread, Pan-European phenomenon' of conduct literature in the late Middle Ages 'imagine[s] female conduct primarily within the context of the married household and the social relations it makes possible [...] they imagine their audience explicitly as daughters who will marry,

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[60] Weisl, '"A Mannes Game": Criseyde's Masculinity in *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Men and Masculinities in Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde'*, ed. by Tison Pugh and Marcia Smith Marzec, Chaucer Studies, 38 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), pp. 115–31 (p. 122).

[61] Fradenburg, pp. 99–100; see also Rushton, p. 152. For an alternative reading, see Jill Mann, 'Troilus's Swoon', in *Life in Words*, pp. 3–19 (pp. 16–17).

[62] 'Y̆lden v.', *Middle English Dictionary* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED53804> [accessed 24 August 2020].

[63] On Pandarus's role, see Hume, pp. 167–68; Saunders, 'Love and the Making of the Self', p. 145; Rushton, 'The Awful Passion of Pandarus'; Gretchen Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

women already married, or widows who once were wives', making it 'first and foremost [...] the good woman as wife that holds their interest'.[64] In this context, it is easy to see why women's resistance to love might be represented as more problematic than male unwillingness.

Chaucer's interest in the complexity and problematics of female unwillingness and consent here is especially notable in view of both the broader preoccupations with *raptus* in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the *raptus* accusations made against Chaucer by Cecily Chaumpaigne in 1380.[65] As Elizabeth Robertson notes,

> Various kinds of rape permeate *Troilus and Criseyde*. Helen's rape, or abduction, instigates the war against Troy. Throughout the work, Criseyde is threatened with rape as forced coitus, first from Troilus, and then from Diomedes. Before she is given over to the Greeks, Troilus considers the possibility of 'ravishing' Criseyde.[66]

Just as Chaucer uses the term 'consent' for Troilus's acceptance of love, so too does he use the term 'rape' later in the poem, 'for nearly the first time in English literature', as Robertson observes.[67] When Troilus is reluctant to abduct Criseyde to prevent her being exchanged for Antenor, Pandarus declares '[i]t is no rape, in my dom, ne no vice, | Hire to witholden that ye love moost' (IV. 596-97). Troilus and Pandarus's explicit discussion of rape and *raptus* calls the problematic aspects of Criseyde's consent to the reader's attention perhaps more starkly than anywhere else in the poem, retrospectively adding to the uncertainty of Criseyde's consent compared to Troilus's. Pandarus's own perspective on what is or is not a 'rape' is particularly provocative in view of his earlier coercion of Criseyde in the episode where he lets Troilus into the room in which she is sleeping. In

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[64] Burger, pp. 2, 3; see also Hume, p. 19; Barbara Harris, pp. 27, 88.

[65] On these accusations, see Candace Barrington, 'Geoffrey Chaucer', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Law and Literature*, ed. by Candace Barrington and Sebastian Sobecki (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 135–47 (pp. 137–39); Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, pp. 266–67; Christopher Cannon, 'Chaucer and Rape: Uncertainty's Certainties', in *Representing Rape*, pp. 255–79 (first publ. in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 22 (2000), 67–92); Christopher Cannon, '*Raptus* in the Chaumpaigne Release and a Newly Discovered Document Concerning the Life of Geoffrey Chaucer', *Speculum*, 68.1 (1993), 74–94; and, for a wider discussion, Tison Pugh, 'Chaucer's Rape, Southern Racism, and the Pedagogical Ethics of Authorial Malfeasance', *College English*, 67.6 (2005), 569–86. For a recent perspective that suggests the accusations may have been connected with Chaucer's ward, Edmund Staplegate, see Sebastian Sobecki, 'Wards and Widows: *Troilus and Criseyde* and New Documents on Chaucer's Life', *ELH*, 86.2 (2019), 413–40. Sobecki also explores the connections between *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Chaumpaigne accusations, suggesting that Pandarus can be read as a negative foil to Chaucer's own actions as a guardian. While this contrast is suggestive, Sobecki does not take into account the extensive contrasts between Troilus and Criseyde's consent, overlooking the ambiguities and problems with Criseyde's consent in the poem.

[66] Robertson, 'Public Bodies and Psychic Domains', p. 298.

[67] Robertson, 'Public Bodies and Psychic Domains', p. 281. Carolyn Dinshaw observes that '[t]he word "rape," [...] occurs very seldom in Chaucer', which may suggest the potential significance of its appearance in *Troilus and Criseyde*: *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 8.

addition, that this conversation takes place between Troilus and Pandarus, when 'this discussion should not be taking place between two men, but rather between Troilus and Criseyde' (as it later does, with Criseyde herself rejecting the possibility of eloping, IV. 1528-1604) draws attention to the prioritisation of Troilus's and Pandarus's desires over Criseyde's.[68] This later exchange thus again draws out the differences between Troilus's and Criseyde's unwillingness and consent, highlighting the significance of gender in romance representations of these issues.

Yet this exchange is also significant in view of Cecily Chaumpaigne's accusation of *raptus*. I am not suggesting that we should read *Troilus and Criseyde* as evidence of Chaucer's guilt or innocence of *raptus* (whether rape or abduction), but his explicit use of the term 'rape' and his characters' discussion of what does and does not constitute rape seem provocative, especially as *Troilus and Criseyde* was written during or shortly after those *raptus* accusations were rescinded. Notably, Pandarus's claim that '[i]t is no rape, [...] | Hire to witholden that ye love moost' (IV. 596-97) was incorrect in the contemporary law of Chaucer's England: the 1382 Statute of Rapes 'allowed a woman's family to prosecute her ravishment if she consented at any time', meaning that abducting anyone, even within a consensual relationship, was still considered rape – this was not, however, Chaumpaigne's situation, as she brought the accusation against Chaucer herself.[69] In the context of (Helen of) Troy, though, the claim that it is no rape if a woman consents is of vital significance to the justice of the Trojan war. Pandarus's claim here thus draws attention to historically different approaches to rape and *raptus*, perhaps reflecting on the potentially controversial nature of the 1382 Statute. The interplay between Chaucer's own experiences, contemporary legal perspectives, and the differing opinions of Pandarus draws attention to the self-conscious ambiguities of *raptus* and rape, consent and coercion in *Troilus and Criseyde*: as Saunders suggests, 'Chaucer's writings do evince a particular and

[68] Robertson, 'Public Bodies and Psychic Domains', p. 294.
[69] Caroline Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction, and Adultery, 1100-1500*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 87 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 41. Chaucer would presumably have known this, given the accusations against him. As Sobecki points out, 'an abduction need not have been done against [Chaumpaigne's] or her family's wishes: Staplegate's refusal to agree to this match could have prompted the *raptus* claim to secure a recompense for Chaumpaigne': Sobecki, 'Wards and Widows', p. 423. There is no evidence as to whether Cecily Chaumpaigne consented or did not consent to an abduction (nor, indeed, is it certain that *raptus* in this case referred to abduction, although Sobecki considers this likely in view of Chaucer's ongoing guardianship of Staplegate), but this is one possibility. As Sobecki also acknowledges, 'just because he was legally entitled to arrange a marriage for his ward between 1377 and 1382 does not mean that Cecily Chaumpaigne was not a victim of Chaucer's sexual aggression'.

perhaps personal awareness of the fluctuating history of the law of rape'.[70] While *Troilus and Criseyde* should not affect understandings of the *raptus* accusation, attending to their chronological proximity may suggest why Chaucer was so preoccupied with female unwillingness, consent, and *raptus* within this poem.

However, while *Troilus and Criseyde* explores the differences between male and female unwillingness and consent in significant detail, the connections between Troilus's and Criseyde's unwillingness to love are also important. By prefiguring Criseyde's unwillingness, Troilus places additional pressure upon Criseyde to accept love, as Troilus has already modelled this narrative trajectory for her. This reflects the frequent framing of love as an expectation within the poem. Pandarus, of course, exploits this expectation both to persuade Criseyde to love Troilus, and to reassure Troilus of the likelihood that Criseyde will love him, telling Troilus that there '[w]as nevere man or womman yet bigete | That was unapt to suffren loves hete, | Celestial, or elles love of kynde' (I. 977-79) – a point that Troilus himself aptly illustrates. Referring to Criseyde specifically, Pandarus then declares '[i]t sit hire naught to ben celestial' (I. 983); 'it sate hire wel right nowthe | A worthi knyght to loven and cherice, | And but she do, I holde it for a vice' (I. 985-87). Commenting on Pandarus's conversations with Criseyde, Hume observes that

> if Pandarus plays on Criseyde's obedience and reliance on him as a familial protector, he also works on her as a courtly friend. These roles parallel two kinds of cultural pressure, which can be represented by the rival voices of moralising advice literature and love-glorifying romance, but surely reflect a more general tension in late medieval society. Pandarus combines these competing pressures in one person and makes them act together, to powerful effect [...] tr[ying] to invoke a sense of love as something she is obliged to do rather than something she is obliged to resist.[71]

Troilus and Criseyde provocatively explores the tension between contemplative life and erotic love, not only through Pandarus's comments but also in Criseyde's own sense that 'a widewes lif' (II. 114) should be to 'rede on holy seyntes lyves' (II. 118), and perhaps most extremely in the narrator's declaration after the consummation scene that '[n]ow is this bet than bothe two be lorn. | For love of God, take every womman heede | To werken thus, if it comth to the neede' (III. 1223-25). By combining a plea '[f]or love of God' with advising women to be sexually active, Chaucer draws attention to *Troilus and Criseyde*'s dramatisation of a fundamental division within medieval culture, between the lay world of marriage and procreation, and the rejection of marriage in clerical and ascetic

[70] *Rape and Ravishment*, pp. 266–67.
[71] *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, p. 169.

circles. Unwillingness to love is an apt motif through which to address this division, as unwilling lovers can be positioned between these two worlds. Criseyde is given religious associations from the start, as she is described as 'aungelik' (I. 102), 'an hevenyssh perfit creature' (I. 104), but she is ultimately led away from piety towards earthly love and betrayal, and consciously rejects a religious model of life in her monologue on her feelings for Troilus, declaring 'I am naught religious' (II. 759).[72] *Troilus and Criseyde* depicts loving as the expected and accepted course of action, but through the trajectory of the narrative this expectation – and the normative narrative drive of medieval romance – is also held up to question and critique. While Troilus's own modelling of the transition from unwilling to willing lover provides a powerful example that sets the reader's expectations for Criseyde, Chaucer is not straightforwardly extolling love and secular life above chastity and virginity.

Instead, Chaucer's dramatisation of the conflict between earthly and heavenly love is part of *Troilus and Criseyde*'s provocative and ambivalent approach to love.[73] The ending of the poem, with Troilus's ascent into the heavens and his sense of the futility of love, has been particularly – but perhaps misleadingly – significant for readings of love in the poem.[74] Noting that 'modern criticism has interpreted the poem through a retrospect', while Chaucer's later retraction of *Troilus and Criseyde* 'would have been scarcely necessary if he shared the religiose modern interpretation of the poem as a cumulative critique of earthly love', Windeatt suggests

> It is not too soon to seek a reading of the poem's approach to love that attempts to match the openness and open-endedness of *Troilus* itself as inseparably both a humanist and experimental work [...] it has been uncommon – yet logical and timely – for the poem's conclusion itself to be included as not more than one among that multiplicity.[75]

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[72] Although Saunders observes that Criseyde's 'presence opens the way to the celestial' for Troilus, for Criseyde Troilus's love perhaps has the opposite effect, moving her from a life of chaste widowhood to her involvement in multiple love affairs: see 'Love and the Making of the Self', p. 142. Bowers also suggests that Troilus 'demonstrates clerical tendencies' in his Boethian musings: John M. Bowers, '"Beautiful as Troilus": Richard II, Chaucer's Troilus, and Figures of (Un)Masculinity', in *Men and Masculinities in Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde'*, pp. 9–27 (p. 12).

[73] For further discussions of love in *Troilus and Criseyde*, indicative of some of the different views of the poem, see Marcia Smith Marzec, 'What Makes a Man? Troilus, Hector, and the Masculinities of Courtly Love', in *Men and Masculinities in Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde'*, pp. 58–72; Saunders, 'Love and the Making of the Self'; Derek Brewer, 'Chivalry', in *A Companion to Chaucer*, pp. 58–74 (pp. 70–71).

[74] Saunders notes that '[f]or the reader, the end is highly problematic, for the story's power comes precisely from its evocation of the passion and tragedy of the temporal world': 'Love and the Making of the Self', p. 144.

[75] Windeatt, 'Love in a Manner of Speaking', pp. 82, 95.

Rather than condemning love at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer questions the performance of love – its rituals, tropes, and social mannerisms – throughout the poem.[76] Troilus's initial hostility to love is more important to this than has previously been noted, as Chaucer adds to his questioning of the tropes of romance and courtly love by framing Troilus as a romance stereotype. Notably, Chaucer seems to express doubt about the trope of the unwilling lover's conversion when Criseyde starts to favour Troilus, as the narrator suggests that some might think '[t]his was a sodeyn love; how myght it be | That she so lightly loved Troilus | Right for the firste syghte' (II. 667-69). This doubting perspective is partly affirmed when the narrator clarifies, 'I sey nought that she so sodeynly | Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan enclyne | To like hym first' (II. 673-75).[77] No such question of the plausibility of love at first sight was raised in relation to Troilus falling in love, and yet the connections between Troilus's and Criseyde's transformations from unwilling to willing lovers ensure that any question raised about Criseyde's love may also reflect back upon Troilus's.[78] This is not to say that Chaucer, or his narrator, is cynically disavowing Troilus's love: although Rushton suggests that 'this poem reveals courtly love as an illusion, a dangerous social conceit at best', the implied contrast between Troilus and Criseyde perhaps suggests that, although implausible, love at first sight does occur, even to those who wished to avoid it.[79] In many respects, Chaucer's portrayal of Troilus and Criseyde's relationship has it both ways: their love accords to such an extent with the conventions of romance as to appear hyperbolic, while this hyperbole is also implied to be appropriate to an experience of such extreme emotion, according with Mark Miller's argument that 'one of Chaucer's most characteristic philosophical and poetic interests lies in the unpacking of cliché'.[80] One of the clichés to which Chaucer frequently returns in his work is unwillingness to love, which he seems to recognise and interrogate as a romance trope. Resistance to love recurs elsewhere in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, *Man of Law's Tale*, and *Franklin's Tale*, works that between them make up a significant proportion of Chaucer's romances. In portraying both Troilus and Criseyde as unwilling to love in different ways, and for different reasons, and making their unwillingness part of his interrogation of romance tropes and the stylisation of love, Chaucer reveals the cultural prominence of unwillingness to love in medieval romance. Like *Amadas et Ydoine*, Chaucer's *Troilus and*

[76] See further Windeatt, 'Love in a Manner of Speaking', p. 86.
[77] Although for a contrary view, see Mann, 'Troilus's Swoon', p. 8.
[78] Fradenburg also notes that this passage 'pushes the point of the contrast upon us', p. 103.
[79] Rushton, p. 160.
[80] Miller, p. 6. See further Windeatt, 'Love in a Manner of Speaking', p. 86.

Criseyde also exhibits a clear awareness of the ways in which consent and coercion were affected by gender, using a precise vocabulary of consent for Troilus while indicating the complexity and uncertainty of Criseyde's consent. However, any critique of this gendered difference is perhaps more muted in *Troilus and Criseyde* than *Amadas et Ydoine*, where the apparently more simplistic manifestations of gendered behaviour invite – or at the very least permit – a more direct dissection of gendered constraints.

'CERTUS, WYFF WOLD HE NON': ACTION, EMOTION, AND COERCION IN *SIR DEGREVANT*[81]

The anonymous *Sir Degrevant* is roughly contemporary with Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*,[82] but has rarely been compared with the Chaucerian work, perhaps because *Sir Degrevant* has received relatively little critical attention and acclaim.[83] There has been recent interest in the social function of *Sir Degrevant*, as Michael Johnston has argued for its status as a gentry romance, and Dominique Battles has drawn attention to its overlooked portrayal of Anglo-Scottish border society.[84] Focusing on unwillingness to love provides another way of reassessing this romance's literary contributions, as *Sir Degrevant* shares similarities with *Troilus and Criseyde* (and *Amadas et Ydoine*) in its indication of the ways in which unwillingness to love is a gendered experience. Reading *Sir Degrevant* in relation to *Troilus and Criseyde* illustrates the surprising connections that can be uncovered by a motif study, complicating preconceived ideas of literary value by bringing together canonical and non-canonical works.

Like Troilus and Amadas, Degrevant is primarily known as a lover, 'Sir Degriuaunt þat amerus' (671). His unwillingness to love is even more briefly represented

[81] *The Romance of Sir Degrevant*, ed. by L. F. Casson, EETS, o.s., 221 (London: Cumberlege, 1949), Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.1.6 (the Findern Manuscript), l. 61. All quotations from *Sir Degrevant* are taken from the Cambridge manuscript unless otherwise stated.

[82] *Sir Degrevant* dates from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century: see Rhiannon Purdie, *Anglicising Romance: Tail-Rhyme and Genre in Medieval English Literature*, Studies in Medieval Romance, 9 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), p. 175.

[83] See L. F. Casson, 'Introduction', in *The Romance of Sir Degrevant*, pp. ix–lxxv (p. lxxiii); A. S. G. Edwards, 'Gender, Order and Reconciliation in *Sir Degrevaunt*', in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, pp. 53–64 (p. 62); W. A. Davenport, '*Sir Degrevant* and Composite Romance', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. by Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows, and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 111–31 (pp. 131, 116).

[84] See Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 57, 60–63, 128–29, 137–42, 188–92, 203; Dominique Battles, 'The Middle English *Sir Degrevant* and the Scottish Border', *Studies in Philology*, 113.3 (2016), 501–45; Battles, 'The Middle English *Sir Degrevant* and the Architecture of the Border', *English Studies*, 96.8 (2015), 853–72; Battles, 'Melidor and the "Wylde Men of þe West" in the Middle English *Sir Degrevant*', *American Notes and Queries*, 33.1 (2020), 15–18.

than Troilus's and Amadas's, as after a description of Degrevant's military might, his royal connections as Arthur's nephew, and his love of music and hunting, we are told

> Certus, wyff wold he non,
> Wench ne lemon,
> Bot as an anker in a ston
> He lyved ever trew. (61-64)

Placed in the last four lines of a sixteen-line stanza that otherwise focuses on hunting (and, briefly, attending church), Degrevant's unwillingness to love seems almost an afterthought, perhaps a troped feature added to the conventional description of Degrevant as a worthy knight. L. F. Casson is one of few scholars to note Degrevant's unwillingness, commenting that 'there are a number of detailed resemblances between *Sir Degrevant* and the *Lay of Guigemar* by Marie', including the protagonists being 'indifferent to the charms of women'.[85] However, the widespread nature of unwillingness to love as a romance motif uncovered by this thesis calls into question Casson's suggestion that a version of *Guigemar* was known to the author of *Sir Degrevant*. Degrevant's unwillingness actually seems more akin to Amadas's and Troilus's. It is possible that Degrevant's romantic a(nti)pathy may be directly influenced by *Amadas et Ydoine*, which is alluded to in *Sir Degrevant*'s description of Melidor's bed (1494). Although Ross Arthur notes that *Sir Degrevant* and other Middle English works treat 'Amadas and Ydoine in the same way as the *Amadas*-author treated pairs of lovers from earlier romances [...] included in lists as examples of people who loved each other faithfully', making it difficult to tell if English writers knew the story of *Amadas et Ydoine* in detail, Casson suggests that the writer of *Sir Degrevant* probably knew French, so a more detailed knowledge of *Amadas et Ydoine* would not be impossible.[86] *Sir Degrevant* may be borrowing a motif from *Amadas et Ydoine*; however, both the early description of Degrevant's unwillingness to love and the later use of it as a contrast to Melidor's unwillingness suggest a deeper engagement with this motif than simply reiterating an earlier work.

The curious reference to Degrevant living 'as an anker in a ston', noted by W. A. Davenport as an example of the poem's 'uncommon literary turns of phrase and imagery',

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[85] 'Introduction', p. lxvi. Degrevant's initial unwillingness is so little commented upon that Edwards does not mention it in an essay that argues that '[t]he various female characters in the romance all embody qualities that are shown to contribute to the larger social, emotional and moral wellbeing in ways that stress the limitations of male achievement in isolation' – where Degrevant's initial reluctance to form attachments to women would support Edwards's point aptly. See A. S. G. Edwards, 'Gender, Order and Reconciliation in *Sir Degrevaunt*', p. 62.

[86] Arthur, 'Introduction', p. 11; Casson, 'Introduction', p. lxvii.

is one of the features that stands out as indicating an unusual and striking approach to unwillingness to love, rather than a blindly borrowed motif.[87] This could be an ironic comment: with his love of music and hunting, Degrevant very clearly does not live 'as an anker' – or at least, does not live how an anchorite ought to live. Suggesting Degrevant lives 'as an anker' may imply that anchorites were not living as enclosed a life as they were supposed to, an anxiety evident in the early thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse*, which warns that the devil may bring an anchoress to 'aleast makien feaste ant wurthen al worldlich, forschuppet of ancre to huse-wif of halle', and cautions against allowing 'me for swucche boden telle ow hende ancren. I-hwear thah ant eaver yemeth ow thet nan from ow thurh ower untuhtle ne parti with scandle'.[88] However, while perhaps drawing upon anxieties about anchoritic solitude, the comparison of Degrevant to an anchorite may also reflect ironically upon Degrevant and the romance tradition, suggesting the hyperbole of romance representations of unwillingness to love. Another alternative is that this could be a serious and unintentional instance of that very same hyperbole. Degrevant is a pious man, who 'lovede well almosdede, | Powr men to cloth and fede' (81-82): living 'as an anker' may simply be an exaggerated instantiation of his piety and virginity. While we cannot know how medieval readers interpreted this reference, the differing content of the two manuscripts of *Sir Degrevant* suggests that interpretations may have been quite varied. Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.1.6 (the Findern Manuscript) is comprised mostly of 'lyrics and texts meditating on aristocratic conventions of love', within which Degrevant's anchoritic lifestyle might well seem an ironic or satirical feature.[89] Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91 (the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript), on the other hand, includes works by Richard Rolle – a hermit and mystic – alongside which a comic reference to anchoritism might seem more unlikely.[90] The startling description of Degrevant's lifestyle may have been interpreted in divergent ways by medieval readers, perhaps influenced by the broader contexts of the codices in which they read *Sir Degrevant*.

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[87] Davenport, p. 119.
[88] *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Robert Hasenfratz, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), IV. 552–53; VIII. 68–70.
[89] Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 129.
[90] For a full list of the Lincoln Thornton manuscript's contents, see Susanna Fein, 'The Contents of Robert Thornton's Manuscripts', in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. by Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 13–65 (pp. 21–48). Fein also discusses the religious focus of many of the texts Robert Thornton copied, and the way 'he considered scribal work to be pious work': 'The Contents of Robert Thornton's Manuscripts', pp. 15, 19–20. In the Thornton manuscript, *Sir Degrevant* appears between the *Life of Saint Christopher* and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*.

While the comparison between Degrevant's unwillingness to love and anchoritism is intriguing and unusual, the primary significance of Degrevant's unwillingness to love comes, as for Amadas and Troilus, in its interaction with and reflection upon the unwillingness of the female protagonist, Melidor. Although Degrevant is initially averse to love and marriage, when he sees Melidor, his enemy's daughter, the impact is instantaneous:

> Wyth loue she wondus þe kny3t;
> In hert trewly he hyeght
> That he shall loue þat swet wy3t,
> Acheue how hit wold. (477-80)

While there is a brief, conventional reference to how Melidor 'wondus' Degrevant, Degrevant's conversion to love is accomplished more briefly and unproblematically even than Troilus's. There is little sense of Degrevant being subjected to love, or of any contradiction between his earlier unwillingness to take a wife and his sudden passion for Melidor. Degrevant simply does not wish to love, then sees Melidor and changes his mind. There is some suggestion that this acceptance of love is the correct course of action, as the Earl (Degrevant's enemy) later says that '[c]ouþe [Degrevant] loue par amoure, | I knew neuer hys mak' (1063-64), positioning Degrevant's initial a(nti)pathy towards love as a flaw. The narrative trajectory also endorses Degrevant's acceptance of love, as this benefits him socially and financially, and eventually reconciles him with the Earl. Yet Degrevant is not criticised for his unwillingness to love when it is first introduced: although Casson's marginal summaries suggest that Degrevant 'was fond of music | and hunting, | *but* would have nothing to do with women', this adversative conjunction is not present in the romance.[91] In some ways, *Sir Degrevant* offers the most idealistic and sentimental conversion from unwillingness to acceptance of love, as it relies solely upon the beauty and attractions of one particular woman. However, Melidor's own conversion to loving Degrevant is not so clear-cut or idealised; as in *Amadas et Ydoine* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, women's resistance and consent seem to be perceived as more complex and problematic issues than men's attitudes towards love and marriage.

Melidor's feelings for Degrevant are consistently ambiguous within the poem. When they first see each other, we are told,

> Þe Eorlus doughder be-held
> That borlich and bolde;

[91] *Sir Degrevant*, p. 5 (my emphasis).

For he was armed so clen
[...]
Was ioy to be-hold. (467-72)

The passive construction implies that Melidor enjoys looking at Degrevant but avoids stating this outright.[92] Degrevant's own response is strikingly more definite, as he falls in love with her immediately. The protagonists' attitudes to love are thus contrasted through their initial reactions to each other. While their first encounter involves them looking upon each other in a way that recalls '[t]he look of longing [...] [as] a mark of mutuality in love', this mutuality is withheld.[93] We know that Degrevant loves Melidor, but we remain uncertain of her feelings for him. Likewise, when Degrevant breaks into the Earl's castle, fully armed but seeking to plight troth with Melidor, her response is ambiguous: she 'was gretely affraid, | But naþeles hoo was wel paid, | He was so ryally arayd' (701-03). Melidor's fear and her complaint that Degrevant 'not dost ryȝth, | [...] Þat þou comyst armid on werre | To maydenus to afferre' (707-10) emphasise the coercive elements within this scene of two armed men surprising two women relaxing in their castle gardens. This 'martial approach to courtship' is echoed in Degrevant's second attempt to win Melidor's love by interrupting a feast hosted by her father, where he 'chalangys þat fre' (1220), claiming Melidor as his tournament prize.[94] While Arlyn Diamond suggests that this 'conflat[es] [...] the hero's love for his mistress with his contest for supremacy with other men', it also illustrates Degrevant overlooking Melidor's consent, as he claims her as a prize rather than as one who loves him in return.[95]

The next encounter between Melidor and Degrevant does focus on Melidor's will, as she appears to change her mind about Degrevant entirely, taking him a steed in the tournament and saying she will ride '[b]y my lemmanus syde' (1319). By this point, then, her resistance appears to have transformed into love, but the process by which this happens has been obscured from the reader. The contrast between representing Melidor's transformation from unwilling to willing lover through actions only, giving us little sense

[92] On the importance of the gaze in medieval romance, see Molly Martin, *Vision and Gender in Malory's 'Morte Darthur'*, Arthurian Studies, 75 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010); Anna Caughey, '"Ladyes war at thare avowing": The Female Gaze in Late-Medieval Scottish Romance', in *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*, ed. by Nicholas Perkins, Studies in Medieval Romance, 18 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2015), pp. 91–109. *Sir Degrevant* appears to have a particular interest in the visuality of beautiful things: Edwards comments that '[t]he poem does, at times, linger in absorbed detail over the "thingness" of its world', while Diamond notes its 'remarkable density of description': Edwards, p. 56; Arlyn Diamond, '*Sir Degrevant*: what lovers want', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, pp. 82–101 (p. 82).
[93] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 239.
[94] Diamond, '*Sir Degrevant*: what lovers want', p. 86.
[95] Diamond, '*Sir Degrevant*: what lovers want', p. 87.

of how her feelings have developed, and Degrevant's own transformation, where we are given access to his emotions, indicates that Degrevant's unwillingness both pressurises Melidor to accept him by modelling the appropriate trajectory of a lover, and provides a contrast through which the greater complexity of female resistance and consent can be considered. This elision of how Melidor's feelings for Degrevant change is only compounded when she later tells Degrevant '[þ]e ferste tyme Y þe mette, | Myn hert on þe was sette' (1538-39), erasing her own resistance and offering a further comparison with Degrevant as she remodels her desire upon his. Degrevant's unwillingness may seem insignificant in itself, barely commented upon and swiftly overcome, but it provides an important contrast to Melidor's unwillingness, which combines elements of anxiety about her familial obligations (as she rejects Degrevant when she knows he is her father's enemy, 733-60), a dual fear and fascination of Degrevant's intrusions into the castle to seek her hand, and potentially some concern with social status (as Melidor's maid comments that Degrevant's status is below that of Melidor's other suitors, 857-60). While Degrevant's attitude to love changes according to his own feelings, Melidor's unwillingness is grounded in social concerns and anxieties, susceptible to both consensual and coercive persuasion rather than solely responsive to her own desires. Although Diamond comments upon the romance's 'endorsement of its heroine's determination to get her own way in love', comparing Melidor's acceptance of love with Degrevant's reveals a greater trepidation in the treatment of female desire and resistance within this romance.[96] *Sir Degrevant*, like many of the other romances discussed in this thesis, endorses the overcoming of unwillingness to achieve a happy ending. However, like *Amadas et Ydoine* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, this romance also demonstrates how both the means of overcoming unwillingness and the complexity of unwillingness are differently inflected according to the gender of the unwilling lover. While Degrevant's unwillingness may seem a simple and relatively insignificant trope, reading it alongside Melidor's attitude to love in the poem reveals a new understanding of this romance's complex, if to some extent obfuscated, approach to romantic relationships.

'YE MAY NAT BE CALLED A GOOD KNYGHT [...] BUT YF YE MAKE A QUARELL FOR A LADY': THOMAS MALORY'S DYNADAN[97]

Sir Dynadan from Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, a late Arthurian prose work Saunders identifies as providing a 'retrospective view of romance', appears to be almost the direct

[96] Diamond, '*Sir Degrevant*: what lovers want', p. 97.
[97] Malory, p. 549.

opposite of Amadas, Troilus, and Degrevant.[98] Where their unwillingness to love is mentioned briefly at the start of their narratives and swiftly overcome, allowing them to become exemplary lovers, Dynadan's unwillingness to love is introduced very late in Malory, after he has already played a significant role in the adventures of Tristram. This may seem to minimise the importance of Dynadan's unwillingness to love, subsuming it into his widely recognised role as a comic questioner of chivalry.[99] However, the late introduction of Dynadan's unwillingness is appropriate to its rather different function. Unlike Guigemar, Amadas, Troilus, and Degrevant, whose unwillingness to love is a brief starting point that contrasts with the later strength of their passion, for Dynadan being unwilling to love is a permanent state, an end-point in itself. In opposition to the usual pattern of the unwilling lover accepting love to facilitate narrative resolution, Malory's Dynadan never falls in love – perhaps in part indicating the greater narrative complexity of a work like the *Morte*, in which Dynadan is one character, one storyline, among many. However, Dynadan does briefly fall in love in a version of Malory's source for this part of the *Morte*, the *Tristan en prose* (an equally, if not more, complex narrative).[100] Malory was probably using a version of the *Tristan en prose* without this episode, as only version I includes it,[101] and Malory's use of the *Tristan* 'combines parts of Versions II and IV'.[102] Malory thus probably inherited Dynadan's persistent romantic a(nti)pathy from his source, rather than deliberately omitting Dynadan's acceptance of love in the *Tristan*. Nonetheless, this unusual outcome for an unwilling lover marks Dynadan out as a different example of the kind of appeal romantic a(nti)pathy held for romance writers and readers.

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[98] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 234.

[99] On Dynadan's questioning function, see Larrington, 'Gender/Queer Studies', p. 269; Dorsey Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's 'Morte d'Arthur'* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 142; D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., 'Characterization or Jumble? Sir Dinadan in Malory', *Medieval Perspectives*, 2.1 (1987), 167–76 (p. 173); Donald L. Hoffman, 'Dinadan: The Excluded Middle', *Tristania*, 10.1–2 (1984-85), 3–16 (p. 14); Keith Busby, 'The Likes of Dinadan: The Röle of the Misfit in Arthurian Literature', *Neophilologus*, 67.2 (1983), 161–74 (p. 166).

[100] *Le Roman de Tristan en prose: Version du manuscrit fr. 757 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris*, ed. by Joël Blanchard and Michel Quéreuil, Classiques français du moyen âge, 123, 5 vols (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), I, pp. 113–14.

[101] See Gilles Roussineau, 'Introduction', in *Le roman de Tristan en prose*, Textes littéraires français, 398, 9 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1991), III, 7–56 (p. 8); this volume contains an edition of the different development of the story in version II (the so-called Vulgate) of the *Tristan*.

[102] Ralph Norris, *Malory's Library: The Sources of the 'Morte Darthur'*, Arthurian Studies, 71 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), p. 96. Salda suggests that the manuscript Malory used as his source may now be best represented by the 1489 print of the *Tristan*: Michael N. Salda, 'Reconsidering Vinaver's Sources for Malory's "Tristram"', *Modern Philology*, 88.4 (1991), 373–81.

While Dynadan is not used to explicitly reinforce sexual and marital norms through his own narrative trajectory, he still in some respects reinforces romance norms through the contrast he offers to Tristram. As D. Thomas Hanks comments,

> Dinadan as foil is perhaps an idea that explains itself as soon as voiced. Where Tristram is invariably brave, Dinadan is as likely as not to flee danger [...]. Where Tristram loves Isolde faithfully (excepting his inexplicable marriage to Isolde of the White Hands), Dinadan refuses to love at all. Tristram shines the brighter through his contrast with Dinadan.[103]

Dynadan's role as a foil to Tristram in some ways replicates the use of romantic a(nti)pathy as a contrast to subsequent passion in *Guigemar*, *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *Sir Degrevant*. However, here this contrast involves two different characters, rather than the development of one figure.[104] Dynadan is repeatedly contrasted implicitly and explicitly with Tristram in the *Morte*, making Dynadan's unwillingness to love and reluctance to fight reflect badly upon him, and constructing Tristram – the lover – as the superior figure. This dynamic is evident from Dynadan's first major appearance in the *Morte*: although he is mentioned briefly in 'Sir Gareth of Orkney', his first significant role is when he rides to Cornwall 'to seke aftir Sir Trystram' (p. 396), asking Tristram to joust and being unhorsed by him, then joining him in fellowship. The martial contrast between Dynadan and Tristram is already evident, and this contrast is linked to love when Dynadan complains 'in all the worlde ar nat such too knyghtes that ar so wood as ys Sir Launcelot and ye Sir Trystram!' (p. 400), railing against the eagerness to fight of two knights described as 'the trewyst lovers' in the Arthurian court (p. 57). This contrast is extended by Dynadan's overt rejection of love: meeting Tristram without recognising him, Dynadan rails against lovers, and Tristram rebukes him for this, saying 'a knyght may never be of proues but yf he be a lovear' (p. 544), in what Dhira Mahoney suggests 'is virtually an equation of chivalric behavior'.[105] Although Władysław Witalisz misleadingly claims that '[i]n his reaction Dinadan questions this romance truth', in fact,

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[103] D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., 'Foil and Forecast: Dinadan in *The Book of Sir Tristram*', *Arthurian Yearbook*, 1 (1991), 149–63 (p. 159). Mula further suggests that 'the best lover in the world would be a poor lover if he were not surrounded by other knights in love with the same lady, or with a different lady, or by those who choose to reject love completely, as Dinadan does': Stefano Mula, 'Dinadan Abroad: Tradition and Innovation for a Counter-Hero', in *The European Dimensions of Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Keith Busby, Bart Besamusca, and Frank Brandsma (=*Arthurian Literature*, 24 (2007)), pp. 50–64 (p. 64).

[104] Although Busby has commented that 'Dinadan may be regarded as a double of Tristan in some respects', while Mula suggests that 'Dinadan and Kahedin represent Tristan's missing reasonable half, a half that follows the path opened by the *Song of Roland*, where Roland and Oliver are repeatedly mentioned together, one being the complementary side of the other': Busby, p. 165; Mula, pp. 54–55.

[105] Mahoney, "'Ar ye a knyght and ar no lovear?": The Chivalry Topos in Malory's *Book of Sir Tristram*', in *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly*, ed. by Keith Busby and Norris J. Lacy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 311–24 (p. 311). See further Larrington, 'Gender/Queer Studies', p. 259.

Dynadan tells Tristram '[y]e say well' (p. 544).[106] Dynadan does not challenge the romance equation of love with prowess, but rather accepts this paradigm and his own disconnection from it. Dynadan's unwillingness to love goes with his aversion to battle, and together, both contrast with Tristram's greatness in love and battle, to some extent reinforcing the 'heroic sexual economy in which great knights are great lovers' through this contrast.[107]

This contrast is highlighted in Dynadan and Tristram's conversation about love because Tristram appears to be performing a kind of re-enactment of his own earlier encounters with Dynadan, with their roles reversed. Where Dynadan formerly sought to eschew battle when travelling with Tristram, the unrecognised Tristram now tells Dynadan 'I woll nat do batayle but yf me lyste' (p. 544). Dynadan's response to this is to label Tristram a 'cowarde' (p. 544), ironically reflecting on his own earlier behaviour. When Tristram refuses to avenge Dynadan against Epynogrys, Dynadan curses his companionship, mirroring his earlier curse against Tristram's insistence on doing battle. At the peak of this ironic re-enactment of their former relationship, Tristram declares 'I woll wayte uppon you and be undyr youre proteccion, for cause ye ar so good a knyght that ye may save me' (p. 550), recasting Dynadan's earlier decision to travel with Tristram as motivated by Tristram's protection. Dynadan's declaration of unwillingness to love, then, is enclosed within a kind of re-enacted role reversal between himself and Tristram, drawing attention to the use of Dynadan's unwillingness to love as a contrast to Tristram's desire for La Beall Isode. Dynadan's unwillingness is thus placed within a framework where it still contributes to normative expectations by contrasting with Tristram's behaviour, even if Dynadan's own actions and desires do not accord with the imperatives of love and battle. In this way, Dynadan's romantic a(nti)pathy serves a different but not opposed function to the other examples discussed in this chapter.

However, when Dynadan's unwillingness to love is tested by Isode, her reaction suggests a comic acceptance of Dynadan's difference that coexists with its use as a foil for Tristram. When Dynadan refuses to fight three knights for her, Isode initially tells Dynadan 'hit is grete shame to you, wherefore ye may nat be called a good knyght by

[106] Witalisz, 'A (Crooked) Mirror for Knights – The Case of Dinadan', *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 44 (2008), 457–62 (p. 460). Nagy also suggests Dynadan 'rejects the courtly convention that no knight can fight and win worship without the inspiration of his lady love', when Dynadan in fact overtly accepts this convention: Gergely Nagy, 'A Fool of a Knight, a Knight of a Fool: Malory's Comic Knights', *Arthuriana*, 14.4 (2004), 59–74 (p. 68).
[107] McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', p. 123.

reson but yf ye make a quarell for a lady', but ultimately she 'lowghe, and had good game at hym. So he had all the chyre that she myght make hym' (p. 549). Dorsey Armstrong argues that Isode's apparent acceptance of Dynadan 'suggests that Dinadan represents a positive alternative to the standard "knights who serve ladies" paradigm'.[108] However, when Armstrong considers the use of laughter elsewhere in the *Morte*, in the episode where Dynadan is forced to don women's clothing, she suggests that laughter is not only 'reflecting the dissipation of gender anxiety, but rather, functioning as a strategy to diffuse such anxiety'.[109] Isode's response to Dynadan may function in a similar way, both marking and diffusing anxiety over Dynadan's rejection of romance principles. Isode laughing at Dynadan is appropriate in that Dynadan himself is frequently the creator or object of humour in the *Morte*; he is, in this sense, a comic knight.[110] But he also *must* be a comic knight in order for his unwillingness to love (and, frequently, to fight) not to be too radical a questioning of Arthurian principles. Not only the laughter of Guenevere when Dynadan is forced into women's clothing, but Isode's laughter upon Dynadan's rejection of her demarcates Dynadan's comic role to foreclose the critique he could facilitate.

While Dynadan's comic role both permits and polices the critique he offers to Arthurian priorities, other aspects of Dynadan's unwillingness to love serve more affirmative purposes, developing the central importance of homosocial bonds within the *Morte*. Although Dynadan himself often seems to accept the connection between romantic love and prowess, to some extent his actions do challenge this paradigm. While he often loses battles or tries to avoid taking part in them, at times he acquits himself well, suggesting that prowess does not need to be motivated by romantic love. With the exception of Dynadan's defeat of Sir Breuse Saunz Pité for 'the honoure of all women' (p. 435), Dynadan's greatest moments of bravery and victory are often associated with fighting for or alongside his friends, a connection that seems to be developed as the *Morte* progresses. For example, in the tournament of Lonezep, Dynadan fights alongside Tristram, Palomydes, and Gareth, against King Arthur's knights. In this tournament, Arthur compares Gareth and Dynadan to 'egir wolvis' (p. 578), and the four knights win acclaim fighting as a group. Dynadan's role in this tournament is further associated with friendship and loyalty when he warns Tristram not to let Palomydes achieve victory,

[108] Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community*, p. 141.
[109] Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community*, p. 140.
[110] See further Nagy.

differentiating Dynadan's friendship from Palomydes' envy, and separating male relationships from the divisive effects of sexual desire. Dynadan's notorious reluctance to fight a better knight is also overlooked when friendship requires it: when Tristram is injured in the tournament at the Castle of Maidens, Dynadan offers to fight Palomydes on Tristram's behalf, telling Tristram 'yf I be slayne ye may pray for my soule' (p. 419). Although Tristram declines Dynadan's offer, his willingness to fight highlights the priority Dynadan gives to fellowship, placing it above his fears for his own safety, and above his logical approach to battle that usually results in him fighting only when he believes victory is achievable. Dynadan also shows loyalty to other knights of the Round Table, jousting with Brewnys again when he defeats Aggravaine and Mordred. Several of Dynadan's more impressive martial victories or demonstrations of bravery, then, revolve around defending or fighting beside other knights, affirming the homosocial bonds he has forged with them (or affirming the homosociality of the Round Table more widely by supporting even Aggravaine and Mordred). Dynadan's association with fellowship is frequently mentioned in the *Morte*: we are often told that 'he loved every good knyght and every good knyght loved hym' (p. 526). To some extent, then, although Dynadan seems to accept Isode's claim that 'ye may nat be called a good knyght by reson but yf ye make a quarell for a lady' (p. 549), his actions actually challenge this romance maxim. If Malory had truly wanted to construct an alternative to romantic love as the motivator of prowess he certainly could have made Dynadan a greater knight and fighter than he is, yet Dynadan's fellowship-based prowess suggests an alternative model that is shared by other knights alongside their commitment to romantic love.

This alternative model also intersects with the formation of queer identities through Dynadan's relationship with Tristram. That Dynadan has queer potential is suggested in gendered terms when he is forced to wear women's clothing at the tournament of Surluse, but his queerness also relates to sexuality through his relationship with Tristram.[111] Dynadan's love of Tristram is well-known: Gareth remarks upon it at Lonezep, telling Tristram 'ye ar the man in the worlde that he lovyth beste' (p. 589), while Dynadan himself tells Palomydes 'I love my lorde Sir Trystram abovyn all othir knyghtes, and hym woll I serve and do honoure' (p. 479). Although Saunders suggests that in Dynadan's declaration of love, '[t]he reader is drawn away from the individual erotics of love by Malory's inclusion of Lamorak's affirmation of this sentiment', Lamerok's

[111] On this episode, see Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community*, pp. 135–40; Martin, pp. 91–93; Hoffman, pp. 9–12.

response has a rather different emphasis to Dynadan's, as he declares '[s]o shall I [...] in all that I may with my power' (p. 479).[112] While Dynadan articulates his love for Tristram and his intention to serve him, Lamerok affirms his service for Tristram without expressing his love in the manner Dynadan does. Of course, love for another knight is not necessarily erotic in Malory's *Morte*: references to knights' love of each other are fairly frequent and often platonic. Gawain is said to be 'the man in the worlde that [Launcelot] lovith beste' (p. 74), while 'there was never no knyght that Sir Gareth loved so well as he dud Sir Launcelot' (p. 285), and Tristram tells Launcelot 'ye ar the man in the worlde that I love beste' (p. 451). However, the potential eroticism of Dynadan's love for Tristram is suggested by his comment in the scene with Lamerok that 'I woll nat abyde, for I have suche a talente to se Sir Trystram that I may nat abyde longe from hym' (p. 479). Field glosses 'talente' as 'longing';[113] it can also mean 'desire', 'inclination', 'inherent physical urge or drive', or 'resolve' ('talent' is also the Anglo-Norman word used to describe Guigemar's lack of desire to love).[114] '[T]alente' is a rare word in Malory's *Morte*, which Tomomi Kato's concordance records only once, in this scene.[115] This unusual term marks out Dynadan's powerful attachment to Tristram as excessive in some way, going beyond the normative boundaries of male chivalric attachment to indicate a queer connection. Analogous figures to Dynadan provide further support for a queer reading: Keith Busby explores the parallels between Dynadan and Galehaut of the *Lancelot en prose* in the Vulgate *Lancelot-Grail* Cycle, commenting that '[t]he intensity of Galehaut's love for Lancelot can be illustrated from practically every page of the "Galehaut" section'.[116] Of course, the fact that Dynadan's love for Tristram is less intense and less frequently commented upon in Malory (and the *Tristan en prose*) is significant: Galehaut's love for Lancelot is of a different quality. But the influence of Galehaut upon both the *Tristan en prose* and Malory may suggest that Dynadan's love for Tristram carries a kind of queer residue, one which is not fully activated by Malory, but which, in combination with Dynadan's unwillingness to love, reveals the presence of queer identities in the *Morte*.[117]

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[112] Corinne Saunders, '"Greater love hath no man": Friendship in Medieval English Romance', in *Traditions and Innovations in the Study of Medieval English Literature: The Influence of Derek Brewer*, ed. by Charlotte Brewer and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 128–43 (p. 138).
[113] P. J. C. Field, 'Glossary', in *Le Morte Darthur*, pp. 976–1080 (p. 1065).
[114] 'Talent n.', *Middle English Dictionary* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED44433> [accessed 27 August 2020].
[115] Kato, *A Concordance to the Works of Sir Thomas Malory* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974), p. 1192.
[116] Busby, p. 164; Larrington, 'Gender/Queer Studies', pp. 267–68.
[117] The Vulgate *Lancelot-Grail* Cycle was one of Malory's main sources for the *Morte* – he does not just know the *Lancelot en prose* through the *Tristan en prose*, but used it as one of his primary sources. See Norris, pp. 4, 11, 70–73.

In this light, the humorous role attributed to Dynadan also illustrates the way in which queer identities are subsumed into the dominant culture of the court by mechanisms such as laughter, which render Dynadan's subversive potential more comic than critical. Like *Guigemar*, then, the role of Dynadan in the *Morte* both reveals the normative strategies romance deploys to circumscribe queerness and indicates the queer potential offered by the motif of unwillingness to love.

CONCLUSION

While romantic a(nti)pathy associated with men in medieval romance is a sporadic and often briefly represented motif, it is nonetheless a significant one, situated at the nexus of romance's generic concerns with love, gender, and chivalric performance. Two of the romances discussed in this chapter reveal the queer potential of unwillingness to love, *Guigemar* exploring ideas of presexuality and asexuality in ways that open up queer resonances to wider appeal, and Malory's Dynadan offering an alternative model of chivalry predicated on relationships between men rather than (at least nominally) on serving women. However, both narratives circumscribe their depictions of queerness, indicating the sexual and gendered norms the romance genre is invested in upholding. Similarly, *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *Sir Degrevant* both perpetuate and question these norms by illustrating the ways in which consent and coercion are gendered issues in romance, positioning female romantic a(nti)pathy as both more problematic and more vulnerable to forms of coercion than male romantic a(nti)pathy. Taken together, the five romances discussed in this chapter illustrate romance's self-conscious engagement with gender, and the way in which it depicts issues of consent and coercion as gendered, suggesting the generative potential romance writers found in male romantic a(nti)pathy as a motif that encourages exploration of gendered and sexual norms. These romances often overtly conform to a normative model, ultimately endorsing the acceptance of love and marriage, but they also illustrate the inclusion of subversive tendencies within that overall model, raising questions about gender, love, chivalry, consent, and coercion. Chapter 2 develops many of the themes and issues discussed in this chapter, considering whether female romantic a(nti)pathy continues to be seen as problematic and susceptible to coercion in romances of the proud lady in love, and evaluating the ways in which these romances explore, uphold, and question cultural norms of love, marriage, and gendered behaviour.

CHAPTER 2.
'SHE WAS NAMYD PROWDE | BUT OF LOVE TO LERE': THE PROUD LADY IN LOVE[1]

INTRODUCTION

In *The English Romance in Time*, Cooper comments on 'the rather small number of ladies familiar from the native romance tradition who were the objects rather than the initiators of wooing', arguing that 'even when such heroines announced their reluctance to admit suitors (like Felice, or Eglantine, or Chaucer's Emily), their major function in their romances was to have their desire for independence or virginity overridden'.[2] It is certainly true that in most (though not all) cases, the single woman who initially resists love is happily married by the end of the romance.[3] But does eventual acquiescence mean that we ought not to take seriously any examples of female resistance to love – that there is little else to say about these women? As I explored in the previous chapter, when male and female romantic a(nti)pathy are represented alongside each other, women's resistance to love is often seen as more disruptive to societal expectations, as well as more susceptible to various forms of coercion, making female romantic a(nti)pathy a subject of some anxiety and significance even when it is eventually resolved. This chapter elaborates on these findings by investigating a particular type of woman who expresses apathy or hostility to love within Middle English romance. I call this figure 'the proud lady in love', taking this title from Caxton's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, a translation of the French prose *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amours*, printed in 1489. The byname 'proud lady in love' points to the association of resistance to love with pride, and a departure from expected gender norms. Yet 'the proud lady in love' also has a double meaning: while the lady is proud in relation to love, this motif also portrays a proud lady *in love* – a woman whose pride does not prevent her from experiencing love after all. These connotations of Eglantine's byname make it a suitable label for a group of heroines who resist love but usually acquiesce and accept marriage by the end of their narratives.

Five core figures can be considered 'proud ladies in love' in Middle English romance: Felice from *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1300), the Fere from *Ipomadon* (c. 1390-1400), Winglayne from *Eger and Grime* (c. 1450; *Eger and Grime* is a Scottish text but circulates in

[1] *Ipomadon*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie, EETS, o.s., 316 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), ll. 107–08.
[2] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 355.
[3] Ettarde in Malory's *Morte Darthur* is an exception, as is Winliane in the printed versions of *Eger and Grime*. Felice also offers a slightly different variation on this model due to the penitential shift of *Guy of Warwick*.

an anglicised form and context in the Percy Folio), Ettarde from Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1469-70), and Eglantine from Caxton's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* (1489). These women share several features: they are unwilling to love and/or marry, rejecting suitors outright or issuing a difficult, if not impossible condition for their hand to be won; they are usually referred to as proud or portrayed as proud in some way; they rule or are heiresses to significant land and wealth; and they generally accept love and marriage by each romance's conclusion. While the degree to which each woman accords with these main features varies slightly, the proud lady in love forms a recognisable motif. There are other kinds of women who display romantic a(nti)pathy in Middle English romance, but this chapter focuses on the proud lady in love as a figure who offers unique insights into the particular appeal and anxieties associated with female romantic a(nti)pathy.

Like the motif of unwillingness to love itself, the proud lady in love is not an invention of Middle English romance. Almost all of the romances discussed in this chapter are translations or adaptations of Anglo-Norman or Old French texts: *Guy of Warwick* and *Ipomadon* translate and adapt the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* and Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*, while *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* is a translation of the fifteenth-century French prose *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amours* (itself an adaptation of the thirteenth-century verse *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour*), and Malory's Pelleas and Ettarde episode adapts a section of the Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin*. *Eger and Grime* alone in this chapter does not have a known French source. However, the linguistic (Anglo-Norman, Old French, and Middle French) and chronological range (twelfth to fifteenth centuries) of the French sources for these works means that they have not often been considered together. Focusing on the adaptation of these works in Middle English romances of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries therefore opens up new possibilities, illuminating the proud lady as a more cohesive and discrete motif. As the range of these romances varies from canonical works usually studied in their own right (such as Malory's *Morte*) to works that are more often viewed as straightforward translations of French romances (such as *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*), they also offer a way to reassess which romances contribute to our understandings of Middle English literature, and why. At the same time, consideration of the wider sources and analogues for this motif indicates that the gendered assumptions it draws upon and perpetuates circulated more broadly, revealing the ways in which this motif both reflects wider attitudes and elaborates on these attitudes in particular ways.

Many different works from within and outside the romance tradition reveal the broad circulation of ideas that linked women's resistance to love with pride (pride being, of course, one of the seven deadly sins, widely represented in medieval literature and culture). In addition to the works discussed in the introduction to this thesis, *Guigemar*, as outlined in Chapter 1, incorporates a plea for the lady not to be 'trop fiere' (522) [too proud, or too harsh], suggesting the cultural association between women who resist love and pride. The romances of Chrétien de Troyes refer to female pride in love fairly often: in *Erec et Enide*, Count Galoain tells Enide '[t]rop estes fiere!' ['[y]ou are too proud'] because she rejects his advances; Blancheflour tells the eponymous protagonist of *Perceval* 's'ele vos ert escondite, | Vos le tendriiez a orgueil' ['you'd think me proud if [my love] were denied you']; and l'Orgueilleuse de Logres in the same work is so named because of her scorn for knights, which seems to link to her insistence that '[n]e sui pas de ces foles bretes | Dont cil chevalier se deportent, | Qui desor lor chevax les portent' ['I'm not one of those silly girls the knights sport with and carry away on their horses']. [4] L'Orgueilleuse's subsequent explanation of her behaviour intriguingly indicates that women may adopt apparently negative behavioural models as a response to experiences of violence: l'Orgueilleuse's lover is killed by another knight who then abducts her, causing her to adopt a scornful attitude in an attempt to provoke her death. However, while she represents quite an extreme example, she may indicate the possibility of reading women's resistance to love as a response to violence or a fear of potential violence. Doggett argues that 'women stood to suffer greatly, both emotionally and physically in cases of abuse, from marriages contracted without taking feelings into account', perhaps suggesting why women might feel anxious about committing to marriage (in literature as in life).[5] However, l'Orgueilleuse de Logres is not entirely identifiable as a proud lady in love, instead according more with the model of the ill-speaking damsel.[6] Chrétien's *Cligès* offers a more identifiable proud lady, but this early manifestation of the motif has quite a limited function: Soredamors's unwillingness to love is mentioned only when she falls

[4] Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ed. by Jean-Marie Fritz, Livre de poche, 4526 (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1992), l. 3343.; trans. in Chrétien de Troyes, 'Erec and Enide', in *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, trans. by Carleton W. Carroll, pp. 37–122 (p. 78); Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal*, ed. by Keith Busby (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993; repr. de Gruyter, 2011), ll. 2110–11, 6706–08; trans. in Chrétien de Troyes, 'The Story of the Grail (Perceval)', in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 381–494 (pp. 407, 463). On l'Orgueilleuse de Logres in *Perceval*, and other appellations referring to pride in Chrétien's romances (which can also be applied to men), see Nicolas Morcovescu, '"Orgueilleux de la Lande", "Orgueilleuse de Logres", "Château Orgueilleux" et autres appellations semblables dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 3.2 (1966), 113–28.

[5] Doggett, p. 260.

[6] On the character-type of the ill-speaking damsel, see Wyatt, 'The Ill-Speaking Woman and the Marriageable Lady', in *Women of Words in 'Le Morte Darthur'*, pp. 15–58.

in love, so that her reputation for being 'desdeigneuse [...] d'amors' ['scornful of love'] merely highlights Alexander's exceptional worthiness as the man whom she does deign to love.[7] This use of the proud lady to indicate '[t]he man's own exceptional attractiveness [...] through the lady's falling for him despite her being [...] capricious, or domineering, or reluctant to engage in a relationship: hence names for her bespeaking pride' continues in later romances, but there the lady's resistance to love plays a larger part in the narrative, and, as we shall see, raises some questions and anxieties about normative gender roles in medieval romance.[8] *Amadas et Ydoine*, drawing directly on the figure of the proud lady in *Cligès*, starts to explore this motif more, using Ydoine's aversion to love as an initial – if relatively short-lived – obstacle to Amadas's desires.[9] However, the proud lady in love is developed further in later Middle English romances, which often expand her role beyond their sources to reflect upon the romance genre's construction of gender, desire, and marriage.

While Latin and French influences upon these romances are not surprising, a more unexpected analogue to the Middle English proud lady appears in the Old Norse motif of the maiden-king. Francophone influence upon the literary culture of both Iceland and England offers an explanation for this connection, but the maiden-king is not typically recognised as appearing outside of Icelandic literature.[10] Icelandic maiden-kings do have some particular characteristics that are not retained elsewhere: the Old Norse narratives 'are unique in the large international corpus of narratives devoted to the taming of a haughty princess in that their plot is dominated by a misogamous female ruler

[7] de Troyes, *Cligès*, l. 446; trans. in 'Cligés', p. 128. At least one medieval copyist seems to have associated (and confused) Soredamors with the figure of the proud lady: see Charles François, 'Le *Roman de Blanchandin* et le *Gral* de Chrétien', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 21 (1942), 25–51 (p. 35).
[8] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 225.
[9] On the connections between *Cligès* and *Amadas et Ydoine*, see Calin, *The French Tradition*, p. 79; Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 187 n. 30.
[10] Friðriksdóttir argues that the maiden-king motif may be 'a fusion of the native, often misogamous shieldmaiden who is wooed by the protagonist, and a range of European characters', suggesting that 'the maiden-king first appears as a more original creation, borrowing aspects from a large literary stock [...] the *meykongr* motif [...] then became so popular in the fourteenth century that a subgenre of romance focussed entirely on maiden-kings was generated, and some of its features were applied to translated texts such as *Partalopa saga*': Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'From Heroic Legend to "Medieval Screwball Comedy"? The Origins, Development and Interpretation of the Maiden-King Narrative', in *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*, ed. by Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012), pp. 229–49 (pp. 237–38). The maiden-king motif is specific to Old Norse, but just as maiden-kings were sometimes created from figures who were imported from French romance, analogous – if less unique – developments may have occurred in the Middle English and French works discussed in this chapter. On the translation of texts from French into Old Norse and Middle English more widely, see Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012).

who insists on being called *kongr* ("king") rather than *dróttning* ("queen")'.[11] This is a decisive difference, implying a transgression of male roles and male power. Yet Icelandic maiden-kings are still recognised as maiden-kings without this title. Séréna in *Clári saga* is usually perceived as a maiden-king, and *Clári saga* is sometimes argued to be the saga 'from which the maiden-king motif in late medieval Icelandic romance originates', without Séréna ever being called *meykóngr* or *kongr*: she is the daughter of King Alexander of France and not yet a ruler in her own right.[12] Similarly, *Dínus saga drambláta* focuses on a king's daughter, not a woman who rules and calls herself a maiden-king.[13] Despite the difference this terminology implies, the recognisability of maiden-kings even without this label opens up the possibility of comparing them with the proud lady in Middle English romances and their French sources. The proud ladies of Middle English romance have more in common with the Old Norse maiden-kings than has previously been recognised, particularly in terms of their power, the anxieties they raise about female authority, and the humiliations that are at times used to disempower them. The Old Norse maiden-kings make a useful point of comparison with the proud ladies in love because, while the proud ladies are less subversive and extreme in their subversion of gender roles than the maiden-kings, the connections between these motifs also indicate that the proud ladies are more subversive than has previously been recognised. Considering the proud ladies alongside the female virgin martyrs of hagiography also reveals the subversive potential of these romance heroines, as while their unwillingness to love is occasionally praised as a form of chastity, such praise is usually fleeting, and the perspectives of parents, vassals, and suitors who try to get these women to marry are generally endorsed by romance narratives overall. The proud lady's resistance disrupts expected generic and social norms in a way that female saints' virginity does not: while virginity may endow a saint with power and require them to resist the social frameworks of their own time, this is divinely and generically sanctioned, while female romantic a(nti)pathy holds a more problematic place within the romance genre's expectations of love, marriage, and dynastic continuation.

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[11] Marianne E. Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*, Islandica, 46 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 66.

[12] Sheryl McDonald Werronen, *Popular Romance in Iceland: The Women, Worldviews, and Manuscript Witnesses of Nítíða Saga*, Crossing Boundaries: Turku Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 5 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), p. 67. For a different perspective, which emphasises the importance of *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* in the development of the maiden-king motif rather than that of *Clári saga*, see Friðriksdóttir, 'From Heroic Legend to "Medieval Screwball Comedy"?'

[13] On *Dínus saga drambláta*, see Kalinke, p. 92.

The proud ladies' unwillingness to love plays a significant role in each romance before they agree to marry, raising questions about normative desires, female autonomy, and the construction of chivalric masculinity. The latter of these is most prominent: each of these narratives focuses on chivalric masculinity in some way, framing the problems and opportunities posed by the proud lady in relation to the impact they have upon men. As Crane notes, refusing love and setting difficult challenges are both 'productive of plots centered on the striving lover [...] sharpen[ing] the image of courtship as a process of masculine self-improvement rather than mutuality and intimacy'.[14] This focus upon masculinity in narratives of the proud lady is not dissimilar to the doubling of unwillingness to love in several narratives of male romantic a(nti)pathy, where male unwillingness was contrasted to the more problematic issue of female resistance. Together, the ways in which these narratives use unwillingness to love associated with one gender to raise questions about another gender suggest a proto-heteronormative focus, revealing possibilities for investigating the ways in which heterosexual-like relationships are created, naturalised, and to some extent institutionalised within medieval romance. Similarly to Burger's view of late medieval conduct literature as manifesting 'at once a hybrid, idiosyncratic manifestation of individual will', and as 'part of that emerging sex/gender system that will ultimately, in its later sedimented and stratified early modern incarnation, coalesce as a foundation for modern heterosexuality', romances can also be seen as participating in this process.[15] Moments of resistance to gender binaries and opposite-sex relationships, as well as the coercive practices that overcome this resistance, can therefore contribute to our understanding of queer potential in the romance genre, as well as of the ways queer possibilities are erased by romance's proto-heteronormativity. The proud lady in love can help us to reassess the ideologies of gender and sexuality romance upholds and questions, indicating the differing approach the genre takes to female romantic a(nti)pathy as opposed to male, the ways in which female unwillingness to love is often met with coercion, and the potential for female figures to facilitate or undermine the construction of chivalric masculinity.

[14] *Gender and Romance*, p. 65.
[15] Burger, p. 25.

'Þan schaltow haue þe loue of me, | ȝif þow be swiche as y telle þe': Directing Chivalric Masculinity in *Guy of Warwick*[16]

Felice from *Guy of Warwick*, an early fourteenth-century 'Matter of England' romance translated from the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*, is the most positively represented proud lady. She is also the most generically and socially conventional, sharing similarities with other types of romance heroine such as the 'actively desiring heiress' and the high-status beloved.[17] Indeed, Felice is less clearly identified as a proud lady than the other women discussed in this chapter. Although versions of the Anglo-Norman *Gui* refer to her 'fere de corage' ['proud heart'], this is omitted in CUL Ff.2.38, does not appear in the Auchinleck manuscript because the first leaf is missing, and is ambiguously translated as '[s]he was a woman of grete corage' in the Caius manuscript ('corage' may or may not indicate pride here).[18] Her rejection of suitors is also presented unusually favourably: she rejects them '[f]or that she was so faire holde' (Caius, 98), or '[f]or the godenes, that was hur on' (CUL, 73-74), the CUL text here associating her with morality and chastity in a way that accords with Alison Wiggins's view of this version as 'more straightforwardly

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[16] *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The First or Fourteenth-Century Version*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, EETS, e.s., 42, 49, 59 (London: Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1883), Auchinleck ll. 673-74. This chapter focuses on the couplet and stanzaic *Guy* in the Auchinleck manuscript; the couplet version in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 107; and the later couplet version in Cambridge University Library Ff.2.38, while also engaging with the Anglo-Norman versions of *Gui*. I generally cite the Auchinleck manuscript first and foremost, following most other commentators and the manuscript's earlier date. All references to the Auchinleck and Caius manuscripts are to *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The First or Fourteenth-Century Version*, ed. by Julius Zupitza. All references to CUL Ff.2.38 are to *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The Second or Fifteenth-Century Version*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, EETS, e.s., 25-26 (London: Trübner, 1875). When discussing the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*, I generally refer to Alfred Ewert's edition and Judith Weiss's translation, both based on London, British Library, MS Additional 38662: although Ivana Djordević argues that the Anglo-Norman *Gui* has been 'reductively identified with Alfred Ewert's edition, an edition not ideally suited to the study of textual relations between the Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions', Djordević acknowledges that the other Anglo-Norman versions are largely inaccessible. For a discussion of the redactions of the Middle English *Guy*, see Alison Wiggins, 'The Manuscripts and Texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 61–80; on the Anglo-Norman *Gui*, see Ailes, '*Gui de Warewic* in its Manuscript Context'; on the complex relationships between *Guy* and *Gui*, see Ivana Djordjević, '*Guy of Warwick* as a Translation', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 27–43 (quotations at pp. 29, 36).

[17] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 223. The higher-status woman loved by a lower-status man appears in romances like *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *William of Palerne*, *The Franklin's Tale*, *Sir Torrent of Portingale*, *The Squire of Low Degree* (*Undo Your Door*), and Caxton's *Paris and Vienne*. This figure often helps her lower-status lover to accrue renown and be accepted by her parents.

[18] *Gui de Warewic: roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by Alfred Ewert, Classiques français du moyen âge, 74, 2 vols (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1932), I, l. 69; trans. in 'Gui de Warewic', in *'Boeve de Haumtone' and 'Gui de Warewic': Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, trans. by Judith Weiss, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 332, FRETS 3 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), pp. 97–243 (p. 98). For the Cambridge manuscript of *Gui*, see *The Fourteenth-Century Guy of Warwick*, l. 93, where Zupitza supplies it in place of Auchinleck's missing leaf. The *Middle English Dictionary* does not list 'pride' as a meaning of 'corage', but the *OED* does: 'Corāğe n.', *Middle English Dictionary*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED9682> [accessed 22 May 2020]; 3. c., 'Courage, n.', *OED*.

historical and exemplary'.[19] Felice also differs from the other proud ladies in that the conditions she sets for her hand to be won form a private bargain between herself and Guy, negotiating their relationship rather than prohibiting suitors more generally; the format in which Felice sets out her conditions is perhaps therefore more amenable to romance's focus on the formation of intimate romantic relationships. However, Felice's additional rejection of 'Erles, Dukes, fro the worldes ende' (Caius, 96), her initial scorn towards Guy, and the difficult conditions she sets him (ultimately requiring him to be the best knight in the world) suggest that Felice can be seen as a proud lady in love. Her more positive portrayal reflects this narrative's particular approach to the proud lady, as Felice, more than the other figures discussed in this chapter, uncritically supports the construction of chivalric masculinity.

The conditions that Felice sets Guy all focus on knightly prowess: she asks him to become a knight, then to prove himself in battle, then to become the best knight in the world. Felice presents this final demand as in Guy's own interests, saying that if she were to accept him without further trial, 'ich þi manschip schuld schone' (Auchinleck, 1145). As Cartlidge observes, this recalls the idea that marriage may be detrimental to chivalric reputation, expressed in *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*; Felice's words also focus specifically upon 'manschip', however, indicating the particular use of the proud lady in love in *Guy of Warwick*.[20] Although Guy sees Felice's final condition as unreasonable, exclaiming '[n]ow ichot, þou scornest me' (Auchinleck, 1167), the point is not that Felice *is* being too harsh in her demands, but that Guy is capable of achieving even her most difficult challenge. While there is some suggestion that Felice's commands may be excessive, as Guy blames Felice for the death of his knights (Auchinleck, 1557-64), the unparalleled renown that Guy wins seems to mitigate these losses.[21] This renown is largely motivated by Felice's demands, situating the proud lady's unwillingness to love as central to the creation of chivalric masculinity.

The way Felice's romantic a(nti)pathy motivates Guy's prowess is particularly important in this narrative because there is an external barrier to the couple's relationship that is not present in most other romances of the proud lady in love (except *Eger and*

[19] Wiggins, 'Manuscripts and Texts', p. 70. This passage again corresponds with the Auchinleck manuscript's missing leaf.
[20] Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage*, p. 102.
[21] The BL *Gui* does not blame Felice for the knights' deaths, but the Cambridge *Gui* (Corpus Christi College, MS 50) does. Scenes like this may prime the reader for the reversal of priorities in the second half of the romance.

Grime): Guy's lower social status. This legitimises Felice's initial a(nti)pathy, differentiating her from the other proud ladies discussed in this chapter, as differing status was an accepted – and, indeed, expected – reason to reject a marriage. Hume notes that 'parity of social class was thought crucial for the maintenance of the individual's and family's social position', while Menuge records that wards were permitted to refuse marriages arranged by their guardian if the marriage was disparaging.[22] Felice's initial rejection of Guy may be scornful, but it also accurately reminds him and the reader that he is '[þ]e steward sone Suward' (Auchinleck, 379), while Felice is 'þi lordes douhter' (Auchinleck, 385). Insofar as Guy's status is problematic for his relationship with Felice, it is Felice's conditions that offer a way around this as, while focusing on chivalric prowess, they also facilitate social ascension. When Felice tells Guy that he must be knighted, she says '[n]o grome louen y no may | Fort he be kniȝt forsoþ to say' (Auchinleck, 667-68), making her condition a matter of status as well as prowess. Her final condition also relates to status, as by becoming the best knight in the world, Guy surpasses his lower social standing to establish himself as a worthy and valuable partner for Felice. In this respect, Felice's role overlaps with the figure of the 'actively desiring heiress', as both facilitate male fantasies of social ascension, again indicating the more generically conventional role Felice plays in *Guy of Warwick*.[23]

Guy's social ascension also serves the interests of Felice's family, as his prowess establishes him as capable of defending their lands, offering the 'reassuring colouring' Cooper discusses as accompanying romance fantasies of social ascension.[24] Felice's father, Rohaud, directly addresses dynastic preoccupations in the CUL manuscript when he belatedly tells Felice '[h]yt were tyme, þou toke an husbonde | Aftur my day to kepe my londe'.[25] These dynastic concerns may have been particularly significant within some of the possible reading contexts for *Guy of Warwick*: although the concept of 'ancestral romance' is questionable, particularly in relation to *Guy*, which circulated widely,

[22] Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, p. 16; Menuge, 'The Wardship Romance: A New Methodology', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), pp. 29–43 (p. 37). A high-profile example of this concern is the Paston family's dissatisfaction with Margery Paston's clandestine marriage to Richard Calle, the family's bailiff: see *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Norman Davis, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), I, pp. 341-43 (letter 203), 409 (letter 245), 541-42 (letter 332).
[23] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 223; on these fantasies, see p. 225.
[24] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 225.
[25] CUL, 7015-16. Caius alludes to dynastic priorities, as Rohaud reminds Felice '[t]hou art heire to all my londe' (7340), but the CUL reference is more explicit.

Marianne Ailes notes that the Earls of Warwick 'did "adopt" Gui early on'.[26] The Beauchamps of Warwick and their circle have been tentatively associated with the Caius and CUL manuscripts of *Guy* (produced in the 1470s and the last quarter of the fifteenth century respectively),[27] as well as with John Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1442), the French prose *Rommant de Guy de Warwik* (c. 1445), the Irish *Life of Sir Guy* (c. 1449), and a 'volum del Romaunce de Gwy'.[28] Wiggins notes the dynastic concerns faced by the Beauchamps in the fifteenth century, suggesting that the Rous Rolls and *Beauchamp Pageants*

> should almost certainly be seen in the context of the struggles of Anne Beauchamp [...] to regain her rightful inheritances. From the death of her husband at Barnet in 1471 almost up until the restoration of her estates in 1487, Anne was excluded from her possessions and 'kept' by her son-in-law, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. During this period she wrote numerous letters appealing for the restoration of her rightful inheritances.[29]

If CUL Ff.2.38 was produced within the Beauchamp circle, as Martha Driver suggests, its particular concern with marrying well 'to kepe my londe' (7016) may have been especially poignant, and seemed especially prudent, in this context. Some of the other works included in CUL Ff.2.38 indicate a further focus upon good rulership: Johnston notes the inclusion of *The Seven Sages of Rome*, which 'narrates the importance of counsel to secular lordship', perhaps supporting the CUL *Guy*'s interest in dynastic duties.[30] Felice's initial unwillingness to love Guy, and the way it motivates his prowess and social

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[26] Ailes, '*Gui de Warewic* in its Manuscript Context', p. 25; see pp. 23-34 for a discussion of the problems with 'ancestral romance'. On the Beauchamps' promotion of Guy through visual culture, see David Griffith, 'The Visual History of Guy of Warwick', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 110–32 (pp. 120–31).

[27] On possible Beauchamp connections with the Caius manuscript, and on the date of this manuscript, see Wiggins, 'Manuscripts and Texts', pp. 75–76, 64. On possible Beauchamp connections with the CUL manuscript, see Martha W. Driver, '"In her owne persone semly and bewteus": Representing Women in Stories of Guy of Warwick', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 133–53 (p. 139). On the date of the CUL manuscript, which Wiggins suggests is late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth century, while Johnston argues for the last quarter of the fifteenth century, see Wiggins, 'Manuscripts and Texts', p. 64; and Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 120.

[28] On the connections with Lydgate, see A. S. G. Edwards, 'The *Speculum Guy de Warwick* and Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick*: The Non-Romance Middle English Tradition', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 81–93 (pp. 87–88); on the French prose *Guy* see John Frankis, 'Taste and Patronage in Late Medieval England as Reflected in Versions of *Guy of Warwick*', *Medium Ævum*, 66.1 (1997), 80–93 (pp. 84, 88–89); on the Irish *Life*, see Driver, pp. 136–39; on the 'volum del Romaunce de Gwy', see Ailes, '*Gui de Warewic* in its Manuscript Context', p. 25.

[29] Wiggins, 'Manuscripts and Texts', p. 76 n. 46.

[30] Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 120 n. 78. Johnston does not link this manuscript to the Beauchamp circle, however: he associates it with mercantile readers and suggests it may have been produced on a commercial basis for a patron in the Leicestershire area: see p. 110 and Johnston, 'Two Leicestershire Romance Codices: Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 15 (2012), 85–100 (pp. 88–89).

ascension, serves her family's dynastic interests, aligning familial, male, and female concerns.

However, while Felice's demands do serve the interests of Guy and her family, her unwillingness to love also gives her significant power over Guy, anticipating some of the more subversive manifestations of the proud lady in later Middle English romances, where female autonomy can challenge male rule. Felice tells Guy he will 'haue þe loue of me, | ȝif þow be swiche *as y telle þe*' (Auchinleck, 673-74; my emphasis), highlighting the extent to which she shapes Guy's identity through her initial unwillingness to love and her subsequent conditions.[31] Felice's agency appears particularly subversive in comparison with the role her father plays. It is Rohaud who eventually offers Guy Felice's hand and the Warwickshire lands, a conventional marriage agreement that seems to accord with Rachel Moss's view of elite marriage as negotiated 'not between a man and a woman, but between two men'.[32] However, Rohaud's apparent significance is undermined by the reader's knowledge of Guy and Felice's prior relationship. Rohaud's exclamation, 'Sir Gij [...] þou art mi frende: | Now þou wilt spouse mi dohter hende | Was y neuer are so bliþe' (Auchinleck, 13.10-12) seems particularly ironic, and this irony is even more pointed in the CUL *Guy* and British Library *Gui*, where Rohaud declares '[n]ow wote y [...] full well, | That ye loue me, be seynt Mychell, | That ye wyll my doghtur take' (CUL, 7073-75); 'or sai jo ben | Que vus me amez sur tote rien, | Quant ma fille prendre volez' (7517-19) ['now I know for sure that you love me above all other, since you are willing to take my daughter', p. 179].[33] Rohaud's emphasis on Guy's love for him, and his impression that he has arranged the marriage, do not take into account the agreements made between Guy and Felice up to this point. It is Felice, not Rohaud, who has negotiated the terms of her relationship with Guy; *Guy of Warwick* thus seems to accord with Vines's suggestion that 'despite the heroines' show of silence and submissiveness' in late medieval romance, 'the audience is always aware of the actual

[31] This emphasis on Felice's agency is omitted from the CUL manuscript: 'Then, for sothe, hyght y the, | That þou shalt haue þe loue of me' (363-64).
[32] Rachel E. Moss, *Fatherhood and its Representations in Middle English Texts* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), p. 124.
[33] The Caius manuscript of *Guy* does not contain this speech, as Guy's acceptance goes straight into the wedding scene. Wiggins notes that the nature of Caius's omissions and abridgements 'indicates a reviser with a particular literary and cultural agenda', suggesting that 'Caius offers a less controversial portrait of Guy of Warwick in which his actions are not morally problematized, the most sordid episodes are removed, and his chivalric qualities are more prominent than in any other account'. The omission of this particular passage may reduce the subversiveness of Felice's agency, removing the ironic reflection on Rohaud's role to reinforce traditional gender roles. See Wiggins, 'Manuscripts and Texts', pp. 73–74.

circumstances of their behavior'.[34] In addition to Felice's role, Rohaud's mistaken assumption of his own importance in this process ironically comments on fathers' self-perceptions, highlighting Felice's freedom as a contrast to other arranged marriages in *Guy of Warwick* (such as Guy's aborted marriage to the Eastern Emperor's daughter). While Rohaud's role may seem to align with Cooper's observation that '[r]omances generally attempt to square [the heroine's] desire with larger social and parental approval by having her engineer the consent of her father', Felice's and Rohaud's roles are arguably more extreme than usual, given Rohaud's complete ignorance of Felice's relationship with Guy, and the apparently ironic nature of his own perception.[35] *Guy of Warwick* exposes Rohaud's control as a façade, raising questions about fathers' typical roles in arranging marriages, and highlighting the subversive possibilities of Felice's role even as she appears to abide by conventional marital processes.

While Wiggins suggests that '[t]he contradictions which Felice embodies are the result of her structural role', I would argue that the variety and appeal of Felice's role in *Guy of Warwick* come from her initial unwillingness to love and, particularly, her affinities with the figure of the proud lady.[36] Far from a 'courted nonentit[y]' who plays an 'essentially marginal role in the hero's life', Felice asserts her power in her interactions with Guy.[37] In addition to playing a crucial role in the construction of his chivalric prowess, she also leads her own marriage negotiations, raising questions about traditional patriarchal roles. As the second half of *Guy of Warwick* shifts into a penitential mode, the initial celebration of Guy's secular prowess and, correspondingly, Felice's role in motivating this is called into question – in some ways, through the motif of unwillingness to love again, as Guy himself now rejects love and marriage as part of a renunciation of worldliness. However, Felice still has a role in the latter half of the romance, not only providing Guy with a son and heir, but performing her own pious and moral acts.[38] Overall, Felice is the most positive and socially conservative of the proud ladies in Middle English romance, but her agency also anticipates the more subversive functions of the proud lady in love in later narratives.

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[34] Vines, *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance*, p. 6.
[35] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 223.
[36] Alison Eve Wiggins, '*Guy of Warwick*: Study and Transcription', p. 18.
[37] Judith Weiss, 'The wooing woman', p. 150; Geraldine Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993), p. 75.
[38] Driver notes the similarity between the pious acts Felice performs and those she suggested Guy could perform instead of a pilgrimage, p. 142.

'AFTUR PRYDE COMYTHE GRETTE REPROVE': ENFORCING NORMATIVE DESIRES AND INTERROGATING MASCULINITY IN *IPOMADON* AND *BLANCHARDYN AND EGLANTINE*[39]

Ipomadon and *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, two later Middle English translations of Anglo-Norman and French romances, present the proud lady in love very similarly.[40] The heroines of these romances are overtly identified as proud ladies: the Fere (La Fière in Anglo-Norman) means 'the Proud One', while Eglantine's byname is 'the proud lady in love'.[41] In both *Ipomadon* and *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, the heroine's pride is presented as transgressive, and tension is established between her celebrated characteristics and her resistance to love. Both romances use the motif of the proud lady to explore disruptions to normative desire and gender roles, ultimately reinforcing the importance of marriage. However, while normative desires are reimposed upon the proud lady, these works also question romance constructions of masculinity, moving away from the affirmative role the proud lady plays in *Guy of Warwick*.

Blanchardyn and Eglantine makes its ambivalence towards Eglantine clear early on, when the Knight of the Ferry first describes Eglantine to Blanchardyn. Unfortunately, a leaf is missing from this section of the Caxton print, but in the French prose *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amours*, which Caxton's translation follows closely,[42] the Knight of the Ferry praises Eglantine's 'tresexcellente beaute' [very excellent beauty] and 'tresgrans vertus' [very great virtues], then declares 'on ne la pourroit trop louer et prisier' [one could not laud and praise her too much], because 'elle na oncques volu ne veult prester ses oreilles aux offres, prieres ne requestes, que nullui ait fait en amours' [she never wanted nor wants to open her ears to offers, prayers, or requests, that anyone might have made

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[39] *Ipomadon*, l. 942.

[40] Hue de Rotelande's twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Ipomedon* was translated into Middle English several times. The three distinct versions of *Ipomadon* in Middle English are known as *Ipomadon A* (here referred to as *Ipomadon*), *Ipomydon B* (or the couplet *Lyfe of Ipomydon*) and *Ipomedon C* (the prose *Ipomedon*). For discussions of the relationships between these versions, see Purdie, 'General Introduction: *Ipomedon* in Middle English', in *Ipomadon*, pp. xiii–xvi (p. xiv); Sánchez-Martí, pp. 25–27. In this section, I discuss the tail-rhyme *Ipomadon* (*Ipomadon A*) and its relationship to the Anglo-Norman *Ipomedon*; the other texts follow the same story-line but diverge in form, style, and detail. As discussed above, *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* is a translation of the fifteenth-century prose *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amours*.

[41] While Cooper notes the meaning of 'the Fere' may differ in Middle English, the redactor's pun, 'she was namyd prowde | But of love to lere' (107-08), suggests the meaning of pride was still recognised: Helen Cooper, 'Passionate, Eloquent and Determined: Heroines' Tales and Feminine Poetics', *Journal of the British Academy*, 4 (2016), 221–44 (p. 232).

[42] See Leon Kellner, 'Appendix', in *Caxton's Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, pp. cx–cxxvi (p. cxii); Judith P. Stelboum, 'William Caxton's Romance of *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1968), p. 31; Joanne M. Despres, 'Translation Techniques in the Romances of William Caxton' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1991), p. 167.

in love].[43] This initial description pinpoints the tension between Eglantine's desirability and her unwillingness to love, which is quickly expanded upon by the Knight of the Ferry:

> me semeth not / that this manere at long rennynge may endure the arowes of loue, ne hir dartes right sharp / som daye / yf god be plesed / shall not be ydle about her / But peraduenture she so quykly hitte atte her herte ther wyth all, that daunger nor refuse shal haue nomore lawe for to rule nor gouerne hir prowde corage / as touching loue. God gyue grace that this may be soone. and that he to whom we wolde wysshe moste good in this worlde, be cause of the reformacion of suche an obstynate wylle. (pp. 36-37)

This already seeks to impose norms upon Eglantine, as the wish that she would fall in love 'some daye / yf god be plesed' aligns God's grace with the expectation of love in romance, while her 'prowde corage' and 'obstynate wylle' are criticised. Eglantine's romantic a(nti)pathy is continually and precisely the object of criticism from the earliest stages of the romance.

Further critiques of Eglantine's pride come from other characters who owe loyalty to her, as the Knight of the Ferry does (he is her vassal), priming the reader to view Eglantine's pride as a negative characteristic. Her provost tells Blanchardyn 'we sholde wel desyre' Eglantine to fall in love (p. 75), while her foster-mother warns her 'youre pryde shalbe cause / but yf ye take hede, of the totall distruction of your royalme' (p. 65). The foster-mother projects larger socio-political concerns onto Eglantine's unwillingness to love, indicating the way that female sexuality seems to become a public issue when the woman in question holds political power (discussed further below). Eglantine's pride is also criticised by the narrator, who disavows her 'haulte corage insaucyble' (p. 53) and 'dismesurable herte' (p. 68), further perpetuating this negative view of Eglantine. While Eglantine is initially praised for her beauty and virtue, presenting her as a desirable partner for Blanchardyn, her positive features exist in tension with her proud repudiation of love. This perhaps develops a feature of troubadour and *trouvère* poetry, where, as Helen Dell writes,

> *la dame* must be constituted as of great worth in order for the lover and the desire itself to be accepted as correspondingly worthy [...]. She must be the best. And yet, [...] her necessary unattainability requires her to refuse the lover, so she *cannot* be the best. She must be split. The genre's contradictory requirements necessitate her having both a good and a bad aspect.[44]

[43] *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, pp. 35–36. Kellner supplies the French text in place of the missing leaf from Caxton. All translations of *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amours* are my own.
[44] Dell, p. 80.

The portrayal of Eglantine seems to reflect this split between the desirable object of love and the unattainable, recalcitrant, and thus flawed figure, but the narrative form of romance allows these two attributes to interweave in varied ways at different times, as well as enabling different viewpoints. Eglantine's negative attributes are the subject of extensive critiques by those who are close to her, which, as Rosalind Brown-Grant notes, are much more prominent in the prose *Blancandin* than the earlier verse version, and encourage the reader to adopt a negative view of Eglantine.[45] In the prose *Blancandin* and Caxton's *Blanchardyn*, Eglantine's pride is transgressive, contradicting the worthy role she could play as Blanchardyn's beloved.

The same tension is evident in *Ipomadon*, where the celebration of the Fere as 'the beste in all degre | That euer on erthe myghte trede' (92-93) is soon qualified, as '[y]f she were semelyeste vnder schrovde | Of other poyntys, she was namyd prowde | But of love to lere' (106-08). Again, the Fere's proud rejection of love is what disrupts her status as a supremely desirable lady. However, views of the Fere's pride in *Ipomadon* are more varied than the criticisms of Eglantine, as the Fere's pride is perceived, at times, as a form of chastity:

> Nowghte she covthe of love amowre
> And held hur howse wyth so grette honoure
> [...]
> And dyd so worthely and so well,
> All prayd God gyffe her happe and sell. (127-31)

The references to 'honoure' and acting 'worthely', and the connection between her honour and her innocence about 'love amowre', reshape her pride as a positive form of chastity. Yet 'a lady of romance who is inviolably chaste is something of a contradiction in terms'.[46] As *Ipomadon* continues and the Fere's chastity persists, more negative views of her pride surface. Her barons blame the discord in Calabria on the Fere's refusal to marry, insisting,

> Oure lady dothe full ylle
> That she will not take a lord
> To mayneteyme vs in good acord.
> We will goo witte hure wille,
>
> For folly makythe she wyth her pride. (1777-81)

[45] Brown-Grant, p. 42.
[46] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 355.

They also describe her refusal to marry as 'synne' (1783), which is seen to have resulted in 'grett warre' (1772). As in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, this critique of the Fere's pride comes from those who are supposed to be loyal to her, although in *Ipomadon* this primarily highlights the political consequences of the Fere's romantic a(nti)pathy.[47] Moments of ambiguity about the Fere's pride do remain: at one point, Imayne asks the Fere '[w]hat pryde', claiming '[t]hat hard I speke neuer or nowe' (1424-25). Onlookers admiring the Fere also think that it is '[n]o wondere yf she be daungerus | To take an onworthy spowsse' (2058-59). However, despite these more varied perceptions of the Fere, her refusal to love remains the primary impediment to the normal expectations of love and desire in medieval romance.

The specific focus of these criticisms in *Ipomadon* and *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* reveals that the Fere and Eglantine not only threaten normative expectations of desire, but arguably inspire greater anxiety and critique by disrupting male rule. Eglantine and the Fere are both sole female rulers, having already come into their inheritance. Indeed, the Fere makes her vow to love only the best knight in the world on the day that she inherits control over her lands, connecting her unwillingness to love with her political power. As Marianne Kalinke notes in relation to the Old Norse maiden-king, while '[t]hrough matrimony a king or an emperor can only improve his lot, increase his power', '[e]ntering into marriage has more profound and far-reaching consequences for a maiden king and the realm she governs'.[48] A single heiress can rule the lands she inherits, but that right passes to her husband when she marries, making the timing of the Fere's vow a pointed statement about her power. The Fere and Eglantine (together with Ettarde, the final proud lady I will discuss in this chapter) are in a somewhat unusual position for women in late medieval literature and society: Saunders notes that 'the system of male primogeniture did not allow women to inherit land except in the absence of a male heir and then only with circumscribed rights; heiresses were therefore married at the earliest opportunity'.[49] While the 'actively desiring heiress' is a prominent romance motif, female rulers appear most often as fairies (in the *Lanval* narratives and *Partonope of Blois*, for example), or as women who are besieged and happily accept the love of a knight who rescues them, with no resistance (such as Blancheflor in Chrétien's *Perceval*, the Lady of

[47] Wadsworth suggests that the pressure on La Fière to marry aligns with the interest in baronial politics characteristic of Anglo-Norman romances: Rosalind Wadsworth [Field], 'Historical Romance in England: Studies in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Romance' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 1972), p. 112.
[48] Kalinke, p. 81.
[49] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 51. See also Barbara Harris, pp. 56–57.

Synadowne in *Lybeaus Desconus*, and the lady Degaré marries in *Sir Degarê*).[50] Eglantine, the Fere, and Ettarde are rather unusual as human female rulers with significant power.[51] Criticisms of the Fere's and Eglantine's pride frequently focus upon the political need for them for marry, suggesting that their romantic a(nti)pathy provokes anxiety because it disrupts male rule. In *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, the provost suggests Eglantine's vassals should hope she does love Blanchardyn, 'to thende she myght take a goode lord for to deffende vs and her lande' (p. 75). Eglantine's marriage is perceived as necessary for her realm's peace and prosperity, currently under threat from the pagan king Alymodes's attempt to force Eglantine to marry him. Similar concerns appear in *Ipomadon*, where a male ruler is perceived as so essential to 'maynteyme vs and hyr lond, | Our stryffe to stabull and stille' (2089-90) that the Fere's barons threaten 'but she a lord take [...] they shuld þer omage make | To kyngys of other kynne' (1787-89). This criticism of the Fere's rule conflicts with the earlier description of her as 'ware and wyce', a ruler who 'not wote | Abowtte hur suffyr no debatte: | [...] Her meyny loyvd her euer ilke one' (348-52). This inconsistency may imply that even an initially effective female ruler eventually requires a husband to keep her followers in check, or it may indicate a growing dissatisfaction with the Fere as her resistance to marriage persists. While these anxieties often focus on the perceived vulnerability of a country ruled by a woman, this highlights a wider discomfort with female rule, and the effects it may have on the prerogative of male rule.[52] Although Kalinke claims that 'only Icelandic romance focuses on the dilemma of the powerful female heiress who is faced with a conscious choice between a career as an unmarried regent and marriage, with the consequent abdication of authority [...] to her husband', the timing of the Fere's vow and the political focus of concerns about both women's unwillingness to love subtly draws attention to this issue, while not addressing it so explicitly.[53]

This focus on marriage as necessary for ruling women suggestively links these narratives to the modern idea of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. While the usefulness of

[50] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 223.
[51] Dido in the *Roman d'Enéas* and Caxton's *Eneydos* (as well as, in the context of epic, Virgil's *Aeneid*) is another human ruler with significant power, although she is disempowered and commits suicide because of her love for Eneas.
[52] On the similar way in which the Old Norse maiden-kings' realms are perceived as vulnerable, see Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 112–13.
[53] Kalinke, p. 83.

this concept has been questioned,[54] and heterosexuality itself can be a problematic framework for medieval contexts,[55] Adrienne Rich's description of 'the enforcement of heterosexuality for women as a means of assuring male right of physical, economical, and emotional access' resonates aptly with the motif of the proud lady in love.[56] Although men's acceptance of love and marriage allows them to participate in cultural norms of masculinity and sexuality, and to continue their lineage, the resolution of male romantic a(nti)pathy rarely has economic or property implications. In *Guigemar*, we do not know if Guigemar and the lady marry, have children, or if the lady brings Guigemar any wealth or property; the emphasis is upon Guigemar's acceptance of love as conforming with romance expectations. Similarly, in *Troilus and Criseyde* the focus is upon the experience of love itself, not wealth, property, or even dynasty. In *Amadas et Ydoine* and *Sir Degrevant*, the woman with whom the unwilling man falls in love possesses significant wealth and property, but there does not seem to be a concern with how the men's economic and familial interests may be compromised by their initial resistance to love. And Dynadan, who never marries or falls in love, is not questioned as to how this will affect any familial, political, or economic interests. In contrast, anxieties about female power in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* and *Ipomadon* reveal a concern with preserving male access to political and economic power through heiresses who accept marriage, highlighting what is really at stake in these romances (and, indeed, what is at stake in romances that emphasise 'desirable desire').[57] While Moss argues that an heiress's 'marriage making must be controlled', as it 'could potentially threaten patriarchal authority', this threat was even greater if an heiress threatened not to marry at all.[58] Romance's alignment with 'compulsory heterosexuality' varies depending on gender: while men's acceptance of love and marriage conforms with expectations of gender and sexuality, women's acceptance of love is more specifically an issue of economics and political power. Although McCracken suggests that 'as a noble man who does not reproduce, the chaste knight disrupts networks of influence, wealth, and power defined by lineage and succession', the

[54] See, for example, Steven Seidman, 'Critique of compulsory heterosexuality', *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 6.1 (2009), 18–28. Adrienne Rich has also critiqued 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' herself, arguing that while it is outdated, what 'has had lasting usefulness is the critique of the presumption that heterosexuality is "beyond question"': Adrienne Rich, 'Reflections on "Compulsory Heterosexuality"', *Journal of Women's History*, 16.1 (2004), 9–11 (p. 10).
[55] Lochrie argues that 'medievalists and other scholars are seriously distorting our historical recuperations of past sexualities when we position them against a reigning heterosexual norm, since heterosexuality as a norm did not exist before the twentieth century': Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, pp. xii–xiii. See further Schultz.
[56] 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Signs*, 5.4 (1980), 631–60 (p. 647).
[57] See further Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 221–23.
[58] Moss, *Fatherhood and its Representations*, p. 137.

romances discussed in this and the previous chapter suggest that it is female romantic a(nti)pathy that is seen as more disruptive and problematic.[59]

The reintegration of the proud lady in love into a kind of 'compulsory heterosexuality' also has a dynastic and patriarchal function, as in each of the narratives discussed in this chapter (except for Malory's episode of Pelleas and Ettarde), the proud lady's acceptance of love eventually leads to the birth of at least one son, ensuring that the political and economic power initially associated with the proud lady is handed down to a male successor rather than repeating the cycle of female inheritance, which poses a risk to patriarchal interests if an heiress resists marriage. The proud lady's resistance to love is taken seriously, then, and her pride viewed negatively, because of her political and economic power, which requires these suggestions of a desire for independence to be disavowed. Brown-Grant similarly argues that the prose *Blancandin*,

> In stressing how the Orgueilleuse d'amour's affective autonomy equates to a dangerous political independence, [...] presents her as a threat to the correct social order whereby a male should rule, and hence emphasizes the need for Blancandin to assert mastery over her.[60]

However, while Brown-Grant suggests that *Blancandin* is influenced by sceptical attitudes to love and women in late-medieval French chivalric treatises, the similarities between the Anglo-Norman and Middle English *Ipomedon*, the prose *Blancandin*, and *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* suggest that anxieties about female rule and independence build upon earlier romance portrayals, drawing out a concern that may be inherent within narratives of the proud lady (appearing within *Guy of Warwick* in Rohaut's late but evident concern that Felice should marry). *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* and *Ipomadon*, like other romances of the proud lady in love, are deeply invested in restoring normative attitudes to love and marriage so that political and economic power can be upheld as primarily the preserve of men.

To reimpose normative attitudes to love and marriage in these romances, *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* and *Ipomadon* use episodes of physical and psychological coercion, illuminating the range of coercive experiences portrayed within romance. However, these episodes also raise questions about masculinity in medieval romance, attesting to a curiosity about alternatives to gendered norms even within narratives that ultimately adhere to these norms. In *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, a forced kiss marks Eglantine's first

[59] McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects', p. 126.
[60] Brown-Grant, p. 42.

encounter with Blanchardyn, deploying physical force to set her on the path to normative desire. The Knight of the Ferry, who suggests Blanchardyn should kiss Eglantine (associating the kiss with male collusion from the start), explicitly frames this kiss as the beginning of Blanchardyn and Eglantine's love, telling Blanchardyn 'yf ye may haue that onely cusse [...] hit shal be occasyon of a loue inseparable betwyx her and you' (p. 39). The kiss is entirely undesired and non-consensual on Eglantine's part; she describes it at first as 'this Iniurye' (p. 43) and 'this vyolence' (p. 45). Unwanted kissing was not, of course, a crime in medieval law, but in medieval literature kissing can be comparable to sexual violation.[61] For example, Perceval forcibly kissing the maiden in the tent is described in terms akin to rape, as he '[m]ist le soz lui tote estendue [...] desfense mestier n'i ot' ['stretched her out beneath himself [...] her resistance was in vain'], while the lady's lover later claims 'ce ne querroit ja nus | Qu'il le baisast sanz faire plus, | Que l'une chose l'autre atrait' ['no one will ever believe he kissed her without doing more, for one thing leads to another'].[62] Kissing and sexual assault are also conflated in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, when Hellawes the enchantress elides propositioning Launcelot for a kiss with her necrophilic desire for his dead body. The kissing scene in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* is less extreme, as for it to lead to a relatively idealised relationship, the use of force cannot be too openly acknowledged: Saunders notes that in romance literature, '[t]he lady may be gained through force, but not force enacted against her person'.[63] However, this kissing scene still 'resonates with sexual violence', as Jennifer Summit argues.[64] When Blanchardyn approaches Eglantine, he 'gaf the spore to þe hors & forced hym as moche as he coude', until 'bothe theyre mouthes recountred' (p. 41). To 'recountre' usually refers to 'encounter[ing] (an enemy or his force) in battle', meeting 'in a hostile encounter, fight'.[65] This casts the kiss as a military encounter or, more specifically, a joust.[66] The scene shares several parallels with jousting, as Blanchardyn charges his horse towards Eglantine to 'recountre' with her, and the result of this 'recountre' is that Eglantine 'fell

[61] For a different approach that focuses on ecclesiastical and medical views of kissing, although still acknowledges 'the kiss is on a continuum with [...] the physiological functions of sensing, eating, drinking and [...] "engendrynge of kynde"', see Katie L. Walter, 'The Epistemology of Kissing', in *Middle English Mouths: Late Medieval Medical, Religious and Literary Traditions*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 105 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 115–43 (p. 117).
[62] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ll. 703, 706; 3857–59; trans. in 'The Story of the Grail (Perceval)', pp. 389, 428.
[63] Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent', p. 116.
[64] Summit, 'William Caxton, Margaret Beaufort and the Romance of Female Patronage', in *Women, the Book, and the Worldly*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, Selected Proceedings of the St Hilda's Conference, 1993, 2 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), pp. 151–65 (p. 162).
[65] 'Recŏuntren v.', *Middle English Dictionary* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED36231> [accessed 27 May 2020].
[66] Summit notes that the scene uses the 'language of masculine enterprise', but does not draw a specific parallel with a joust, p. 161.

doune from her amblere' (p. 43) in shock, while Blanchardyn rides on. Framing this kiss as a joust establishes it as a violent encounter, and an encounter in which someone is defeated: as Brown-Grant argues, 'Blancandin's mastery over the Orgueilleuse d'amour [is] first symbolized by his stealing of the kiss'.[67] The imagery of jousting offers an unusual variation on the metaphor of love as warfare or as a siege (found in the works of Ovid, as well as *Le Roman de la Rose*),[68] although a more metaphorical use of jousting imagery occurs in the Anglo-Norman *Ipomedon*, where Hue sometimes refers to sex as 'juster enz el lit' [jousting in bed].[69]

The comic use of jousting imagery in *Ipomedon* seems in part to recur in *Blanchardyn*, as the military language that describes the kiss also raises questions about chivalric masculinity through its comic incongruity. The high register in which Blanchardyn considers his task, being 'affrayed and replenysshed wyth grete fere lest he shold faylle of his entrepryse' (p. 40), seems somewhat absurd, while the fortuitous meeting of the couple's lips (with no injury to either party, despite Blanchardyn apparently riding at full speed) is suggestively comic, as is Blanchardyn's subsequent ride through Eglantine's company 'gyuyng a gracyouse and honourable salutacion to them all' (p. 42). The framing of the kiss as a deed akin to jousting or a 'fayre aduenture' (p. 42) suggests a mock-heroic emphasis that may indicate the self-aggrandisement of chivalry by illustrating how a kiss can be inflated into a great heroic deed.[70] This combination of comedy and critique is not unique to *Blanchardyn*, but accords with one of the key influences on *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour*, Chrétien's *Perceval*.[71] The kissing episode in *Perceval* comically illustrates Perceval's complete misinterpretation of his mother's advice, while criticising Perceval's simplicity and brutality. However, the author of *Blancandin* perhaps goes further than Chrétien by using the vocabulary of chivalric achievement as a source of comedy, while Perceval's actions could not be considered chivalric by anyone other than

[67] Brown-Grant, p. 40.
[68] For an example from Ovid, see *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, 2. 233; trans. p. 83. In *Le Roman de la Rose*, see, for example, II, ll. 10409–530, 10657–744; trans. in *The Romance of the Rose*, pp. 160–62, 164–65.
[69] Hue de Rotelande, *Ipomedon: poème de Hue de Rotelande (fin du XIIe siècle)*, ed. by A. J. Holden, Bibliothèque française et romane, série B, éditions critiques de textes, 17 (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1979), l. 4314; see also ll. 4989-90. This phrase is omitted from the Middle English redaction.
[70] This mock-heroic humour is not unheard of in Middle English romance, appearing most obviously in Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*. Mock-heroic humour is perhaps usually more obviously parodic, rather than embedded into a narrative that otherwise appears to take itself seriously, as it is in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*.
[71] On the relationship between these texts, see François.

himself. The forced kiss violently initiates Eglantine's acceptance of love, but it also raises questions about the construction of masculinity in medieval romance.

While *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* uses physical force to initiate Eglantine's acceptance of love, *Ipomadon* turns to psychological coercion to reinforce the importance of normative desire.[72] Ipomadon's emotional manipulation of the Fere occurs after she has already fallen in love with him, distancing coercion from the inception of the Fere's desire. However, Ipomadon's later manipulation still forcefully repudiates the Fere's initial transgression of normative gender and sexual roles. While Roberta L. Krueger has outlined the problematic ways in which the episodes of the three-day tournament and Ipomedon's fight with Leonin subvert romance expectations and deprive La Fière of her agency in Hue's Anglo-Norman *Ipomedon*, Krueger does not directly consider these episodes in relation to coercion.[73] Moreover, the Middle English *Ipomadon* offers potentially differing views of these episodes, as *Ipomadon*'s reduced misogyny presents more straightforward opportunities for sympathising with the Fere, while also incorporating some questioning of Ipomadon's behaviour.[74] The Middle English *Ipomadon* portrays the Fere more positively during the three-day tournament, removing *Ipomedon*'s description of her desire for the hero in each of his disguises (which, because she does not realise it is Ipomedon, suggests indiscriminate lust) to instead emphasise her fidelity.[75] Given the significance of chastity for female virtue in the Middle Ages, this may have encouraged greater sympathy with the Fere's distress. *Ipomadon* does not disguise, but rather emphasises, the sorrow Ipomadon's machinations cause the Fere: on the first day, the Fere 'þought for pur tene | Her hert wold breke in thre' (3406-07) when she hears Ipomadon has left, cursing her pride and proclaiming '[d]othe he þus, he dothe grette synne!' (3417). In Hue's *Ipomedon*, this line is given to Jason rather than the Fere,

[72] O'Sullivan defines coercion as 'the use of force or intimidation to obtain compliance, be it through emotional manipulation, implied or real threats in the form of psychological, verbal, or physical harm': Daniel E. O'Sullivan, 'Troubadour Lyric, *Fin'Amors*, and Rape Culture', in *Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom*, pp. 151–63 (p. 152).

[73] Krueger, 'Misogyny, Manipulation, and the Female Reader in Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*', in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, ed. by Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1990), pp. 395–409 (p. 400).

[74] Hosington claims that 'the translator always renders the narrative without its anti-feminist commentary', although the misogyny of *Ipomedon* does permeate *Ipomadon* more than she suggests: 'The Englishing of the Comic Technique in Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*', in *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, ed. by Jeanette Beer, Studies in Medieval Culture, 25 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), pp. 247–63 (p. 254). Crane notes that '[b]ecause Hue questions convention not just in commentary but through the plot itself, sometimes Middle English reformations coexist with original versions of episodes in a confusing way', singling out the Lyolyne episode in particular as an example of this: *Insular Romance*, pp. 205–06.

[75] See further Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 205.

ensuring that the heroine herself does not question Ipomedon's behaviour.[76] Jason continues to warn Ipomadon against leaving the Fere in both versions, and Ipomadon's insistent pretence even after the stark caution that '[t]rewely, goo ye this fro her, | My lady herselff shal shend' (4659-60) heightens the tension between his behaviour and the chivalric ideal of saving a lady from a desperate situation.[77] While Ipomadon acts conventionally by attempting to win the Fere's hand through prowess, he simultaneously subverts this ideal by placing her in a position of despair that he has created. In another line introduced by the Middle English writer, Ipomadon himself briefly acknowledges that he may be acting wrongly, declaring '[h]ereafter I shall amendys make | To that myld of chere' (5006-07). These moments locate discomfort with Ipomadon's behaviour within the romance, problematising Hue's celebration of Ipomedon's triumph in humbling La Fière to more soberingly reflect on the negative aspects of Ipomadon's behaviour.

The distress Ipomadon causes the Fere becomes even more evident in the Lyolyne episodes. Indeed, the Fere's behaviour by the end of this sequence suggestively indicates the traumatic effects of Ipomadon repeatedly abandoning her. When the Fere sees Cabanus approach after Lyolyne's apparent victory, she introduces herself as 'a sympull woman, syr, | That yesterday owght Calaber: | Today I am in drede' (8295-97). This emphatically reveals her transformation from the proud lady who 'thought no prynce her pere' (105) to this humble woman, indicating the effects of Ipomadon's manipulation of her feelings in a way that specifically highlights her changed conception of her own power and autonomy, contributing to *Ipomadon*'s focus on and anxiety about female rule. The Fere's perception of external events also indicates the ways in which Ipomadon's machinations affect her. She assumes Cabanus's men are Lyolyne's forces coming to abduct her, and Cabanus has to reassure her '[d]rede you for no gile! | I am your cosyne Cabanus' (8306-07); the reference to 'gile' is introduced by the Middle English redactor, perhaps as a more pointed reflection on Ipomadon's conduct.[78] Similarly, when one of Cabanus's men returns from the fight with 'Lyolyne' (Ipomadon), the Fere assumes '[s]layne is my cosyne Cabanus!' (8626). The effects of Ipomadon's repeated manipulations and abandonments are illustrated through the Fere's constant assumption of the worst-case scenario. While Ipomadon's treatment of the Fere is

[76] See *Ipomedon*, ll. 5192, 6316.
[77] Compare *Ipomedon*, ll. 6313–18.
[78] Compare *Ipomedon*, ll. 10036–38.

explicitly motivated by his determination to prove himself, the effects his conduct has on the Fere are depicted clearly and seriously, and are suggestive of psychological forms of coercion. His repeated abandonment of the Fere makes her ever more desperate for him to stay, and above all, reduces her pride from believing 'no prynce her pere' (105) to perceiving herself as 'a sympull woman' (8295).

While the Middle English redactor evokes sympathy for the Fere at times, the reduction of her pride also takes on a didactic meaning when considered alongside the many speeches the Fere makes castigating her former pride. She repeatedly blames herself for her misfortune, declaring '[p]rowde in hertte ay haue I been, | Therefore I haue a falle, I wene' (944-45), and acknowledging 'aftur pryde comythe grette reprove' (942).[79] She also extends this moral lesson to others, proclaiming '[c]ursyd pryde, woo worthe þe aye! | Of all women so may I say' (3414-15), and comparing herself to Lucifer, who '[f]or his pryde fell' (3693). The Middle English *Ipomadon* both absorbs and redirects the misogynistic elements of Hue's *Ipomedon*: while these speeches can be seen as misogynistically blaming the Fere for her own misfortunes, in the Middle English text they perhaps also become a catalyst for further empathy, as we see the Fere recognising her own (apparent) wrongdoing (although this still reinforces normative sexual and gendered roles). The balance between misogyny and a greater level of sympathy can also be seen through comparison with the Old Norse maiden-kings. The Fere's movement from pride to humility is motivated by her (mis)treatment by Ipomadon, aligning with the humiliations imposed by the maiden-king's suitors.[80] However, the humiliation of the maiden-kings is much more extreme than that of the Fere, and the Fere is not entirely disempowered by the ending of *Ipomadon*. Although her emotions are manipulated and her pride reduced, she does ultimately marry the only man she has ever desired.

Like the forced kiss in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, these episodes of psychological coercion in *Ipomadon* are portrayed ambivalently: while they impress a normative role upon the Fere, they also highlight the coercive practices to which Ipomadon subjects her, and raise questions about the construction of masculinity in *Ipomadon* and in romance

[79] Purdie notes that line 942 is the result of a translation error where 'en reprover', 'proverbially', is translated as 'reprove', but the sense is not so different from the Anglo-Norman, which declares 'cil dit bien en reprover: | "De grant orgoil vient encombrer" ['but it is often said proverbially: from great pride comes trouble'], which still carries the sense of pride creating trouble. See Purdie, 'Explanatory Notes', in *Ipomadon*, pp. 257–329 (p. 265).

[80] On the humiliation of the maiden-king, see Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 120–25; Kalinke, pp. 66–68, 78–79, 101–02; Erik Wahlgren, 'The Maiden King in Iceland' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1938), pp. 36–38.

more widely. Ipomadon is frequently disguised as the antithesis of the chivalric Christian knight: he appears as the fool, the coward, and finally the threatening knight who besieges the Fere, Lyolyne. This final disguise is the most disruptive, not only because it ruptures the Fere's and the reader's climactic expectations, but also because this disguise is both closer to the Christian chivalric knight than the fool or the coward, and furthest from this identity. While Lyolyne is a knight, he is also a black man from 'Ynde Mayore' (6138), who embodies the trope of the 'hostile pagan outsider's desire to possess the woman'.[81] Somewhat surprisingly, Lyolyne is not explicitly described as pagan or Muslim, unlike Alymodes in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, who Eglantine refuses to marry because 'neuer the dayes of her lyff she sholde wedde paynem nor noo man infydele' (p. 65).[82] However, Lyolyne's association with 'Ynde Mayore' may link him to the trope of what Geraldine Heng refers to as 'black Saracens', who 'abound from the twelfth century on – in the shape of [...] enemies whose bodies may also bear nonhuman characteristics', recalling the description of Lyolyne in lines 6145-64.[83] Ipomadon's disguise crosses racial and religious lines, as he temporarily (but convincingly for his in-text audience) appropriates the identity of a black, presumably non-Christian, knight. Ipomadon could be seen as engaging in a kind of blackface here, masquerading as a black person successfully, where Lyolyne himself cannot cross racial borders so easily.[84] Ipomadon's disguise may therefore be an example of what Heng has described as 'the availability of medieval color discourse to strategies of meaningful play [...] play that otherwise leaves undisturbed hierarchical alignments of color and race'.[85] Nonetheless, Ipomadon's masquerade as a black, presumably non-Christian character, against whom Christian knights are often purposefully contrasted in medieval romance, may raise questions about racial identity alongside the broader exploration of chivalric masculinity in these episodes of disguise. The centrality of disguise and deception in *Ipomadon* may even suggest that masculinity itself is a form of disguise or deception, aligning with modern views of gender as performative.[86] Several scholars have commented on the way other romances,

[81] Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent', p. 115.
[82] On the importance of using the term 'Muslim' instead of 'Saracen' to call attention to Islamophobia in medieval texts, see Shokoofeh Rajabzadeh, 'The Depoliticized Saracen and Muslim Erasure', *Literature Compass*, 16.9–10 (2019).
[83] *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 187–88. Heng notes that people from India are imagined as black in *Parzival*, p. 209.
[84] For recent scholarship on blackface and medieval performance, see Erik Wade, '*Ower Felaws Blake*: Blackface, Race, and Muslim Conversion in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*', *Exemplaria*, 31.1 (2019), 22–45; Wade's insights into the way blackface is used as a contrast to a sense of white Christian identity as stable and God-given align with my reading of *Ipomadon* here.
[85] *The Invention of Race*, p. 44.
[86] See Judith Butler.

particularly Malory's *Morte*, align with this model, but *Ipomadon* perhaps takes this further to suggest that masculinity is also a perpetual work of deception, of pretending to be (or performing as) something you are not.[87] This may stem from Hue de Rotelande's ironic and satirical approach to romance and gender, but in the Middle English text it perhaps opens up other possibilities for exploring and questioning chivalric masculinity, according with the subtle critiques of Ipomadon's actions in this version.[88] The plot of the proud lady in love in this romance thus raises questions about masculinity as well as female adherence to normative gender and sexual roles, indicating the generative potential medieval writers found for reflecting upon gender roles through this motif.

Blanchardyn and Eglantine and *Ipomadon* both reassert normative models of desire and gender, at times forcefully emphasising the necessity of love to ensure the continuance of male rule. These texts expose the political significance of the proud lady's consent to marriage, which ensures that the lands ruled over by the Fere and Eglantine return to male rulership. However, both romances also explore possibilities outside the norm by interrogating romance constructions of masculinity, moving beyond the affirmative role of the proud lady in the first half of *Guy of Warwick*. This interrogation of masculinity is developed further in the particular use of the proud lady in love in *Eger and Grime* and Malory's episode of Pelleas and Ettarde.

'MANHOOD IS LOST FOR EUERMORE': CHIVALRIC FAILURES AND THE CENSORING OF THE PROUD LADY IN *EGER AND GRIME*[89]

In the late-medieval Scottish romance of *Eger and Grime*, which survives in two different versions (one in the Percy Folio, and the other represented by three prints from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), Winglayne's proud resistance to marriage raises more difficult questions about chivalric masculinity than the Fere's and Eglantine's romantic a(nti)pathy.[90] While the Fere's conditions are primarily aspirational, seeking to

[87] See, for example, Martin, pp. 12–13; Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community*, pp. 38, 68–69, 129. Armstrong discusses Malorian masculinity as masquerade, pp. 86-89, but this is not quite the same as masculinity as disguise or even pretence in *Ipomadon*. Larrington comments that 'knightly masculinity is indeed a perpetual work in progress' in romance more widely: 'Gender/Queer Studies', pp. 269–70.
[88] Crane refers to Hue's 'irreverent, even parodic approach' and his 'profoundly ironic detachment from the very traditions he adopts', although notes that 'these parodic moments do not fully account for the work as a whole', as 'Hue provides two conflicting interpretations for his material [...] both a sophisticated conventional treatment and a critical reassessment of romance ideals': *Insular Romance*, pp. 158, 160. See also Legge, pp. 85, 88, 93, 95.
[89] *Eger and Grime: A parallel-text edition of the Percy and the Huntington-Laing Versions of the Romance*, ed. by James Ralston Caldwell, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), Percy Folio, l. 84.
[90] Both versions are printed in *Eger and Grime*, ed. by Caldwell. The printed texts date from 1669, 1687, and 1711; Caldwell uses the 1687 print as the basis of his edition, as the 1669 print was unknown to him,

marry 'the best knyghte | Of all this world in armus bryghte | Assayde vnder his shelde' (118-20), Winglayne's demands also include a prohibition, as she will not take a husband 'without he would with swords dent | win euery battell where he went' (Percy, 13-14). Winglayne adheres strictly to this prohibition, rejecting Eger after his defeat by Gray-steele and, in the Huntington-Laing version of the romance, separating from him on discovering his deception. The specificity of Winglayne's demand raises difficult, perhaps unanswerable questions about the construction of masculinity in romance literature. While romance often focuses on exceptional knights capable of the most demanding deeds, *Eger and Grime* raises a question the genre rarely addresses: what happens when a romance hero is defeated?[91] The difficulties posed by this question, rather than concerns about female power (as Winglayne does not wield the same power as the Fere and Eglantine, since her father is still alive), motivate the negative representation of Winglayne. This ensures that these questions can be asked but ultimately disavowed, since they are mediated through a negative figure.

Winglayne therefore becomes a kind of scapegoat who both facilitates and contains the questioning of masculinity in *Eger and Grime*. She does have some redeeming features: the observation that she only overhears the conversation about Eger's defeat because 'of Sir Egar shee soe sore thought | that shee lay wakened, & sleeped nought' (Percy, 367-68) provides a rare insight into her feelings for Eger, which is developed further in Huntington-Laing, where Winliane tells Grahame she 'bade [Eger] let his journey be, | Make not this travel all for me' (659-60). However, aside from these brief

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but the printed texts are almost identical except for minor variations in spelling and occasionally phrasing (especially in the 1711 version). There is also a record of a 1577 print, but this has not survived: see Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 36. It is unclear whether the Percy Folio text or the printed texts represent the earlier version of the romance. Hasler notes '[t]he nature of the relation between the two versions is [...] an open question', p. 202, while Michael Cichon suggests that 'neither derives from the other and they do not share an immediate common source': '"As ye have brewd, so shal ye drink": The Proverbial Context of *Eger and Grime*', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon, Studies in Medieval Romance, 14 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011), pp. 35–46 (p. 37). James Wade implies the print versions represent the later form but gives no further explanation for this, simply stating that 'why the later print version would tack on such an ending [...] remains very much open to speculation': *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 158 n. 37. The two versions are similar but diverge notably in their endings. I discuss both versions in this chapter, generally drawing first and foremost on the Percy Folio text. Quotations from the Percy Folio are marked by 'Percy' and quotations from the printed texts by 'HL' (Huntington-Laing, as designated by Caldwell). I follow the names given to the characters in each version when discussing the texts individually; when referring to both versions of the romance, I use the forms from the Percy Folio.

[91] There is some acknowledgment of this possibility elsewhere, including in Malory's *Morte Darthur*: when Palomydes unhorses Tristram and Lamerok, we are told that '[h]ere men may undirstonde that bene men of worshyp that man was never fourmed that all tymes myght attayne, but somtyme he was put to the worse by malefortune, and at som tyme the wayker knyght put the byggar knyght to a rebuke': Malory, p. 379.

references, Winglayne is represented extremely negatively in this romance. She is shown to be fickle, 'lowt[ing]' Eger 'like a knaue' (Percy, 672), when 'oftentimes Egar both cruell & keene | for her in strong battells oft hath beene' (Percy, 669-70). In Huntington-Laing, this fickleness is directly stated, as Grahame declares '[o]f women I can never traist, | I found them fickle and never fast' (715-16), his proverbial language, as Michael Cichon notes, conveying the authority to 'express a perceived truth'.[92] Winglayne is also scornful, speaking 'words [...] both strange & drye' (Percy, 450) to Eger when she eventually visits him. Her scorn is contrasted with Loosepine's care for Eger's injured body, and 'Loosepine serves as Winglaine's foil' more generally in the romance, as Pugh notes.[93] In-text responses, similarly to those in *Ipomadon* and *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, encourage the reader to share this critical view of Winglayne: 'all that euer stoode her by | did Marueill her answer was soe dry' (Percy, 639-40), while Grime, the romance's hero, laments that 'thy great pride of thy daughter free | made him in this great perill to bee; | alas that euer shee was borne!' (Percy, 1319-21).

This negative view of Winglayne is also built into the plot of *Eger and Grime* and its coercion of the proud lady, which is more explicit than the physical and psychological coercion of Eglantine and the Fere. To regain Winglayne, Eger and Grime switch places, Grime challenging Gray-steele on his friend's behalf, while Eger pretends to be Grime in his sick-bed. This 'breathtakingly flagrant plot of male deception and doubling' is what permits Eger to marry Winglayne at the end of the narrative, and this is openly acknowledged within the romance.[94] Calin notes that 'except at the end, nobody questions the ethical or legal propriety of the deception by which one of the friends stands in for the other'; in fact, the only person to question this deception is Winliane herself, in Huntington-Laing.[95] To some extent, this deception is subordinated to the romance's focus on friendship: Cichon argues that 'Grime has no qualms about lying to protect his sworn brother, using cunning and pretence to restore Eger's honour and relationship', while Anthony Hasler suggests that 'every other narrative decorum takes second place to the requirements of *compagnonnage*'.[96] In keeping with works like *Amis and Amiloun*, *Eger*

[92] Cichon, p. 41.
[93] *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 136.
[94] Hasler, p. 210.
[95] *The Lily and the Thistle*, p. 214.
[96] Cichon, p. 42; Hasler, p. 212. Cichon also notes that '[t]he story as we have it is a version of a common medieval tale-type, that of the two brothers', p. 36. *Yvain* or *Ywain and Gawain* has been suggested as a potential source for *Eger and Grime*: see Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, p. 87; Laura A. Hibbard, *Mediæval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances*, Research and Source Works Series, 17, Essays in Literature and Criticism, 36 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1924; repr.

and Grime makes the friends' love a primary interest, celebrating and elevating it above Eger's relationship with Winglayne (and Grime's with Loosepine).[97] However, the deception of Winglayne is not glossed over in service of celebrating the knights' friendship. Instead, it is suggested that she deserves to be tricked into marriage, and the Percy Folio text gives no sense this is problematic, celebrating Grime for having 'proued soe weele | [...] he gate to his brother Sir Egar | an Erles Land & a ladye faire' (1445-48). While the Percy Folio text commends the coercion of Winglayne, this emphasis reveals deception as another kind of coercion explored by romance literature. The recognition of deception as a form of coercion illustrates an understanding that consent can be conditional – that it depends, most obviously, upon the person to whom one gives consent, but that it can also depend on certain material conditions, or even on chivalric achievements in a romance context. This understanding of conditional consent is not surprising, as medieval marriage agreements were sometimes dependent on financial circumstances or the consent of other parties, but it once again illustrates how the unlikely situations of romance can and do draw upon real situations.[98]

This underlying deception is apparently not all Winglayne deserves, as the romance also suggests she merits a taste of her own medicine through Eger's scorn. Grime instructs Eger to

> looke thou as strange to her bee
> as shee in times past hath beene to thee;
> for & thou doe not as shee hath done before,
> thou shalst loose my loue for euermore. (Percy, 1305-08)

Because this instruction comes from Grime, the hero, and threatens a loss of the male protagonists' all-important love, the reader is encouraged to agree that Winglayne deserves Eger's scorn. The idea that this is a taste of her own medicine is explicit in Huntington-Laing, where Eger exclaims '[a]s ye have brewd, so shal ye drink' (2384), this

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1969), pp. 314–15. David E. Faris compares *Eger and Grime* and *Ywain and Gawain*: see 'The Art of Adventure in the Middle English Romance'.

[97] Calin suggests that 'the most important tradition behind Eger and Grime is the story of Ami and Amile': *The Lily and the Thistle*, p. 213. The two texts are also compared in Mainer, pp. 84–86; Hasler, pp. 211, 212–13; Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, pp. 123–25; Mabel Van Duzee, *A Medieval Romance of Friendship: Eger and Grime*, Selected Papers in Literature and Criticism, 2 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), pp. 33–34, 38–39. Friendship has been particularly emphasised in criticism on *Eger and Grime*: see the appellation Van Duzee gives to the text, as well as Deanna Delmar Evans, 'Scott's *Redgauntlet* and the Late Medieval Romance of Friendship, *Eger and Grime*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 31.1 (1999), 31–45. On friendship in the *Amis and Amiloun* narratives, see David Clark, 'The Ideal of Friendship in *Amis and Amiloun*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 60 (2016), 161–86; Saunders, 'Friendship in Medieval English Romance', pp. 130–34.

[98] McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 34–35, 88–93.

proverbial statement again 'us[ing] aspects of traditional wisdom to endorse the action of the narrative and the so-called wisdom that informs it'.[99] The Percy Folio text may indicate more discomfort with Eger's feigned scorn, as here the Earl offers Grime '40li of Land, | of florences that were fayre & round' (1349-50) to reconcile Eger with Winglayne, the narrator commenting 'I hope that was ethe to doe' (1352).[100] That Grime financially profits from resolving a problem that he has created may question the motivation for Eger's scorn, but given the acquisitive focus of this romance overall (the ending of the Percy Folio text openly celebrates the protagonists' material acquisitions, 1445-52), it is possible that Grime's easily-won reward is supposed to be applauded, and Eger's scorn of Winglayne viewed as a just rebuke for her earlier pride.

The differing ending of Huntington-Laing may seem to acknowledge the problem of Eger and Grime's deception more directly. Instead of ending with the happy triple marriage of the Percy Folio, Huntington-Laing extends the story: Grahame dies, Eger confesses the trick to Winliane, and Eger and Winliane separate, Winliane going to a nunnery and Eger going on crusade in Rhodes. They explicitly separate because Winliane feels the marriage was not correctly won: she states

> Now may I live in lasting pain:
> I should never have made you band,
> Ye should never have had mine hand,
> And ye should never have been mine,
> Had I kend it had been sir Grahame. (HL, 2822-26)

Although the condition Winliane argues was invalid, Eger's false claim to have defeated every knight he has fought, is a hyperbolic demand typical of romance literature, Winliane's reasoning seems to draw on medieval legal precedents for divorce. Her complaint recalls the law of divorce *a vinculo*, which constituted 'a release from the bond of marriage, granted on the grounds that the marriage had never been valid'.[101] However, while this endows Winliane's complaint with a quasi-legal status, the romance is quick to refute Winliane's sense of injustice, asserting

> Thus she was so set all to ill,
> As wanton women that gets their will:

[99] Cichon, pp. 43–44.
[100] The reference to forty pounds may provide a clue about *Eger and Grime*'s early audience, as Johnston comments that *Eger and Grime*'s reference to forty pounds accords with the use of this figure as a 'gentry motif' in other romances: Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 84, 82.
[101] McCarthy, p. 140. Although McCarthy focuses upon an English context, Karras notes that 'the canon law rules about the formation and dissolution of marriage were well established and uniform across Europe': Karras, p. 79.

Amongst thousands there is not one
Can govern them but wit of none. (HL, 2827-30)

Rather than the wrong Eger has done to Winliane, this passage focuses on the wrong Winliane does to Eger by separating from him. This explains why Huntington-Laing ends with Eger marrying Lilias after Winliane has died. While James Wade suggests that the printed texts' ending may relate to 'the trend in later romance to move away from characteristically "happy" endings', Huntington-Laing's ending is more specifically and misogynistically directed than this: it suggests that Winliane does not deserve a happy ending because of her proud adherence to her vow at all costs, while Eger is still permitted a happy ending through his marriage to Lilias.[102] Winliane's exclusion provides a definitive final condemnation, which positions her as the problem, rather than as a figure who reveals the problems inherent within masculinity predicated on chivalric prowess.

Eger and Grime is arguably preoccupied with masculinity above all else, with frequent references to 'manhood' (Percy, 68, 81, 84, 90, 668, 1234), a prioritisation of homosocial love, and the unsubtle symbolic castration figured by Gray-steele cutting off defeated knights' little fingers.[103] Yet *Eger and Grime* provides no convincing answers to the questions that Winglayne's unwillingness to love raises about defeat and knightly identity.[104] Eger's defeat is resolved only through deception, providing no reinforcement of his masculine identity except by association with Grime. This diverges from the analogous tale of Sadius and Galo in Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*, where Galo turns down Sadius's offer to fight the giant in his place.[105] In contrast, the focus of chivalric exceptionality in *Eger and Grime* passes from Eger to Grime. While this may seem to reassert masculinity, replacing Eger with Grime as the triumphant hero of the romance whose prowess is infallible, this transfer also draws attention to the provisional nature of masculine prowess. If Eger had formerly 'euermore [...] wan the honour' (Percy, 31), only to be defeated in battle, might not the same thing happen to Grime? Huntington-Laing partly explores this possibility: although Grahame does not lose a battle, Eger is

[102] Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, p. 158 n. 37.
[103] On this symbolic castration, see Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, p. 88; Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, pp. 123–25, 130–31, 134, 138, 141–42, 144; Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 82; Calin, *The Lily and the Thistle*, p. 218; Mainer, p. 82.
[104] Mainer similarly suggests '*Eger and Grime* does not propose conclusive solutions to the questions it posits', although he sees the romance as 'a consciously self-parodic meta-romance' because of this, which I do not: see Mainer, p. 94. Likewise, Hasler questions 'how far [...] Grime's extemporized romance make[s] good Eger's loss', although proposes a different reason for this, approaching the romance through psychoanalytic theories, p. 216.
[105] For a discussion of this story and its relation to *Eger and Grime*, see Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, pp. 91–93.

apparently restored as the hero of the romance after Grahame's death, as during his battle in Rhodes, '[a] better man then sir Eger, | Was not counted that day to live' (HL, 2846-47).[106] This secondary transition of exceptional chivalric masculinity from Grahame back to Eger again underscores the fragility of masculine identities that are dependent on the outcome of each battle. As Pugh suggests,

> Under cultural conditions in which manhood always needs to be proved, it faces the likelihood of eventually being disproved. Masculinity must be repeatedly performed, but the performance is so complex and demanding that even the most masculine of men will eventually trip up in its enactment.[107]

Eger and Grime acknowledges the possibility that chivalric masculinity may fail, and Winglayne's demand for perpetual victory heightens the stakes of this failure. Yet if Grime appears happy to accept the possibility of failure, saying 'that man was neuer soe well cladd, [...] | but in battell place he may be distayned' (Percy, 87-89), the romance itself does not accept that knights are 'as like to loose as win' (Percy, 354), instead attempting to reassert masculine prowess first through Grime's defeat of Gray-steele and then, in Huntington-Laing, through the attempt to restore Eger as a romance hero with his victories at Rhodes and his marriage to Lilias. Yet *Eger and Grime*'s response to Eger's failure relies upon deception (as does *Ipomadon*'s approach to chivalric masculinity): because no better resolution can be offered to the questions *Eger and Grime* raises about masculinity, these questions must be contained within a character who is represented negatively, distancing these problems from the romance's writer. *Eger and Grime* illustrates a shift in views and uses of the proud lady in romance literature, which undertakes a further step in Malory's *Morte Darthur* with the portrayal of Ettarde.

'HIT IS NO JOY OF SUCHE A PROUDE LADY THAT WOLL NAT HAVE NO MERCY OF SUCHE A VALYAUNTE KNYGHT': THE PROUD LADY BEYOND REDEMPTION IN MALORY'S TALE OF PELLEAS AND ETTARDE[108]

In Malory's tale of Pelleas and Ettarde, the proud lady more directly disrupts chivalric masculinity, as Ettarde rejects any involvement in the process of recognising Pelleas's virtue as a knight and a lover. As Carolyne Larrington argues, Ettarde 'refuses to follow the courtly script': within the romance economy of love and prowess, she 'has no right *not* to grant her love to Pelleas, since he is brave and loves her faithfully, especially once

[106] Mainer does not view this as an uncritical idealisation of Eger, however, as he argues that 'by the end of the fifteenth century, crusades had partly or completely lost their originally idealised significance', p. 93.
[107] *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 127.
[108] Malory, p. 135.

Malory has removed the *Suite*'s mitigating circumstance: that Pelleas is of low birth'.[109] Situating Ettarde within the romance tradition of the proud lady in love can further our understanding of the specific nature of her transgression in the *Morte*, Malory's punitive response to it, and the wider challenges and opportunities the proud lady in love offers to constructions of chivalric masculinities. Ettarde also reveals how representations of unwillingness to love can connect with readers' (and authors') real-life concerns. Ettarde is the most negatively represented, punitively treated, and in some ways most subversive incarnation of a proud lady in love; as such, she reveals the functions this motif can serve at its furthest extreme.

As Larrington observes, the *Morte* 'radically alter[s]' the Pellias and Arcade episode in the *Suite du Merlin*, a source 'which Malory follows quite closely until this point'.[110] In the *Suite*, Pellias cannot approach Arcade 'pour ce qu'il est de bas lignage et elle est extraicte de haulte gent' ['because he's of low descent and she is of the nobility']; 'il n'estoit pas de tel lignage que elle le deust amer' ['he was not of such birth that she should love him'].[111] Arcade is still criticised for rejecting Pellias – she is 'orgueilleuse [...] encor plus que nulle autre' (p. 403) ['arrogant […] more than any other', p. 227] – but she has a reason for rejecting Pellias, and a reason medieval readers may have considered compelling.[112] While Eugène Vinaver suggests that Malory alters Pelleas's status because he was '[r]eluctant […] to have a protagonist of low birth', the motivations for and consequences of this change are more significant than Vinaver acknowledges.[113] Removing social status as a factor, Malory highlights Ettarde's transgressive refusal to accept a suitable, well-tested knight as her lover, exploring the disruptions proud women can cause to the construction of chivalric masculinity, while also disavowing this disruption as the result of female pride rather than masculine failure.

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[109] Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: Tauris, 2006), p. 115. Mahoney argues of this courtly script that '[l]ove inspires prowess, certainly, but prowess is also expected to arouse love in return', p. 313. See also the discussion in McCracken, 'Chaste Subjects'.

[110] Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 115.

[111] *La Suite du Roman de Merlin*, ed. by Gilles Roussineau, Textes Littéraires Français, 472, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1996), II, pp. 402, 403; trans. in *The Post-Vulgate Cycle: The Merlin Continuation*, trans. by Martha Asher, Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation, 10 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), VIII, p. 227.

[112] On the importance of class parity in medieval marriages, see Hume, p. 16; Menuge, 'The Wardship Romance', p. 37. For further discussion of social status and unwillingness to love, see Chapter 3.

[113] 'Commentary', in *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. by Eugène Vinaver, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), III, 1261–1663 (p. 1358).

The rupture of expectations Ettarde's refusal to love Pelleas creates is frequently emphasised within this episode. When Gawain first encounters Pelleas, Pelleas tells him that 'sorow and shame commyth unto me after worshyppe' (p. 128), emphasising Ettarde's fracturing of the chivalric economy, where 'worshyp' should result in a reward rather than in 'sorow and shame'. Malory also asserts that while Ettarde is 'so prowde that she had scorne of [Pelleas], and seyde she wolde never love hym thoughe he wolde dye for hir',

> all ladyes and jantyllwomen had scorne of hir that she was so prowde; for there were fayrer than she, and there was none that was there but and Sir Pelleas wolde have profyrde hem love they wolde have shewed hym the same for his noble prouesse. (p. 131)

These other 'ladyes and jantyllwomen' indicate the normative behaviour expected of Ettarde, which Ettarde herself later rehearses when she tells Gawain his supposed lady 'is to blame [...] and she woll nat love you, for ye that be so well-borne a man and suche a man of prouesse, there is no lady in this worlde to good for you' (p. 133).[114] Although Ettarde does agree to love Gawain, marking a difference from the other proud ladies who reject all suitors, this may not so much mitigate as further condemn her refusal to love Pelleas, given Malory's negative representation of Gawain in this episode.[115] The inclusion of her acceptance of Gawain pinpoints the issue Malory is targeting through Ettarde: the failure to reward a deserving knight with love. This indicates the preoccupation with the will – or wilfulness – of women characteristic of the motif of the proud lady. It is not so much women's right to consent to love or retain their virginity that is at issue in this motif, as it is concerns about women's ability to dictate the terms of their marriage in whatever way they desire, and the impact this may have on constructions of masculinity. In this way, the motif of the proud lady in love to some extent seems to be a rewriting of the motif of 'desirable desire', which reveals some of the anxiety the focus on female desire may have provoked.[116] In opposition to modern conceptions of aromanticism or asexuality, the proud ladies' unwillingness to love is seen as wilful, and this wilfulness is 'judged as a problem by others', perhaps because it threatens to become 'nonproductive and nonreproductive', both by resisting marriage

[114] Wyatt comments that 'Ettarde's spurning of Pelleas' love is regarded with disapproval by all the other characters involved', p. 46.
[115] Ettarde's feelings also remain less clear than Arcade's in the *Suite*: Wyatt suggests that '[w]hile Malory does not indicate that Ettarde is averse to Gawain's approaches, he does allow her to remain technically faultless in their affair; as Ettarde herself states, she is trapped into fulfilling Gawain's desires: "I may nat chese"', p. 46.
[116] See Cooper, 'Desirable desire'.

and procreation, and by attempting to opt out of the construction of chivalric masculinity.[117] As Megan Arkenberg comments, 'one of the romance genre's most powerful strategies for normalizing sexual desire lies in its linking of desire to productivity, specifically the production of future knightly deeds': the proud ladies in love temporarily resist this model of sexual desire, and their wilfulness in doing so requires condemnation so as to close off the questions they pose.[118]

Malory's precise condemnation of Ettarde's wilful refusal to reward a deserving knight with her love is supported by his entirely altered resolution of the episode. In the *Suite*, Gawain repents his betrayal and convinces Arcade to love Pellias instead. Despite Gawain's persuasion, this is a consensual process in which Arcade is actively engaged: she asks Gawain 'le dictes vous sur vostre loyauté que vous cuidés que ce soit mon preu?' (p. 421) ['do you tell me on your faith that you believe this is to my benefit?', p. 237], and tells her knights '[j]a n'en dirés [...] chose que je n'en face, pourquoy je y voie mon preu et mon honnor' (p. 425) ['I'll do everything you say [...] provided I see my welfare and honor in it', p. 239]. The *Suite* thus portrays Arcade abiding by chivalric and courtly priorities, establishing whether Pellias's merit is sufficient to overcome his lower status. In doing so, it focuses on her priorities, consent, and will. In Malory, however, Ettarde has already transgressed against 'the overwhelming presumption in courtly literature that a woman worthy of courtship will eventually accede to a worthy suitor', and accordingly her will is disavowed and indeed violated by the ending of Malory's episode.[119] In the *Morte*, Gawain does not repent, and a very different kind of resolution is provided by Nyneve, the lady of the lake, who enchants both Pelleas and Ettarde.[120] She causes Ettarde to love Pelleas, but Pelleas to scorn her in return; Nyneve then marries Pelleas herself, leaving Ettarde to die of sorrow. Nyneve's overriding of Ettarde's refusal to love Pelleas reveals another kind of coercion explored by medieval romance: that of magic, to which I shall return in Chapter 5. However, whereas other uses of magic for sexual coercion are described as morally dubious, in this case the enchantment is framed as an appropriate punishment for Ettarde's earlier refusal to love Pelleas: Inna Matyushina's claim that '[i]n the realm of *amour courtois*, any hint of punishing a lady would have struck a discordant note' does not, it seems, apply to women who disobey the rules of *amour*

[117] Ahmed, pp. 19, 20.
[118] Arkenberg, p. 7.
[119] Crane, *Gender and Romance*, p. 62.
[120] Malory's altered ending may partly reflect a desire to portray Gawain more negatively, as Norris suggests, p. 45. However, this does not seem to sufficiently account for why Malory would introduce Nyneve in his *denouement*.

courtois.[121] Nyneve tells Ettarde 'ye oughte to be ashamed for to murther suche a knyght', and insists that Ettarde's sudden love for Pelleas is 'the ryghteuouse jugemente of God' (pp. 135-36). Positioning her enchantment as the work of divine justice (in a manner that Siobhán Wyatt argues 'comes close to being associated with blasphemous words'), Nyneve suggests that Ettarde merits death for her refusal to love Pelleas.[122] This aligns with Pugh's argument (in relation to *Amis and Amiloun*) that 'normative sexuality kills in medieval romance [...]. Death [...] serves a regulatory function in narrative. It frequently codes characters as heroes and as villains'.[123] Ettarde's death defines her as the villain of this episode (rather than, or as well as, Gawain), condemning her wilful rejection of Pelleas, and not just reducing the focus upon Arcade's will in the *Suite* but actually violating Ettarde's will through Nyneve's enchantment. The role-reversal occasioned by this enchantment (turning Pelleas's sorrow and wish for death into Ettarde's) positions Nyneve as giving Ettarde a taste of her own medicine in a manner similar to, but more extreme than, Eger's scorn of Winglayne. Winliane too, of course, ultimately dies in the Huntington-Laing *Eger and Grime*, perhaps similarly indicating the regulatory function of death in that narrative. The ending of Malory's Pelleas and Ettarde episode precisely and deliberately identifies Ettarde's wilful rejection of Pelleas as transgressive, superseding any focus on representing Gawain negatively to establish Ettarde as a villain within this episode, and in the process offering the most punitive and condemnatory representation of a proud lady in love, which both reveals the subversive potential of this figure and violently eliminates it.

Malory's more extreme punitive approach to enforcing normative sexual and gendered roles in comparison with the other portrayals of the proud lady in love discussed in this chapter resonates with some of the biographical information we have about the author of the *Morte*, if he was indeed Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revell, as P. J. C. Field has argued.[124] While there are potential problems with biographical criticism (which

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[121] Matyushina, 'Treacherous Women at King Arthur's Court: Punishment and Shame', in *Treason: Medieval and Early Modern Adultery, Betrayal, and Shame*, ed. by Larissa Tracy, Explorations in Medieval Culture, 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 288–319 (p. 312).
[122] Wyatt, p. 47. See also Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 115.
[123] Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, pp. 118–19.
[124] See P. J. C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, Arthurian Studies, 29 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993), pp. 1–35; P. J. C. Field, 'The Malory Life-Records', in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards, Arthurian Studies, 37 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 115–30. For a recent summary of the authorship debate, see Thomas H. Crofts and K. S. Whetter, 'Writing the *Morte Darthur*: Author, Manuscript and Modern Editions', in *A New Companion to Malory*, ed. by Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton, Arthurian Studies, 87 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2019), pp. 53–78 (pp. 53–57). Crofts and Whetter conclude that '[t]he biographical evidence at the moment does quite firmly support the Warwickshire Malory as the author' (p. 55).

Amy Kaufman discusses eloquently, suggesting 'Malory's biography puts his female characters in an unenviable, somewhat overdetermined position, their potential agency always already limited by the image of the man who shaped them'), discussions of misogynistic and retributive portrayals of women and their attitudes to love in the *Morte* cannot ignore the relevance of Malory's biography.[125] In a 1451 inquisition at Nuneaton, Malory was accused of two counts of *raptus* against Joan Smith in 1450, along with a series of other violent crimes.[126] The charges make clear that *raptus* here designates sexual assault and not abduction, stating that Malory 'felonice rapuit & cum ea carnaliter concubuit' ['feloniously seized and carnally lay by her'].[127] However, the charges were brought against Malory by Joan's husband, Hugh Smith, and Joan herself gave no evidence ('in keeping with the procedure of bringing a charge of *raptus* by writ rather than appeal').[128] Because the charges were brought in Hugh's name, some scholars have suggested that Malory may have had consensual but adulterous sex with Joan.[129] It is also possible that these charges, along with the other crimes Malory was accused of in his lifetime, may have been politically motivated, either invented or exaggerated by Malory's enemies.[130] However, with so little evidence to proceed from, it is problematic to dismiss these charges – although also problematic to assert that Malory was a rapist. So, is it

[125] Amy S. Kaufman, 'Malory and Gender', in *A New Companion to Malory*, pp. 164–76 (pp. 164–65). In a similar perspective to my own, Saunders argues that '[n]o consideration of rape in the *Morte Darthur* could ignore the fact that the author [...] was himself twice accused of *raptus*': *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 234.
[126] For a full record of the crimes of which Malory was accused, see Edward Hicks, *Sir Thomas Malory: His Turbulent Career* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928; repr. 2014), pp. 33–36, 93–107; A. C. Baugh, 'Documenting Sir Thomas Malory', *Speculum*, 8.1 (1933), 3–29. The *raptus* accusations are recorded on Hicks, p. 96, and Baugh, p. 6.
[127] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 234. Saunders suggests that *raptus* is here 'specified as rape but closely associated with theft', p. 235.
[128] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 235.
[129] Christine Carpenter suggests that '[t]he fact that the offence allegedly took place on two separate occasions, that the woman was abducted on the second occasion and that the husband appealed Malory of rape – a procedure given to the next of kin if the alleged victim had consented – suggests that this was one of those *raptus* pleas brought to bring to heel an errant wife or daughter': see 'Sir Thomas Malory and Fifteenth-Century Local Politics', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53.127 (1980), 31–43 (pp. 37–38 n. 54); see further Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 235. Dunn, writing about the broader context of *raptus* and adultery cases, notes that '[a]dultery cases were usually brought into the royal courts as abduction cases once the two offences of illicit sexuality and wife-theft were associated together in the Second Statute of Westminster', p. 124. Batt takes a different view, arguing that 'the extant evidence also intimates that Joan Smith, as a married woman who had suffered a rape, would not have had any other remedy in law but to allow her husband to bring the case on her behalf', p. 82.
[130] Saunders notes that Malory may have been 'if not "framed," then at least the victim of heightened pursuit', while Field argues that '[t]he number of people involved, the variety of the allegations, and [...] their timing suggests that they were not wholly invented; but their comprehensiveness makes it plain that someone looked for people with grievances against Malory and organised them into court': Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 236; Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 106.

possible to say anything at all about the accusations? Moss, writing about the *raptus* accusations against Chaucer, suggests,

> In a way it doesn't matter if Chaucer was a rapist, because whether or not he was, he was clearly deeply entrenched in the rape culture of his time. [...] In another way, it is absolutely critical to address the issue of Chaucer being a man who raped a woman, because it forces us to think of how Chaucer may not just have been a passive recipient of the values embedded into rape culture, but also an active promoter of those values.[131]

This is a useful formula for considering Malory too. The *Morte Darthur* at times perpetuates and promotes what we would now think of as rape culture, including through the Pelleas and Ettarde episode.[132] Of course, this episode – and the *Morte* more widely – cannot be read as evidence that Malory committed rape. But the *possibility* that real-life violence may be a counterpart to the misogynistic condemnation of Ettarde in the *Morte* uncovers the stakes of the proud lady in love as a motif. Literary attitudes towards women do not exist in isolation, but evidence and perpetuate misogyny and violence in real life, offering a particularly disturbing manifestation of the connections unwillingness to love can create between romance narratives and their readers (and authors).

The implications of Malory's portrayal of Pelleas and Ettarde indeed seem to be particularly long-lasting in this regard, as later rewritings of and references to the Pelleas and Ettarde story continue to blame Ettarde for her refusal to love Pelleas in ways that perpetuate misogynistic ideas about women and consent.[133] In doing so, they reveal the wider cultural impact of the motif of the proud lady in love, and of the ideas and ideologies upheld by the romance genre. Malory's *Morte Darthur*, of course, has become a particularly canonical romance (albeit, within academia, relatively recently), and so its cultural reach is greater than many of the other works discussed in this thesis.[134] But

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[131] Rachel E. Moss, 'Chaucer's Funny Rape: Addressing a Taboo in Medieval Studies', *Rachel E. Moss*, 2014 <https://rachelemoss.com/2014/09/11/chaucers-funny-rape-addressing-a-taboo-in-medieval-studies/> [accessed 1 June 2020].

[132] Rape culture is defined by Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth as 'a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. [...] rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women *as the norm*. [...] In a rape culture both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life': Emilie Buchwald, Pamela R. Fletcher, and Martha Roth, 'Preamble', in *Transforming a Rape Culture*, ed. by Emilie Buchwald, Pamela R. Fletcher, and Martha Roth, rev. edn (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2005), pp. i–xii (p. vii).

[133] For example, see Tennyson's 'Pelleas and Ettarre' idyll (1869), Henry Newbolt's *Mordred, A Tragedy* (1895), Howard Pyle's *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights* (1903), Dean Belden Lyman Jr.'s poem 'To Launcelot and the Rest' (1923), and Godfrey Turton's *The Emperor Arthur* (1968).

[134] The opening of Leitch and Rushton's *New Companion to Malory* observes that 'Malory is now canonical and widely taught', positioning this as a change that has occurred between the publication of *A Companion to Malory* in 1996 and the *New Companion* in 2019: Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton, 'Introduction', in *A New Companion to Malory*, pp. 1–10 (p. 1). On the afterlives of Malory's *Morte* more

despite its unusually strong influence on later literature, the *Morte* indicates (if more prominently and extremely) the impact of the romance genre's engagement with unwillingness to love. The works discussed in this chapter often incorporate powerful condemnations of unwillingness to love, and forceful reassertions of normative desire and conventional gendered roles. However, we have seen that they also raise some questions about these gender roles, particularly in relation to masculinity. There are, then, alternative possibilities encoded within these narratives, which may have been pursued by readers in the medieval period and today. Even in the *Morte*, where we are presented with a narrative that overtly condemns Ettarde, from a perspective focused on consent (which was, at least in theory, paramount to medieval marriages) it is not Ettarde's but Pelleas's behaviour that starts to look unreasonable. Ettarde simply wants to be rid of Pelleas: we are told that 'all she doth hit is for to cawse hym to leve this contrey and to leve his lovynge' (p. 131), partially justifying the humiliations she inflicts on Pelleas, while she later tells Gawain that 'I hated hym moste, for I coude never be quytte of hym' (p. 133). Ettarde's desire to be rid of Pelleas is one reason I do not find convincing Kaufman's suggestion that 'the female characters against which Nynyve pits herself are arguably the constructions of patriarchal fantasy more than they can be said to represent "real" women': Ettarde too seems to be resisting the constructions of patriarchal fantasy.[135] However, the rarity of these insights into Ettarde's desires corresponds with Kaufman's suggestion that '[a] female character's struggle within Malory's text is, quite frequently, a struggle of competing narratives': 'a woman's pleas for her own sovereignty and safety must struggle against a privileged male narrative just to be heard'.[136] Ettarde's pleas for her right to choose a – or no – marital partner are almost entirely erased by the narrative's overt sympathy with Pelleas, deploying Nyneve to further encourage the reader (and perhaps particularly the female reader) to accept the condemnation of Ettarde as appropriate.[137] But Ettarde's pleas may have been particularly detectable to readers

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generally, see A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Reception of Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in *A Companion to Malory*, pp. 241–52.

[135] Amy S. Kaufman, 'The Law of the Lake: Malory's Sovereign Lady', *Arthuriana*, 17.3 (2007), 56–73 (p. 63).

[136] Kaufman, 'Malory and Gender', pp. 172, 174.

[137] Roberta Davidson argues that Nyneve 'functions as an authorial agent' here, 'reflect[ing] Malory's own reading of the original story of Pelleas and Ettard, his interpretation of it, and his desire to revise the conclusion'. She suggests that Malory uses Nyneve 'to voice his own interpretations, guiding us to read the episodes "correctly"', indicating the way in which Nyneve's involvement may shape the reader's response to this episode. Davidson's argument resonates with Larrington's reading of enchantresses as figures of authorial identification in Arthurian romance: see Davidson, 'Reading Like a Woman in Malory's "Morte Darthur"', *Arthuriana*, 16.1 (2006), 21–33 (pp. 26–27); Larrington, 'The Enchantress, the Knight and the Cleric: Authorial Surrogates in Arthurian Romance', *Arthurian Literature*, 25 (2008), 43–65.

concerned with how freely chosen their own marital prospects might be, again revealing the connections unwillingness to love invites between medieval readers' own experiences and concerns and those of romance narratives. While both later narratives and the *Morte* itself overtly condemn Ettarde, this does not and cannot entirely confine readers' responses. Ettarde's subversive potential to reveal the weaknesses and dependencies of chivalric masculinity is contained by Malory's negative and punitive depiction, but this confinement is not complete: the proud lady's transgressive potential remains latent, waiting to be activated by medieval and modern readers.

CONCLUSION

The motif of the proud lady in love can be socially subversive as well as conservative, raising questions about the performance of gender (especially masculinity) in medieval romance, even while ultimately reimposing normative desires upon the proud lady. These romances' ultimate adherence to norms reveals the political investment they have in female sexuality: while Riddy argues that often in romance, 'the woman [...] simply moves, plotlessly, from daughterhood to wifehood', the romances I have discussed in this chapter reveal the plot within this pattern, and the politics within that plot.[138] Narratives of the proud lady in love can raise questions about other kinds of romances, as they expose how '[t]he drive of romance as a genre towards its fixed conclusion, the "happily ever after" of courtly marriage, coerces woman into compliance that limits her'.[139] The proud ladies' initial resistance to love reveals the stakes of the celebration of female desire within marriage in other romances. But, at the same time as these romances adhere to sociocultural expectations and set a pattern for women's behaviour in secular society, they also raise questions about gender and sexuality. The fact that these romances seem to problematise gender roles even as they try to reassert normative desires may suggest the difficulty of imposing binaries that do not account for the complexity and variety of human expressions of gender and sexuality. Even in a genre – and with a motif – that seems particularly concerned with upholding the need for marriage, love, and procreation (with, that is, what have become the 'cultural appurtenances' of heterosexuality), formulations of gender and sexuality are not absolute, and attempts to impose norms are undermined by the questions that remain unanswered, the suggestions of alternative practices, and the necessity of coercion.[140] Romantic a(nti)pathy is a gendered motif, as I

[138] Riddy, p. 240.
[139] Weisl, "'Quiting" Eve', p. 121.
[140] Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, p. xiii.

have suggested, which differentiates between men's and women's expressions of romantic a(nti)pathy, resolves them to different extents, and for different purposes. But, at the same time, this is a motif that engages with the complexities of gender and sexuality, women's romantic a(nti)pathy frequently revealing the problems with chivalric masculinity. This motif also indicates the varieties of coercion the romance genre employs in order to reassert normative patterns of gendered and sexual behaviour. The next chapter continues to explore these coercive strategies, uncovering the ways in which unwillingness to love across class divides opens up coercive situations that reveal male vulnerability as a concern of medieval romance.

CHAPTER 3.
'NE FEOLLE HIT ÞE OF CUNDE | TO SPUSE BEO ME BUNDE': INTERCLASS RELATIONSHIPS[1]

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces a change of emphasis, moving from romantic a(nti)pathy to resistance to particular types of relationship, on the grounds of different social status (discussed in this chapter), differing religious beliefs and racial identities (Chapter 4), and issues of infidelity (Chapter 5). These kinds of unwillingness to love partly uphold the social boundaries represented by class, race/faith, and marriage, aligning with morally and socially conservative perspectives. However, the fact that initial resistance to love across social and racial-religious divides is usually overcome by the end of these romances (which is less often true for unwillingness to commit adultery) complicates their moral and social perspectives. Like the examples of unwillingness to love discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis, those discussed in this and the subsequent chapters both reinforce and question socially and generically normative expectations. Moral and socially conservative perspectives seem to be a particular concern of unwillingness to love based upon class, along with unwillingness to commit adultery; this may reflect the relevance and immediacy of these concerns, as love across social divides and infidelity were real and potentially concerning possibilities, in a way that interfaith relationships were not for most people living in medieval England. The immediacy of these concerns may have inspired their focus on appropriate models of behaviour. This chapter will explore the moral and socially conservative functions of unwillingness to love across social divides; the ways in which this motif creates proximity between readers' own lives and apparently unrealistic romance scenarios; and the complexities of consent and coercion revealed by unwillingness to love across class divides.

Relationships between partners of (apparently) differing social status are common enough in romance literature to be a recognisable trope of the genre: amongst romances written in medieval England, relationships between two willing partners of apparently differing status appear in *Le Fresne* and *Lay le Freine*, *Amadas et Ydoine* (although the parity between Amadas's and Ydoine's fathers is emphasised, Ydoine's father is still the liege lord), *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *William of Palerne*, *The Franklin's Tale*, *Sir Torrent of Portingale*,

[1] *King Horn: A Middle-English Romance*, ed. by Joseph Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), ll. 421–22. All quotations will be taken from the text of Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.4.27.2 unless otherwise stated.

The Squire of Low Degree (*Undo Your Door*), and Caxton's *Paris and Vienne*. The popularity of this motif has been frequently remarked upon: Cooper argues that '[t]he typical medieval romance of love portrays a hero whose family is dead or invisible, and who becomes the object of desire of an heiress who can bestow on him both wealth and rank', while John Scattergood notes that

> In some romances and lays, the possibility of winning a lover, or, more usually, a wife, of a higher social status is a frequent theme. In some, such as *The Squire of Low Degree*, the hero has to prove himself worthy […]. In other stories, where the social status of the lovers is very different, an unexpected revelation leads to a happy denouement.[2]

The social disparity between partners usually takes the form of a higher-class woman and a lower-class man, although there are exceptions, as the *Fresne* narratives and *The Wife of Bath's Tale* demonstrate. Although Cooper observes that these narratives 'serve the wishful thinking of male readers' for whom 'marriage provided the best way to rise in life', their focus upon female desire regardless of social class – and often in contradiction of parental wishes – makes such romances 'begin to look almost oppositional' rather than 'serving the ideology of the élite'.[3] Many romances adopt strategies to reduce the marital freedom this would seem to bestow upon women, ensuring that 'the hero has to prove himself worthy', or providing an 'unexpected revelation' – usually in the form of the hero (or, in the *Fresne* narratives, the heroine) discovering he is of high social class after all – to reduce the socially subversive message romances focused upon (apparently) interclass relationships would seem to convey.[4] Depicting unwillingness to love across class divides may be another of these strategies, indicating the transgressive nature of women wooing lower-status men. Unwillingness to love across class divides can also be seen as a response to the easy – and often desiring – acceptance of this kind of love in other romances, reimposing realistic social boundaries and mores upon romance narratives.

However, the connections between romance and reality opened up by this motif are also more complex and wide-ranging than this. While depicting an heiress desiring a lower-status man and successfully achieving her desire to marry him goes against the priorities of real upper-class medieval marriages, the common desire for social advancement through the medieval marriage market also suggests that social mobility

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[2] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 225; John Scattergood, '"The unequal scales of love": Love and Social Class in Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* and Some Later Texts', in *Writings on Love in the English Middle Ages*, pp. 63–80 (pp. 72–73).
[3] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 225, 226.
[4] Scattergood, pp. 72, 73.

through marriage is not always transgressive, in romance literature or real life. As Cooper notes, the motif of social ascension through marriage acts as wish-fulfilment for male readers, especially younger sons in need of a wealthy bride, but this dynamic of wish-fulfilment may also have been more broadly applicable, given the nature of marriages in medieval England. Ward argues that '[t]he desirability of securing an heiress and of making advantageous alliances, whether at court or in the locality, strongly influenced families in their choice of marriage partners', while Hume notes that although 'parity of social class was thought crucial for the maintenance of the individual's and family's social position', 'marriages between adjacent classes of society were commonplace: Rosenthal shows that only two-thirds of his sample of English peers, for example, married nobility, and similarly merchant daughters frequently married the gentry and the gentry the nobility'.[5] Hume also suggests that '[a]n oldest son would probably marry a bride of equal status or financial prospects, whereas daughters and younger sons would marry into families of lower status or with less money – but ideally still make some kind of useful local alliance'.[6] The focus on increasing wealth and status, making socially advantageous alliances, the intermarriage between the nobility, gentry, and merchant classes, and the likelihood of younger sons and daughters marrying slightly lower-status partners points to the presence of social mobility within the medieval marriage market. While upward social mobility was desirable, and families sought to increase their wealth and status through marriage, logically the people who provided this increase in wealth and status were themselves marrying people of a lower status or of less wealth (while not necessarily reducing their own social standing). Of course, I am not suggesting that interclass marriages were not controversial and transgressive: that they were is clearly evidenced by the much-discussed case of Margery Paston's clandestine marriage to her family's bailiff, Richard Calle, which was met with hostility, threats, and disappointment from her family.[7] But the medieval marriage market's relationship to social class is more complex than one example conveys, suggesting that romance representations of interclass marriage need not always be socially subversive; rather, they may replicate an important part of the

[5] Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, p. 15; Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 16–17. See also Barbara Harris, pp. 43–44.
[6] Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, p. 15.
[7] John Paston III remarks scornfully that Richard 'shold neuer haue my good wyll for to make my sustyr to selle kandyll and mustard', while Margery's mother, Margaret Paston, describes to John Paston II how the bishop examining Margery 'put here in rememberawns how sche was born, wat kyn and frenddys þat sche had, and xuld haue mo yf sche were rulyd and gydyd aftyre them; and yf sche ded not, wat rebuke and schame and los yt xuld be […] and cause of foresakyng of here fore any good ore helpe ore kownfort þat sche xuld haue of hem'; she also declares 'I wot wele yt gothe ryth nere ȝowr hart, and so doth yt to myn and to othere': *Paston Letters*, I, p. 541 (letter 332), 342-43 (letter 203).

medieval marriage market, albeit often in a more extreme way. Similarly, unwillingness to love across class divides can be seen as a way of investigating how to appropriately negotiate an (apparently) interclass relationship, rather than simply as reinforcing social boundaries by rejecting the possibility of interclass partnerships.

This chapter explores unwillingness to love across class divides in four Middle English romances: *King Horn*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *Havelok*, and Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*. *King Horn* and *Havelok* are both early dynastic 'Matter of England' romances adapted from Anglo-Norman antecedents, often grouped together but stylistically quite different.[8] *Amis and Amiloun* is another relatively early English romance with an Anglo-Norman antecedent (although the ultimate source of the story is thought to be a lost Old French *chanson de geste*), but its more explicitly religious and homosocial focus is somewhat different to the nationalistic concerns of *King Horn* and *Havelok*.[9] *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, as a much later Arthurian romance by Chaucer, is an outlier amongst this group. I discuss this tale more briefly, comparing it with the earlier romances to explore the way that the motif of unwillingness to love across class divides shifts and develops in its moral focus. All four romances explicitly identify social status as a primary reason for one or more of the characters to resist a particular relationship, in contrast to the romances mentioned above (such as *Le Fresne* and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*), where opposition to interclass relationships may come from parents or vassals, but not from one of the prospective couple themselves.

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[8] On the date of *King Horn*, see Susanna Greer Fein, 'Explanatory Notes', in *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, ed. by Susanna Greer Fein, trans. by Susanna Greer Fein, David Raybin, and Jan Ziolkowski, TEAMS, 3 vols (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2014), II, 371–454 (p. 448); Rosamund Allen, 'The Date and Provenance of *King Horn*: Some Interim Reassessments', in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 99–125 (pp. 102–03, 125). *King Horn*'s relationship to the *Roman de Horn* will be discussed shortly. For an account of the main early versions of the Havelok story, Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* and the *Lai d'Haveloc*, see G. V. Smithers, 'Introduction', in *Havelok*, ed. by G. V. Smithers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. xi–xciii (pp. xvi–lvi, especially p. liv); for the date of *Havelok*, see pp. lxiv-lxxiii. On other versions of the Havelok story in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, see Glyn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook, 'Part II: The Shorter Versions of the Legend', in *The Anglo-Norman Lay of 'Haveloc': Text and Translation*, Gallica, 37 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2015), pp. 149–210.

[9] *Amis and Amiloun* dates from either the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century: its oldest extant copy is that in the Auchinleck manuscript, dated to no later than about 1330. See Nicola McDonald et al., 'Amis and Amiloun', *Database of Middle English Romance*, 2012 <https://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk/mer/5> [accessed 19 January 2021]; Judith Weiss, 'Introduction', in *The Birth of Romance in England: The 'Romance of Horn', The 'Folie Tristan', The 'Lai of Haveloc', and 'Amis and Amilun', Four Twelfth-Century Romances in the French of England*, ed. by Judith Weiss, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 344, FRETS 4 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2009), pp. 1–43 (p. 28); MacEdward Leach, 'Introduction', in *Amis and Amiloun*, EETS, o.s., 203 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. ix–cii (p. xc). For an account of the extant early versions of the Amis and Amilun story, and their possible source, see Judith Weiss, 'Introduction', in *The Birth of Romance in England*, pp. 25–26.

In addition to *King Horn*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *Havelok*, and *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, there are other romances that encompass a concern with social status in romantic relationships, but I discuss these in the context of different categories of unwillingness to love in this thesis, in accordance with the kind of unwillingness that seems to be the most significant priority for each work. *Sir Degrevant*, for example, raises Degrevant's status as a potential issue, but I consider *Sir Degrevant* under the category of romantic a(nti)pathy, comparing Melidor's unwillingness with Degrevant's, rather than discussing this narrative here. Several of the romances about the proud lady in love also focus on social status: Guy's lower status is an issue for Felice, as shown in her initial harsh reprimand to him for daring to seek her love, but as she also rejects higher-status men who seek her hand in marriage, her romantic a(nti)pathy seems to be a more significant and extensive point of focus. In *Ipomadon*, the hero's identity and status is unknown to the Fere, but she recognises his nobility straight away, and her vow and Ipomadon's lack of chivalric prowess are ultimately more extensive issues in the narrative. In *Eger and Grime*, the difference between Eger's and Winglayne's social status is commented upon, but it is not the reason she rejects him, and her determination to marry the greatest fighter explicitly overlooks status. Finally, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, *Bevis of Hampton* incorporates a focus on social status alongside unwillingness to love someone of a different race and faith, but faith and race seem to be more prominent concerns. *King Horn, Amis and Amiloun, Havelok*, and *The Wife of Bath's Tale* are certainly not the only works that portray unwillingness to love across class divides, then, but they engage with this motif in particularly significant ways, opening up insights into the kinds of coercive (or beneficial) situations such relationships might create, revealing a more comprehensive picture of sexual and marital coercion in the romance genre, and demonstrating the ways in which romances engage thoughtfully with concerns about morality and class boundaries.

'BITWEXE A ÞRALL & A KING': MORALITY AND MISOGYNY IN *KING HORN* AND *AMIS AND AMILOUN*[10]

King Horn and *Amis and Amiloun* are a less obvious textual grouping than *King Horn* and *Havelok*, but the Horn and Amis stories are textually linked, as Judith Weiss notes that 'the poet of *Amis e Amilun* seems to have been well acquainted with [...] Thomas's *Horn*'.[11] Moreover, for the purposes of this chapter, *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun* make a

[10] *King Horn*, l. 424.
[11] Judith Weiss, 'Introduction', in *The Birth of Romance in England*, p. 29.

productive pairing, as they depict very similar scenarios of unwillingness to love, but develop these scenarios differently in terms of consent and coercion. In each case, Horn and Amis try to reject the higher-status daughters of their lords on the grounds that they are too low status to be worthy of these women. Neither is successful in rejecting the woman's love, and the way in which each relationship develops diverges sharply. At the same time, the presentation of Horn's and Amis's unwillingness to love across class divides, and the ways in which that unwillingness is overcome, reveals the extent to which episodes of unwillingness to love can be read in terms of social mores. These works seem to provide models of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, and reveal the importance of class boundaries – as well as the circumstances in which it may be permissible to overstep them. Moreover, *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun* suggest that an interest in unwillingness to love across class divides may be particularly characteristic of Middle English romances, as both works differ from their Anglo-Norman antecedents by providing a stronger focus upon social class and its implications for romantic relationships. Unfortunately, the precise relationships between the Middle English romances discussed in this chapter and their Anglo-Norman antecedents are uncertain (hence the term antecedents rather than sources): Weiss suggests that both *King Horn* and *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild* 'appear ultimately to depend on the *Romance of Horn*, though in ways impossible to unravel totally',[12] while Susan Dannenbaum argues that despite the similarities between the Anglo-Norman and Middle English *Amis* narratives, they 'cannot be considered strictly as source and descendant'.[13] More recently, John Ford has suggested that the redactor of the Middle English *Amis* may have used an Anglo-Norman manuscript similar to Karlsruhe and connected to the other Anglo-Norman manuscripts, as well as using remembered knowledge of the Old French *Ami et Amile* in a version close to that of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale ancien 7227[5] (MS Colbert 658).[14] Despite these complex textual relationships, the characteristic emphasis upon status in the Middle English works across their various manuscript forms, where this emphasis is

[12] Judith Weiss, 'Introduction', in *The Birth of Romance in England*, p. 5. Joseph Hall's approach to the relationships between these texts is now outdated: Hall, 'The Story', in *King Horn*, p. li–lvi.
[13] Susan Dannenbaum [Crane], 'Insular Tradition in the Story of Amis and Amiloun', *Neophilologus*, 67.4 (1983), 611–22 (p. 621).
[14] 'From *Poésie* to Poetry: *Remaniement* and Mediaeval Techniques of French-to-English Translation of Verse Romance' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2000), pp. 57, 286–87 <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/2690/> [accessed 20 January 2021]. On the similarities between the Middle English and Anglo-Norman versions see also Françoise Le Saux, 'From *Ami* to *Amys*: Translation and Adaptation in the Middle English *Amys and Amylion*', in *The Formation of Culture in Medieval Britain: Celtic, Latin, and Norman Influences on English Music, Literature, History, and Art*, ed. by Françoise Le Saux (Lewiston: Mellen, 1995), pp. 111–27 (p. 111).

not present in the Anglo-Norman texts, suggests that the focus on status reflects the Middle English redactors' alterations.

In Thomas's *Roman de Horn*, Rigmel's father is well aware that Horn is of royal blood: when Horn washes ashore in Brittany, he tells Herland the steward and King Hunlaf that he is 'fiz Aälof, al bon rei coruné, | Ki out a justisier Suddene, le regné' ['Aalof's son, the good crowned king, ruler of the realm of Suddene'].[15] Hunlaf then agrees to protect Horn and 'vus aïderai purchacer voz regnez' (336) ['help you acquire your kingdom', p. 51]. Thomas thus makes it clear that Hunlaf knows Horn's status throughout his wardship and intends Horn to regain his kingdom when he is of age. In contrast, the Middle English Horn's identity is much vaguer. In Cambridge University Library, MS. Gg. 4.27.2, an early manuscript of *King Horn*,[16] Horn tells King Aylmar

> We beoþ of Suddenne,
> Icome of gode kenne,
> Of Cristene blode
> & kynges suþe gode. (175-78)

Horn alludes to his status, being of 'kynges suþe gode', but provides no further information, and Aylmar does not offer to help restore Horn's kingdom as Hunlaf does. More significantly, in the other manuscripts of *King Horn* (London, British Library, MS Harley 2253 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108), Horn does not allude to his royal lineage. Instead, the line referring to kingly descent is replaced with the more general 'of cunne swyþe gode' (Harley 2253, 186) and 'of swiþe gode' (Laud, 188). In these manuscripts, it seems Horn has become closer to the Fair Unknown, with no allusion whatsoever to his royal lineage: Aylmar therefore seems to remain unaware of this.[17] This different representation of Horn's status opens up greater possibilities for exploring unwillingness to love across class divides.

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[15] Thomas, *The Romance of Horn*, ed. by Mildred K. Pope, Anglo-Norman Texts, 9–10, 2 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), I, ll. 169–70; trans. in Thomas, 'The Romance of Horn', in *The Birth of Romance in England*, trans. by Judith Weiss, pp. 45–137 (p. 48).

[16] MS Gg. 4.27.2 was previously thought to be the oldest manuscript, dated to c. 1250/60, but Allen notes that the more recent estimate of c. 1300 for the Cambridge manuscript would place it as postdating Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108 (dated to c. 1290). Nonetheless, she describes the Cambridge manuscript as 'the most accurate MS of *KH* (though neither the earliest nor the most complete)': Allen, pp. 103, 116.

[17] Cooper defines the Fair Unknown as 'a child whose parentage may well have been told to the reader, but is not known either to the child himself (he is typically male) or to those who raise him': 'Restoring the rightful heir: "If that which is lost be not found"', in *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 324–59 (quotation at pp. 331–32). For an overview of Fair Unknown stories, see Maldwyn Mills, 'The Story of the Fair Unknown in Medieval Literature', in 'Introduction', in *Lybeaus Desconus*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, EETS, o.s., 261 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 42–68.

In both the Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions, Horn tries to reject Rigmel/Rymenhild's affection because he sees himself as unworthy: in the Anglo-Norman *Roman*, he declares 'ne sui si vaillant | Ke me devez offrir de vus chose taunt grant. | Povre sui orphanin, n'ai de terre plein gant' (1110-12) ['I am not worthy of so great an offer. I am a poor orphan, I haven't a scrap of land', p. 65], while in the Middle English, he insists '[i]hc am ibore to lowe | Such wimmen to knowe. | Ihc am icome of þralle' (417-19). Even these claims indicate a different approach to Horn's status, however, as in the *Roman* Horn correctly says that he is a '[p]ovre [...] orphanin', implying that his lack of land results from his status as an orphan, while in *King Horn* he falsely declares he is 'ibore to lowe', 'icome of þralle' – which, of course, he is not. More significantly, however, in the *Roman* Rigmel refutes Horn's claim, saying

> Ke me voillez amer dreiz est que vus requere:
> Del parage estes bien, kar reis fu vostre pere
> E de real lignage fud néé vostre mere,
> E vostre aol si fud d'Alemagne enperere. (1122-25)
>
> [It is only right that I should ask you to love me: you are of noble birth, for a king was your father, your mother was of royal stock and your grandfather the emperor of Germany.] (p. 65)

In contrast, in *King Horn* Rymenhild 'gan [...] mis lyke | & sore gan to sike' (425-26), indicating the Middle English author's differing approach to Horn's status, as Rymenhild cannot refute Horn's claim because in this narrative Horn's true status is unknown in her father's court. Horn and Rymenhild's situation in *King Horn* is more akin to that of Horn and Lenburc (the Irish Princess who falls in love with Horn) in the *Roman*, since in the Lenburc episodes Horn presents himself as noble but poor, concealing his royal identity. The Middle English poet may be combining the two episodes involving Rigmel and Lenburc (as the Irish Princess is barely mentioned in *King Horn*), possibly suggesting that the redactor was working from memory, or alternatively indicating a deliberate compression of Thomas's characteristic narrative doubling.[18] In *King Horn*, then, the 'essentially hypothetical' obstacle of Rigmel and Horn's different status in the *Roman* becomes more significant, giving the redactor room to explore unwillingness to love across class divides.[19] That this is an innovation of the translator of *King Horn* is further supported by the absence of this focus on status in the later Middle English *Horn Childe*

[18] See Judith Weiss, 'Thomas and the Earl: Literary and Historical Contexts for the *Romance of Horn*', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, pp. 1–13 (pp. 2, 7, 12).
[19] John H. Perry, 'Opening the Secret: Marriage, Narration, and Nascent Subjectivity in Middle English Romance', *Philological Quarterly*, 76.2 (1997), 133–57 (p. 146).

and Maiden Rimnild, which is thought to be an independent adaptation from the *Roman*, rather than descending from *King Horn*; their differing representations of status corroborate this hypothesis.[20] In *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*, social status is even less of an issue than in the *Roman*, as Horn is not only presented to King Houlac as Haþeolf's son, but Horn himself makes no attempt to reject a relationship with Rimnild on the basis of differing status, rather accepting her love as soon as she offers it.[21] The differing representation of Horn and Rymenhild's relationship in terms of social status can be attributed to the redactor of *King Horn*, then, and can perhaps be related to the different audience and social context of this redaction, as I will explore later.

The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*, written within a century of *King Horn*, also differs from its Anglo-Norman antecedent, *Amys e Amillyoun*, in its representation of unwillingness to love across class divides. In the Anglo-Norman text Amys does not actually reject Florie outright: instead, we are told '[q]uideit que ele fuit devee | Qe ele pout pur hounte descoverir | Sa volunté e son desir' ['he thought she was out of her mind', '[t]hat she could shamefully reveal her will and her desire'].[22] Amys seems shocked because Florie is so open about her desires – not, in this version, because of their differing status (although other versions of *Amys e Amillyoun* are less clear about the reason for Amys feeling Florie has lost her mind: neither Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 50 nor Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS 345 include the line about Florie's desire, meaning that in these texts Amys's shock perhaps could be interpreted as relating to social status).[23] Florie does not wait for Amys to respond before she upbraids him, and the most we hear of Amys's reluctance is that he 'talent ne aveit | Q'il mesprist vers son seignur' (270-71) ['did not want to harm his lord', p. 175] and refuses to '[v]ers vous ne mesprendroie mye | Par quei vous en averez vilenye | Ne de vostre corps hontage' (297-99) ['do you wrong, to bring you discourtesy or bodily shame', p. 176]. Although a concern with status is indicated by Florie's outrage that Amys will not 'me dedeignez avere amye! | Tant gentils hommes m'ount prié' (280-81) ['deign to have me as your

[20] Judith Weiss, 'Introduction', in *The Birth of Romance in England*, p. 5. Matthew Holford provides a good overview of and argument for the significantly different emphases of *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*: 'History and Politics in *Horn Child and Maiden Rimnild*', *Review of English Studies*, 57.229 (2006), 149–68.
[21] 'Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild', in *King Horn*, ed. by Joseph Hall, pp. 179–92 (ll. 253–71, 409–14).
[22] *Amys e Amillyoun*, ed. by Hideka Fukui, Plain Texts Series, 7 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1990), ll. 266–68; trans. in 'Amis and Amilun', in *The Birth of Romance in England*, trans. by Judith Weiss, pp. 171–88 (p. 175 and 175 n. 23).
[23] See Weiss, 'Amis and Amilun', p. 175; *Anglo-Norman 'Amys e Amilioun': The Text of Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS 345 (olim Codex Durlac 38) in parallel with London, British Library, MS Royal 12 C. XII*, ed. by John Ford, Medium Ævum Monographs, 27 (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2011), Karlsruhe ll. 446–49.

mistress: so many noble men have begged me', p. 175], this is not developed. Likewise, after they marry it is clear that Florie was of higher status than Amys, since 'est mout en astage, | Car cru li est par mariage | Grant seignurie e grant honur' (771-73) ['he had risen to a high rank, for through marriage he accrued great power and great estates', p. 182]. But while Amys ascends socially by marrying Florie, the exact disparity between them is not clear. Amys and Amillyoun are identified as '[f]iz [...] de barons' (11) [sons of barons], and when Amillyoun marries '[u]ne gentile femme [...] | Qe fille d'un counte' (172-73) ['a high-born lady, a count's daughter', p. 174] – not dissimilar in rank to Florie, whose father is also a count – we are told that '[b]ien furent entre eux couplés | De parage e de beautez' (179-80) ['[t]hey were well matched in beauty and rank', p. 174]. Florie's father, after his initial anger, also does not seem reluctant to allow Florie to marry Amys because of Amys's social status, as when he sees Amillyoun (pretending to be Amys) arrive to fight the steward,

> li dist suef en son oraille
> Qe, s'il pout deffendre la bataille,
> Sa fille a femme ly dorreyt
> E de tote sa terre heir li freit. (581-84)
>
> [he whispered in his ear that if he could win the fight, he would give him his daughter to wife and make him heir to all his land.] (p. 179)

In *Amys e Amillyoun*, then, there is some disparity between Amys's and Florie's social status, but the extent of this disparity is not clear, and it is not highlighted in Amys's attempt to reject Florie, which focuses instead on his position as her father's retainer and his fear of slander.

In contrast, the Middle English *Amis and Amiloun* makes social status central to Amis's attempt to resist Belisaunt. Although Amis and Amiloun remain barons' sons in this version, the romance reduces the suggestions of possible equality between Amis and Belisaunt, for example by telling us only that Amiloun marries 'a leuedy bri3t in bour', not that he marries a count's daughter with whom he is well-matched.[24] Moreover, Amis explicitly rejects Belisaunt in the Middle English romance, and does so because of their social inequality, saying

> Kinges sones & emperour
> Nar non to gode to þe;
> Certes, þan were it michel vnri3t

[24] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. by MacEdward Leach, EETS, o.s., 203 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), l. 334.

Þi loue to lain opon a kniȝt
Þat naþ noiþer lond no fe. (596-600)

Amis does also protest against doing 'mi lord þis deshonour' (607), continuing the Anglo-Norman version's focus upon loyalty to his lord, but disparity in social status seems more central to Amis's attempt to resist Belisaunt. In this focus upon social class, the Middle English *Amis* seems to develop an emphasis of the Old French *Ami et Amile* that is not carried over into the Anglo-Norman *Amys*. As Ford notes, Amis's focus on class recalls the Old French Amile's rejection of Belissant (the roles of Ami and Amile are swapped between the Old French and Anglo-Norman redactions, with the Middle English adhering to the pattern of the Anglo-Norman versions), which also focuses on their differing status.[25] In addition, the Old French *Ami* also focuses on class in the episode where Belissant overcomes Amile's resistance by climbing into his bed and allowing him to think that she is a servant-girl or chambermaid (with whom he is quite happy to make love).[26] This episode is not recounted in the Middle English *Amis*, whether because the author did not know of it, did not remember it, or did not approve of it. However, the Middle English *Amis* does seem to develop the Old French *Ami*'s focus upon status, perhaps indicating that the Middle English poet found this emphasis of the French poem memorable and interesting, although chose to use it in rather different ways: the Old French poet's inclusion of Amile's willingness to have sex with a lower-class girl seems to go against the Middle English poet's focus on unwillingness to love across class divides as a locus for moral and social consideration.

In the Middle English *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun*, the protagonists' unwillingness to love a higher-status lady seems to be used to explore virtuous and appropriate behaviour, as well as indicating some of the varied forms consensual and coercive relationships could take in medieval romance (and perhaps in reality); indeed, as I shall discuss, these two functions to some extent overlap. While discussions of coercion in romance have often focused on more extreme cases, mostly in relation to male sexual coercion of women, it is not difficult to see how the social dynamics of the relationships in *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun* might involve coercive elements.[27] Horn and Amis are

[25] Ford, 'From *Poésie* to Poetry', p. 118; *Ami et Amile: Chanson de Geste*, ed. by Peter F. Dembowski, Classiques français du moyen âge, 97 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1969), ll. 631–42; trans. in *Ami and Amile: A Medieval Tale of Friendship*, trans. by Samuel N. Rosenberg and Samuel Danon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996; first publ. French Literature Publications Company, 1981), p. 50.
[26] *Ami et Amile*, ll. 673–91; trans. *Ami and Amile*, p. 51.
[27] See, for example, Vines, 'Invisible Woman'; Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*; Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent'; Gravdal, 'The Poetics of Rape Law: Chrétien de Troyes's Arthurian Romance'. Some critics

both wooed by the high-status daughter of their lord – a lord who has fostered them and to whom they therefore owe loyalty and gratitude. While this might seem to be a fantasy scenario, Horn's and Amis's resistance to this apparent fantasy highlights the coercive dynamics of interclass relationships. Although Horn's situation is extreme, given his dependence on Aylmar because of his exile, Menuge notes that Horn's situation 'touch[es] briefly upon wardship issues', providing some engagement with the relatively common practice of wardship in the case of an orphaned (or fatherless) child.[28] Amis's situation is perhaps more akin to the wider experiences of the medieval nobility and gentry, however: Ward observes that amongst the nobility and gentry it was not uncommon that 'children were sent to other households for their education', as Amis and Amiloun are after the Duke volunteers to foster them in his service from the age of twelve.[29] Horn's and Amis's situations therefore share some similarities with the potential experiences of the audiences for these romances, and they also illuminate some of the possible difficulties and vulnerabilities associated with such experiences.[30] As young men who have been taken in by another family, Horn and Amis occupy a somewhat precarious position. Being pursued by their lord's daughter puts them at the mercy of this high-status woman, who holds a more established and powerful position in court than they do; Rymenhild and Belisaunt are 'both attractive and formidable figures'.[31] The men are also placed at the mercy of their lord, should he discover this relationship. Parents often seem concerned about children forming attachments to foster-children or wards in romances such as *William of Palerne* and *Sir Torrent of Portingale*.[32] *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun* pick up on this anxiety and to some extent invert it, presenting it from the protagonist's perspective: while Amis directly voices a concern about doing 'mi lord [...] deshonour' (607), Horn

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have focused on the sexual coercion experienced by men in romance, but have concentrated on the more extreme examples: Elizabeth Harper, 'Teaching the Potiphar's Wife Motif in Marie de France's *Lanval*', in *Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom*, pp. 128–37; Grubbs; Batt.

[28] *Medieval English Wardship in Romance and Law* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001), p. 6.

[29] Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, p. 48.

[30] I will discuss the audiences for these romances in more detail later in this chapter. While each may have reached varied social audiences, some of the manuscript versions of these romances have been associated with a middle- to upper-class readership: see Derek Pearsall, 'The Auchinleck Manuscript Forty Years On', in *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, ed. by Susanna Fein, Manuscript Culture in the British Isles, 7 (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2016), pp. 11–25 (p. 13); Susanna Greer Fein, 'The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript, Volume 2: Introduction', in *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, II, 1–13 (pp. 10–11); see also Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 13–14, 32.

[31] Weiss, 'The wooing woman', p. 150.

[32] Interestingly, fostering seems to have been an anxious subject in early medieval literature too, although the anxieties dramatised are of a rather different kind: see Susan Irvine, 'Foster-Relationships in the Old English *Boethius*', in *Childhood and Adolescence in Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, ed. by Susan Irvine and Winfried Rudolf, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), pp. 202–21; Richard North, 'Hrothulf's Childhood and Beowulf's: A Comparison', in *Childhood and Adolescence in Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, pp. 222–43.

alludes to his relationship with Rymenhild's father by reminding her that he is 'fundling bifalle' (420). In both cases, the vulnerability of Horn and Amis to their lord's revenge is later made clear by Aylmar exiling Horn, and the Duke attacking Amis and wishing to have him executed. These episodes thus highlight the potentially serious consequences of interclass relationships. However, it is also clear that, despite the men's attempts to resist their lord's daughter, she wields significant enough influence that to refuse her advances is also potentially risky, as Amis in particular discovers. That the lady holds greater social and political power in her father's court, while the young men occupy a more precarious position, separated from their family, indicates the potentially coercive dynamic to the women's wooing. *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun* take different approaches to resolving this dynamic, Horn negotiating his relationship with Rymenhild to retain power and control over the situation, while *Amis and Amiloun* directly confronts the issue of coercion and demonstrates the vulnerability men in situations somewhat akin to Horn and Amis could experience.

In *King Horn*, Rymenhild is established as the powerful figure who initiates a relationship with Horn on her terms. Horn is brought to her bower, ensuring their encounter takes place at a time and in a location of Rymenhild's choosing. Moreover, the bower as a setting is significant for understanding the relational dynamics between Horn and Rymenhild: Hollie Morgan has argued that 'there was a cultural understanding that women had a degree of power in the chamber, which they did not have elsewhere', suggesting that '[m]ale anxieties surrounding the powers allowed to women [...] manifest themselves in stories in which women become powerful when they are in the chamber', a situation that seems to be reflected in *King Horn*.[33] In the chamber, Rymenhild is clearly marked as the active partner determining their actions: she 'tok him bi þi honde', 'sette him on pelle', gives him wine, 'makede him faire chere | & tok him abute þe swere', 'him custe' often, and instructs Horn '[þ]u schalt haue me to þi wif' (400-08). Although Megan Leitch argues that Rimnild in *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild* exhibits more 'strategic awareness' of how to 'manipulat[e] her space both to declare erotic intent and to seek to elicit a similar response', as she 'strategize[s] inwardly about what she will do', Rymenhild's actions perform a similar kind of spatial manipulation and erotic control, the lack of a thoughtful strategy perhaps indicating the reduced focus upon internal subjectivity in earlier Middle English romances rather than an absence of such a strategy

[33] Hollie L. S. Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England: Readings, Representations and Realities* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2017), pp. 188, 213.

altogether.[34] Indeed, Rymenhild's agency has been developed from the *Roman*, where it is not so pronounced, in part because Herland's intermediary comments and instructions dilute the focus on Rigmel.[35] While the Middle English Rymenhild starts to indicate a shift in the balance of power by asking Horn to 'haue of me rewþe' (409), aligning more with the *Roman*, where Rigmel says '[j]oe vus otrei m'amur, si l'estes otreiant' (1104) ['I offer you my love, if you consent', p. 65], Rymenhild's control over the situation at this point in *King Horn* remains evident, hinting at the potentially coercive dynamics of seduction by a higher-status woman.

However, *King Horn* seems to mobilise a specific strategy to redirect the possibility of coercion, as Horn manoeuvres the relationship from one controlled by Rymenhild to one negotiated by Horn for his own benefit. While Horn initially rejects Rymenhild in terms that clearly indicate the potential problems with an (apparently) interclass relationship, telling her '[n]e feolle hit þe of cunde | To spuse beo me bunde' (421-22), his attempt to reject Rymenhild is relatively short-lived, as he is shown beginning to change his mind barely ten lines later. Addressing Rymenhild as '[l]emman [...] dere' (433), Horn tells her,

> Help me to kniȝte
> Bi al þine miȝte,
> To my lord þe king,
> Þat he me ȝiue dubbing.
> Þanne is mi þralhod
> Iwent in to kniȝthod,
> & ischal wexe more
> & do, lemman, þi lore. (435-42)

While Horn is initially reluctant to accept Rymenhild's love because of their (apparently) different social status, he swiftly indicates that he will fulfil Rymenhild's wishes if she persuades her father to knight him. As well as bringing his social status closer to hers (recalling the function of Felice's conditions in *Guy of Warwick*), this arrangement directly benefits Horn, providing him with a means of social advancement through Rymenhild's influence over her father. While Lynch suggests this evidences Horn's 'ability to put his

[34] 'Enter the Bedroom: Managing Space for the Erotic in Middle English Romance', in *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, pp. 39–53 (p. 44). Bell suggests *King Horn* exhibits a 'characteristic English concern with external entities [...] over self-reflective emotion': Kimberly K. Bell, '"holie mannes liues": England and its Saints in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108's *King Horn* and *South English Legendary*', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108: The Shaping of English Vernacular Narrative*, ed. by Kimberly K. Bell and Julie Nelson Couch, Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 251–74 (p. 260).
[35] See *The Romance of Horn*, I, ll. 1059–1108; trans. 'Romance of Horn', p. 65.

love for Rymenhild in a broader strategic context of duty', it could also be seen to accord with Rosalind Field's conception of 'the somewhat calculating affections of the standard exile-and-return hero'.[36] This pattern of conditions that benefit Horn continues. When, having had Horn knighted, Rymenhild demands he '[d]o nu þat þu er of spake, | To þi wif þume take [...] | Nu þu hast wille þine' (535-39), Horn again refuses, saying that first he will 'mi kniȝthod proue, | Ar ihc þe ginne to woȝe' (545-46). Rymenhild agrees to Horn's condition again, this time giving him a ring that has such power that he need not be afraid of any blows in battle (and that in the *Roman* and the Harley 2253 *King Horn* protects him from death). After Horn has proven himself in battle, he at last consents to love Rymenhild, but their relationship is almost immediately disrupted by the betrayal of Fikenhild and Horn's exile. Horn then insists on one more delay after he eventually returns to Westernesse, telling Rymenhild's father '[n]e schal ihc hit biginne, | Til I suddene winne' (1277-78), declining to wed Rymenhild until he has regained his rightful lands. Horn's initial refusal of Rymenhild is thus overcome by a series of conditions he outlines for Rymenhild and himself – conditions it is often up to Horn to meet, but with which Rymenhild frequently assists him, causing him to be knighted, or offering him the magical protection of the ring.

These conditions have the effect of rewriting the love-relationship between Horn and Rymenhild, from one in which Rymenhild propositions and commands Horn to love her, to one in which Horn must accomplish a series of feats before the couple can be united. This re-establishes Horn as the active partner, the one who will 'woȝe' (546) rather than being wooed, in accordance with the contemporary expectation that during courtship, 'the man should take the lead while the woman followed'.[37] Horn thus reasserts normative gender roles, overturning the potentially coercive situation of Rymenhild wooing him to instead ensure that the relationship is based upon male chivalric achievement rather than female desire. More specifically, the conditions Horn sets out assert his need to perform aspects of gender and status, as he insists on being knighted and proving his identity as a knight, despite his true identity as the rightful king of Suddene. This accords with the romance genre's characteristic representation of

[36] Andrew Lynch, 'Genre, Bodies, and Power in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108: *King Horn*, *Havelok*, and the *South English Legendary*', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*, pp. 177–96 (p. 190); Field, 'The King Over the Water: Exile and Return Revisited', in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. by Corinne Saunders, Studies in Medieval Romance, 2 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), pp. 41–53 (p. 46).
[37] McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 48.

masculinity as reliant on display, constituted by 'highly ritualized performances' that 'define knights' masculinity and espouse a specific model of maleness'.[38] Horn seems to reorient his relationship with Rymenhild around romance models of identity and masculinity, which are often predicated on external displays of prowess, and sometimes use material tokens to signify identity.[39] Although Crane argues that Horn's 'traits are static, present and complete in his character even as a boy, so that the story proceeds not through the gradual development of his personality but through a series of enemy actions', I would suggest that the story in relation to Horn and Rymenhild's love progresses by Horn performing his identity through external displays of prowess and love, in accordance with the preoccupations of the romance genre.[40]

The negotiating strategy Horn uses to reposition his relationship with Rymenhild also seems to carry with it a form of moral message or critique, which reinforces socio-cultural markers of gender and class. Indeed, Rymenhild is criticised fairly directly in the romance for offering her love to Horn, as her father's steward, Aþelbrus, is concerned that Rymenhild summoning Horn 'nas for none gode' (282) because '[s]ore ihc me ofdrede | He wolde horn misrede' (291-92). While we might expect Aþelbrus's concern to be with Rymenhild lowering herself to love Horn, as indeed it is in the *Roman de Horn*, where Herland is reluctant to bring Horn to Rigmel because she is the 'fille le rei, [...] | Si çoe ne fust par lui, mut sereit avilé' (667-68) ['daughter to the king, [...] if this is not done through him, she will be greatly dishonoured', pp. 57-58], Aþelbrus instead suggests that Rymenhild poses some kind of danger to Horn. Although this deviates from a concern with the potential perils of interclass relationships, it may again indicate the possibility of coercion, as Aþelbrus fears for Horn's safety. Aþelbrus's anxiety also censures Rymenhild's desires, saying they are 'for none gode' (282) even while abstracting them from the details of social class. However, it is Horn himself who provides the strongest disavowal of Rymenhild's desires, telling her in his rejection that '[n]e feolle hit

[38] Martin, p. 13. This association with masculinity may be supported by Riddy's argument that Rymenhild herself 'does not [...] recognize that there are things Horn has to achieve in the public world, such as status, esteem and a source of livelihood, before he can take a wife': Riddy, p. 240.
[39] Perkins notes that '[t]he significant objects, places, bodies and books in romance stories become not only symbols of identity formation which wrap themselves around the selfhood of their leading protagonists, but actants that overlap with those protagonists and have their own narrative trajectories', while Kinoshita and McCracken observe that Marie's *Lais* sometimes leave 'material objects to carry the burden of identity': Nicholas Perkins, 'Introduction: The Materiality of Medieval Romance and *The Erle of Tolous*', in *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*, pp. 1–22 (p. 7); Kinoshita and McCracken, p. 193. On the symbolism of material tokens, see further Shearle Furnish, 'Thematic Structure and Symbolic Motif in the Middle English Breton Lays', *Traditio*, 62 (2007), 83–118; Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 324.
[40] *Insular Romance*, p. 35.

þe of cunde | To spuse beo me bunde' (421-22). This emphasis on interclass marriage being against 'cunde' is repeated in *Havelok*, where Goldeborw is said to be sorrowful '[þ]at she were yeuen unkyndelike', while Amis insists it is 'michel vnriȝt | Þi loue to lain opon a kniȝt | Þat naþ noiþer lond no fe' (598-600).[41] These suggestions that interclass marriages are unnatural may have carried strong moral implications: Karras notes that '[m]edieval texts frequently make reference to "the sin against nature," which is sometimes used interchangeably with "sodomy"', and although Lochrie complicates the idea of nature and the unnatural as a binary, her suggestion that "'[d]oing what comes naturally," [...] would by medieval standards be doing things according to the degraded nature after the Fall, and hence doing them *un*naturally' does not undermine the medieval associations between the unnatural and the immoral.[42] These brief suggestions that interclass relationships are unnatural combine with Aþelbrus's and Horn's criticisms of Rymenhild to convey a moral and socially conservative warning against interclass relationships, which draws upon misogynistic ideas about female desire as a disruptive and threatening force.

As Horn renegotiates his relationship with Rymenhild, however, the romance also seems to offer some didactic consideration of the circumstances in which (apparently) interclass relationships may be acceptable, and of the appropriate way in which such relationships might be formed, according with views of romance as at times approaching 'a form of courtesy text'.[43] The conditions Horn sets before he will love (or marry) Rymenhild act as ways of overcoming their apparent difference in status, while also adhering to '[t]he romance model of the strenuous processes involved in winning the lady' in order to give 'a reassuring colouring to the need for such men to have the competence to manage well the power they acquired through their wives'.[44] While Horn's conditions ensure that he benefits from his relationship with Rymenhild, in a way that perhaps mitigates the risk of such a relationship – a strategy that might not have seemed ignoble in the context of a marriage market shaped by desires for social advancement – his conditions also seem to orient Rymenhild towards a different kind of desire, suggesting the things she ought to seek in a partner. This reassertion of gendered roles and

[41] *Havelok*, ed. by G. V. Smithers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), l. 1251.
[42] Karras, p. 20; Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, p. xxii. On the unnatural, see further Victoria Blud, 'What Comes Unnaturally: Unspeakable Acts', in *The Unspeakable, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval Literature 1000-1400*, Gender in the Middle Ages, 12 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 61–106.
[43] Riddy, p. 242. Riddy comments specifically on a later Middle English adaptation of the Horn story, *King Ponthus and the Fair Sidone*, in this regard.
[44] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 225.

appropriate desires in *King Horn* is particularly evident when it is compared with *Guy of Warwick*. Although the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* may have been influenced by the *Roman de Horn*, the *Roman* differs from the later works by having Horn set out the three conditions he requires all at once, while *Gui de Warewic*, *King Horn*, and *Guy of Warwick* include three separate episodes in which one partner sets a different and increasingly demanding condition required for them to agree to marriage.[45] The Middle English *King Horn* and the Anglo-Norman and Middle English *Gui* narratives are thus my point of comparison here.[46] In *Gui de Warewic* and *Guy of Warwick*, as discussed in the previous chapter, Felice sets Guy three different and increasingly difficult tasks that he must complete before she will love him. These tasks compensate for Guy's lower social status, ensuring that he is an appropriate partner for Felice in terms of his military prowess and chivalric renown. In *King Horn*, the three conditions Horn sets follow a similar pattern. In this way, Horn's negotiation of their relationship not only ensures that he benefits from it, but also suggests and imposes the things Rymenhild ought to consider necessary for marriage. *King Horn* thus seems to set out a pattern by which interclass differences may be appropriately overcome, reimposing romance models of chivalric prowess and inner worth, and reshaping Rymenhild's desires to accord with these. However, at the same time, *King Horn* also avoids any socially subversive representation of class mobility because the reader knows throughout that Horn *is* of an eminently suitable status for Rymenhild; the romance can therefore explore the possibilities for negotiating social mobility through romantic relationships while also retaining a conservative sense of social boundaries.

King Horn's exploration of social mores, both in terms of whether class boundaries ought to be overcome, and the ways in which this might be appropriately negotiated, seems particularly appropriate to some of the contexts in which this romance appears to have been read. Discussing the trilingual manuscript British Library, MS Harley 2253, Susanna Fein argues that

> If an externally directed pattern is perceptible here, it runs toward edification and instruction. It would seem likely that the Ludlow scribe had some responsibility in the

[45] Weiss suggests '*Gui* is indebted to its insular romance predecessors, *Horn*, *Boeve de Haumtone*, the Haveloc story' and others: Judith Weiss, 'Introduction', in *'Boeve de Haumtone' and 'Gui de Warewic'*, p. 14.
[46] The possibility of a textual connection between these narratives is unclear. Each is relatively close to the others chronologically, the *Roman de Horn* being written in the late twelfth century, *Gui de Warewic* in the early thirteenth, *King Horn* late thirteenth, and *Guy of Warwick* around 1300. They do not appear in any of the same manuscripts, however.

> inculcation of manners and learning for a male heir or heirs in a well-bred, perhaps aristocratic setting.[47]

As Fein suggests, '[t]he inclusion of the adventure stor[y] of *King Horn* [...] seems well explained as directed toward an audience of boys whose morals were to be shaped by a clerical tutor or schoolmaster',[48] while

> The Harley lyrics' recurrent interest in exploring male/female love relationships is realized narratively in the romance. One can readily imagine how *Horn* would have appealed viscerally to adolescent boys in a well-to-do household, where such entertainment would have helped to inculcate social skills and good morals in prospective heirs.[49]

King Horn's careful depiction of an (apparently) interclass relationship, delineating how class differences might be overcome, and the kinds of negotiations and conditions that might make this permissible or desirable (while at the same time remaining socially conservative in its depiction of social mobility only through someone who is actually royalty), indicate some of the more specific ways in which the romance might have provided suitable material for an audience of young readers developing a sense of social mores and correct conduct. Similarly, the moral or didactic focus of the romance seems fitting for MS Laud Misc. 108, which includes one of the earliest versions of the *South English Legendary*, alongside other religious and didactic works, such as the *Sayings of St. Bernard*, the *Vision of St. Paul*, and the *Dispute Between the Body and the Soul* (which are placed between the *SEL* and the romances in the manuscript).[50] Kimberly Bell notes that '[o]f the sixty-seven poems currently bound in the Laud manuscript, sixty-one are explicitly

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[47] Fein, 'Introduction', II, p. 10. See also Susanna Fein, 'Compilation and Purpose in MS Harley 2253', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Wendy Scase, Material Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 67–94 (p. 68).

[48] Fein, 'Introduction', II, p. 10. However, Revard notes that the manuscript also seems to specifically include women in its imagined audience: Carter Revard, 'Oppositional Thematics and Metanarrative in MS Harley 2253, Quires 1-6', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography*, pp. 95–112 (p. 104).

[49] Fein, 'Explanatory Notes', II, p. 449. Fein elsewhere comments that the scribe was probably associated with 'the local gentry and manor lords of Ludlow and its vicinity', linking the trilingual nature of the manuscript to the linguistic mobility of the upper classes: Fein, 'Compilation and Purpose', p. 73.

[50] See further 'MS. Laud Misc. 108', *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries*, 2017 <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_6917> [accessed 22 January 2021]; Kimberly K. Bell and Julie Nelson Couch, 'Introduction: Reading Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108 as a "Whole Book"', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*, pp. 1–18. On MS Laud as one of the earliest versions of the *SEL* rather than the earliest version, see Thomas R. Liszka, 'Talk in the Camps: On the Dating of the *South English Legendary*, *Havelok the Dane*, and *King Horn* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*, pp. 31–50 (pp. 45–46). On the placing of the didactic or eschatological cluster of texts, see J. Justin Brent, 'The Eschatological Cluster – *Sayings of St. Bernard, Vision of St. Paul*, and *Dispute Between the Body and the Soul* – in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*, pp. 157–76 (p. 157).

hagiographic texts', which 'establishes the thematic and generic dominance of the *SEL* over the other material bound with it'.[51] The only two romances included are *King Horn* and *Havelok*; while Gisela Guddat-Figge suggested they may have been bound with the first half of the manuscript (containing the *South English Legendary*) because they were 'mistaken as saints' legends', Fein argues that their inclusion may suggest 'a compiler or readership that viewed these tales of secular heroic chosenness as correspondent to some saints' lives'.[52] Although this manuscript suggests a more general didactic approach than MS Harley 2253, it nonetheless continues to illustrate the moral potential of *King Horn* and how it may have been understood as a didactic work by its medieval readers. The other extant manuscript of *King Horn*, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.4.27.2, contains a fragment of *Floris and Blancheflour*, along with the *Assumpcion de nostre Dame*.[53] Although it is difficult to advance any conclusions about how medieval readers approached *King Horn* from this manuscript, given the brief number of works included, A. S. G. Edwards does suggest that this manuscript may 'hint at related forms of compilation' to those characteristic of MS Laud Misc. 108.[54] The contexts provided by the Laud and Harley manuscripts in particular suggest that *King Horn* may have flourished in environments where its exploration of models of behaviour for negotiating interclass relationships and reinforcing gender (and, to some extent, class) boundaries would have found a receptive audience.

While *King Horn* initially portrays Rymenhild as the dominant partner in wooing Horn, in *Amis and Amiloun* Belisaunt's agency is more extreme, and more coercive, as she effectively blackmails Amis into loving her.[55] She declares:

> Mi loue schal be ful dere abouȝt
> Wiþ pines hard & strong;
> Mi kerchef & mi cloþes anon
> Y schal torende doun ichon
> & say wiþ michel wrong,

[51] 'Resituating Romance: The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108's *Havelok the Dane* and Royal *Vitae*', *Parergon*, 25.1 (2008), 27–51 (p. 32).
[52] Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances*, Münchener Universitäts-Schriften, Philosophische Fakultät, 4 (Munich: Fink, 1976), p. 283; Fein, 'Explanatory Notes', II, p. 448. On the deliberate nature of this compilation, see Bell and Nelson Couch, pp. 2, 8–9.
[53] See *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, ed. by C. Hardwick et al., 5 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1858), III, p. 174; Joseph Hall, 'Introduction', in *King Horn*, pp. vii–xv (p. x). For a further discussion of this manuscript and its relation to the Chaucerian works it was bound with from the sixteenth century, see Megan L. Cook, 'Joseph Holland and the Idea of the Chaucerian Book', *Manuscript Studies*, 1.2 (2016), 165–88.
[54] A. S. G. Edwards, 'Epilogue: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108 and Other English Manuscripts', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*, pp. 299–301 (p. 300).
[55] Le Saux also suggests Amys's 'idyll with Belissaunt is imposed on him by blackmail', p. 119.

Wiþ strengþe þou hast me todrawe;
Ytake þou schalt be þurch londes lawe
& dempt heiȝe to hong! (629-36)

Belisaunt's wooing turns into a 'Potiphar's wife' motif, as she threatens to falsely accuse Amis of rape: the *Middle English Dictionary* includes Belisaunt's use of 'todrawe' under the meaning 'to cause affliction [...] injure (sb.), harm; […] oppress'.[56] This is apparently a euphemism for sexual violation, supported by Belisaunt's mention of the 'londes lawe', which Saunders suggests displays a 'legal emphasis [that] […] is unusual in its historical accuracy'.[57] The Middle English *Amis* varies from the Anglo-Norman *Amys*, where Florie more ambiguously says she will 'mon pere le conteray | Qe vers li estes e moy forfet, | E serrés des chivals destret' (286-88) ['tell my father you have wronged both me and him, and you will be torn to pieces by horses', p. 175]. Where the Anglo-Norman romance hints at the nature of Florie's accusation, the Middle English text makes the threat of a false rape accusation more explicit. While Amis tries to resist Belisaunt's advances, her direct and extreme coercion overcomes his resistance, clearly indicating the coercive force that could characterise romantic relationships between a lower-status man and a higher-status woman, and complicating perspectives of consent and coercion focused on male sexual aggression. Here, male vulnerability is clearly and sympathetically portrayed.

Although Weiss suggests in relation to Florie's wooing of Amys in the Anglo-Norman romance that 'the end justifies the means', drawing attention to the later happy nature of their marriage in contrast to Amilun's, there does seem to be some moral condemnation of Belisaunt's behaviour at the start of this relationship.[58] Not only do her own words, declaring she will 'say wiþ michel wrong' (633), hover ambiguously between a reference to her false accusation being itself 'michel wrong' and her accusing Amis of behaving with 'michel wrong', but the Potiphar's wife motif would have had strong negative connotations for medieval – and, indeed, modern – readers. Not only would the motif have readily recalled its namesake in the Bible, but its appearances elsewhere in romance literature associate it with negative characters, who are usually unsuccessful in seeking love. For example, this motif appears in *Lanval*, *Protheselaus*, and *Generydes*, and is deployed there by women who are depicted negatively: Weiss comments that Candace in

[56] 2 d)., 'tǫ̊drauen v.', *Middle English Dictionary*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED46122> [accessed 11 February 2021].
[57] *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 197.
[58] Weiss, 'The wooing woman', p. 159.

Protheselaus is the only wooing woman who is 'unequivocally a bad lot'.[59] The motif also appears alongside *Amis and Amiloun* in the Auchinleck manuscript, in the *Seven Sages of Rome*, which Nicole Clifton argues is positioned at a midpoint in Auchinleck that 'may encourage readers to reflect on both earlier and later items in the book'; this highlights the negative impression a reader of the Auchinleck manuscript may gain of Belisaunt.[60] The Potiphar's wife motif is, indeed, particularly provocative in the *Amis* story, because Belisaunt's threat to falsely accuse Amis of raping her draws attention to her sexual coercion of him, lending a different meaning to the way in which this motif is 'a mirror image of the actual problem of a rape accusation'.[61] Amis's experience probably would not have been thought of in terms of rape by medieval readers, because although 'men as well as women could be abducted or sexually violated […] any such crime would have been considered assault rather than ravishment in legal terms', as 'for men there was no legal counterpart to the process of appeal of rape open to women'.[62] However, the mirroring between the Potiphar's wife motif and Belisaunt's own coercion of Amis perhaps suggests some awareness of sexual coercion as an issue that could affect men as well as women, adding to the implicit condemnation of Belisaunt's behaviour.

This condemnation, and Belisaunt's coercion of Amis, serves an important moral and social function in the romance: carefully monitoring and to some extent warning against the pursuit of interclass relationships. While Weiss notes that Amis is a rare 'sexually unchaste' hero, it is because Belisaunt coerces him into a relationship with her that he is allowed to be sexually unchaste and socially mobile without condemnation.[63] The moral focus of the Middle English romance is particularly evident in comparison with the Old French *Ami*, where Amile's participation in an interclass relationship is mitigated by Bellisant's deception of him, but his sexual desires are acknowledged. In contrast, the Middle English Amis is able to remain apparently undesiring because he is entirely coerced into a sexual relationship. While *King Horn* mitigates the potentially subversive nature of an apparently interclass relationship by aligning it with the romance context of chivalric prowess leading to social ascension, and above all by ensuring that Horn is actually of an appropriate status to marry Rymenhild, *Amis and Amiloun* mitigates

[59] Weiss, 'The wooing woman', p. 159.
[60] 'The Seven Sages of Rome, Children's Literature, and the Auchinleck Manuscript', in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 185–201 (p. 187).
[61] Harper, p. 132.
[62] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 20. See also James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 531.
[63] 'The wooing woman', p. 158.

subversion by ensuring that Amis is not implicated in a desire for social ascension, and that the partner who did desire an interclass relationship, Belisaunt, is to some extent portrayed negatively for her desires. However, here *Amis and Amiloun* very much has it both ways: while Belisaunt is implicitly compared with the negative characters associated with the Potiphar's wife motif, the poet simultaneously praises her, introducing her as 'fair & bold' (422), 'gentil & auenaunt' (427), and characterising her as a 'bird bri3t' (661) even in the midst of her coercion of Amis, as well as portraying her very positively for the rest of the narrative (in contrast to Amiloun's wife). Although Jean Jost suggests that '[n]arratorial interruptions insisting on the notion of her gentleness appear suspicious and overdetermined', at times 'laden with ironic sarcasm', I would argue rather that the two approaches – criticising Belisaunt by associating her with negative narrative patterns, while also overtly praising her – accord with the ways in which *Amis and Amiloun* uses the motif of unwillingness to love across class divides.[64] Belisaunt is both praised and condemned; the romance both warns against pursuing class mobility and grants it to a deserving protagonist. In this way, like *King Horn*, *Amis and Amiloun* indicates a way in which interclass relationships may be permitted, while simultaneously warning against such relationships by focusing on their negative and coercive aspects. To this extent, *Amis and Amiloun* does seem to offer the 'educational material relating to spiritual, family or political matters, or [...] social order' that Raluca Radulescu suggests it eschews.[65]

Like *King Horn*, the socially moralistic aspects of *Amis and Amiloun* seem to accord with the manuscript contexts in which it survives, while the differing genre of *Amis*, with its hagiographical elements, may also have influenced its didactic messages and presentation of sexual coercion.[66] Given the emphasis on virginity and threats to virginity in hagiography, *Amis and Amiloun*'s more direct confrontation of a woman coercing a

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[64] 'Hearing the Female Voice: Transgression in *Amis and Amiloun*', *Medieval Perspectives*, 10 (1995), 116–32 (pp. 118, 119).
[65] 'Genre and Classification', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, pp. 31–48 (p. 43).
[66] Le Saux calls *Amis and Amiloun* 'a hybrid', where '[f]olk-tale elements rub shoulders with the conventions of the "chanson de geste" and hagiography as well as of romance', p. 112. For further discussion of *Amis and Amiloun*'s relationship to hagiography, see Radulescu, 'Genre and Classification', pp. 42–43; Sheila Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding same-sex union in *Amis and Amiloun*', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, pp. 63–81 (pp. 65–67); Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 117–18, 122–25, 127–28; Diana T. Childress, 'Between Romance and Legend: "Secular Hagiography" in Middle English Literature', *Philological Quarterly*, 57.3 (1978), 311–22 (pp. 318–19); Ojars Kratins, 'The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?', *PMLA*, 81.5 (1966), 347–54. *Amis and Amiloun* is not only a hagiographical romance, but a romance that also survives in hagiographical versions: see Leach, pp. ix–xxxii; Kathryn Hume, 'Structure and Perspective: Romance and Hagiographic Features in the Amicus and Amelius Story', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 69.1 (1970), 89–107. Leach's view of neat divisions between the so-called hagiographical and romance versions of the *Amis and Amiloun* story is now outdated.

man into a sexual relationship is perhaps facilitated or encouraged by the narrative's hagiographical influences, while *King Horn* adheres more to a romance framework in shifting to a consensual model predicated on male chivalric performance.[67] Although Amis's sexual relationship with Belisaunt is highly unusual in the context of hagiography, the romance's ambivalence about love and marriage, and its representation of sexual coercion, do seem to accord with hagiographical anxieties about sexuality. The manuscript contexts of *Amis and Amiloun* both support and refine this view of hagiographical influence, attesting also to a more general focus upon education and conduct. *Amis and Amiloun* survives in four manuscripts: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Auchinleck W.4.l. (Advocates' 19.2.1); London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 326 (Bodleian 21900); and London, British Library, MS Harley 2386. Although the Auchinleck manuscript's focus on romance has often been discussed, Edwards observes that '[t]he early sections of the Auchinleck manuscript [...] differ markedly in content from the later, predominantly romance sections [...] compris[ing] poems on religious subjects'.[68] *Amis and Amiloun* (as well as *The King of Tars*) is included in this early, religious section, as item eleven, between the *Speculum Gy de Warewyke* and the *Life of St Mary Magdalene*; Edwards suggests that *Amis and Amiloun* may be regarded as a religious narrative.[69] The socially moralistic elements of *Amis and Amiloun* would also fit well with what Emily Runde has described as the cultivation of 'morally deliberative' 'readerly self-consciousness' in the third booklet of the Auchinleck manuscript, containing the *Seuen Dedly Sinnes* and *Pater Noster*.[70] However, *Amis and Amiloun*'s focus on social mores also accords with recent suggestions that *Amis and Amiloun*, as well as other Auchinleck texts (and other Middle English romances) may have been aimed partly at an audience inclusive of children.[71] Phillipa Hardman suggests that popular romances 'were seen as particularly suitable texts for transmitting core parental cultural values to young readers', noting that 'six of Reiss's pre-1300 child-

[67] On the threat of sexual violence in hagiography, see Suzanne M. Edwards, 'Medieval Saints and Misogynist Times: Transhistorical Perspectives on Sexual Violence in the Undergraduate Classroom', in *Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom*, pp. 12–28; Saunders, 'The Threat of Rape: Saintly Women', in *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England*, pp. 120–51; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 197–98; Gravdal, 'Plotting Rape in the Female Saints' Lives', in *Ravishing Maidens*, pp. 21–41.
[68] 'Codicology and Translation in the Early Sections of the Auchinleck Manuscript', in *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, pp. 26–35 (p. 26).
[69] Ibid., p. 30 n. 14.
[70] 'Scribe 3's Literary Project: Pedagogies of Reading in Auchinleck's Booklet 3', in *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, pp. 67–87 (p. 82).
[71] See Cathy Hume, 'The Auchinleck *Adam and Eve*: An Exemplary Family Story', in *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, pp. 36–51; Clifton; Nicholas Orme, 'Children and Literature in Medieval England', *Medium Ævum*, 68.2 (1999), 218–46. The importance of children's reading is directly addressed in the Auchinleck *Of Arthur and of Merlin*: see Runde, p. 67.

centred romances are found in the Auchinleck MS' (Reiss's list includes *Amis and Amiloun*), which has been identified as 'a household, family book'.[72] Clifton also observes that the long list of names of the Browne family written in the Auchinleck manuscript in the late Middle Ages 'suggests that during the 15th century, the manuscript belonged to a family – a large family, with children of varying ages to be educated and entertained'.[73] The Auchinleck romances engage with 'lessons on chivalric or courtly accomplishments', which Amis's encounter with Belisaunt might compliment through its focus on correct and subversive forms of desire.[74] Nicholas Orme also provides a suggestive reading context for works like *Amis and Amiloun*, noting that '[r]eading aloud was a means of social entertainment', which took place in 'households [that] often included children: sons and daughters of the family, pages and wards being brought up and educated, and young servants'.[75] Orme's acknowledgement of the wards and pages fostered away from their nuclear family provides a particularly pointed context for reading *Amis and Amiloun*'s cautious depiction of a relationship between a lord's daughter and a young man being fostered by that lord.

London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 326 provide less of a contextual basis for *Amis and Amiloun*'s moral insights and educational potential. Egerton 2862 is a manuscript comprised entirely of romances (which is not to say that these romances do not also provide didactic material);[76] Johnston includes Egerton 2862 in his study of gentry romances, arguing that it may have circulated in gentry contexts, and drawing attention to the simple but well-planned execution of the manuscript.[77] Douce 326 contains only *Amis and Amiloun* and a Marian lyric, limiting the frame of reference for its reading contexts.[78] London, British Library, MS Harley 2386, however, offers a different and interesting context for *Amis and Amiloun*'s focus on interclass relationships: this manuscript was owned by William Cresset, 'a household servant residing in Herefordshire' around 1510-30.[79] Cresset's name appears four times

[72] Hardman, 'Popular Romances and Young Readers', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, pp. 150–64 (p. 154).
[73] Clifton, p. 189.
[74] Hardman, p. 159.
[75] Orme, p. 229.
[76] Mills notes that there is 'a frequent diversity of content, and sometimes style', even within this romance codex: Maldwyn Mills and Gillian Rogers, 'The Manuscripts of Popular Romance', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, pp. 49–66 (p. 50).
[77] Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 92, 94, 103–04, 110–12.
[78] Ford, 'From *Poésie* to Poetry', pp. 48, 49.
[79] Johnston, 'New Evidence for the Social Reach of "Popular Romance"', p. 306. Johnston establishes that Cresset was not the original owner of the manuscript, pp. 311-13.

in the manuscript, including once after the manuscript's fragmentary copy of *Amis and Amiloun*, where Cresset wrote what Johnston describes as 'the whimsical phrase "wyllyaum cresett was a lorde a lorde"'.[80] Of course, we cannot know why Cresset wrote this phrase or what he meant by it, but it is tempting to speculate that its appearance after *Amis and Amiloun* relates to the theme of class in this romance.[81] While only the first part of *Amis and Amiloun*, lines 1-890 and 1013-1058, is included in the manuscript, this encompasses the section with Amis and Belisaunt.[82] Even without this phrase, Cresset's status as a household servant, whose annotations make reference to his 'master' and indicate 'that Cresset served in the kitchen and pantry of some institution, be it a gentry household or a religious house', seems to indicate his particular potential to be aware of and interested in the romance's treatment of social class – perhaps not as an immediate model for his own behaviour, but as a telling exploration and assertion of class boundaries through the motif of unwillingness to love.[83]

King Horn and *Amis and Amiloun*, then, use the motif of unwillingness to love across class divides in similar ways. Both explore moral and social issues with class boundaries, deploying strategies to mitigate their potentially subversive representation of social ascension, while at the same time fulfilling the desire for social ascension that was a common feature of the medieval marriage market. The two romances take different approaches to interclass relationships in terms of their place on the continuum of consent and coercion: while Rymenhild may initially be seen as wooing Horn in a potentially coercive way, Horn successfully negotiates their relationship into a situation satisfactory and beneficial to him, moving from the potential for coercion to consent. In contrast, *Amis and Amiloun* openly depicts 'Belisaunt's coercive seduction of Amis'.[84] This coercive approach to an interclass relationship serves a socially conservative function, taking a different approach but ultimately functioning similarly to *King Horn*'s focus upon the circumstances in which interclass relationships might be permissible. While social ascension and interclass relationships can be an acceptable and celebrated motif of romance literature (albeit often with the caveat that, as with Horn, the male protagonist

[80] Johnston, 'New Evidence for the Social Reach of "Popular Romance"', p. 306.
[81] Wiggins comments that the 'annotations at the end of *Amis and Amiloun* express his active interest in the story', although Wiggins's understanding of Cresset as a 'young learner [...] undergoing elementary education with other boys' has been superseded by Johnston's research: Alison Wiggins, 'Middle English Romance and the West Midlands', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography*, pp. 239–55 (p. 251).
[82] Ford gives the line numbers at which *Amis and Amiloun* breaks off, 'From *Poésie* to Poetry', p. 49.
[83] Johnston, 'New Evidence for the Social Reach of "Popular Romance"', p. 306.
[84] Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 110.

turns out to be of a suitable status after all), these romances use unwillingness to love across class divides to set out a cautious and conservative approach to interclass relationships, while not entirely prohibiting them. In doing so, they not only complicate ideas about consent and coercion, social fantasy and social conservatism, but they also draw attention to the subtly moralistic and didactic functions romance literature could serve.

'ÞEY HIRE LIKEDE SWIÞE ILLE, | [SHE Þ]OUTHE IT WAS GODES WILLE': SECULAR AND SPIRITUAL EXEMPLARITY IN *HAVELOK*[85]

The late thirteenth-century romance of *Havelok* is unusual amongst representations of unwillingness to love across class divides (although aligns to some extent with the romances discussed in Chapter 1) because it depicts unwillingness mutually affecting both partners.[86] This broadens the focus on consent and coercion to concentrate primarily on external pressure to marry, and perhaps reduces the focus upon love in accordance with the hagiographical affinities of this narrative, which is labelled a *vita* in the incipit added to it in MS Laud Misc. 108 (the only complete manuscript of *Havelok*, which also includes *King Horn*, as discussed above).[87] While Bell rightly argues for the importance of considering *Havelok* within its manuscript context, suggesting that this 'would draw its audience away from the secular and mundane matters typically found in romance and toward the further contemplation of the spiritual matters such as those addressed in the *South English Legendary*', I would argue that *Havelok* also brings together romance and hagiographical concerns through its use of unwillingness to love across class divides.[88] *Havelok*'s dual focus upon Goldeborw's and Havelok's unwillingness to love, and the issues this allows the romance to address, position the narrative as exploring and

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[85] *Havelok*, ll. 1166–67.

[86] On the date of *Havelok*, see Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury, 'Havelok the Dane: Introduction', in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*, ed. by Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), pp. 73–84 (p. 73); Donald B. Sands, 'Havelok the Dane: Introduction', in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. by Donald B. Sands (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1986), pp. 55–58 (p. 56).

[87] See further Bell, 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', pp. 32, 41–42, 51. *Havelok* is also referred to as a 'gest' within the text itself. For a full discussion of *Havelok*'s genre, which suggests *vita* may simply mean 'the series of actions or events comprising an individual's life', see K. S. Whetter, '*Gest* and *Vita*, Folktale and Romance in *Havelok*', *Parergon*, 20.2 (2003), 21–46 (quotation at p. 37). As well as MS Laud Misc. 108, fragments of *Havelok* survive in Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 4407 (19), along with fragments of the *Elegy on the Death of Edward I*, *The Proverbs of Hendyng*, and a poem 'modelled on the first elegy of Maximian'. See further Smithers, 'Introduction', pp. xiv–xvi.

[88] Bell, 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 51. As Whetter notes, 'the historical-didactic elements of *Havelok* do not in themselves rule out or counterbalance what can be shown to be its predominantly romance characteristics', p. 31.

upholding secular concerns alongside spiritual matters. *Havelok* thus incorporates exemplary models that relate specifically to the romance's probable readers, as well as encouraging a broader perception of social and moral issues more characteristic of hagiographical oppositions to worldliness. This reading develops Julie Nelson Couch's perception of *Havelok* as a narrative which 'appropriates the affective receptivity of meditative reading on Christ's life to shape a devotion to secular retribution', bringing together spiritual preoccupations with a political focus upon the problems of secular power; my view accords with Nelson Couch's, but elaborates on some of the more individual ways in which *Havelok*'s affective and exemplary focus might have appealed to its readers.[89]

Goldeborw's unwillingness to love Havelok perhaps offers a more worldly and potentially quite immediate set of concerns for the romance's audience, concentrating specifically on the issue of social class and marital disparagement.[90] This was evidently a subject of considerable concern to medieval middle- and upper-class readers, with whom *Havelok* may have been associated: Taylor suggests the Laud manuscript may be 'a purposeful commission from a prosperous, sophisticated, and highly literate patron'.[91] Menuge notes that five out of six of the works she defines as wardship romances 'share the connected themes of wardship marriage, marriage abuse and disparagement', indicating the relatively popular nature of this subject; Menuge also interprets the presence of legislature against disparaging marriages in medieval law as indicating that such marriages were occurring, revealing the real-life problems wardship romances confront.[92] Goldeborw is clearly unwilling to love Havelok because of their differing social status: she tells her guardian, Godrich, that 'hire sholde noman wedde [...] | But he were king or kinges eyr' (1114-16) This both anticipates the providential outcome of her

[89] 'Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108: The Narrator of *Havelok the Dane* and Affective Piety", *Parergon*, 25.1 (2008), 53–79 (quotation at p. 73; see also pp. 75–79).
[90] Little is known about the initial audience of *Havelok*. For a discussion of the audience for MS Laud Misc. 108, see Bell and Nelson Couch, pp. 14–16. For the *South English Legendary*, of which the Laud manuscript offers an early witness, Pickering has suggested an initial audience of 'enclosed religious', quickly broadening to encompass devout lay readers. Samson suggests 'regional gentry and perhaps secular clergy' for the early *South English Legendary* readers, while Crane proposes a baronial readership for *Havelok* and *King Horn*. While a wider audience may have heard these narratives read aloud, a gentry or noble audience does not seem unlikely for *Havelok*. See O. S. Pickering, 'The *South English Legendary*: Teaching or Preaching?', *Poetica*, 45 (1996), 1–14 (pp. 6, 10, 12–13); Annie Samson, 'The South English Legendary: Constructing a Context', *Thirteenth Century England*, 1 (1986), 185–95 (p. 194); Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 43–52.
[91] Andrew Taylor, '"Her Y Spelle": The Evocation of Minstrel Performance in a Hagiographical Context', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*, pp. 71–86 (p. 85).
[92] Menuge, 'The Wardship Romance', pp. 33, 37. See also the discussion of disparaging marriages and the interest in prospective husbands' rank in Barbara Harris, pp. 54, 56.

marriage to Havelok, and highlights its apparently disparaging nature, as Havelok appears to be only a poor, lower-class servant. Like *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun*, the Middle English version of *Havelok* alters its Anglo-Norman antecedents' approaches to social class to provide a more detailed focus on this topic. In *Havelok*, this shifts the emphasis from the more courtly narratives of Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (written for Constance Fitz Gilbert, 1135-37) and the *Lai d'Haveloc* (late twelfth to early thirteenth century) into a more socially conservative focus on status.[93] In Gaimar's *Estoire*, Argentille starts to love Havelok before she knows his true status, as when 'il firent primes lur deduit: | mult s'entreamerent e joïrent' ['they made love for the first time. They showed great affection to each other and found great pleasure'].[94] Likewise, in the *Lai d'Haveloc*, while Argentille is initially ashamed of Haveloc,

> puis s'asseürerent tant,
> Et par parole et par semblant,
> Qu'il l'ama et od lui geut
> Come od s'espouse fere deut.
> [...]
> Et la meschine s'endormi;
> Son braz getta sus son ami.
>
> [later they became so trusting of each other,
> In both their words and their expressions,
> That he loved her and lay with her
> As it was his duty to do with his wife.
> [...]
> And the maiden slept,
> Throwing her arm over her lover.][95]

These lines establish a loving relationship between Haveloc and Argentille before the revelation of Haveloc's true status in the *Lai d'Haveloc*, as well as in Gaimar's *Estoire*; it is

[93] On FitzGilbert as Gaimar's patron, and for the date of the *Estoire*, see Emily Dolmans, 'The View from Lincolnshire: Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* as Regional History', in *Writing Regional Identities in Medieval England: From the 'Gesta Herwardi' to 'Richard Coer de Lyon'* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2020), pp. 64–96 (pp. 65–66, 68, 70–72); Ian Short, 'Introduction', in *Estoire des Engleis | History of the English*, ed. & trans. by Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. ix–liii (pp. ix–xii, xxiv–xxix); Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 43. On the relationships between the *Havelok* stories, Crane comments that '[t]he *Lai d'Haveloc* and *Havelok the Dane* [...] are distant from each other textually but share a close thematic harmony', while Smithers suggests that 'the author of *Havelok* used a version of the story that was at many points identical with both the Anglo-Norman ones', making it 'conceivable that Gaimar and the *Lai* were his main sources, in a form not quite identical with the extant copies': *Insular Romance*, p. 40; Smithers, 'Introduction', p. liv.

[94] Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire Des Engleis | History of the English*, ed. & trans. by Ian Short, ll. 192–93, trans. p. 13.

[95] *The Anglo-Norman Lay of 'Haveloc'*, ll. 387–96.

notable that in both cases this reflects a courtly focus upon sexuality, which the Middle English romance eschews, perhaps to align better with its hagiographical emphases.

Havelok also makes social class a more consistent and significant preoccupation, as when Goldeborw travels to Grimsby with Havelok we are told that '[s]ory and sorwful was she ay, | [...] | Þat she were yeuen unkyndelike' (1249-51), 'unkyndelike' potentially conveying the moral implications indicated earlier in relation to *King Horn*. Whereas love develops between Haveloc and Argentille in Gaimar and the *Lai* before Haveloc's status is revealed, in the Middle English romance it is only when Goldeborw sees the light coming from Havelok's mouth and the cross on his shoulder, and thinks '[h]e beth heyman yet' (1261), that her attitude towards him starts to change. This episode yokes together immediate, practical, and worldly concerns about social class (positioned as determining Goldeborw's ability to love Havelok) with religious symbolism: Bell notes the holy and specifically Christological connections of the light and king-mark as symbols of Havelok's status, and this combination of religious and secular concerns is developed as Goldeborw is told by an angel to 'lat þi sorwe be! | For Hauelok [...] is kinges sone and kinges eyr' (1266-68).[96] Only after the angel's message does she become 'so fele siþes bliþe' that she kisses Havelok and calls him 'lemman' (1323). It is worth noting that the time frame here is unclear: it is possible that the angel appears to Goldeborw 'on their wedding night', as Emma O'Loughlin Bérat suggests, but this is not clearly stated.[97] Temporally, then, the Middle English Goldeborw may love Havelok sooner than Argentille loves Haveloc in Gaimar or in the *Lai*, but this is not so important in terms of the narratives' approaches to class boundaries as the distinction of whether or not Argentille/Goldeborw knows her husband's true status before loving him. Here, *Havelok* seems to combine practical or worldly concerns about how social status facilitates or prevents love between two people with religious symbolism, indicating the unity of secular and spiritual concerns within this romance.

While Bell suggests that *Havelok* 'exerts its own influence on the *vitae* [in the Laud manuscript] by offering a more complete picture of royal sanctity', the romance also seems to present models of exemplary behaviour more immediately relevant to its readers through the dual focus on Goldeborw and Havelok.[98] This is not to deny the emphasis

[96] Bell, 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', pp. 44–50.
[97] 'Constructions of Queenship: Envisioning Women's Sovereignty in *Havelok*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 118.2 (2019), 234–51 (p. 248).
[98] Bell, 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 28.

on hagiographical and Christological models, but to suggest that the romances included in the Laud manuscript may add something to the hagiographical narratives' focus, providing models of behaviour that the manuscript's readers might more readily be called upon to imitate.[99] The presence of these intermediary models of behaviour does not replace the more spiritually-oriented models of the hagiographies proper, but may instead encourage readers to broaden their sense of exemplarity and emulation from the more easily imitated romance models to encompass religious models too.[100] While Goldeborw's resistance to marrying Havelok reinforces class boundaries and opposes coercive practices associated with wards' marriages (aligning with *Havelok* and the Laud manuscript's broader focus on abuses of worldly power), the characterisation of Goldeborw also offers an exemplary model of worldly piety through a brief but significant focus on God's providence.[101] As the couple marry, we are told that 'þey hire likede swiþe ille', Goldeborw '[þ]outhe it was Godes wille' (1166-67). This reference does not imply that Goldeborw accepts the marriage as a positive thing: indeed, the ensuing comment that 'God [...] | Formede hire wimmen to be born' (1168-69) perhaps has more in common with Custance's famous reflection that '[w]ommen are born to thraldom and penance' in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, criticising gendered constructions and the coercion of female wards rather than celebrating the marriage as the will of God.[102] However, it is because Goldeborw accepts God's will even while she opposes the marriage that this episode offers an exemplary model, indicating the importance of faith in God even at an apparently disastrous moment. This reference to accepting God's will even in the face of crisis is particular to the Middle English romance rather than coming from Gaimar or the *Lai*, although this emphasis also appears in the Anonymous Latin Prose Chronicle's version of the Havelok story in London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A ii (c. 1300), where Ailsye is said to be 'disponente deo quamquam ipse maliciose cogitasset' ['acting in God's name in spite of his own malevolent intentions'].[103]

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[99] For further perspectives on the mutual interactions between the romances and more overtly religious material in the Laud manuscript (what Lynch refers to as 'the potential imaginative traffic' between them), see Lynch, 'Genre, Bodies, and Power', p. 178; Julie Nelson Couch, 'The Magic of Englishness in *St. Kenelm* and *Havelok the Dane*', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*, pp. 223–50; Bell, 'England and its Saints'.

[100] Nelson Couch indicates the active ethical and exemplary engagement *Havelok* offers to (and expects of) its readers/listeners, arguing 'the audience is asked to join in the exercise of an affective pious receptivity in their reading/hearing of the poem', which 'assumes a participatory ethics in its audience – the audience, along with the characters, strives for exaltation of good and defeat of evil': 'Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 57.

[101] On *Havelok* and the Laud manuscript's scepticism towards worldly authority, see Nelson Couch, 'Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108', pp. 75–79.

[102] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Man of Law's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 87–104 (l. 286).

[103] Burgess and Brook, 'The Shorter Versions of the Legend', p. 198.

Gaimar and the *Lai*, on the other hand, refer to God's will only in positive contexts: Crane notes that '[a] sense of providential favor suffuses the story's developments' in the *Lai*, while Gaimar almost provides the opposite emphasis to *Havelok*, affirming when Argentille is married to Havelok 'ore est mesters de Deus aït' (170) '['[w]hat is needed at this stage is God's help', p. 11], and thus pointing to God's assistance with restoring good fortune rather than his providence at work even in an apparently negative outcome.[104] The different emphasis of the Middle English romance again heightens its engagement with exemplary behaviour, aligning *Havelok* with other pious romances that emphasise accepting God's will, such as *Sir Isumbras* and *Sir Amadace*, as well as with hagiographies. This adds to Bell's observation that

> the multivalent Christological signs inscribed on Havelok's body and the effect of his body on the characters who view it attest to 'God's active involvement in the affairs of men' just as the miracles associated with the saint-kings' bodies manifest God's will on earth.[105]

Where God's involvement is associated with the miraculous and saintly in relation to Havelok, Goldeborw's focus on God's providence offers a different, more achievable and everyday model of pious behaviour. This may explain Goldeborw's particular prominence in *Havelok*, as in this light she shares similarities with the tradition of hagiographical romance heroines like Custance or Emaré, whose heroism focuses on enduring and accepting suffering while upholding faith.[106] Although the didactic emphasis on accepting God's providence is only briefly mentioned in *Havelok*, this focus is supported by the greater prominence of religious concerns in the Middle English work compared to its Anglo-Norman antecedents, such as the emphasis on confession and prayer in Aþelwold's and Birkabeyn's deaths, the focus on religious objects in the oaths Godrich and Godard swear, the references to Godard and Godrich as Judas, and the appearance of the angel to Goldeborw.[107] Even this brief indication of an exemplary role

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[104] *Insular Romance*, p. 41. There is no exact counterpart in the *Lai*, but the emphasis there is on the positive nature of God's providence, as we are told of Argentille that '[m]ult fut einçois desesperee, | Mes ore l'ad Dieus reconfortee' ['[e]arlier she had been in great despair, | But now God had comforted her'], ll. 977-78.

[105] Bell, 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 50; quoting from *Medieval English Romances, Part One*, ed. by A. V. C. Schmidt and Nicolas Jacobs, 2 vols (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), I, p. 8.

[106] On Goldeborw's prominence, see Bérat, p. 236; Whetter, pp. 43–46. On Custance and similar heroines as models of female endurance, see Holly A. Crocker, 'Virtue's Grace: Custance and Other Daughters', in *The Matter of Virtue: Women's Ethical Action from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 111–53.

[107] Bell notes the pious and hagiographical emphases of Aþelwold's death, and observes that the references to Judas are paralleled in the life of Saint Edmund in the Laud manuscript, 'reinforc[ing]

for Goldeborw broadens our sense of *Havelok*'s appeal and didacticism, indicating some of the more immediately imitable exemplary models *Havelok* may have offered its audience.

Indeed, the representation of Goldeborw's experiences in *Havelok* may have opened up connections with the experiences of this romance's readers, in a manner characteristic of the motif of unwillingness to love in medieval romance. These resonances may have encouraged further reflection upon Goldeborw's conduct and the moral and didactic issues conveyed through her character. Goldeborw's experience of marital coercion is extreme, encompassing guardianship abuse, concerns about wardship, and forced marriage but, as Menuge argues, *Havelok* can also be seen as closely engaged with legal and social realities, as the 'marriage [is] thrust upon [Goldeborw] with the threat of "force and fear"', closely following the legal identification of forced marriages, while the 'narrative boundaries', particularly the constraints upon Goldeborw to accept Godrich's command, 'must be representative of the legal difficulties female wards faced'.[108] Although Goldeborw's situation most clearly recalls that of a medieval ward, other upper- and middle-class readers may have been drawn to Goldeborw as a figure who, although in a much more extreme way, may have reflected their own experiences of or concerns about coercion. The Middle English *Havelok* is particularly preoccupied with marital coercion, containing a more pervasive and detailed concern with consent and the law throughout, compared to its Anglo-Norman antecedents (for example, in the praise of Aþelwold's laws, the description of Godrich establishing his reign, and the judgement and punishment scenes at the end of the romance).[109] In particular, the Middle English writer pays significantly more attention to Goldeborw's (and Havelok's) unwillingness to marry than the Anglo-Norman works do. In Gaimar, Argentille's lack of consent is evident only after the marriage has already taken place, when she 'son uncle maldisseit | ki si l'aveit desheritee | e a un tel home donee' (188-90) ['kept cursing her uncle for having disinherited her and for having given her a man like this', p. 13]. The *Lai*, meanwhile, gives more prominence to the barons' dissent than to Argentille's, as

Havelok's generic association with saints' lives': 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', pp. 38–39, 44.

[108] Menuge, 'The Wardship Romance', p. 31; Menuge, 'Female Wards and Marriage', p. 159.

[109] For discussions of the particular legal emphases of the Middle English romance, see Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent', p. 113; Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 48. On potential differences in the representation of Danish and English law in the judgement and punishment scenes, see Robert Rouse, 'English Identity and the Law in *Havelok the Dane*, *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild* and *Beues of Hamtoun*', in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, pp. 69–83 (pp. 75–77).

'[e]ntre eus dient en apert | Que ceo n'ert ja par eus suffert' ['[t]hey said openly among themselves | That they would never tolerate this'] (373-74), until Alsi summons his soldiers to force their acceptance. The barons' resistance to Alsi's command may relate to contemporary aristocratic concerns, as Crane notes that the Angevin kings (who ruled during the period in which the *Estoire* and *Lai* were written) extended their powers over the barony 'to include forced marriages of the king's choice'.[110] This may be why the *Lai* focuses on opposition to forced marriages not on an individual basis, but on a collective basis, sidelining Argentille's concerns in favour of focusing on the barons. All we hear of Argentille herself is that Alsi

> Sa niece lur fet amener
> Et a Cuaran esposer.
> Pur lui aviler et honir
> La fist la nuit lez lui gisir.
>
> [had his niece brought forward
> And married her to Cuaran.
> To disgrace and dishonour her
> He made her lie next to him that night.] (377-80)

While this highlights Argentille's lack of agency, her consent is not expressly declined; rather, it is absent. This contrasts with the Middle English narrative, which makes consent an individual issue and gives significant prominence to Goldeborw's experiences of coercion.

The Middle English narrative adds the scene in which Goldeborw and Godrich discuss her marriage before it occurs, and focuses significantly on her emotional experiences of coercion during the marriage scene itself. We are told

> Sho was adrad for he so þrette,
> And durste nouth þe spusing lette,
> But þey hire likede swiþe ille,
> Þouthe it was Godes wille. (1164-67)

These details are very different to the omission of Argentille's feelings in the *Lai*, and the mention of her consent only after marriage in Gaimar. The Middle English writer takes time to establish Goldeborw's anger and fear, focusing on her emotions both as they are externally manifested (she is said to have 'gret and yaf hire ille' when she is first told she will marry Havelok, 1130), and as they are internally experienced by Goldeborw, privileging the reader with knowledge of Goldeborw's fear and dissatisfaction to elicit

[110] *Insular Romance*, p. 19.

sympathy for this coerced bride. As Nelson Couch notes, the narrator repeatedly 'shape[s] an audience response of sympathy for the victimized heroine', 'mapping out expected actions for the external audience' and 'priming us to suffer with her'.[111] While Nelson Couch connects this to *Havelok*'s continued emphasis upon affective, meditative reading, the sympathy evoked for Goldeborw may also reflect an implicit connection between Goldeborw's experiences and the more moderate experiences of or fears about marital coercion relevant to middle- and upper-class readers. The importance of economic, political, and parental considerations in negotiating middle- and upper-class marriages may in many cases have outweighed personal desires, whether this was protested or accepted as a necessary part of life.[112] Godrich's (mis)treatment of Goldeborw is extreme, but this extremity perhaps allows the romance to dramatise fears about coercion, presenting Goldeborw as a sympathetic and exemplary figure who resists a wrongful marriage but is ultimately accepting of God's will.

While Goldeborw's unwillingness to love encompasses an exemplary and didactic function, Havelok's unwillingness to love extends the moral remit of this motif by using it to elicit consideration of and sympathy with experiences of poverty. Havelok's unwillingness to love reflects a much more extreme situation of class difference than that in *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun*, as while Horn and Amis were both respected young men in their communities, Havelok lacks basic necessities. When Godrich asks if Havelok will marry, Havelok responds,

> Hwat sholde Ich with wif do?
> J ne may hire fede ne cloþe ne sho.
> Wider sholde Ich wimman bringe?
> J ne haue none kines þinge –
> J ne haue hws, Y ne haue cote,
> Ne I ne haue stikke, Y ne haue sprote,
> J ne haue neyþer bred ne sowel,
> Ne cloth but of an hold with couel. (1138-45)

Havelok's reservations about marriage are not concerns about the boundaries between different kinds of noble ranks, as in *Amis and Amiloun*, but instead reflect his poverty and

[111] Nelson Couch, 'Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 70. On the sympathy the narrator elicits for his protagonists, see also Kenneth E. Gadomski, 'Narrative Style in *King Horn* and *Havelok the Dane*', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 15.2 (1985), 133–45 (pp. 139–40, 142).
[112] See Karras, p. 146; McSheffrey, pp. 17–18; Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, p. 15. On the possibility that women accepted the need to obey their parents' wishes in return for support and protection, see Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 12–13, 114–15; Barbara Harris, pp. 56–59.

state of material need. The extent to which Havelok considers his situation unsuitable to marry anyone, let alone the heir to the throne, is emphasised by the vagueness of Godrich's offer. Asking 'Mayster, wilte wif?' (1136), it is unclear whether Godrich has specifically offered Havelok Goldeborw's hand at this point, or whether Havelok is rejecting the idea of marriage in general because of his poverty. While Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* and the *Roman de la Rose* single out poverty as an impediment to love, Andreas's brief description of poverty diminishing love, and the *Roman de la Rose*'s simplistic dichotomy between Povreté's place on the outside of the walls of the garden of pleasure and Richece's and Largesce's presences within are taken much further in *Havelok*'s sympathetic portrayal of poverty.[113] Havelok does not imagine marriage as a form of upward social mobility – again subtly conveying caution about interclass relationships – but considers poverty a debilitating state that prevents him from marrying. This focus on poverty, with Havelok listing the material securities he lacks in the speech quoted above, accords with the romance's focus on Havelok as 'a Christ-like hero who shares more affinities with Christ and the saints than he does with other romance heroes', given Christ's association with poverty, as well as supporting the wider focus of the Laud manuscript on 'the plight of the poor', and the repeated narratorial alignment of both saintly protagonists and narratorial sympathy with the poor and powerless.[114] *Havelok*, then, takes the didactic and moral potential of the motif of unwillingness to love across class divides further than the other romances discussed so far, broadening its audience's moral and social framework to consider experiences outside of their lived knowledge and elicit sympathetic consideration of social issues like poverty.

However, Havelok's unwillingness to love also connects with the romance's audience and their more immediate and worldly concerns, using the motif of unwillingness to love across class divides to shape perspectives on social mobility that combine religious morality with social conservatism: as Nelson Couch notes, *Havelok* is 'invested [...] in the formation of a particular noble social identity', even as it encompasses spiritual concerns too.[115] While the romance warns against the exploitation of apparently lower-class people, demonstrating Havelok's vulnerability to Godrich's threats and coercion, the coercion of Havelok into an interclass relationship also serves a moralistic

[113] *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, p. 36, trans. p. 37; *Le Roman de la Rose*, I, ll. 439–68, 1017–1188; trans. *The Romance of the Rose*, pp. 9, 17–19. For a discussion of these works, see Scattergood, pp. 69, 70.
[114] Bell, 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', pp. 28, 35; Nelson Couch, 'Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 77. See also Bell and Nelson Couch, p. 14; Lynch, 'Genre, Bodies, and Power', p. 186.
[115] Nelson Couch, 'Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 55.

and socially conservative purpose that is not dissimilar to *Amis and Amiloun*. Because Havelok and Goldeborw are coerced into an (apparently) interclass relationship, interclass relationships are not depicted as desirable, avoiding socially subversive implications. But this socially conservative focus also takes on a moral valence, particularly when we consider the extremely negative depictions of social mobility elsewhere in the romance: Grim almost murders 'a little boy in exchange for monetary gain and upward social mobility', while Godrich's treachery seems to be motivated by a desire for social advancement, as he demands of Goldeborw, '[h]wor þou wilt be | Quen and leuedi ouer me?' (1120-21).[116] The moral focus of this romance, its socially conservative and cautious representation of interclass relationships, and its exploration of consent and coercion, then, serve complementary functions, which relate to the Laud manuscript's didactic and exemplary focus.

'SWICH GENTILLESSE | AS IS DESCENDED OUT OF OLD RICHESSE': INTERROGATING SOCIAL CLASS IN CHAUCER'S *WIFE OF BATH'S TALE*[117]

The Wife of Bath's contribution to *The Canterbury Tales* constitutes Chaucer's only Arthurian romance. Written in the late fourteenth century, this tale considerably postdates the romances discussed so far in this chapter.[118] However, it both shares and develops some of their distinctive uses of unwillingness to love across class divides, continuing the emphasis upon social morality that is often a focus of this motif, but working against the socially conservative pattern established so far to turn moral consideration upon the class system itself. This emphasis seems to be quite a deliberate focus of Chaucer's, as once again this tale differs from its sources and analogues by developing the focus on social status. While status is not the only reason why the knight in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* attempts to reject the loathly lady, as he also complains '[t]hou art so loothly, and so oold also', her 'com[ing] of so lough a kynde' (1100-01) and the extent to which he will be 'disparaged' (1069) through this marriage are significant factors in the knight's reluctance to wed her. These reasons are specific to Chaucer's version of the narrative rather than being shared by the tale's sources and analogues, Gower's 'Tale of Florent', *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, and *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*.[119]

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[116] Bell, 'The Dialectics of Sanctity in MS Laud Misc. 108', p. 48.
[117] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Wife of Bath's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 116–22 (ll. 1109–10).
[118] Larry D. Benson, 'Explanatory Notes', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 795–1116 (p. 872).
[119] *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* and *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* both post-date *The Wife of Bath's Tale*; while they may build on earlier sources, this is not certain, and nor is it known if they use Chaucer's tale as their source. However, 'the likelihood is great that [Chaucer] knew Gower's version of the story': Marc Glasser, '"He nedes moste hire wedde": The Forced Marriage in the "Wife of Bath's

In Gower, the lady is twice described as wearing 'ragges', but this is all the attention that is given to her poverty, and Florent's main preoccupation is that '[h]is youthe schal be cast aweie | Upon such on which as the weie | Is old and lothly overal'.[120] Similarly, although Thomas Hahn suggests that Ragnelle's 'poverty [...] make[s] clear that her repulsiveness is a function of her low estate and not simply a wild monstrosity', *The Wedding* does not seem to indicate that Ragnelle is poor, as when she initially appears to Arthur, she is riding 'a palfray was gay begon, | With gold besett and many a precious stone'.[121] Not only the decorative equipment but the term 'palfray' itself indicates a level of status, as palfreys 'would be destined for a wealthy person: a noble lady, a prelate, or as a knight's traveling horse'.[122] Likewise, in *The Marriage* the lady is wearing 'red scarlett' when she first meets Arthur, a 'very costly product', and thus associated with the upper classes.[123] More significantly, *The Wife of Bath's Tale* is unique in not revealing the lady to be of high status: in the 'Tale of Florent', the lady turns out to be '[t]he kinges dowhter of Cizile', who had been under the enchantment of her wicked stepmother,[124] while in *The Wedding* and *The Marriage*, the loathly lady is implicitly of an appropriate status, since she is the sister of Arthur's antagonist, referred to as Sir Gromer Somer Joure, '[a] knyght fulle strong and of greatt myghte', in *The Wedding* and simply as 'the Baron' in *The Marriage*, thus establishing the lady as one of the knightly class.[125] In contrast, Chaucer occludes the lady's social status in the tale's ending, focusing upon her restored beauty and youth but revealing no change in her status, and thus potentially allowing this relationship to stand as a fully interclass one. This may primarily support the moral interrogation of social class in the tale, since, as Alastair Minnis notes, 'a woman who turned out to be ostentatiously aristocratic, rich, young, and beautiful would make a highly unconvincing

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Tale" and Its Middle English Analogues', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 85.2 (1984), 239–41 (p. 240 n. 2). See further *Sources and Analogues of The Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, Chaucer Studies, 35, 2 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), II, pp. 407–09; Benson, 'Explanatory Notes', p. 872.

[120] John Gower, 'Tale of Florent', in *Confessio Amantis*, I, I. 1407-1882 (ll. 1723, 1745, 1711–13).

[121] Thomas Hahn, 'The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle: Introduction', in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. by Thomas Hahn, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp. 41–46 (p. 42); 'The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle', in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 47–70 (ll. 246–47).

[122] Jürg Gassman, 'Mounted Combat in Transition: The Transformation of the Eleventh Century: Early Medieval Cavalry Battlefield Tactics', in *The Horse in Premodern European Culture*, ed. by Anastasija Ropa and Timothy Dawson, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 70 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 71–86 (p. 74). See also 'Palefrei n.', *Middle English Dictionary* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED32215> [accessed 28 January 2021].

[123] 'The Marriage of Sir Gawain', in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 362–69 (l. 56); Michel Pastoureau, *Red: The History of a Color*, trans. by Jody Gladding (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 90.

[124] Gower, I. 1841.

[125] 'Wedding', l. 52; 'The Marriage of Sir Gawain', l. 18.

advocate for virtuous poverty, the advantages of ugliness, and *gentilesse* by merit alone'.[126] Leaving the lady's social status unspecified while transforming her physical appearance may attest to the particular interest in social status and what it does and does not signify that is characteristic of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* above its sources and analogues.

The loathly lady's climactic discussion with the knight confronts his unwillingness to love someone of a lower status as a moral and ethical issue, as the lady defends her lower birth using the 'nobilitas virtus, non sanguis' trope, and argues that poverty can be a virtuous state.[127] Neither of these features is paralleled in any other version of this narrative, where the focus of the climactic conversation between the couple is the lady's beauty or ugliness, and her sovereignty. Indeed, the 'nobilitas virtus, non sanguis' trope also takes unwillingness to love across class divides onto another moral level in comparison with the works discussed earlier in this chapter: while they often focus on exemplary conduct in accordance with socially conservative ideas about class, here Chaucer raises questions about the class system in and of itself, as the lady openly queries whether 'gentillesse | [...] descended out of old richesse' (1109-10) equates to being 'the grettest gentil man' (1116). While *Havelok* invites sympathy with poverty and, in accordance with the wider focus of the narrative and the Laud manuscript, indicates some scepticism about worldly authority, Chaucer's tale directly questions the right of the nobility to claim moral authority and respect.[128] This is particularly provocative in view of the rape that opens *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, which also indicates that 'gentillesse [...] descended out of old richesse' is indeed not true *gentillesse*: as Saunders suggests, '[t]he morality of the Arthurian world is immediately thrown into question' from the tale's beginning.[129] The queen and her ladies' intercession on behalf of the knight may further develop this querying of *gentillesse*, as it perhaps suggests a notion of class solidarity, courtly figures intervening to defend their own rather than standing by to watch justice

[126] 'The Wisdom of Old Women: Alisoun of Bath as *Auctrice*', in *Writings on Love in the English Middle Ages*, pp. 99–114 (p. 111).
[127] For a discussion of the 'nobilitas virtus, non sanguis' trope in Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore*, see Scattergood, pp. 67–68.
[128] Nelson Couch, 'Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108', pp. 75–79.
[129] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 301. Much has been written about the rape in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*: see, for example, Suzanne M. Edwards, 'Outrage against Rape and the Battle over Survival in Fourteenth-Century Legal Discourse and the *Wife of Bath's Tale*', in *The Afterlives of Rape in Medieval English Literature*, pp. 81–106; Vines, 'Invisible Woman', pp. 162–67; Christine M. Rose, 'Reading Chaucer Reading Rape', in *Representing Rape*, pp. 21–60 (pp. 36–39); Robert J. Blanch, '"Al was this land fulfild of fayerye": The Thematic Employment of Force, Willfulness, and Legal Conventions in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 57.1 (1985), 41–51, as well as the scholarship cited below.

be done (an implication that seems regrettably topical even today).[130] This effect would be exacerbated if, as Bernard Huppé suggests, the survivor of the rape is to be identified as a lower-class, perhaps peasant, woman.[131] However, as Saunders notes, we are 'told nothing of the victim except that she is a "mayde"', meaning that far from excusing the crime on the basis of social class (as Huppé suggests), 'the crime thus falls into the gravest category of theft of virginity'.[132] Whatever the social status of the lady, however, this rape still raises questions about the morality and *gentillesse* of the knightly classes, especially as it 'contravenes the generic expectation of romance, that rape is not explicitly enacted except by otherworldly or monstrous figures' (which are themselves invoked and problematised in the Wife's reference to a friar as an incubus, 880).[133]

This questioning of *gentillesse* may in part accord with the characterisation of the Wife as the tale's teller: the moral issue of 'nobilitas virtus, non sanguis' may reflect her interest in social status, evidenced in the *General Prologue*'s focus on her rich clothing and her need to be first to go to the offering in church, and in her *Prologue*, where she asserts 'I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun, | [...] I took no kep, so that he liked me, | How poore he was, ne eek of what degree'.[134] However, the specifically moral focus upon class seems to suit the Wife's character less well: I disagree with Dorothy Colmer's assertion that 'there is no particular irony in the fact that Dame Alice cannot qualify under her own

[130] Alison Gulley asks '[w]hy would Guinevere and the other ladies at court be so eager to save a rapist from the prescribed penalty for rape?', while Bernard Huppé suggests '[o]nly if a peasant girl is involved may the Queen's actions be explained': Alison Gulley, '"How do we know he really raped her?": Using the BBC *Canterbury Tales* to Confront Student Skepticism towards the Wife of Bath', in *Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom*, pp. 113–27 (p. 114); Bernard F. Huppé, 'Rape and Woman's Sovereignty in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*', *Modern Language Notes*, 63.6 (1948), 378–81 (p. 379). The notion of class solidarity is developed in Dryden's rewriting of the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, as Rose notes, p. 38. Salisbury comments on the similarities between the female jurists' judgement and the likely penalties ecclesiastical law was likely to issue for *raptus*, while Harris takes a different perspective, suggesting we can read this 'as a community response to rape by the specific population who has been wronged [...] the kingdom's most powerful women unite to claim that women should determine rape justice collectively': Salisbury, p. 81; Carissa M. Harris, 'Rape and Justice in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*', in *The Open Access Companion to the Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Candace Barrington et al., 2015-2017 <https://opencanterburytales.dsl.lsu.edu/wobt1/> [accessed 1 February 2021].

[131] Huppé, pp. 379–80.

[132] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 302.

[133] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 301.

[134] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 105–16 (ll. 622–26). Although the origin of these lines in the Wife's *Prologue* has been debated, with Beverly Kennedy and Alastair Minnis arguing that they are likely to be scribal revisions rather than Chaucer's own, Orietta Da Rold has more recently argued that the presence of these lines in other manuscripts from the *a* and *b* group of the *Canterbury Tales*, particularly in Caxton's 1482 print, suggests that they are Chaucerian in origin. See further Beverly Kennedy, 'Cambridge MS. Dd.4.24: A Misogynous Scribal Revision of the "Wife of Bath's Prologue"?', *Chaucer Review*, 30.4 (1996), 343–58 (pp. 343–47, 351–56); Minnis, pp. 105–06; Orietta Da Rold, 'The Significance of Scribal Corrections in Cambridge, University Library MS Dd.4.24 of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales"', *Chaucer Review*, 41.4 (2007), 393–438 (pp. 395–96, 405–08).

definitions of gentillesse'.[135] Minnis offers a better explanation for this apparent discrepancy, suggesting that Chaucer

> was engaging in a literary experiment of quite radical proportions. In the *Pardoner's Tale*, which dates from this same period, we are asked to consider the startling possibility that the most immoral of men can tell the most moral of tales.[136]

In the particular moral focus Chaucer chooses to explore through the Wife of Bath, we may be able to discern Chaucer's social preoccupations as well as literary experimentation. Chaucer's interest in the *gentillesse* of deeds rather than birth is evident elsewhere in *The Canterbury Tales*, such as in *The Franklin's Tale*, where the clerk insists 'a clerk koude doon a gentil dede | As wel as any of yow'.[137] More strikingly, it is also expressed with clear echoes of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* in Chaucer's short poem 'Gentilesse', as Martin Puhvel notes.[138] This poem suggests that

> but his heir love vertu as dide he,
> He is noght gentil, thogh he riche seme,
> Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.
>
> Vyce may wel be heir to old richesse,
> But ther may no man, as men may wel see,
> Bequethe his heir his vertuous noblesse.[139]

The first line quoted above has echoes of the loathly lady's claim '[h]e nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl' (1157), while Chaucer's mention of 'old richesse' accords with her opening reference to 'old richesse' (1110), and the following lines echo her claim 'may they nat biquethe for no thyng | To noon of us hir vertuous lyvyng' (1121-22). 'Gentilesse' arguably suggests that the lady's speech in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* may, in its focus on 'nobilitas virtus, non sanguis', reflect Chaucer's own interests in social class, as well as or rather than the Wife of Bath's purported interests, perhaps explaining why Chaucer emphasised the issue of social class more than his sources and analogues, and why he

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[135] Colmer, 'Character and Class in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 72.3 (1973), 329–39 (p. 336).
[136] Minnis, pp. 109–10. McKinley argues for the effectiveness of this apparent disjuncture, suggesting that 'Chaucer employs a narrative technique common in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, one of Chaucer's favorite sources: that of dramatic juxtaposition of differences in theme and in tone': Kathryn L. McKinley, 'The Silenced Knight: Questions of Power and Reciprocity in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*', *Chaucer Review*, 30.4 (1996), 359–78 (p. 361).
[137] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Franklin's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 178–89 (ll. 1611–12).
[138] 'The Wife of Bath's Tale: Mirror of Her Mind', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 100.3 (1999), 291–300 (p. 295).
[139] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Gentilesse', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 654 (ll. 12–17).

develops the moral capacity of unwillingness to love across class divides beyond that of the earlier romances discussed in this chapter.

Attending to unwillingness to love across class divides as a motif in Chaucer's tale and other romances, then, reveals some of the particular ways in which Chaucer's tale differs from its sources and analogues to bring out a socially moralistic theme. Focusing on a motif that appears in early Middle English romances as well as Chaucer's work also uncovers some of the ways in which Chaucer was working within the parameters of the romance tradition even while pushing at their boundaries. Some of the preoccupations Chaucer – and/or the Wife – explore through the motif of unwillingness to love find comparable emphases in earlier romances, both in relation to the intersections between consent and coercion evident in the knight being required to keep his promise of marriage against his will, and above all in the morally and socially orientated use of this motif.[140] While Chaucer takes the moral function of the motif beyond earlier romances, which tend to be more socially conservative, the seeds of this use of unwillingness to love to explore the privileges of the nobility were perhaps evident in *Havelok*'s sympathy for the poor, as well as in the more conventional social morality of *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun*. Reading unwillingness to love across class divides from *King Horn* to *The Wife of Bath's Tale* can thus reveal traces of earlier romances influencing Chaucer, despite his apparent ambivalence towards the genre.[141]

CONCLUSION

From *King Horn* through to *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, the motif of unwillingness to love across class divides is consistently used for moral and didactic purposes, often warning against interclass relationships even while permitting them in exceptional cases. Other forms of unwillingness to love also engage with exemplary and unexemplary models of behaviour, but unwillingness to love across class divides repeatedly evokes a more pointed moral focus, perhaps suggesting the immediacy of concerns about social status for the middle- and upper-class readers of romances. These romances' cautious approach to interclass relationships can also be seen as a response to the relatively common representation of interclass relationships as desirable elsewhere in romance literature, taking seriously a problem that other works gloss over. These romances reveal the complexity of the genre's engagement with social ascension, and with the ways in which

[140] On the loathly lady's coercion of the knight, see Carissa Harris; McKinley, 'The Silenced Knight'; Gerald Richman, 'Rape and Desire in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 61.2 (1989), 161–65.
[141] See Saunders, 'Chaucer's Romances'.

it might reflect on the real-life medieval marriage market and its opportunities for social advancement. The romances discussed in this chapter also complicate our understandings of consent and coercion, particularly through their focus upon male vulnerability to sexual coercion. Unwillingness to love across class divides serves a variety of ideological and moral functions, offering insights into the subtle ways romances construct models of behaviour for their readers, and deal with the social and moral issues about which their readers may have been concerned. While the next chapter, on unwillingness to love someone of a different race or faith, might seem to hold less immediate value and applicability in relation to readers' own lives, once again this motif continues to create links between the extreme situations of romance narratives and their readers' more everyday realities, illustrating the proximity unwillingness to love creates between romance narratives and their audiences.

CHAPTER 4.
'TILL ÞAT SCHE LEUED OPON HIS LAY': RACE AND FAITH[1]

INTRODUCTION

Like unwillingness to love across class divides, resistance to interfaith and interracial relationships serves a socially conservative function by reinforcing contemporary social boundaries. This motif partly asserts racial-religious difference, upholding perceptions of (or a desire for) white Christian supremacy by drawing an exclusionary line between those whose romantic advances are to be accepted and those who are to be rejected.[2] Literary representations to this extent accord with the dividing lines drawn by canon law: James Brundage records that Gratian prohibited marriages between Christians and non-Christians; the Council of Nablus in 1120 forbade sex and marriage between Muslims and Christians; and the thirteenth-century Italian lawyer Benencasa of Arezzo 'asserted that Christians should not marry non-Christians, even if the marriage was premised on the condition that the non-Christian convert to Christianity'.[3] Unwillingness to love someone of a different race or faith forms part of what Jeffrey Jerome Cohen refers to as 'the cultural work of the Saracen, whose dark skin and diabolical physiognomy were the western Middle Ages' most familiar, most exorbitant embodiment of racial alterity': the motif provides a cultural scaffolding that upholds racial-religious difference.[4]

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[1] *The King of Tars, ed. from the Auchinleck MS, Advocates 19.2.1*, ed. by Judith Perryman, Middle English Texts, 12 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980), l. 405.

[2] It is important to note that literature upholds perceptions of (or a desire for) white Christian supremacy rather than reflecting any historical reality of social and political dominance, given the vast extent of Islamic rule in the Middle Ages, and the cultural and scientific advances of Muslim society. Mohja Kahf, writing about the (mis)application of Orientalism to medieval representations, argues that while 'Orientalism [...] is a product of Western hegemony over the East', '[i]t was very much otherwise in the Middle Ages [...]. There is no question who had the upper hand from the eighth to roughly the fifteenth century. Nor is there any question that Europeans perceived an Islamic hegemony': *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), pp. 15–16. As Heng notes, '[b]y the twelfth century, after the First Crusade, Peter the Venerable […] soberly concluded that Islam "occupied two parts of the world [and] did not leave the third (which is called Europe) whole to Christ or his Christians"'. The crusading era's attempts to unseat this dominance were not successful: '[t]he international contest with the Islamic foe for geopolitical possession of the Holy Land and religious supremacy was not decided in favor of the West'. See *The Invention of Race*, pp. 113, 159.

[3] Brundage, pp. 238, 207, 361. For further discussion of these and similar prohibitions, see Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 81; David M. Freidenreich, 'Muslims in Western Canon Law, 1000-1500', in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 3 (1050-1200)*, ed. by David Thomas and Alexander Mallett, The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, 15, 7 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2009), III, 41–68 (p. 56); Freidenreich, 'Muslims in Eastern Canon Law, 1000-1500', in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 4 (1200-1350)*, ed. by David Thomas et al., The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, 17, 7 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2012), IV, 45–57 (p. 55); Steven F. Kruger, 'Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories', in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, pp. 158–79 (pp. 167–69, 178 n. 32).

[4] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment', in *Medieval Identity Machines*, Medieval Cultures, 35 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 188-221 (p. 189) (first publ. in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 113–46).

However, as with the other forms of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis, resistance to loving someone of a different race or faith does not necessarily serve one straightforward ideological function. This is not to deny that 'European objects of study on the Crusades and on the Muslims from the Middle Ages are racist, political projects most often designed to incite violence, always by way of fostering Islamophobia'.[5] The works I will discuss *are* racist portrayals of Muslims that promote an ideology of Christian superiority, often expounding the desirability of even a forced conversion (which, in romance, is often given less prominence than voluntary – or seemingly voluntary – conversion). However, as Elias has noted, while a romance in its entirety may retain religious divisions (and Islamophobic rhetoric), 'moments of reassessment' explore alternative perspectives: 'Christians come to be endowed with ambivalent, problematic, and even reprehensible emotional responses and mindsets, while Saracens [...] are increasingly presented as courteous, chivalrous, and praiseworthy'.[6] The works discussed in this chapter offer a similar balance between asserting religious difference and exposing some of the pressure points of this ideology, raising questions about race and faith, conversion, consent, and coercion, even as they ultimately uphold conservative white Christian ideals.

One of the ways in which the romances discussed in this chapter explore such questions is through their interaction with and reflection upon contrary motifs within the romance tradition. The trope of the Christian man marrying a beautiful Muslim woman is not uncommon in romance and *chansons de geste*: Kinoshita describes 'the stock epic motif of the Saracen princess who converts to Christianity for love of a brave Christian warrior', while Siobhain Bly Calkin notes that '[t]his figure is surprisingly popular in western medieval literature' more widely.[7] Muslim Princesses who convert to Christianity for love appear in *chansons de geste* like *La Chanson de Roland*, *Fierabras* (the source for several of the works discussed in this chapter), the *Guillaume d'Orange* cycle, *Aiol*, *Anseis de Cartage, Elie de Saint Gille*, *Floovant*, and *Gaufrey*.[8] Interfaith or interracial relationships also occur

[5] Rajabzadeh, p. 6.
[6] Elias, p. 101.
[7] Sharon Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 9; Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, p. 62; see also Cohen, p. 202.
[8] See Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 174; Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 186; Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, 2077 (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 5, 113; Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 160–77; Joan M. Ferrante, 'Introduction', in *Guillaume d'Orange: Four Twelfth-Century Epics*, trans. by Joan M. Ferrante (New York:

in romances, including *Parzival* and *Octavian*, while religious conversion is a widespread romance theme, from the Otuel narratives to Henry Lovelich's *History of the Holy Grail*, *Sir Isumbras* to *Amoryus and Cleopes*.[9] In these works, conversion is the assumed goal, and conversion even for the motive of marrying a Christian knight is generally praised and accepted. However, both mass conversions and conversions for the love of Christian knights are recognisably fantastic tropes: the idea of Christian crusaders converting Muslim women 'ha[s] little historical basis', and in many cases can be seen as a kind of compensatory fantasy for the failures of the crusading era.[10] The trope of unwillingness to love someone of a different race or faith, then, can be seen as a disruption to these fantasies, resisting an easy acceptance of conversion and inviting – even momentarily – the reader to question and critique received ideas and ideologies.

The balance these romances strike between interrogating and promulgating received ideas is especially evident in the way that they treat gender in relation to race. When the narratives discussed in this chapter are viewed together, they could almost be seen as displaying a kind of intersectional awareness by indicating the layered privileges of gender and race.[11] In particular, there seems to be much more concern about Christian women marrying Muslim (or formerly Muslim) men than there is about Christian men marrying Muslim (or formerly Muslim) women, and concerns about Christian women centre much more precisely upon race, religion, and procreation. This suggests an awareness of gendered power disparities, which to some extent reflects historical approaches to interfaith marriages. David Freidenreich notes that in eastern canon law, 'Mxitʿar forbids marriage to all foreigners, male or female [...] ʿAbdishoʿ [...] forbids only the marriage of a Christian woman to a non-Christian man [...] Cyril III, surprisingly, forbids only marriage between a Christian man and a non-Christian woman'; his comment on the surprising nature of Cyril III's prohibition indicates the more usual division of interfaith relationships as more acceptable when they involve a woman of

Columbia University Press, 1974; repr. 1991), pp. 1–61 (p. 4). On the Muslim Queen Bramimonde in *La Chanson de Roland*, who converts to Christianity for the love of God rather than a Christian warrior, see Kinoshita, pp. 35–45; Kahf, pp. 21–33; on *La Prise d'Orange*, see Kinoshita, pp. 46–73.

[9] On *Parzival*, see Heng, p. 196; Kahf, pp. 40–43.

[10] Heng, *The Invention of Race*, p. 141. Heng elsewhere argues that '[w]hen the replication of colonial dominance in territorial and military terms falters, the preferred momentum of empire becomes cultural: ideological reproduction in the form of religious conversion': *Empire of Magic*, p. 190.

[11] Intersectionality can be defined as 'investigat[ing] how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life [...] intersectionality views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, class, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another': Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), p. 14.

another faith, not a Christian woman and a non-Christian man.[12] This division is mirrored in Islamic law, which stated that '[a] Muslim man may marry a *dhimmi* woman, but a Muslim woman may only marry another Muslim', a gendered difference governed by 'the assumption that the husband, as head of the family, would be likely to convert his wife, whereas the wife, as the subordinate partner, would be unable to convert her husband to her religion'.[13] In the Iberian Peninsula, 'cross-border marriages between Muslim women and Christian men occurred only in exceptional circumstances', while Christian women married Muslim men more often, a situation Simon Barton partly attributes to 'the decidedly weak political and military position in which the Christian monarchs found themselves for much of the tenth century', which 'meant that at times they had little room for maneuver when Muslim rulers demanded Christian brides as the price of peace'.[14] Christian-authored literature seems to reverse this historical situation, as there are far fewer Christian women who marry Muslim men in romance and *chansons de geste* compared to the number of Christian men marrying Muslim women, while the level of anxiety about interfaith marriages seems to be much greater when Christian women are involved. This could be attributed partly to the reduced opportunities for stories in which Christian women marry Muslim men: whereas the crusading era provided the imaginative (and *only* imaginative) potential for Christian men to woo and convert Muslim women, Christian women from Western Europe (except within the greater religious diversity of the Iberian Peninsula) would not often have encountered men of other faiths, perhaps explaining the relative rarity of such encounters in the cultural imagination. However, the increased concern about conversion, procreation, and cultural difference evident in narratives about Christian women marrying Muslim men also suggests that this is not simply a practical matter, but an ideological one.

While this gendered anxiety about Christian women marrying Muslim men may partly explore the relationship between gender and power, this concern could alternatively indicate the long-standing connections between misogyny and racism, rather than encouraging any positive sense of intersectional awareness. Writing about misogyny and racism in the modern world, Laura Bates notes that '[t]he crimes pegged to white

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[12] Freidenreich, IV, p. 55 n. 41.
[13] Jessica Coope, *The Martyrs of Córdoba: Community and Family Conflict in an Age of Mass Conversion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 12. A *dhimmi* was 'a non-Muslim member of an Islamic society'; the laws of the *dhimma* applied specifically to 'relations between Muslims and non-Muslim monotheists', p. 1.
[14] *Conquerors, Brides, and Concubines: Interfaith Relations and Social Power in Medieval Iberia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 32, 31.

supremacy are motivated by a hatred and fear that includes ingrained misogynistic notions about immigrants "stealing" white women', while Mithu Sanyal attributes the level of outrage about the sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2016 to the fact that 'the assaults hadn't been perpetrated by someone, but by someone *else*, someone *foreign*', arguing that 'since New Year's Eve, people of "Arabic appearance™" have been inseparably linked in the Western mind with sexual threats to (white) women'.[15] Similarly, grooming gangs are often misleadingly associated with Asian men, whereas research has found white men to be the largest group of offenders involved in child sexual exploitation.[16] These racist conceptual links are long-standing: although Alison Phipps argues (using medievalist imagery apparently by accident) that the "'damsel in distress" evokes a protective response: and simultaneously, colonial archetypes of people of colour as aggressive and frightening come into play', the connections between white female victimhood and racist violence pre-date the colonial era, as the anxiety around Christian women marrying Muslim men in the works discussed in this chapter reveals.[17] Romances also perpetuate this combination of racist and misogynistic concerns through the trope of 'the hostile pagan outsider's desire to possess the woman', which appears in Middle English romances like *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *Ipomadon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, and *Valentine and Orson*, as well as *The King of Tars*, discussed in this chapter.[18] Moral panic about race/religion and sexual violence had a historical impact too, as Pope Urban II's crusading sermon (as reported in the account by Robert the Monk) 'delivered to the gathered throng a nightmare vision of defiling, polluting Muslims who tortured and eviscerated Christians in the Holy Land, raped women, and forcibly circumcised men'.[19] The longstanding links between racism and anxiety about white Christian women's sexual vulnerability suggest that the concern about Christian women marrying Muslim men in the romances discussed in this chapter can be attributed to this

[15] Laura Bates, *Men Who Hate Women* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2020), p. 176; Sanyal, p. 91.
[16] *Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation: Characteristics of Offending* (Home Office, 15 December 2020), pp. 8, 25–27 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/944206/Group-based_CSE_Paper.pdf> [accessed 31 December 2020]; Jamie Grierson, 'Most Child Sexual Abuse Gangs Made up of White Men, Home Office Report Says', *The Guardian*, 15 December 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/dec/15/child-sexual-abuse-gangs-white-men-home-office-report> [accessed 31 December 2020].
[17] Alison Phipps, 'White tears, white rage: Victimhood and (as) violence in mainstream feminism', in *The Politics of Victimhood*, ed. by Sarah Banet-Weiser and Lilie Chouliaraki (=*European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24.1 (2021)), pp. 1–13 (p. 4).
[18] Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent', p. 115.
[19] Heng, *The Invention of Race*, p. 114; Lee Manion, *Narrating the Crusades: Loss and Recovery in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 9.

combination of misogyny and racism at least as easily as it could signify some level of intersectional awareness.[20]

In this chapter, I interpret the category of interfaith relationships quite broadly, including relationships involving people who (offer to) convert. This approach is supported by the works discussed: the Princess of Tars's fake conversion raises questions about the efficacy of conversion; Custance is unwilling to marry the Sultan in *The Man of Law's Tale* even though he converts to Christianity; and questions seem to be raised about the certainty of Floripas's and, to a lesser extent, Josian's conversion through their behaviour in the period between their offer to convert and their baptism.[21] While conversion is generally resolved emphatically by the end of each romance, there seems to be at least a stage in which a relationship with a convert from Islam to Christianity is considered similarly to – albeit more openly permitted than – an entirely interfaith relationship.[22] This literary approach again accords with religious perspectives: Stephen Kruger notes that 'Pope Clement IV in 1268 rebuked Alfonso III of Portugal for allowing marriages of Christian men to women of Saracen and Jewish *origin*', while Salo Wittmayer Baron records that in late fourteenth-century Aragon (a context associated with particularly extreme persecution), 'John I [...] restated in 1393 the death penalty for all sex relations between Jews and Christians, including new converts'.[23] While literature sometimes treats conversion as an absolute and immediate phenomenon, the works I discuss in this chapter seem to position relationships between a Christian and a Muslim who offers to convert to Christianity within the framework of interfaith relationships, supporting Kruger's suggestion that 'converts clearly occupied an uncomfortable position in relation to both their old and their new religions, and perhaps particularly when it came to the possibility of being integrated into Christian sexual and familial structures'.[24] Interfaith relationships can perhaps be seen as a continuum rather than a binary

[20] Concern about Muslims raping Christian women also recurs in Pope Alexander III's *Decretales*: see Freidenreich, III, p. 46.
[21] Saunders notes that Josian 'frequently transgresses conventional gender roles': 'Gender, Virtue and Wisdom in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', in *'Sir Bevis of Hampton' in Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević, Studies in Medieval Romance, 8 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), pp. 161–75 (p. 169). Kahf correlates this trait with the typical representation of Muslim women in medieval romance, pp. 33, 36, 52–53.
[22] Heng suggests this reveals that 'conversion to Christianity is insufficient in and of itself to cancel out differences of race and color'; this is a suggestive perspective, and one that may operate alongside concerns about conversion: *Empire of Magic*, p. 232.
[23] Kruger, p. 169; Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 20 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952-93), XI, p. 79.
[24] Kruger, p. 171.

distinction, as relationships between recent converts and Christians are sometimes (often temporarily) viewed in a similar way to relationships between people of differing faiths.

Another category distinction that is sometimes lost or blurred, but sometimes maintained, in the works discussed in this chapter is the distinction between interracial and interfaith relationships. Heng discusses religious race as a concept mobilised in both the medieval and modern periods; within medieval romance, Muslims are often represented as black, and religion can become a determiner of race, conflating the two categories.[25] However, race and faith are also at times treated as separate issues: desiring and desirable Muslim women in romance are often represented as white-skinned, while figures like the Sultan who Custance marries offer to convert to Christianity without being able to alter their racial identity (although in *The King of Tars*, the Sultan's skin does turn white at his conversion).[26] I therefore consider racial and religious difference as separate and yet interwoven issues: while I often refer to 'racial-religious difference', 'racial-religious boundaries', 'interfaith and interracial relationships' and 'race or faith', I do also consider race and faith separately.

Except where directly quoting primary and secondary sources, in this chapter I refer to characters of Islamic faith as Muslim rather than 'Saracen'. In doing so, I follow the practice set out by Shokoofeh Rajabzadeh, who argues that

> with few exceptions and unless it is a direct quotation, all qualified and unqualified uses of Saracen should be replaced with the word Muslim [...]. It may seem as though using Muslim erases the recognition that the people in these stories are *misrepresented* Muslims. We may fear that, if we do not capture this misrepresentation by using Saracen we are softening the harsh racism of the primary material in our scholarship. [...] But [...] it is by using Muslim that we acknowledge that a misrepresentation exists and legitimize the violence of that misrepresentation. [...] The most simple and powerful way [...] to produce

[25] *The Invention of Race*, pp. 3, 20. Heng writes that '[i]n medieval European literature, black Saracens abound from the twelfth century on', while Cohen observes that 'the otherness of the Saracen is racially marked', as 'Christian fantasy found a repeated delight in the imagining of the flesh of Saracens (and Tartars, and other conflatable Others) as being as dark as the classical Ethiopian': Heng, *The Invention of Race*, p. 187; Cohen, pp. 201, 199.

[26] For example, in *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas's skin is 'as whyt so þe melkis fom': *Sir Ferumbras*, ed. by Sidney J. Herrtage, EETS, e.s., 34 (London: Trübner, 1879), l. 5879. See further Akbari, pp. 177, 182; Marianne Ailes, 'A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Verse Texts of the Fierabras Legend' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1989), p. 698; de Weever, 'Whitening the Saracen: The Erasure of Alterity', in *Sheba's Daughters*, pp. 3–52. On racial conversion in *The King of Tars*, see Cord J. Whitaker, 'Black Metaphors in the *King of Tars*', in *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 20–47; Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Romance Baptisms and Theological Contexts in *The King of Tars* and *Sir Ferumbras*', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, pp. 105–19 (pp. 108–12); Akbari, pp. 190–92; Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Marking Religion on the Body: Saracens, Categorization, and *The King of Tars*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 104.2 (2005), 219–38; Cohen, p. 202.

> racially conscious scholarship [is to call] these primary texts what they are: racist, Islamophobic, and hateful.[27]

Rajabzadeh's argument differs from previous academic practice: Bly Calkin, Cohen, and Norman Daniel have all used and argued for the value of 'Saracen' as a term that points to the deliberate misrepresentation of Muslims in medieval European literature.[28] But Rajabzadeh persuasively argues that using the term Muslim signals the Islamophobic violence and misrepresentation perpetuated by medieval literature in ways that affirm Muslim readers' experiences of these works; accordingly, I follow Rajabzadeh's practice here.

This chapter explores how moments of resistance to interfaith and/or interracial relationships in *The King of Tars, The Man of Law's Tale*, *Sir Bevis of Hampton, Sir Ferumbras,* and *The Sowdone of Babylone* raise questions about race and faith, conversion, consent, coercion, and gender. These works reveal a gendered divide in their approaches to interfaith and interracial relationships, which arouse much more concern when Christian women are involved in them, in comparison with Christian men. I explore whether this increased concern with Christian women marrying Muslim men relates to an awareness of gendered power disparities or a combination of racism and misogyny, investigating different (sometimes coexistent) possibilities in each romance. While the romances discussed in this chapter often use the motif of unwillingness to love to uphold ideas about or a desire for white Christian supremacy, at times this motif can also draw Christian and Muslim characters closer together, and unwillingness to love someone of a different race or faith can become a mechanism through which issues closer to readers' own lives are discussed. These romances are socially and ideologically conservative, upholding ideas that reflect a desire for white Christian supremacy, but they also offer moments of questioning this ideology, reflecting more broadly on issues of power, success, defeat, consent, coercion, and gender.

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[27] Rajabzadeh, p. 4.

[28] Cohen 'use[s] Saracen […] instead of Muslim in order to mark the category from the start as produced through the passionate investment of occidental fantasies and desires': Cohen, p. 136 n. 3. See also Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 2, 213 n. 3; Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the 'Chansons de Geste'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), pp. 9–10.

'Y NOLD HIR ȝIUE A SARAZIN': HISTORY, FANTASY, AND FAILURE IN *THE KING OF TARS*[29]

The King of Tars, an anonymous early fourteenth-century romance, differs from the other works discussed in this chapter in that the Sultan of Damascus, who seeks the Christian Princess of Tars's hand in marriage, does not offer to convert in order for the marriage to take place.[30] Instead, the Sultan determines he will marry her 'houso it bifalle' (28), insisting '[h]e wald hir win in batayl' (32) if the Princess and her father will not consent to the marriage. The Sultan and the Princess's relationship is thus most straightforwardly of any of the examples discussed in this chapter an interfaith relationship: although the Princess pretends to convert to Islam, the reader knows this is a false conversion, and even if this provokes Christian anxiety it does not undermine the nature of their relationship as interfaith.[31] Indeed, the Sultan and the Princess's relationship is aligned from the start with the stereotypical ways in which romance usually depicts (threatened) interfaith relationships, as the Sultan's determination to marry the Princess by force associates him with the trope of the Muslim knight besieging a Christian woman.[32] This trope usually upholds the perceived or desired moral, chivalric, and romantic supremacy of Christians: a Christian knight who arrives to defend the besieged lady reinforces the idea that marital consent is prioritised by Christians where Muslims seek to force marriage upon unwilling women; the Christian knight's military triumph ensures that Christian chivalry is upheld as the greater military force; and the lady's usual offer of love to her Christian champion suggests the greater romantic desirability of Christians compared to Muslim knights, while also continuing to contrast the coercive force of the lady's Muslim suitor with the apparently (and conveniently) free offer of her love to her Christian defender.[33] However, while clearly invoking this trope, *The King of Tars* decisively veers away from this typical portrayal, as no Christian hero arrives to defend the Princess, and

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[29] *The King of Tars*, l. 43.

[30] On the date of *The King of Tars*, see Judith Perryman, 'Introduction', in *The King of Tars*, pp. 7–72 (p. 15).

[31] See *The King of Tars*, ll. 505–16. Lampert similarly argues '[t]he poem makes it clear that the marriage remains a mixed one, since the princess has converted only for necessity's sake': Lisa Lampert, 'Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-) Middle Ages', in *Postcolonialism and the Past*, ed. by Barbara Fuchs and David J. Baker (= *Modern Language Quarterly*, 65.3 (2004)), pp. 391–421 (p. 407). For other views of the false conversion, its unusual nature and the anxiety it may cause, see Heng, *The Invention of Race*, pp. 215–16; Jamie Friedman, 'Making Whiteness Matter: *The King of Tars*', *postmedieval*, 6.1 (2015), 52–63 (pp. 57–58); Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 110–12; Karen A. Winstead, 'Saints, Wives, and Other "Hooly Thynges": Pious Laywomen in Middle English Romance', *Chaucer Yearbook*, 2 (1995), 137–54 (p. 146).

[32] On this trope, see Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent', p. 115.

[33] Saunders notes that '[r]ather ironically, a knight's successful defence of a lady's castle from its attackers is frequently followed by the swift conferral of her hand and lands on him', observing that this forms 'a highly idealistic equation of might with right': 'A Matter of Consent', pp. 114, 116.

her father's forces suffer severe defeat, with 'þritti þousend […] | kniȝtes of Cristen lawe' killed (211-12). The effects of the Princess's unwillingness to love thus expose romance fantasies *as* fantasies, as the Christian hero never materialises and '[t]he Christian King of Tars [...] fails to impose sexual prohibition and patrilineal filiation', leaving the Princess to surrender to the Sultan on his terms.[34] *The King of Tars* provides perhaps the most overt disruption of the fantasy of white Christian supremacy of any of the works discussed in this chapter, through the effects of the Princess's unwillingness. As the Christian forces fail to protect her, she agrees to marry the Sultan to preserve her people, and the reality of Christian failure to uphold chivalry, consent, and Christian marriage is starkly confronted.

Unwillingness to love in *The King of Tars* thus creates a bridge not only between real and fictional expectations of consent and coercion in marriage, but also between real and fictional expectations of Christian military prowess, as the Princess's unwillingness results in Christian defeat and death. *The King of Tars* invites comparison with contemporary events: as Judith Perryman notes, 'the basis of the romance is a historical incident from the late thirteenth-century crusades', which 'appeared in a number of chronicles'.[35] This incident involves Ghazan, Khan of the Persians, who defeated the Sultans of Damascus and Babylon in 1299, and formed alliances with the Christian kings of Armenia and Georgia.[36] Jamie Friedman suggests that '[c]ontinued Mongol success against the Muslims' led to 'stories about Mongol conversion […] circulat[ing] widely and hopefully, perpetuated at various times by both Mongols and Christians'.[37] Ghazan himself ultimately converted to Islam rather than Christianity but, despite this historical fact, a number of chronicles include tales of a Mongol leader converting to Christianity, which seem to have formed the basis for *The King of Tars* (potentially influencing both the portrayal of the Christian King of Tars, a figure associated with the Tartars – as even if Tars refers to the Armenian city of Tarsus, this city was under Mongol rule – and the later conversion of the Sultan of Damascus).[38] Bearing in mind that *The King of Tars* both draws on and reshapes historical events and historiographical accounts, the King of Tars's defeat by the Sultan of Damascus seems a provocative intrusion of history into fiction,

[34] Jane Gilbert, 'Putting the pulp into fiction: the lump-child and its parents in *The King of Tars*', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, pp. 102–23 (p. 110).
[35] Perryman, 'Introduction', p. 42.
[36] See Friedman, pp. 54–55.
[37] Friedman, p. 54.
[38] See Perryman, 'Introduction', pp. 47–48; Friedman, p. 55.

reality into fantasy, 'recall[ing] Christendom's fears of eastern dominance'.[39] As Bly Calkin notes, '[t]he late thirteenth century', shortly before *The King of Tars* was composed, was 'the period during which the Crusader kingdoms definitively fell to Muslim powers after a series of Christian military defeats and failures culminating in the Fall of Acre in 1291'.[40] The loss of Acre in particular, Robert Rouse argues, 'had a profound impact on the culture and literature of Western Europe', as 'Christendom was left to face the undeniable fact that the Islamic foe had triumphed'.[41] *The King of Tars*'s stark depiction of Christian military defeat in its opening sequence challenges and disrupts contemporary fantasies of white Christian military supremacy, interpolating real-life losses into the fantasy context of romance.

More similarly to the other romances discussed so far in this thesis, *The King of Tars* also uses the motif of unwillingness to love as a bridge between romance and its readers' lives by combining consensual and coercive approaches to love and marriage. The Princess of Tars explicitly does not want to marry the Sultan: upon her father asking whether she would 'for tresour, | Forsake Ihesus our saueour' (55-56), the Princess declares

> Nay lord, so mot y þriue!
>
> Ihesu, mi Lord in trinite,
> Lat me neuer þat day yse
> A tirant forto take. (60-63)

While the Princess, perhaps surprisingly, does not focus upon the Sultan's religious and racial identity in her rejection of his proposal, instead referring to him only as '[a] tirant' (a negative stereotype but not one particularly associated with Muslim figures), she clearly rejects his offer of marriage and does so in terms that highlight her own Christian identity as paramount to her unwillingness to engage in an interfaith relationship. Her father focuses upon the Sultan's religious identity more explicitly and negatively, telling the messengers 'Y nold hir ȝiue a Sarazin' (43), while they later report to the Sultan that '[h]eþen hounde he gan þe calle' (93). That her father mobilises Islamophobic stereotypes more than the Princess herself perhaps suggests that the anxiety about Christian women

[39] Whitaker, p. 21.
[40] Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Saracens', in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge, Studies in Medieval Romance, 16 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), pp. 185–200 (p. 191).
[41] Robert Allen Rouse, 'Crusaders', in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, pp. 173–83 (p. 182). The loss of Jerusalem, albeit earlier, also affected literary imaginings of the Crusades: see further Suzanne M. Yeager, 'The Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the Crusades*, ed. by Anthony Bale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 121–35.

marrying Muslim men in the romances discussed in this chapter reflects a yoking together of misogynistic concerns about female vulnerability with racist preoccupations about sexual violence or forced marriages associated with people of a different race or faith. His declaration 'Y nold hir ȝiue a Sarazin' combines his sense of patriarchal ownership over his daughter with a rejection of the Sultan specifically motivated by his 'Sarazin' faith.

Yet, despite the Princess's and King's resistance, the Princess does ultimately marry the Sultan. The marriage is necessitated by the Christians' defeat, positioning it as a marriage formed under duress and coercion. But the Princess also frames the marriage as, in some way, her choice: she pleads 'lete me be þe soudans wiif' (223), insisting 'y wil serue at wille | Þe Soudan boþe loude & stille, | & leue on God almiȝt' (229-31). Asking her father to 'lete me be' married to the Sultan and declaring she will serve him 'at wille' indicates the way that this episode combines consent with coercion, as the Princess offers to marry the Sultan willingly, while being under the extreme duress of military force. Although we rightly feel that consent cannot be given in these circumstances, the Princess's words suggest a view of consent and coercion as coexistent within *The King of Tars*. To say that the Princess chooses in some way to marry the Sultan is not to deny that she is forced to do so, but it is to reclaim some of her agency as the heroine of the narrative, which has often been understated: Karen Winstead refers to the Princess as 'the long-suffering protagonist […] who does not even have a name, [and] subordinates herself completely to the desires and interests of others', underplaying the Princess's importance in motivating the Sultan's conversion.[42] *The King of Tars* is an extreme representation of marital coercion, a rare example of military force effecting a marriage in romance, but this extremity perhaps allows it to explore the issue of forced marriage more openly. The distancing framework of the Sultan's different faith and race, and the extent of the military force he uses, separate this example from the kinds of coercion more likely to have been experienced by medieval readers, even as the careful combination of coercion and consent provides a way of reflecting real-life concerns in a more extreme fictive setting, bridging the gap between these scenarios to offer insights into the variety of experiences of unwillingness to love that could span both fiction and reality.

While the extremity of this forced marriage allows *The King of Tars* to think through some of the more moderate ways in which medieval marriages might have been

[42] Winstead, p. 44.

characterised by a combination of consent and coercion, this romance also reflects directly on interfaith and interracial marriages as an issue in and of themselves. Indeed, *The King of Tars* is explicitly and continuously preoccupied with issues of race, faith, and procreation, which are central to the narrative's representation of unwillingness to love. While the Princess of Tars rejects the Sultan in terms that focus upon her faith rather than his, and do not engage in racial stereotyping, the Sultan's desire for the Princess is described in terms that focus precisely upon race. References to colour saturate the description of the Princess's beauty in the first two stanzas of the poem: we are told '[n]on *feirer* woman mi3t ben', and she is described as '*white* as feþer of swan', '[w]iþ rode *red*', 'ey3en stepe & *gray*', and a '*white* swere', making the Sultan desire to 'haue hir to wiue | Þat was so *feir* a may' (11-12, 14-16, 23-24; all emphases my own). The traditional features of western European beauty are defined in terms of colour, with the conventional white and red complexion, and the grey eyes; it is these colours that are said to be attractive to the Sultan.[43] While the Sultan's race is barely remarked in the opening of the poem (as Bly Calkin notes, 'we don't know until line 799 that the sultan is black'), the Princess's is repeatedly: this constant emphasis on the colours by which the Princess's beauty is characterised both projects an image of white Christians as desirable to those of other races and faiths, and aligns with Friedman's argument that in *The King of Tars* 'the white racial body is precisely what is being constructed and continually held together across the narrative's trajectory'.[44] If it is surprising that the Sultan's own race is not really mentioned by the Princess in her rejection of him (although he is described stereotypically in the early sections of the narrative), *The King of Tars* is still preoccupied with interracial marriages and race itself through its repeated focus on the Princess's white body.[45] The focus on the desirability of the Princess's whiteness also highlights the use of desire to reinforce cultural perceptions and boundaries: while the Sultan desires the Princess, her unwillingness to marry him marks him out as undesirable, implicitly asserting racial-religious difference and highlighting a perception of white Christian superiority.[46]

[43] For a similar discussion, see Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 231.
[44] Bly Calkin, 'Marking Religion on the Body', p. 224 n. 19; Friedman, p. 53.
[45] For stereotypical descriptions of the Sultan and his people, see *The King of Tars*, ll. 97–108, 169, 422–32. See also Friedman, p. 56; Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 107–08.
[46] This recalls Heng's argument that '[p]art of the fantasy of empire, as colonial and conquest literatures in later periods will amply teach us, is that the colonized, in the form of their women, desire the colonizers', although here this dynamic is somewhat reversed: while not a coloniser as such, the Sultan is triumphant in battle. See *Empire of Magic*, p. 187.

Alongside the focus on race through the preoccupation with whiteness, *The King of Tars* also considers the nature of interfaith relationships, 'provid[ing] an interesting bilateral view of the mixed-faith marriage, declaring it unacceptable to both Christian and Muslim societies'.[47] The Sultan will not sleep with the Princess until she has converted to Islam: 'For noþing wold he neyȝe þat may | Till þat sche leued opon his lay' (404-05). The narrator explains the problematic nature of interfaith relationships for Muslims by analogy with Christians:

> Wel loþe war a Cristen man
> To wedde an heþen woman
> þat leued on fals lawe;
> Als loþ was þat soudan
> To wed a Cristen woman. (409-13)

The Sultan is directly compared to a Christian man who would be reluctant to marry a 'heþen' woman, bringing the two different religious identities together in an attempt to gain a brief insight into a Muslim perspective by analogy with a Christian perspective. This moment exemplifies Friedman's argument that 'the poem presents white Christian identity as proximate to black Saracen bodies and selves', although at the same time as *The King of Tars* brings Muslim and Christian together to render them comparable, it is also careful to redraw the boundaries it threatens to erase, reminding its audience of the 'fals lawe' of the 'heþen woman' even as it momentarily compares that 'fals lawe' with Christianity.[48] While this passage does assert the differences between Christianity and other faiths, then, it also brings them together by demonstrating that interfaith relationships were problematic not just in Christian but also in Islamic law.

The King of Tars also focuses upon the issue of faith in the Princess's unwillingness to love by suggesting that her unwillingness is not resolved when she agrees to marry the Sultan. Instead, when the child, the primary representation of *The King of Tars*'s anxieties about interracial and interfaith procreation,[49] is miraculously reshaped upon being christened, the Princess tells the Sultan

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[47] Lynn T. Ramey, *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), p. 68; Bly Calkin also notes that 'such a desire traverses Saracen-Christian borders [...] complicat[ing] the definitive division the text initially seemed to draw between people of two faiths': *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, p. 110.

[48] Friedman, p. 58.

[49] For discussions of the child, see Natalie Goodison, Deborah J. G. Mackay, and Karen Temple, 'Genetics, Molar Pregnancies and Medieval Ideas of Monstrous Births: The Lump of Flesh in *The King of Tars*', *Medical Humanities*, 45.1 (2019), 2–9; Molly Lewis, '"Blob Child" Revisited: Conflations of Monstrosity, Disability, and Race in *King of Tars*', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval*

Ȝif þe haluendel wer þin
Wel glad miȝt þou be
[...]
Bot þou were cristned so it is
þou no hast no part þeron, ywis,
Noiþer of þe child ne of me. (803-10)

Here, she effectively denies their marriage, suggesting that neither she nor the child are connected with the Sultan unless he converts to Christianity.[50] This speech emphasises her continued unwillingness to love the Sultan, inverting the condition of conversion that he formerly required her to meet. The Princess seems here to be the agent resolving her own unwillingness to love, demanding that her husband abides by her conditions for their relationship to continue. Her acceptance of the need to marry therefore does not overcome her unwillingness to love; rather, this is only resolved when her husband agrees to convert after the restoration of the child.

In the end, then, *The King of Tars* uses the motif of unwillingness to love to temporarily disrupt fantasies of white Christian supremacy, which the narrative ultimately seems to reassert in its ending. However, some anxieties about conversion and Christian vulnerability are left open and unanswered: Cord Whitaker suggests that the Sultan's concluding violence towards his own people 'bespeaks a lack of difference between the sultan's Saracen and Christian selves'.[51] *The King of Tars* may also unsettle its medieval Christian readers by exposing the motif of the Christian knight saving a woman besieged by a Muslim man as improbably fantastic, and allowing this exposure to question whether the poem's 'happy ending' is also an unlikely fantasy. However, the difference between these two types of fantasy (the Christian hero saving the Christian lady from a forced marriage to a Muslim knight, and the miraculous recovery of the child and the Sultan's

and Early Modern World, ed. by Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 147–62; Sarah Star, '*Anima Carnis in Sanguine Est*: Blood, Life, and *The King of Tars*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 115.4 (2016), 442–62; Ramey, pp. 68–71, 77; Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*, Studies in Medieval Romance, 13 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 209–10; Akbari, pp. 189–92; Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 98, 103, 105–06, 112–22, 127–28; Gilbert; Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 227–30. I follow Lewis's example in referring to the baby simply as 'the child', avoiding the reductive terminology often used to describe it; another alternative could be to refer to it as a mole in accordance with Goodison, Mackay, and Temple's interpretation. There was an interest in what mixed-race children could look like in other romances too: the piebald Feirefiz in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* is another extreme and unrealistic example, discussed in Heng, *The Invention of Race*, pp. 188–89, 194, 198, 216–18.

[50] Ramey also notes that the Princess not only 'reject[s] his paternity', but 'the marriage [...] is now declared to be nonexistent', while Gilbert suggests that '[t]he paternity lacking pertains not to the Sultan's acknowledged physical fatherhood but to his right to be named as the child's father', which depends upon his Christianity: Ramey, p. 69; Gilbert, p. 108.

[51] Whitaker, p. 43.

consequent conversion) may be the centrality of Christianity: *The King of Tars* perhaps turns away from the fantasies of romance to assert the greater power of Christian miracle to achieve a desirable ending. That medieval readers may have perceived the narrative in this way is suggested by its manuscript contexts: the related manuscripts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. A.1. (the Vernon manuscript) and London, British Library, MS Additional 22283 (the Simeon manuscript) are codices focused on 'items of a moral or religious nature', which contain only two other texts that might be identified with the romance genre, the pious works *Robert of Cisyle* (in both manuscripts) and *Joseph of Arimathia* (in the Vernon manuscript).[52] Commenting on *Robert of Cisyle* and *The King of Tars*, N. F. Blake suggests 'they are more in the nature of exempla exhibiting moral and religious truths, and as such they fit well into this section of the [Vernon] manuscript', while Edwards argues that *The King of Tars* accords well with *The Pistel of Susan*, which it follows in the Simeon manuscript (and precedes, a few texts apart, in the Vernon manuscript), as both emphasise 'female devotional figures who provide models of Christian conduct, and who, by their submission to Divine Will, enable the triumph of that Will'.[53] The other surviving manuscript of *The King of Tars*, the Auchinleck manuscript, supports these connections, as in Auchinleck *The King of Tars* is grouped with religious narratives rather than with the romances that characterise the later sections of this manuscript.[54] Hume also notes that *The King of Tars* shares its pious emphasis and its relation of love and the family to Christian salvation with the narrative that follows it in the Auchinleck manuscript, *The Life of Adam and Eve*.[55] The manuscript contexts of *The King of Tars* therefore seem to support a reading of it as turning away from the fantasies of romance to the promise of divine intervention.

The focus upon divine miracle in *The King of Tars* may have had particular appeal for medieval Christians in the context of crusading defeats, which probably made an immediate military victory seem an unlikely fantasy indeed. Divine miracle and Christian endurance could offer a more promising and in some ways more hopeful moral message.

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[52] Perryman, 'Introduction', p. 9. For example, the Vernon manuscript includes the *South English Legendary*, the *Northern Homily Cycle*, the *Miracles of the Virgin*, *La Estorie del Evangelie*, *Piers Plowman*, works by medieval mystics like Richard Rolle, and a version of the *Ancrene Riwle*. See 'MS. Eng. Poet. a. 1', *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries*, 2018 <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_4817> [accessed 12 February 2021].

[53] N. F. Blake, 'Vernon Manuscript: Contents and Organisation', in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 45–59 (p. 54); A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Contexts of the Vernon Romances', in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, pp. 159–70 (p. 167).

[54] Edwards, 'Codicology and Translation', pp. 27, 30 n. 14.

[55] Hume, 'The Auchinleck *Adam and Eve*', pp. 49–50.

Although Heng suggests that narratives like *The King of Tars* offer 'an elegant solution to holy war: The simple agency of a Christian princess, acting as a missionary for her faith and her people, obviates the need for large armies, territorial invasion, and bloody combat', *The King of Tars* in fact acknowledges the reality of bloody combat.[56] It reassures anxieties about real crusading defeats not by sublimating those defeats but by incorporating them into a story where accepting defeat results in ultimate victory. While the connections between the opening and the ending of the romance may open up questions about its fantasy of Christian supremacy, *The King of Tars* ultimately permits both readings, offering its Christian readers a reassuring fantasy that recuperates military defeats and deploys Christian miracle to facilitate conversion, while also allowing for some questioning of the probability of its fantasy ending, and the ways in which it does and does not maintain racial-religious boundaries. *The King of Tars*'s use of the motif of unwillingness to love highlights the ways in which it engages, if briefly, with both sides of the equation: with crusading losses and compensatory fantasies, with history and fiction, with consent and coercion, with female agency and the racist mobilisation of concerns about female vulnerability. The Princess's unwillingness to love the Sultan does not simply draw a neat dividing line between Christians and Muslims, but becomes the catalyst for this romance's exploration of issues of race and faith.

'ALLAS, WHAT WONDER IS IT THOGH SHE WEPTE, | THAT SHAL BE SENT TO STRANGE NACIOUN?': CULTURAL CLASHES IN *THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE*[57]

The late fourteenth-century *Man of Law's Tale* is 'Chaucer's sole textual confrontation with medieval Christianity's strongest religious rival, Islam'.[58] Custance's unwillingness to love the Sultan focuses on race, faith, and foreignness even though the Sultan offers to convert to Christianity in order to marry her, making the relationship less clearly interfaith. It is possible that this link between race, faith, and unwillingness is indirectly influenced by *The King of Tars*: Lillian Herlands Hornstein has argued that Chaucer's main source for *The Man of Law's Tale*, Nicholas Trevet's *Cronicles*, may have been influenced by *The King of Tars*, on the basis of a number of unusual similarities between the two narratives.[59]

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[56] Heng, *The Invention of Race*, p. 139.
[57] Chaucer, 'The Man of Law's Tale', ll. 267–68.
[58] Susan Schibanoff, 'Worlds Apart: Orientalism, Antifeminism, and Heresy in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale', in *Chaucer's Cultural Geography*, ed. by Kathryn L. Lynch (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 248-80 (pp. 248–49) (first publ. in *Exemplaria*, 8 (1996), 59-96). On the date of *The Man of Law's Tale*, see Benson, 'Canon and Chronology', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. xxii–xxv (p. xxv); Benson, 'Explanatory Notes', pp. 856–57.
[59] 'Trivet's Constance and the *King of Tars*', *Modern Language Notes*, 55.5 (1940), 354–57.

Hornstein focuses particularly upon the sorrow Trevet describes when Constance leaves Rome, arguing that 'the reason for this general misery is not apparent, for the Sultan groom has already agreed to accept the Christian faith', making it 'an unexplained survival, until we recall the situation in the *King of Tars*'.[60] Yet Chaucer elaborates on this moment of sorrow in Trevet to explore Custance's unwillingness to love the Sultan in more depth. In Trevet, Constance is sent 'hors de sa conoissaunce entre estranges barbaryns a grant deol et lermes et crie et noyse et plente de tote la cité de Rome' [from 'her acquaintances among foreign barbarians with great grief, tears, outcry, noise and lament from the whole city of Rome']; the scene describes a general experience of pity and sorrow, rather than focusing on the sorrow of Constance herself.[61] In contrast, Chaucer directly focuses on Custance's own emotions. It is 'Custance, that was with sorwe al overcome' (264) on the day of her departure, and Chaucer describes her sorrow with sympathy and pathos, asking

> Allas, what wonder is it thogh she wepte,
> That shal be sent to strange nacioun,
> Fro freendes that so tenderly hire kepte,
> And to be bounden under subjeccioun
> Of oon, she knoweth nat his condicioun? (267-71)

Chaucer focuses Custance's sorrow upon the foreignness of her husband, identifying the 'strange nacioun' and unknown nature of the Sultan as the primary causes of Custance's sadness. While not centring overtly upon faith, Chaucer does invite race to be invoked in relation to Custance's sorrow, as Custance is described as '[f]ul pale' (265), pinpointing her white skin as an implicit contrast to her future husband's to draw ideas about race into the reader's consciousness. As Carolyn Dinshaw notes, paleness 'can mark race and religion', 'provid[ing] a relay point at which affect, religion, race, and sex cross', but 'such a normal state marked as such, heightened and displayed, is already different from the normal [...] suggest[ing] a certain fear of instability or infection of white Christian normalcy itself'.[62] Custance's paleness is thus not just a marker of white Christianity, but also an affective mark of unhappiness and vulnerability, as it is in 'the pale face stanza', when Custance is falsely accused of murdering Hermengyld and the Man of Law invites

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[60] Hornstein, p. 356.
[61] Nicholas Trevet, 'De la noble femme Constance', ed. and trans. by Robert M. Correale, in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Robert M. Correale, Mary Hamel, et al., II, 297–329 (ll. 67-68; trans. p. 300). Gower's 'Tale of Constance', another of Chaucer's sources, does not describe any sadness upon Constance's departure. See John Gower, 'The Tale of Constance', in *Confessio Amantis*, II, II. 588-1613. It is now largely agreed that Gower's version of the tale pre-dates Chaucer's: see Peter Nicholson, 'The *Man of Law's Tale*: What Chaucer Really Owed to Gower', *Chaucer Review*, 26.2 (1991), 153–74.
[62] Carolyn Dinshaw, 'Pale Faces: Race, Religion, and Affect in Chaucer's Texts and Their Readers', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 23 (2001), 19–41 (pp. 22, 27, 22–23).

us to reflect on the image of 'a pale face, | Among a prees' (645-46).[63] The combination of these racial and affective connotations seems to invite the (pale) audience of *The Man of Law's Tale* to sympathise with Custance's plight. Chaucer thus elaborates upon the general and vague expression of sorrow in Trevet in ways that explore ideas of race and faith in relation to unwillingness to love. This greater focus upon race and faith in *The Man of Law's Tale* compared to Trevet does not indicate a more direct link between *The Man of Law's Tale* and *The King of Tars* though: while there are some potentially suggestive links between the two works, especially the focus upon the female protagonist feigning happiness (in *The King of Tars*, 394-96, and *The Man of Law's Tale*, 320), Laura Hibbard Loomis's suggestion that Chaucer may have known the Auchinleck manuscript has been widely discredited.[64] It seems more likely that Chaucer elaborates on Custance's unwillingness to love because he perceived it to be an interesting and productive motif, as he uses this motif elsewhere in his work, including in *Troilus and Criseyde, The Knight's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *The Franklin's Tale*.

Indeed, *The Man of Law's Tale* is in some ways very different to *The King of Tars* in its presentation of Custance's unwillingness to love. While the Princess of Tars's aversion to the Sultan seems to focus on her Christian faith as a barrier to an interfaith relationship, in *The Man of Law's Tale* this barrier has already been overcome. The Sultan is so determined to marry Custance that he makes a treaty with the Pope, 'in destruccioun of mawmettrie, | And in encrees of Cristes lawe deere', agreeing that he, 'his baronage | And alle his liges sholde ycristned be' (236-40). This is directly motivated by the perceived difficulties of an interfaith relationship from an Islamic perspective as, in an episode unique to Chaucer's version of the tale, his council foresee 'swich difficultee [...] | By cause that ther was swich diversitee | Bitwene hir bothe lawes', telling the Sultan 'no "Cristen prince wolde fayn | Wedden his child under oure lawe sweete"' (218-23).[65] Like *The King of Tars*, *The Man of Law's Tale* recognises that interfaith relationships are problematic in Islamic as well as Christian law, but *The Man of Law's Tale* reverses the pattern of the Muslim Sultan forcing the Christian Princess to convert. Here, the Sultan agrees to a mass conversion, evoking the kind of fantasy that more often concludes a

[63] Dinshaw, 'Pale Faces', p. 28.
[64] Christopher Cannon, 'Chaucer and the Auchinleck Manuscript Revisited', *Chaucer Review*, 46.1–2 (2011), 131–46. For Loomis's claim, see Laura Hibbard Loomis, 'Chaucer and the Auchinleck MS: *Thopas* and *Guy of Warwick*', in *Adventures in the Middle Ages: A Memorial Collection of Essays and Studies*, Selected Papers in Literature and Criticism, 1 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1962), pp. 131–49.
[65] In Trevet and Gower, the Sultan declares he will convert to marry Constance without consulting his council or giving them the opportunity to express reservations.

romance than begins one.[66] However, Custance's unwillingness to marry the Sultan explicitly challenges this kind of conversion fantasy. Custance's doubts do not seem to reflect concerns about the efficacy of conversion, as apart from mentioning 'the Barbre nacioun' (281), she makes no reference to the Sultan's religious beliefs. Instead, the focus of Custance's unwillingness is the unknown, foreign nature of the Sultan and the country in which she will live. This indicates the issues an interfaith relationship might still pose even after (an offer of) conversion. As Jessica Coope notes, these difficulties were present in real-life interfaith relationships, with portrayals of the martyrs of Córdoba 'reveal[ing] a high level of tension in mixed-marriage families, which emerged from the difficulties surrounding Muslim-Christian marriages', such as differing standards of behaviour for women, different marriage laws, and different perspectives on drinking alcohol.[67] Chaucer seems to use Custance's unwillingness to explore the practical difficulties that may have been associated with conversion and cross-cultural marriages of the kind offered in some romances and *chansons de geste*, even when two partners commit to one religion. While *The King of Tars* uses the motif of unwillingness to love to explore contemporary anxieties about Christian failure and Muslim power, *The Man of Law's Tale* considers some of the potential problems with and questions about conversion to Christianity on a more personal level, depicting conversion as something culturally desirable, but insufficient to ensure consensual and mutual love.

This preoccupation with race, faith, and foreignness in Custance's unwillingness to love the Sultan suggests that anxieties about Christian women forming relationships with Muslim men are sustained even when those men have offered to convert to Christianity. *The Man of Law's Tale* suggests different possibilities for whether this can be seen as an area of intersectional awareness, acknowledging discrepancies of gendered power alongside racial dynamics, or rather a form of racial prejudice inflected by concern about white female vulnerability. There is an explicit concern with gendered power dynamics in *The Man of Law's Tale*, as Custance famously describes how '[w]ommen are born to thraldom and penance, | And to been under mannes governance' (286-87), adding to the tale's concern with her being 'bounden under subjeccioun | Of oon, she knoweth nat his condicioun', with the ambiguous reflection '[h]usbondes been alle goode,

[66] See, for example, *The King of Tars*, *Sir Isumbras*, and *Amoryus and Cleopes*.
[67] Coope, p. 12.

and han ben yoore; | That knowen wyves; I dar sey yow na moore' (270-73).[68] The suggestive trailing off into silence at this point indicates the depth of concern with gendered relationships in this tale: as Jill Mann suggests, '[t]he mask of romantic fiction here seems to fall away', as '[t]he narratorial comment encourages us to see the situation in its most bleakly depressing aspect'.[69] The consideration of these issues in a tale told by the Man of Law is particularly suggestive, as his profession may allow to Chaucer to lend a certain gravity and legitimacy to these issues.[70] Like *The King of Tars*, and perhaps in a more overt and relatable way, *The Man of Law's Tale* seems to use the motif of unwillingness to love someone of a different race or faith to explore the ways in which consent and coercion can coexist in other kinds of relationships too. *The Man of Law's Tale* focuses upon the discrepancy between personal desire and what is perceived to be for the benefit of (Christian) society, as well as the differences between a young person's own wishes and those of her parents. Custance makes it clear that she is going to Syria 'syn that it is youre wille' (282), indicating her parents' influence upon her marriage. A duality between Custance's wishes and what is deemed to be for the benefit of wider society is also established, as 'the popes mediacioun, | And al the chirche, and al the chivalrie' (234-35) are enlisted, and 'th'Emperour' makes 'purveiance' (247-48) on Custance's behalf. The marriage is arranged by significant elements of Christian society, and all of this mediation occurs before Custance herself is given chance to express her thoughts – in contrast to *The King of Tars*, where the Princess is consulted for her views (46-72). This contrast between personal wishes and societal gain is suggestive in a context where '[e]lite marriages [...] were [...] closely controlled by the heads of families'.[71] Although, as Hume notes, 'most of Chaucer's readers would have enjoyed more freedom than that afforded to the fictional Constance', Custance's marriage may comment

[68] Lines 286-87 may also be a narratorial reflection rather than a comment by Custance; Saunders suggests that 'though sometimes ascribed to Custance, [these lines] seem to form a narratorial comment': *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 284.
[69] Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer*, Chaucer Studies, 30 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002), pp. 101, 100 (first publ. as *Geoffrey Chaucer*, Feminist Readings (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991)).
[70] For a discussion of Chaucer, gender, and the law, see Barrington. Many other critics have commented on the legal themes of *The Man of Law's Tale* and their suitability to its teller: for a good, brief summary, see Kathy Lavezzo, 'Beyond Rome: Mapping Gender and Justice in *The Man of Law's Tale*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 24 (2002), 149–80 (pp. 164–65 n. 39). Dinshaw perhaps underplays the sympathy with which the Man of Law (and potentially Chaucer through the Man of Law) approaches issues of female autonomy: Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, p. 90. Whether to refer to the speaker of *The Man of Law's Tale* as Chaucer or the Man of Law is a complicated issue; in referring to the speaker at times as the Man of Law I do not wish to attribute separate agency to the Man of Law. For a discussion of the difficulties and problems this poses, see A. C. Spearing, 'Narrative Voice: The Case of Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*', *New Literary History*, 32.3 (2001), 715–46.
[71] McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, p. 18.

suggestively and sympathetically on the prerogative of parental choice in marriage.[72] That there is a brief, ambiguous reference to happiness – 'in murthe and joye I lete hem dwelle' (410) – when Custance and the Sultan meet could also indicate some exploration of contemporary marriage norms: the 'hem' referred to is ambiguous, so while Custance may still be unhappy, the possibility that she warms to her marriage to the Sultan when she meets him may be alluded to, proffering a provisional but hopeful message for young people facing their own marriage agreements (especially given the assumption that love may develop within, rather than before, marriage).[73]

However, while Custance's marriage may resonate with some of the anxieties (and perhaps hopes) medieval readers may have felt about their own marital prospects, hers is not 'a typical late medieval marriage', a 'fate suffered by multitudes of medieval women (and men too)': Hume and Mann underplay the importance of the Sultan's identity, Hume referring to him only as 'particularly mysterious', when his (cultural, racial, and to some extent religious) foreignness is emphasised in a way King Alla's (Custance's strikingly-named second husband) is not.[74] As Lynn Ramey notes, there is 'no metacommentary from Chaucer at all' about Custance's feelings towards Alla. Although there is no explicit mention of Custance consenting (let alone desiring) to marry Alla, the difference between the ambiguity of her consent to marry Alla and the 'sixty lines of the tale [...] spent explaining how and why Custance is traumatized by her impending marriage to the converted Saracen' indicate the significance of the Sultan's race and faith for Custance's unwillingness to love.[75] The particular nature of Custance's marriage to the Sultan is important, then, and to some extent distances her marriage from comparisons with real-life partnerships, as the extreme nature of being sent unwillingly to marry an unknown man in a far-off country would only have been likely to apply in rare cases, such as royal marriages.[76] However, the extremity of Custance's situation may enable a veiled but pointed exposure of the way in which consent and coercion – framed here as acceptance

[72] Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, p. 117.
[73] On this assumption, see Burger, pp. 18, 194–95.
[74] Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 109, 115; Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer*, p. 100.
[75] Ramey, p. 83.
[76] Ward notes that queens' marriages were 'often conducted on the international plane and, once married, she was more likely to be isolated from kin and countrymen': 'the majority of English queens originated from the Continent', and '[i]n some cases, there was an element of culture shock', pertinent to Custance's anxiety in *The Man of Law's Tale*. Ward's description of Leonor of Urgel having to be forced onto the boat which was to take her to marry Raimondo Orisini, Count of Nola, also suggestively resonates with the circumstances of Custance's marriage: *Women in Medieval Europe 1200-1500*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 132–33. Bly Calkin states that 'the foreign queen was a constant presence in the English political scene during the reigns of Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, Edward III, and Richard II': *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, p. 63.

and parental pressure – could coexist in medieval marriage arrangements. This is not necessarily to claim that Chaucer is critiquing medieval marriages, but that he is exploring the kinds of cultural practices, ideas, and problems that accompany them, using an extreme situation to reflect on more everyday possibilities.[77]

While Chaucer treats Custance's agency (or lack therefore) in her marriage thoughtfully, this seems in part to reflect a combination of anxieties about white female vulnerability and racist fears about sexual and marital coercion. The sympathy evoked for Custance's plight upon marrying the Sultan is itself inflected by the dynamics of race and faith: Custance prays for Christ to 'yeve me grace his heestes to fulfille' (284), and the embodiment of her sorrow in her '[f]ul pale' (265) appearance suggestively correlates pity with Christianity and whiteness of skin, perhaps using Custance's plight to reinforce racial-religious boundaries despite the apparent overcoming of those boundaries through conversion. The portrayal of the Sultana, Custance's mother-in-law, also combines aspects of misogyny and racism, potentially reflecting back on the reasons for the tale's concern about Custance's marital arrangements. The Man of Law castigates the Sultana right from her first appearance, rebuking her as the

> roote of iniquitee!
> Virago, thou Semyrame the secounde!
> O serpent under femynynytee,
> Like to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!
> O feyned womman, al that may confounde
> Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
> Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!
>
> O Sathan, envious syn thilke day
> That thou were chaced from our heritage,
> Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!
> [...]
> Thou wolt fordoon this Cristen mariage.
> Thyn instrument so – weylawey the while! –
> Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigile. (358-71)

This condemnation repeatedly focuses on the Sultana's gender, deploying misogynistic ideas about the associations between Satan and women, women and sin. At the same

[77] Hume notes that Custance's speeches have been taken to indicate 'Chaucer's compassionate opposition to the practice of arranged marriages', but argues instead that '[t]he poem's aim must be to cultivate in its readers the resilience of Constance in the face of worldly disaster and her focus on the next world rather than this'; while this is a persuasive reading, I would argue that Chaucer is also interested in dramatising the problems of this world and exploring the various narrative and cultural functions unwillingness to love can serve in his work. See Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 112, 126.

time, however, the Man of Law also questions the Sultana's femininity, calling her 'Virago' ('a standard monitory topos of later medieval antifeminist satire and discourse') and 'feyned womman' to suggest that the misogynistic association between women and sin has its opposite and counterpart in the perception that women should be characterised by '[v]ertu and innocence', as is Custance.[78] The connection between the Sultana and the devil can also be seen to draw upon prejudices about race and religion, as in *The Prioress's Tale* Chaucer similarly invokes the devil as the motivator for the Jews' murder of the young boy in this tale (although elsewhere in *The Man of Law's Tale*, Satan is evoked in relation to the English knight's desire for Custance, 582-88).[79] Likewise, the reference to Semiramis – an Assyrian queen – could be motivated by race as well as gender. The combination of misogyny and racism in the portrayal of the Sultana, and the way in which this reflects upon the converse characterisation of Custance as victim rather than villain, marked out by her pale countenance and faith in Christ, perhaps suggests that the pronounced concern with Christian women marrying Muslim men in medieval romance reflects a potent and longstanding combination of misogyny and racism rather than (or as much as) an awareness of how issues of gender also impact upon interfaith and interracial relationships.[80]

The Sultana also serves another important function within *The Man of Law's Tale*'s representation of interfaith and interracial relationships: because the Sultana schemes to have the Sultan and the other Christians killed at the wedding feast, Custance's relationship with the Sultan ends before it is consummated. While *The King of Tars* is explicitly preoccupied with the birth of a mixed-race child, *The Man of Law's Tale* perhaps reflects similar anxieties about interracial relationships through its omission of consummation.[81] However, in *The Man of Law's Tale*, anxiety about sexuality is not just a racial or interfaith issue, as there seems to be a distaste or anxiety about sex more generally, perhaps reflecting the way that 'in hagiographic romance, the sexual formula and alchemy of an erotic trajectory that has served medieval romance for centuries [...] must give way

[78] Schibanoff, p. 253.
[79] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Prioress's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 209–12 (ll. 558–66).
[80] The polarisation between the Sultana as villain and Custance as victim accords with Phipps's argument that '[v]ictimhood is dressed in white', and can 'be turned on women of colour in interpersonal interactions': Phipps, p. 10.
[81] However, Ramey suggests that '[b]y contrasting the two conversions and marriages [between Custance and the Sultan and Custance and King Alla], Chaucer implicitly raises the question of what a child of Custance and the sultan would have been like', Ramey, p. 84.

to a different order of love'.[82] Gaunt comments that '[t]he universal subtext of saints' lives about women is forced sex, in other words rape', while Saunders notes that female saints' lives 'repeatedly recount their devotion to virginity and the testing of this ideal, most strikingly through the threat of rape', which is almost always averted.[83] Avoiding the consummation of Custance's first marriage to the Sultan, then, can be seen as not only motivated by an anxiety about sex that reflects racist concerns about interracial relationships, but also as a broader reflection of anxieties about sexuality in this tale more widely. Nonetheless, similarly to the difference between Custance's sorrow at marrying the Sultan and her lack of explicit consent or desire to marry Alla, the fact that her relationship with the Sultan is brought to an end before they consummate their marriage, while the consummation of her marriage with Alla is explicitly (if oddly) narrated still suggests a difference in attitudes to these relationships, which seems to return to the issue of the Sultan's greater religious, racial, and cultural foreignness.[84]

Like *The King of Tars*, *The Man of Law's Tale* displays an explicit and repeated anxiety about a marriage between a Christian woman and a Muslim man, even when that man has already offered to convert to Christianity in a way that is thought of as beneficial to Christian society. That this anxiety is evident even when a Sultan has promised to convert suggests that relationships between Christian women and (formerly) non-Christian men are a source of significant concern for medieval Christian writers. The extent to which this seems to be a gendered perception is revealed by the differences evident in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, *Sir Ferumbras*, and *The Sowdone of Babylone*, all of which depict a Christian man as unwilling to marry a non-Christian woman, but do so in ways that reveal less explicit concern with race and faith when it is a Christian man involved in an interfaith relationship.

[82] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 183; see further her discussion pp. 200-01. Custance faces an attempted rape, unwanted advances from a knight in Northumbria, and lines 708-14 seem markedly embarrassed or ambivalent about her sexual relationship with Alla.
[83] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 197; Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 120. See also Gravdal, 'Plotting Rape in the Female Saints' Lives'.
[84] For a complementary perspective, see Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 227.

'Y HAUE LEUYD ON FALSE LORE – | FOR ÞY LOUE Y WYLL NO MORE': FAITH, STATUS, AND VULNERABILITY IN *SIR BEVIS OF HAMPTON*[85]

The lengthy fourteenth-century romance *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, like *The King of Tars* and *The Man of Law's Tale*, also pinpoints differences of faith as motivating unwillingness to love.[86] Indeed, Josian's Muslim identity is foregrounded as a potential issue right from the first mention of her in the narrative. We are told straightaway that she is 'whyte and swete' (581), according with the romance and *chanson de geste* image of the white Muslim Princess and to some extent erasing the interracial aspects of Bevis and Josian's relationship.[87] However, while '[m]en knewe noon so feyre on lyue, | So hende nor so wele ytaght', 'of Crystes lawe cowde sche noght' (587-89), pinpointing her faith as a potential issue in the narrative. This is quickly developed, as Josian's father suggests to Bevis

> And þou wolde þy lorde forsake
> And Apolyn to þy lorde take,
> Hur wyll y geue þe to wyfe,
> And all my londe aftur my lyfe. (622-25)

This seemingly tempting offer of land, riches, and a wife, made to a young boy who has been disinherited, is quickly rejected by Bevis:

> That y nolde
> For all thy syluyr and þy golde;
> Ne for all þe gode vndur Heuyn lyght,
> Nodur for þy doghtur, þat ys so bryght.
> I wolde not forsake, on no manere,
> God þat boght me so dere.
> All be they brente to dethe
> That on odur false goddys beleuyth! (626-33)

The condition of his conversion is explicitly the reason Bevis rejects the king's offer, violently refuting non-Christian religious beliefs. He acknowledges the fantasy appeal of the king's wealth, and the beauty of Josian, but affirms his commitment to his faith above all, making it absolutely clear that his unwillingness to marry Josian comes from their differing faiths. To some extent, this is an inversion of the trope of a Muslim Princess offering to convert for the love of a Christian man, as *Bevis* stages fantasies of religious

[85] *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows, EETS, o.s., 349, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), I, ll. 1328–29. All quotations are taken from Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38 unless otherwise stated.
[86] On the date of *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, see Jennifer Fellows, 'Introduction', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, I, xv–lxxviii (p. xv).
[87] de Weever, 'Whitening the Saracen'; Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, p. 63; Cohen, p. 202.

conversion in a different manner, positioning conversion to Islam as a temptation that Bevis determinedly avoids. However, *Bevis* replays this trope more conventionally later on, when Josian starts to offer Bevis her love, as it is only when she declares 'y haue leuyd on false lore – | For þy loue y wyll no more' (1328-29) and insists 'y schall, as y am mayde – | My false goddys all forsake | And Crystendome for þy loue take' that Bevis agrees to love her, specifically saying '[o]n that maner [...] | I the graunt, my swete wyght!' (1335-39). *Bevis* engages clearly and directly with interfaith relationships as an issue for Christian men as well as Christian women, as Bevis refuses to love Josian until she agrees to convert for his sake, even calling her a 'hethen hounde' (773) to starkly reinforce his dislike of her beliefs. Although Mohja Kahf suggests Josian's 'promise of conversion is a desperate last attempt to overcome Bevis' virtuous objections', *Bevis* in fact repeatedly engages with the issue of religious conversion to make this central to Bevis's relationship with Josian.[88]

However, *Bevis* also complicates the fantasy trope of the converted Muslim Princess through the context of Bevis and Josian's relationship. Compared to other similar romances, Bevis is in a particularly vulnerable position, as he is the only Christian in Josian's father's court. While crusading romances, including the *Ferumbras* narratives discussed in the final section of this chapter, may depict precarity and isolation in terms of war and imprisonment, positioning a small group of Christian men within a Muslim court, *Bevis* is unusual in portraying Bevis as the only Christian. In some ways, Bevis's vulnerability and isolation position him similarly to Horn and Amis, according with the *Roman de Horn*'s influence on *Boeve de Haumtone*.[89] Like *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun*, *Bevis* engages thoughtfully and extensively with the precarity of a young man living at another king's court, depicting Bevis's vulnerability to accusations made by members of this court (1347-79). However, the added issue of being in a court that serves a different faith, and with people of a different race, extends the isolation Bevis experiences, perhaps opening up anxiety about the potential for Bevis to be coerced or persuaded into converting to Islam himself (as the King initially suggests). As Bly Calkin notes, the romance 'conveys a fear of Christian assimilation into a non-Christian world', dramatising '[o]ne of the historical anxieties prompted by crusade and settlement in the East [...] the fear that western Christians involved in these activities might lose their sense of proper

[88] Kahf, p. 34.
[89] On *Boeve* and the *Roman de Horn*, see Judith Weiss, 'Introduction', in *'Boeve de Haumtone' and 'Gui de Warewic'*, pp. 1–24 (p. 5).

mores and become too similar to their Muslim opponents'.[90] The preoccupation with religion demonstrated in Bevis's unwillingness to love Josian, then, may not simply suggest the same level of concern about interfaith relationships for Christian men as for Christian women; instead, this may reflect the unusual and vulnerable situation particular to the protagonist of this narrative.[91]

In some ways, *Bevis* uses the motif of unwillingness to love very differently to *The King of Tars* and *The Man of Law's Tale*. Whereas those romances depicted differing race/faith as the sole reason for the protagonists' unwillingness to love, *Bevis* somewhat diminishes the emphasis upon racial-religious difference by adding a secondary area of concern, that of status rather than religion. While religion is the most prominent concern when Josian's father initially offers Bevis her hand in marriage, and when Bevis subsequently accepts Josian's love, an intermediary episode focuses instead on the issue of social status. This focus is clearest in the Naples manuscript (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29), which is closer to the Anglo-Norman *Boeve* at this point.[92] When Josian reveals her love to Bevis, Bevis replies

> For God [...] þat do I nelle!
> In alle this worlde is no suche man –
> King, prince ne soudan –
> That [t]he to wife hab nolde
> And he the onys had biholde.
> And I am a kny3t of vnkouth lond
> And haue no more good þan I in stond. (Naples, 1231-37)

Rather than their differing faiths, Bevis here pinpoints the disparity in their social status – Josian a princess desired by many royal suitors, and Bevis a disinherited knight being fostered by the foreign king whose daughter now woos him – as the reason for his resistance to Josian's advances, again recalling the scenario in *King Horn* and *Amis and*

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[90] Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'The Anxieties of Encounter and Exchange: Saracens and Christian Heroism in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*', *Florilegium*, 21 (2004), 135–58 (pp. 136–37).

[91] Bly Calkin notes that Bevis is an isolated figure more generally, characterised by 'an inability to fit comfortably into English society', which leads to him 'abandon[ing] Christian England to return to his Saracen realm of Mombraunt': 'Saracens and Christian Heroism in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*', p. 146. Rouse also explores Bevis's complex relationship to English identity: 'For King and Country? The Tension between National and Regional Identities in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', in *'Sir Bevis of Hampton' in Literary Tradition*, pp. 114–26.

[92] For the text of *Boeve*, see *Der Anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, ed. by Albert Stimming, Bibliotheca Normannica, 7 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1899), ll. 670–708; trans. in 'Boeve de Haumtone', in *'Boeve de Haumtone' and 'Gui de Warewic'*, trans. by Judith Weiss, pp. 25–95 (p. 37). While 'the relationships of the Middle English manuscript texts of *Bevis* both to their ultimate, Anglo-Norman source and to one another are extraordinarily complex', Fellows notes that the Naples manuscript 'is perhaps the most conservative version': Fellows, 'Introduction', I, p. lxi–lxii, lxix.

Amiloun. *Bevis* remains focused upon social status throughout this scene: after Bevis's rebuff, Josian insists that 'I haue the leuer to my leman, | Al on thi shirt nakid, | Than al the good that euer was makid' (Naples, 1241-43), and when Bevis still refuses her, she weeps and calls him a 'chorle' (1252), an insult predicated upon social status.[93] Josian then agrees with Bevis's argument that no king or knight would refuse her, and Bevis himself undergoes a similarly humorous reversal as he grows angry at her description of him as a churl, saying '[m]y fadir was bothe erle and kny3t' (Naples, 1261). The sudden shifts in the protagonists' claims about social status in this scene may provide humour, indicating their anger and quickness to take offence (Saunders notes that this 'plays on the proverbial stereotype of the short-lived anger of women' in particular), but these shifts in perspective also foreground the issue of social status.[94] While the Cambridge University Library manuscript does not include Bevis's first speech insisting that he is of too low status to accept Josian's love, social status is still the primary focus of the scene in this manuscript, as Josian upbraids Bevis for rejecting her when kings and princes desire her, and Bevis similarly takes offence at her description of him as a churl. In contrast, Josian's religion is not explicitly mentioned by Bevis in either version of this scene, even though she angrily curses 'Mahound yeue the tene and wrake!' (Naples, 1253; the line is almost identical in CUL Ff.2.38). Instead, this scene focuses directly and continually on social status, highlighting an issue that was not addressed in the works focused upon a woman involved in an interfaith relationship. This dilution of the focus upon racial-religious difference suggests that there may be less concern about relationships involving Christian men and Muslim women than relationships involving Muslim men and Christian women, despite the focus on religion elsewhere in *Bevis*.

Bevis's initial resistance to the apparently fantasy offer of Josian's love (or hand in marriage), then, creates space for a dialogue between fictional and real-world concerns, again illustrating the proximity between literature and life that the motif of unwillingness to love often facilitates within medieval romance. While Bevis's first rejection of the king's offer of Josian's hand and his ultimate acceptance of Josian's love are predicated upon issues of religious difference, this concern with faith also paves the way for an examination of other issues that might have a more direct bearing on readers' own relationships. The focus on social status in the intermediary scene not only dilutes the

[93] See 'Cherl n.', in *Middle English Dictionary*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED7461> [accessed 22 December 2020].
[94] Saunders, 'Gender, Virtue and Wisdom in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', p. 169.

concern with religious difference, but also encompasses an issue more likely to be of concern to medieval readers (even if this issue is represented in a quite extreme way), and signals some of the ways in which Bevis and Josian's relationship could be said to combine consent with coercion. Like *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun*, *Bevis* suggests – perhaps more subtly than the other works – that Bevis's position is not a straightforward one, despite the apparent fantasy of being offered a beautiful and high-status woman's love. I am not suggesting that Josian coerces Bevis into a relationship with her: Bevis ultimately agrees to the relationship on his own terms, and his attraction to Josian is indicated by his repeated references to her beauty and desirability even as he rejects her. However, the dynamics of their relationship are depicted in such a way that suggests the potential for coercion, in view of Bevis's precarious position in Josian's father's court and his vulnerability as a disinherited Christian knight in a foreign land. Once again, this use of the motif of unwillingness to love can broaden our understanding of coercion in the romance genre, revealing that men like Bevis may be vulnerable to coercion by powerful women. Even though Bevis himself ultimately consents to a relationship with Josian, the portrayal of their relationship gestures towards some of the ways in which coercion may be subtly contained within a consensual agreement. The earlier scene in which Bevis is wounded is particularly suggestive in this regard. While Bevis lies in bed injured, Josian kisses him (790, 822) and calls him 'leman' (796), 'mak[ing] her desire obvious'; Bevis does not resist this treatment, but nor is he said to call her 'leman' in return.[95] The romance genre's focus on female desire can be seen to question male reciprocation and consent here, as '[t]he traditional power relation between knight and lady is reversed as Bevis becomes the desired object'.[96] The hints of an imbalance in both power and desire suggestively indicate the broader and more subtle ways in which coercion may be invoked in medieval romance, and the experiences men may have of coercion. The apparently unusual situation of an interfaith relationship offered to a disinherited Christian knight in a foreign land, and the fantasy of converting a beautiful Muslim woman (who offers great knowledge and agency, drawn from her Muslim heritage, which support Bevis's interests in the plot of the romance), is thus used not only to explore issues of religious difference in *Bevis*, but to reflect upon issues more likely to affect readers' own lives and relationships.[97] While this is true also of narratives involving Christian women in

[95] Kahf, p. 34.
[96] Saunders, 'Gender, Virtue and Wisdom in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', p. 169. On female desire in *Bevis*, see further Judith Weiss, 'The wooing woman', pp. 151–54.
[97] On Josian's learning and medical knowledge, see Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*, pp. 121–24.

interfaith relationships, *Bevis* more explicitly diverges from a focus on race and faith through its consideration of social status, suggesting a different level of concern about interfaith relationships when Christian men are involved in them compared to Christian women.

'WYLE I NEUER TAKE HIRE NER NO WOMAN': HOMOSOCIALITY AND SOCIAL PRESSURE IN *SIR FERUMBRAS* AND *THE SOWDONE OF BABYLONE*[98]

While *Sir Bevis of Hampton* indicates a reduced concern with racial-religious difference compared to narratives involving Christian women in interfaith relationships, the late fourteenth-century *Sir Ferumbras* and early fifteenth-century *Sowdone of Babylone*, two of the Middle English Charlemagne romances derived ultimately (and probably independently) from the French *Fierabras* tradition, demonstrate even less preoccupation with religion and race.[99] When Floripas, the 'fair & swet' daughter of the Muslim Sultan Balan/Laban, asks for Guy of Burgundy's love in return for helping the imprisoned Christians, saying she will convert to Christianity for him, Guy's response does not focus on Floripas's faith as an issue at all.[100] Instead, Guy declares, 'wyuy nolde he noȝt, | With-oute assent of kyng Charloun : that had had him vp i-broȝt' (2096-97), elaborating on this further in *The Sowdone of Babylone*, where he swears

> By God [...] þat gafe me life,
> Hire wole I never haue,
> Wyle I neuer take hire ner no woman,
> But Charles the kinge hir me gife.
> I hight him, as I was trewe man,
> To holden it, while I lyve. (*SoB*, 1909-12)

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[98] *The Sowdone of Babylone*, ed. by Emil Hausknecht, EETS, e.s., 38 (London: Trübner, 1881), l. 1911.

[99] On the complex relationships between the Middle English and French *Fierabras* texts, see Ailes, 'A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Verse Texts of the Fierabras Legend', pp. 270–77, 353–57, 420–21, 422–26, 430–34, 443–44; W. R. J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London: Longman, 1987), pp. 100–103; Janet M. Cowen, 'The English Charlemagne Romances', in *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, ed. by Karen Pratt, King's College London Medieval Studies, 12 (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1996), pp. 149–68 (especially pp. 150–51, 159, 161–62); and the introductions to the various editions of the *Sowdone of Babylon*, *Sir Ferumbras*, and *Firumbras*. Although these, as Ailes discusses, are somewhat out of date due to the subsequent discovery and availability of more French manuscripts, they provide some of the framework for later studies. See Sidney J. Herrtage, 'Introduction', in *Sir Ferumbras*, pp. v–xxx (pp. xii–xiv); Emil Hausknecht, 'Introduction', in *The Sowdone of Babylone*, pp. v–xlviii (pp. xvi–xxxiv), and Emil Hausknecht, 'Additions', in *The Sowdone of Babylone*, pp. xlix–liv; Mary Isabelle O'Sullivan, 'Introduction', in *Firumbras and Otuel and Roland*, EETS, o.s., 198 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. xi–lxxxiii (pp. xxi–xxii, xxvi–xliii). Because the Fillingham *Firumbras* is missing the early sections of the text in which Guy and Floripas become engaged, I focus upon *The Sowdone of Babylone* and the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* here. To provide a more concise discussion, I do not consider Caxton's *Charles the Grete*.

[100] *Sir Ferumbras*, l. 1201.

Guy's resistance to marrying Floripas is apparently unrelated to her faith or race; instead, he focuses upon the issue of homosocial loyalty through his unwillingness to love any woman not given to him by Charlemagne. *The Sowdone of Babylone* and *Sir Ferumbras* seem to turn away from addressing and reinforcing racial-religious difference through unwillingness to love someone of another race or faith, instead using this motif to focus on another issue entirely. This accords with Bly Calkin's argument that Muslim characters 'address both local western issues as well as ideas stemming from East-West cultural contact and the very real anxieties Muslim civilizations occasioned for European Christians', extending the parameters of Bly Calkin's argument beyond the Auchinleck manuscript, and illustrating the way in which this tendency characterises even what would seem to be the ultimate manifestation of contact between Muslims and Christians, intermarriage.[101] *The Sowdone of Babylone* and *Sir Ferumbras* illustrate a significant shift away from the anxiety about racial and religious differences in *The King of Tars* and *The Man of Law's Tale*, providing a suggestive example of the extent to which interfaith marriages may have been considered less of an issue for Christian men compared to Christian women.

Of course, it could be argued that the reduced concern with racial-religious difference in *The Sowdone of Babylone* and *Sir Ferumbras* (as well as, to some extent, *Sir Bevis of Hampton*) in part results from Floripas's offer to convert, reducing the extent to which her prospective relationship with Guy could be considered interfaith, and thus lessening some of the potential for anxiety about this. However, while Guy's unwillingness does not seem to be used to create anxiety about interfaith relationships, both the *Sowdone* and *Sir Ferumbras* include moments that do suggest a concern with Floripas's religious beliefs. In *Sir Ferumbras*, after she has offered to convert, Floripas later suggests the knights should pray to her idols, since '[f]ul litel ys 3our god of my3t þat vytailes ne sent 3ov none' (*SF*, 2526). Her commitment to conversion is reaffirmed after this, when the peers break her idols and she sees that they had no power to protect themselves, but her reversion to idolatry (falsely represented as a part of Islam) after her offer to convert still highlights a concern with her commitment to Christianity. This concern seems to align well with what we know of the author of *Sir Ferumbras*, who was apparently a cleric, making it perhaps more striking that Guy's reluctance to marry Floripas does not seem to relate to concerns

[101] Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, p. 3.

about her religion.[102] While the *Sowdone* does not include the same reversion to idolatry, it exhibits anxiety about religious difference when Roland refuses Floripas's offer for him to choose one of her maidens to love, saying

> þat were myscheve;
> Oure lay wole not, þat we with youe dele,
> Tille that ye Cristyn be made;
> Ner of your play we wole not fele,
> For than were we cursed in dede. (*SoB*, 2750-54)

Roland's refusal of Floripas's maidens sits uncomfortably alongside her relationship with Guy, as Roland apparently extends this concern to Floripas herself, saying Christians may not 'with *youe* dele | Tille that *ye* Cristyn be made' (my emphasis). While Guy and Floripas's relationship is not depicted in detail, they do kiss as soon as they are betrothed, marking a difference from the French *chanson de geste* and Jean Bagnyon's prose *Fierabras*, where Floripas and Guy do not kiss initially '[p]or chen qu'ele iert paienne et il crestïennez',[103] introducing a 'prohibition on physical contact' because Floripas 'is still marked off as pagan and therefore forbidden'.[104] Roland's negative reaction to Floripas's offer contrasts with his positive response in *Sir Ferumbras* (3441-42) and the Fillingham *Firumbras*, indicating some concern with interfaith relationships in the *Sowdone*, and suggesting that the absence of anxiety about Floripas's faith in Guy's rejection of her cannot solely be attributed to her offer to convert.[105]

In terms of the balance between Guy's lack of reference to Floripas's faith in his rejection of her, and the extent to which his unwillingness still serves to demarcate racial-religious boundaries, comparing the Middle English *Fierabras* narratives with the anonymous French prose *Fierabras* is illuminating. Unusually, the anonymous prose *Fierabras* does not include Guy's unwillingness to love, instead having Guy accept Floripas's love immediately.[106] The differing situation in the prose *Fierabras* probably comes from the anonymous prose author or their immediate source: Ailes suggests the

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[102] The author's clerical identity is established by Herrtage on the basis of a corrected draft of a section of *Sir Ferumbras*, which survived in the cover of the Ashmole manuscript. It appears on the back of an ecclesiastical document from the diocese of Exeter, which is in the same handwriting. See Herrtage, 'Introduction', pp. xv–xvi.
[103] *Fierabras: Chanson de geste du XIIe siècle*, ed. by Marc Le Person, Classiques français du moyen âge, 142 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), l. 2930.
[104] Akbari, pp. 183, 184.
[105] *Firumbras and Otuel and Roland*, ed. by Mary Isabelle O'Sullivan, EETS, o. s., 198 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), ll. 860–62.
[106] *Fierabras: roman en prose de la fin du XIVe siècle*, ed. by Jean Miquet, Publications médiévales de l'Université d'Ottawa, 9 (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983), p. 92 (91. 1013-27).

anonymous prose narrative may be situated on the same side of the stemma as the Egerton manuscript of the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras*, the Middle English texts, and the Bagnyon prose version, so its omission of Guy's initial rejection of Floripas does not point to it being a different recension of the narrative as a whole.[107] Nor does it seem to focus much more on Floripas's willingness to convert: while she does say that in kissing her, '[j]a vous n'y aurez pechié' [you will never have sinned] (contrasting with the Bagnyon prose version), her offer to convert to Christianity is presented quite similarly to her offer in *Sir Ferumbras* and the *Sowdone*.[108] Instead, the omission of Guy's unwillingness may relate to this narrative's different approach to Floripas, Suzanne Conklin Akbari suggesting that it 'presents a neutralized Floripas' as 'a model of feminine deportment'.[109] The omission of the rejection episode may both result from and contribute to this change in Floripas's character: the author of the anonymous prose version may have chosen to omit Guy's initial rejection of Floripas to ensure she is presented as a more conventionally desirable figure who does not need to resort to threats or violence to obtain her desired husband; or, in rendering Floripas a more neutral/positive figure, the author may have seen no reason for Guy to reject her, and so omitted the episode altogether. These alterations to the narrative may illuminate the functions of the rejection episode in the other texts: if the rejection episode is omitted in accordance with changes to Floripas's character, then the inclusion of the rejection episode may support a particular interpretation of Floripas in the other texts. Despite his apparent absence of concern about her faith, Guy's unwillingness to love Floripas may work with the other moments in the narrative that suggest anxiety about her Islamic heritage and beliefs to demarcate racial-religious difference by suggesting that Floripas is an improper object of desire, even momentarily and without explicitly relating this to her faith. Guy's unwillingness certainly seems to humiliate Floripas and, in *Sir Ferumbras*, to characterise her negatively through her angry and anti-Christian response to Guy's rejection (like Josian, Floripas curses 'by Mahoun', *SF*, 2099). While it seems odd, and deliberate, that Guy's rejection of Floripas does not explicitly comment on her character or religion, Guy's unwillingness to love may still implicitly serve the ideological function of demarcating racial-religious boundaries and normative desires.

[107] Ailes, 'A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Verse Texts of the Fierabras Legend', pp. 291–320, 421, 444.
[108] Miquet, p. 92 (91. 1014). My translation.
[109] Akbari, pp. 179–80.

However, the focus on homosociality also opens up other functions for Guy's unwillingness to love, which diminish the concern with racial-religious difference to suggest the reduced anxiety it creates when a Christian man is involved in an interfaith relationship, and indicate further possibilities for romances' reflections of real-life marital practices. Guy's focus on homosocial loyalty acts as a bridge between the concerns of romance and reality: kings influenced the marriages of their highest nobility in both literature and life, and Guy is noted to be Charlemagne's nephew in the *Sowdone* (1888), and to have been 'up i-broȝt' by him in *Sir Ferumbras* (2097), adding a familial or even paternal dimension to this relationship, where more of an influence over marital choice would have been expected.[110] Moss, writing about English gentry families, argues that

> Fathers played an important role in running negotiations. From the evidence of marriage contracts, it would seem that fathers were often responsible for having the contracts drawn up. [...] The case of William Stonor and Margery Blount demonstrates that whilst sons may have wooed women, they relied on their fathers for advice and permission – and that a father had the ability to stop negotiations.[111]

McSheffrey similarly observes that while '[t]here is little evidence to support the old chestnut that all medieval marriages were arranged by fathers or lords', 'a decision as important as the choice of spouse was not made without recourse to the advice, help, and sometimes the consent or even the coercion of the important people in a young man's or young woman's life'.[112] Guy's commitment to marry only a woman approved by Charlemagne therefore seems to reflect the real-life importance of fathers and guardians in marital arrangements.

While Guy's commitment to his promise to Charlemagne seems to be undermined when he accepts Floripas's offer, this acceptance continues to highlight the participation of people other than a couple themselves in the making of a marriage agreement, according with perspectives of marriage from the evidence of sources like the Paston letters, where Margery Paston is reminded of 'how sche was born, wat kyn and frenddys þat sche had' when she asserts her right to choose her own husband.[113] Similarly to this emphasis upon abiding by familial wishes, in *Sir Ferumbras* Guy changes his mind

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[110] Ward notes that '[m]arriage for noble and gentry children was arranged by their families, with the participation on occasion of their lords and of the king'; '[a]ccording to Henry I's coronation charter of 1100, any baron contemplating the marriage of one of his female relations had to consult the king, and a baron's daughter who survived him as his heir was to be given in marriage by the king on the advice of his barons': Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, pp. 15–16.
[111] Moss, *Fatherhood and its Representations*, p. 94.
[112] McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 77–78.
[113] *Paston Letters*, I, p. 342 (letter 203).

when Roland appeals again to 'ys cosn free', saying '[t]ak thys damesele by þe hand as þow louest me'. This time, Guy replies '[a]s þow wolt y wol done' (*SF*, 2102-04). While Guy partly reneges on his commitment to Charlemagne (although at the end of *Sir Ferumbras*, he says he will 'gladlych' marry Floripas '[s]o þat myn vncle assenty to', 5875, a condition that is not explicitly reiterated in the *Sowdone*), homosociality is still highlighted in his acceptance of her love. Likewise, in the *Sowdone*, Roland and Oliver both beseech Guy,

> [c]ertyfyinge him of her myschefe,
> Tellinge him of the parelles, þat þay in wer,
> For to take this lady to his wedded wife.
> 'But thou helpe in this nede,
> We be here in grete doute.
> Almyghty god shalle quyte thy mede,
> Elles come we nevere hennys oute.'
> Thus thay treted him to and fro;
> At the laste he sayde, he wolde. (*SoB*, 1916-24)

Roland and Oliver make this decision about 'her myschefe' and 'parelles' rather than Floripas's qualities, appealing to Guy to help them and the other peers. They do tell Guy that '[a]lmyghty god shalle quyte thy mede', perhaps suggesting that the implications of an interfaith marriage are being considered, as Guy is reassured that this is a choice for which God will reward him (perhaps also forgiving him for breaking his promise to Charlemagne). But overall, the focus here seems to be on homosocial bonds and pressures, with Roland and Oliver's influence replacing Charlemagne's. While Guy accepting Floripas's love diminishes the weight he places on Charlemagne's agreement, then, his acceptance still prioritises homosocial loyalty as a factor influencing marital arrangements. Once again, while Guy's unwillingness to love Floripas is situated amongst an extreme situation, the *Sowdone* and *Sir Ferumbras* use Guy's unwillingness as a way of considering issues that are perhaps surprisingly pertinent to readers' own lives, particularly focusing upon the way marriage negotiations often took different people's views and loyalties into account.

The *Sowdone* and *Sir Ferumbras* also use Guy's unwillingness to love as a way of exploring the combinations of consent and coercion that could characterise medieval marriage negotiations, using an extreme situation to shed light on the more everyday ways in which coercion could influence romantic relationships. Floripas's first mention of her love for Guy in the *Sowdone* establishes a dynamic that Dorothee Metlitzki argues represents 'blackmail' as much as a bargain, while Kahf suggests Floripas 'forces a

proposal of marriage [...] on Sir Guy, whose options are understandably limited'.[114] Floripas tells Duke Neymes

> but he wole graunte me his loue,
> Of you askape shalle none here.
> By him, þat is almyghty aboue,
> Ye shalle abye it ellis ful dere. (*SoB*, 1899-1902)

In *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas is not initially so explicit about threatening the peers, but she does instruct them, 'perfornyeþ ȝe my wille. | ȝif ȝe þynkeþ to askape away [...] do me haue a þyng : þat al myn herte ys on' (*SF*, 2039-42). Floripas's assistance is dependent upon Guy accepting her offer, and this is augmented by an explicit threat when Guy initially rejects her, warning 'bote if Gy to wyue hure take […] | Ecchone þay scholde for is sake or euene beo an-honge' (*SF*, 2100-01).[115] As we have seen, it is a concern for their own safety that motivates Roland and Oliver to persuade Guy to accept Floripas's love in the *Sowdone*, while Floripas's threat in *Sir Ferumbras* also prompts Roland's intervention. While Guy ultimately agrees to marry Floripas, and later seems to love her (*SF*, 3089-91, 3330, 5195; *SoB*, 2307-08), the situation in which he accepts her love is marked by coercion and threats. Although Guy's situation is extreme, being asked to accept Floripas's love to save his friends' lives (and his own), the combination of coercive external pressure and subsequent emotional connection in his relationship with Floripas provides a suggestive example of the ways in which consent and coercion might coexist in medieval literature and life. The *Sowdone* and *Sir Ferumbras* engage with surprisingly realistic concerns through the fantasy motif of the converted Muslim princess, using Guy's unwillingness as a means of exploring the ways in which consent and coercion might coincide or relate to each other within medieval marriage negotiations, and demonstrating a pervasive expectation of marriage as influenced by external demands and wishes rather than simply by the couple's own freely given consent.

CONCLUSION

The motif of unwillingness to love someone of another race or faith might appear to be an extreme and unrealistic form of unwillingness to love, little connected to medieval readers' real-world preoccupations and concerns. The romances discussed in this chapter do not always straightforwardly promote racial-religious difference to the advantage of white Christians but, unsurprisingly given the (presumed) cultural perspectives of their

[114] Metlitzki, p. 174; Kahf, p. 35.
[115] Floripas also issues this threat in the *chanson de geste*, 2918-19.

writers, they do usually try to reinforce racial-religious difference and white Christian superiority in some way. Unwillingness to love often indicates a redrawing of racial-religious boundaries: even though it may eventually be overcome, unwillingness to love still marks out who is and is not to be considered desirable, and invokes sympathy for coercion and vulnerability along racial-religious lines. The focus upon race and faith thus lends a particular emphasis to the motif of unwillingness to love in Middle English romance: while many of the uses of this specific type of motif accord with the literary uses of other types of unwillingness to love, exploring nuances of consent and coercion, the focus upon race and faith must also be considered in and of itself as a way of supporting racist and nationalist agendas. The context of these works is particularly important in this regard: stretching from the early fourteenth to the early fifteenth centuries, the works discussed in this chapter appear at the end of the crusading era, offering compensatory fantasies, reassurances, and occasionally acknowledgement of Christian military losses. Unwillingness to love someone of a different race or faith can also open up more personal connections between romance and reality, exploring some of the nuances of consent and coercion in literary works and readers' lives. Indeed, at times it seems that the extremity of situations involving people of different faiths or races is what facilitates deeper exploration of the nuances of consent and coercion, acting as a distancing mechanism that allows writers to probe the presence of coercion in real-life relationships as well as fictional ones. Chapter 5 explores the way that unwillingness to commit infidelity similarly addresses readers' anxieties and concerns, taking the focus upon coercion in narratives of interfaith and interracial relationships further to provide a particularly empathetic portrayal of experiences of sexual coercion that affect men and women in medieval romance.

CHAPTER 5.
'WHAT DEYNTEE SHOLDE A MAN HAN IN HIS LYF | FOR TO GO LOVE ANOTHER MANNES WYF': ADULTERY AND INFIDELITY[1]

INTRODUCTION

As with unwillingness to love motivated by concerns about race and faith, the significance and function of unwillingness to commit adultery (that is, being unfaithful to one's spouse or having a relationship with a married person) or infidelity (more broadly being unfaithful to a lover) in Middle English romance might seem obvious.[2] Adulterous relationships are forbidden in Christian doctrine; instances of unwillingness to commit adultery and infidelity, then, uphold Christian morality, providing an exemplary or didactic focus upon the importance of rejecting extramarital love.[3] However, like unwillingness predicated on race or faith, the doctrinal focus of rejecting extramarital relationships in medieval romance is complicated by the way in which this motif intersects with and responds to its opposite, the motif of committing adultery. While Cooper observes that '[a]dultery was never a norm in romance in any language', she also argues that there was a 'greater wariness towards adultery in English-language romance than in its French counterpart'.[4] The presence of adultery in some of the most high-profile French (and English) romances, a feature that may have particularly provoked their castigation by moral commentators, perhaps inspired some medieval authors to write in opposition to this: as Cooper notes, '[o]utside Malory, the woman charged with adultery in English romance is overwhelmingly likely to be innocent', a pattern that seems to directly refute the identification of romance (and its heroines) with adultery.[5] However, while the motif of refusing adultery in some cases directly rebuts the association between adulterous love and romance literature, the dialogue between these motifs can also be more complex. At times, resistance to adultery is portrayed not so much as an innocent refusal, but as a difficult struggle against real temptation. Unwillingness to commit

[1] Chaucer, 'The Franklin's Tale', ll. 1003–04.
[2] On the distinction between adultery and infidelity, see 1. a., 'Adultery, n.', in *Oxford English Dictionary*; 3. a., 'Infidelity, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary*. I generally use the term 'adultery' in this chapter, except for when discussing Launcelot's relationships with women other than Guenevere, where I use 'infidelity' to indicate the distinction between adulterous extramarital affairs and committing infidelity within a relationship that is itself adulterous.
[3] Most obviously, adultery is prohibited in the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20.14.
[4] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 307, 318.
[5] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 274. See the condemnations of romance cited in Furrow, pp. 25–31; William of Nassington's reference to 'veyn spekyng | Of dedes of armes ne of amours' may be particularly significant for condemning the type of 'amours' associated with romance, cited p. 28.

adultery also exceeds an immediately obvious exemplary function by engaging with particular ways in which adultery ought to be rejected, rather than just asserting the rejection of adultery as the goal in and of itself, as well as by exploring instances of coercion, connecting the motif of unwillingness to commit adultery with other variations of unwillingness to love in perhaps surprising and provocative ways.

Rejecting adultery is quite a widespread form of unwillingness to love in medieval romance, perhaps because of its exemplary function and its surprising nuances and complexities. Rejections of adultery are common in the accused queen romances, such as *Syr Tryamowre*, *The Erle of Tolous*, *Le Bone Florence of Rome* (in a slightly different form), and *Valentine and Orson*; they also appear in the *Lanval* stories, which share affinities with the accused queen narratives through their use of the Potiphar's wife motif; in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (and *The Greene Knight*); and several times in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, although here the motif sometimes takes the form of trying to preserve fidelity to a relationship that is itself adulterous (as with the love of Tristram and Isode and Launcelot and Guenevere). As rejecting adultery is a relatively popular motif, this chapter offers case studies from different kinds of romances, which show the various different forms that rejections of adultery can take. *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous* represent the accused queen motif, a group of narratives that include the story of Custance, discussed in the previous chapter in relation to unwillingness to love someone of a different race or faith.[6] Adultery is one of the most common accusations levelled against the calumniated queen in romance literature, and this accusation is often made by a would-be adulterous lover who the queen has rejected. Although the accusation of a queen by a would-be lover occurs in more romances than these, I focus on *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous* as romances which exemplify the didactic and nuanced ways in which romance literature uses the motif of unwillingness to commit adultery. Both works appear in Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38, which contains six other romances, including two other accused queen romances, *Le Bone Florence of Rome* and the Northern *Octavian*. In *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, Mylys's proposition of Florence is situated not as adultery but as remarriage (since he claims that her husband, Emere, is dead), while in *Octavian* the accusations of adultery are levelled by the queen's mother-in-law, and not by

[6] On the accused queen motif, also known as the 'calumniated wife' motif, see Cooper, 'Women on trial', in *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 269–323; Nancy B. Black, *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Alcuin Blamires, 'Exemplifying Feminine Stability', in *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 153–70; Margaret Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* (New York: New York University Press, 1927).

a jealous would-be lover; this chapter therefore focuses its discussion of the accused queen motif on *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous*.

The Erle of Tolous to some extent stands out within the accused queen tradition because it includes a secondary element to the story, the Empress Beulybon's relationship with the Earl of Tolous, which has been argued to 'radically revis[e] the conception of goodness underlying most narratives of righteous women on trial'.[7] The Empress's ambiguous relationship with a man who is not her husband finds a parallel outside the accused queen tradition, in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*. These two works are not often compared, but have many similarities.[8] Both are Breton lays probably written in the later fourteenth century;[9] both (arguably) take as their theme 'the sanctity of the marriage bond', as Carol Meale notes of *The Erle of Tolous*;[10] together, they are alone amongst the Middle English lays in 'focus[ing] alternatively and equally on two central characters', and in both cases the lady's (mis)adventures occur in the absence of her husband, two commonalities between these works that Shearle Furnish identifies.[11] They also share an interesting absence of female characters outside of the main protagonist: in *The Erle of Tolous*, no female friends of the Empress are mentioned, while *The Franklin's Tale* leaves Dorigen's 'freendes' (822) curiously (and perhaps deliberately) ungendered. Both narratives are also notably ambiguous about the protagonists' culpability. In this chapter, I discuss *The Erle of Tolous* alongside *The Franklin's Tale*, rather than exclusively pairing it with *Syr Tryamowre* as examples of the accused queen motif.

The other two works discussed in this chapter involve men who (try to) resist infidelity: in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain resists the lady's adulterous temptations, and in Malory's *Morte Darthur* Launcelot rejects many different women (or

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[7] Jonathan Stavsky, '"Gode in all thynge": *The Erle of Tolous*, Susanna and the Elders, and Other Narratives of Righteous Women on Trial', *Anglia*, 131.4 (2013), 538–61 (pp. 539–40).
[8] Some isolated similarities between the two tales, but no sustained attempts to compare them, are included in Shearle Furnish, 'The Modernity of *The Erle of Tolous* and the Decay of the Breton Lai', *Medieval Perspectives*, 8 (1993), 69–77.
[9] Both works identify themselves as Breton lays: see 'The Erle of Tolous', in *Of Love and Chivalry: An Anthology of Middle English Romance*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows (London: Dent, 1993), pp. 231–65 (l. 1214); Chaucer, 'The Franklin's Tale', ll. 709–15. Fellows dates *The Erle of Tolous* to c. 1400, while McDonald suggests the latter half of the fourteenth century, in agreement with Laskaya and Salisbury. See Fellows, 'Introduction', in *Of Love and Chivalry*, pp. vii–xxiii (p. xx); McDonald et al., 'Erle of Tolous', *Database of Middle English Romance*, 2012 <https://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk/mer/18> [accessed 2 February 2020]; Laskaya and Salisbury, 'Erle of Tolous: Introduction', in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. by Laskaya and Salisbury, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp. 309–18 (p. 309). Larry D. Benson dates *The Franklin's Tale* to the 1390s: Benson, 'Explanatory Notes', p. 895.
[10] Carol M. Meale, '"Prenes: Engre": An Early Sixteenth-Century Presentation Copy of *The Erle of Tolous*', in *Romance Reading on the Book: Essays on Medieval Narrative Presented to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 221–36 (p. 231).
[11] Furnish, 'The Modernity of *The Erle of Tolous*', p. 71.

tries to) in order to remain faithful to his love for Guenevere – a love that is itself adulterous.[12] These two narratives, then, not only reflect different concerns to the accused queen narratives and *The Franklin's Tale* because they involve men rejecting adultery rather than women, but because they depict different situations of potential infidelity. Gawain's rejection of the lady does not ensure his fidelity to another romantic relationship, but the lady's fidelity to her husband, Bertilak. Launcelot is already committing adultery with Guenevere, and so Malory's *Morte* itself is not a rejection of infidelity to marriage. However, within the bounds of this adulterous relationship, Launcelot tries to be faithful to his lady. These narratives therefore explore slightly different issues compared to romances that depict a married partner rejecting an adulterous proposition.

Most of the romances discussed in this chapter date from the late fourteenth century, with Malory's *Morte Darthur* a later outlier.[13] By this time, the romance genre was well-established, allowing these works to create a nuanced dialogue with recognised romance motifs such as adultery. The works discussed in this chapter also intersect with the other variations of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis, at times revealing striking similarities or disparities between the treatment of unwillingness to commit adultery and romantic a(nti)pathy. Unwillingness to commit adultery therefore provides a fitting topic for the final chapter of this thesis, reflecting back on the arguments made so far, and continuing to refine understandings of the diversity and variety of romance representations of unwillingness to love, and the way this motif can influence our understanding of consent, coercion, and gendered behaviour in medieval romance.

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[12] The lady is not named in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Although she is often referred to as 'Lady Bertilak' in criticism, I refer to her simply as 'the lady'.

[13] On the date of *Syr Tryamowre*, see Harriet Hudson, 'Sir Tryamour: Introduction', in *Four Middle English Romances: Sir Isumbras, Octavian, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Tryamour*, ed. by Harriet Hudson, TEAMS, 2nd edn (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), pp. 145–48 (p. 145); for *The Erle of Tolous* and *The Franklin's Tale*, see the discussion above. On the date of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, see Norman Davis, 'Introduction', in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd edn, rev. by Norman Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. xi–xxvii (pp. xxv–xxvi); Derek Brewer, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, Arthurian Studies, 38 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 1–21 (p. 1). On the date of *Le Morte Darthur*, see P. J. C. Field, 'Introduction', in *Le Morte Darthur*, pp. vii–xxxiv (pp. vii, xviii); Leitch and Rushton, p. 2.

'YS THAT YOURE WYLLE? | YF HYT WERE MYNE, THEN DYD Y YLLE!': EXEMPLARITY, COERCION, AND CRITIQUE IN *SYR TRYAMOWRE*, *THE ERLE OF TOLOUS*, AND CHAUCER'S *FRANKLIN'S TALE*[14]

The anonymous fourteenth-century romances *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous* focus significant episodes of their narratives on unwillingness to commit adultery and the ensuing responses it can elicit.[15] In *Syr Tryamowre*, this motif seems to function primarily as an exemplary one, according with the romance's early identification of itself as '[a] gode ensaumpull'.[16] When the king's steward, Marrok, makes advances to Queen Margaret, she rejects him outright, using unambiguous vocabulary to assert her anger and shock at this proposition. The language Margaret uses to reject Marrok has similarities with Beulybon's rejection of the knights in *The Erle of Tolous*, as well as sharing some features with Dorigen's rejection of Aurelius in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*. The table below illustrates these shared features.

	Syr Tryamowre	***The Erle of Tolous***	***The Franklin's Tale***
Questioning adulterous desires	'Traytur, what ys thy thoght?' (76)	'ys that youre wylle? | Yf hyt were myne, then dyd y ylle!' (646-47)	'Is this youre wyl […] and sey ye thus?' (980)
Questioning the would-be lover's presumption	'How darste thou be so bolde?' (84)	'What woman holdyst thou me? | […] | What haste thou herde be me or sene | That touchyth to any velanye, | That thou in herte art so bolde, | Os y were a hore or a scolde?' (648-53)	'What deyntee sholde a man han in his lyf | For to go love another mannes wyf' (1003-04)
Reference to treachery	'Traytur' (76) 'Be the furste to do me trayne!' (83)	'Thou art a traytour in thy sawe' (571)	
Reference to role in service of husband	'My lorde, when he went to the see, | For specyall tryste he toke me to the' (79-80)	'My lorde ys emperoure. | He chase the for a trewe knyght, | To kepe me, bothe day and nyght' (564-66)	
Direct rejection	'All that thou spekyst, hyt ys for noght' (77)	'Nay, that schall nevyr bee!' (654)	'Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf' (984)
Threat	'Yf ye be so hardy | To wayte me wyth velanye, | Fowle hyt schall the	'Thou art [...] | Worthy to be hanged and to-drawe' (571-72)	

[14] 'The Erle of Tolous', ll. 646–47.

[15] *Syr Tryamowre*, of course, focuses primarily on the story of Tryamowre, but his narrative does not really begin until line 615, with his mother's misfortunes being the subject of the early portion of the narrative before this.

[16] 'Syr Tryamowre', in *Of Love and Chivalry*, pp. 147–98 (l. 10).

	rewe! | Y trowe y schall never ete bredd | Tyll thou be broght to the dedd.' (100-04)	'Thou schouldest be honged, wythowt fayle' (656)	
Reference to married status		'wele thou wottyst y am a wyfe' (563)	'Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf' (984) 'I wol been his to whom that I am knyt' (986)

While not every feature is shared across these romances, the similarities between these rejection speeches suggest a kind of shared concept of how adultery might – or perhaps should – be rejected. Although *The Franklin's Tale* has less in common with either accused queen narrative, this may reflect its differing scenario. Unlike Marrok and the knights in *The Erle of Tolous*, Aurelius is not in Arveragus's service, nor does it seem likely he could be accused of treason. Although treason is a complex, wide-ranging term in Middle English, '[a]dultery was classified as treason [...] when the cuckolded party was king' or 'when a wife betrayed her lord and husband (though it never seems to have worked the other way around)', meaning Aurelius's proposition would probably not be considered treasonous.[17] The absence of threats in Dorigen's response may also reflect her different social role, as she is not a queen in a position to threaten a presumptuous subject. The variation in *The Franklin's Tale*, then, may be related to its differing circumstances rather than to a movement away from a similar vocabulary of rejection. The similarities between these rejection speeches do not necessarily suggest a close textual link between these tales; rather, their similar patterns of vocabulary may reflect a broader cultural perception of how women may – or should – reject adultery. The content of these shared features suggests an exemplary focus: several of them convey shock and anger, responses that seem to highlight the innocence of the propositioned woman. These similar speeches could be read as exemplars for rejecting adultery, indicating not just that adultery should be rejected, but that there are some shared ideas about *how* women ought to reject adultery.

These narratives therefore highlight the moralistic and exemplary purpose unwillingness to commit adultery serves in romance, not just reinforcing the importance of upholding marital bonds, but also offering a model of the appropriate way to do so. These works illuminate the function of romance as 'a form of courtesy text', not just for

[17] Larissa Tracy, 'Introduction: The Shameful Business of Betrayal and Treason', in *Treason: Medieval and Early Modern Adultery, Betrayal, and Shame*, pp. 1–22 (pp. 8, 4).

the young and unmarried, but as a guide for behaviour within marriage too.[18] The exemplary focus of *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous* seems to be supported by the manuscripts in which they survive: CUL Ff.2.38, the manuscript in which both romances are preserved together, includes many religious and didactic texts alongside nine romances (some of which are themselves more didactic than other romances, such as *Robert of Cisyle* and *Le Bone Florence of Rome*).[19] Its didactic works include two texts about adultery (*The Adulterous Falmouth Squire* and *How a Merchant did his Wife Betray*), placed shortly before the beginning of the romance section of the codex (at fols. 56r-59r; the romances start at 63r).[20] The presence of *The Adulterous Falmouth Squire*, an afterlife vision in which a squire explains how he is being tortured in hell for committing adultery, would seem likely, at the very least, to prompt the reader's awareness of the way in which *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous* negotiate the moral problems posed by adultery. Indeed, *The Adulterous Falmouth Squire* does not seem to go badly with *Syr Tryamowre*, which is perhaps the most concerned with appropriate and moralistic conduct of any of the romances discussed in this chapter, as it does not engage with the possibility of desiring adultery. Margaret never seems to be tempted to agree to Marrok's proposition, but is a model of the exemplary, faithful wife. *Syr Tryamowre* also offers a wider repudiation of adultery by clearly indicating the stakes of (female) adultery as a cause of social disruption. When Marrok accuses Margaret of adultery, he plays on contemporary fears about illegitimacy, telling King Ardus 'hyt were not feyre | A horcop to be yowre heyre, | But he ware of yowre kynne' (223-25). Marrok emphasises the threat to the king's lineage if the accusation is correct, mobilising the contemporary perception that 'female adultery was far more serious [than male adultery], because it threatened legitimate production of progeny and proper descent of property'.[21] The seriousness of female adultery was exacerbated within royal marriages, as

[18] Riddy, p. 242.
[19] *Syr Tryamowre* is also preserved in the Percy Folio (as discussed later in this chapter), as well as in two fragments: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. d. 208, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson fragment. The fragmentary survival of these texts means they do not offer many insights into the reading contexts of *Syr Tryamowre*. See further 'MS. Eng. Poet. d. 208', *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries*, 2017 <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_4823> [accessed 5 February 2021]; Nicola McDonald et al., 'Sir Tryamour', *Database of Middle English Romance*, 2012 <https://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk/mer/65> [accessed 14 January 2021]. I discuss the manuscript contexts of *The Erle of Tolous* later in this chapter.
[20] Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 120–21.
[21] Dunn, p. 120.

> the queen's conception of an illegitimate child threatens the proper succession of the throne in a way that the birth of a king's bastard does not. The queen's child is born into the royal family, whether or not her husband is the father.[22]

The way in which Marrok frames his false accusation thus reinforces the serious nature of female adultery: *Syr Tryamowre* even uses the machinations of the very character who desires adultery to emphasise the negative effects of adulterous relationships. *Sir Tryamowre* illustrates the moral focus of unwillingness to commit adultery, using Margaret as an exemplary figure, while also highlighting the potentially serious and disruptive effects adultery could have through Marrok's false accusation and Ardus's serious – and credulous – response to it. In this respect, the romance seems to go well with the didactic content that precedes it in CUL Ff.2.38, including *The Adulterous Falmouth Squire*.

While *Syr Tryamowre* consistently condemns adultery, even indicating its serious nature through the character who most desires it, *The Erle of Tolous* and *The Franklin's Tale* somewhat complicate this exemplary focus. In *The Erle of Tolous*, Beulybon's reaction to the two knights' propositions aligns her with Margaret in *Syr Tryamowre*, using similar vocabulary and issuing an exemplary and absolute rejection of adultery. However, Beulybon's role is complicated by her relationship with Barnard, the Earl of Toulous, who falls in love with her and whom she eventually marries at the end of the romance (after her first husband's death). This relationship does not undermine Beulybon's unwillingness to commit adultery, but rather explores the nuances that unwillingness to commit adultery can encompass. The ambiguity of Beulybon's relationship with Barnard has been somewhat understated in critical approaches to *The Erle of Tolous*: Victoria Weiss suggests that 'the Earl of Tolouse and the Empress of Almayne […] fall in love and suffer a series of misfortunes, before they are able to marry after the evil Emperor has died', while Wade, in a formula like Weiss's although with more recognition of the limited evidence for this, argues that the Empress is 'apparently mutually smitten (she gives him a ring)'.[23] As Wade's parenthetical explanation hints, the romance is actually quite ambiguous about Beulybon's feelings for the Earl. Although she gives him a ring, she bestows this upon him when he asks for 'almes' (377), a request that has previously been connected with Beulybon's virtue, when she is described as being 'gode in all thynge, |

[22] Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 18.
[23] Victoria L. Weiss, 'Blurring the Lines between the Play World and the Real World in "The Earl of Toulouse"', *Chaucer Review*, 31.1 (1996), 87–98 (p. 89); James Wade, 'Ungallant Knights', in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, pp. 201–18 (p. 205).

Of almesdede and gode berynge' (40-41). While rings can be love-tokens in medieval romance,[24] they can also function in other ways: in the *Lai du Cor*, the queen explains that the horn has labelled her adulterous because she once gave a ring to a boy in gratitude.[25] This ring therefore seems to operate as a dual token of apparent adultery and of innocence, providing a suggestive analogy to the ring in *The Erle of Tolous*, where Beulybon's confession of this gift highlights her wider innocence by revealing the relatively insignificant things she deems it necessary to confess.[26] In addition to the ring, we are also told that the Empress 'schewed opynly hur face, | For love of that knyght' (335-36), but love does not necessarily refer to erotic love, and this is a very brief reference that is counterbalanced by the more ambivalent representation of Beulybon's feelings for Barnard elsewhere in the romance.[27] There is no emotional reunion after he has fought for her, as the romance instead focuses on the peace established between the Earl and the Emperor, and Beulybon's will in her subsequent marriage to the Earl is elided, as it is '[b]e alexcion of the lordys free' (1202) that the Earl is made Emperor and 'weddyd that lady to hys wyfe' (1207). Beulybon and Barnard's marriage is certainly a happy one, as they live '[w]yth yoye and myrthe' (1208) and have fifteen children, a sign of sexual fulfilment that contrasts with the original Emperor's lack of heirs.[28] However, Beulybon is never actually said to want to marry the Earl. While this may be an example of the romance 'work[ing] hard to deflect the potentially illicit nature of the contact between Barnard and Beulybon' and 'balance extra-marital love with marital chastity', it also indicates the complex nature of unwillingness to commit adultery and its intersections with exemplarity.[29]

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[24] Rings appear as love-tokens in *King Horn* (as discussed in Chapter 3), *Guy of Warwick*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *Generydes*, *Sir Torrent of Portingale*, and *Amoryus and Cleopes*. The lady tries to give Gawain a ring in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* but he refuses it. Rings can also appear as recognition tokens, serving this rather different function in works like *Sir Tristrem*, *Lay le Freine*, and *Ipomadon*.

[25] See Robert Biket, *The Anglo-Norman Text of Le Lai du Cor*, ed. by C. T. Erickson, Anglo-Norman Texts, 24 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), ll. 334–62; trans. in Robert Biket, 'Cor', in *Twenty-Four Lays from the French Middle Ages*, trans. by Glyn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 121–29 (p. 127).

[26] On the ring, see further Perkins, 'Introduction: The Materiality of Medieval Romance and *The Erle of Tolous*', pp. 15–17.

[27] Alcuin Blamires also notes that the syntax here enables the possibility that this refers to Barnard's love of Beulybon, not hers of him, in *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, p. 163. On the possibility of love meaning 'friendship' rather than romantic love, see definition 1a., 'Lŏve n.(1)', *Middle English Dictionary*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED26245> [accessed 16 September 2019].

[28] The Galenic idea that conception was achieved in part through female orgasm circulated widely, which would associate the Empress's many pregnancies with the fulfilment of desire: see Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 29; Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 222.

[29] Perkins, 'Introduction: The Materiality of Medieval Romance and *The Erle of Tolous*', pp. 13–14; Wade, 'Ungallant Knights', p. 206.

Unlike other forms of unwillingness to love, resistance to adultery can be separated from the influence of desire, as it can be motivated by morality rather than by a straightforward absence of desire. The ambivalence of Beulybon's desire for the Earl encompasses varied possibilities: that she does not desire the earl, or that she does desire him, but remains unwilling to commit adultery because of her loyalty to her husband. This second possibility does not undermine Beulybon's exemplary role as a falsely accused queen, but rather may make her all the more praiseworthy, if she upholds her fidelity to her husband despite real temptation. It is not necessarily adulterous desire that *The Erle of Tolous* condemns, but acting on such desires. This accords with Diamond's view that '[d]esire is rewritten and controlled, but not repudiated, for it is desire that guarantees the happy ending we want and need', as well as Wade's argument that '*The Erle of Tolous* [...] is an exercise in the proper constraint of erotic desires'.[30] The difference between desire and intention in fact differentiates the Earl's interactions with Beulybon from the knights'. The Earl's speeches are marked by conditional and subjunctive speech acts, as he wishes 'y were so worthy a knyght | That y myght be hur fere! | And that sche no husbonde hadd' (365-67), and thinks upon receiving the ring that '[y]f evyr y gete grace of the quene, | That any love betwene us bene, | Thys may be oure tokenyng' (403-05). The knights' speeches, on the other hand, are characterised by warnings and imperatives, insisting '[b]ut ye do aftur my rede, | Certenly, y am but dede' (559-60), and instructing '[d]ere lady, graunt me youre love, | For the love of God' (643-44). This is an important difference, as medieval scholastic views of sin distinguish between wishing and intention: feelings could not be helped, but intent could be controlled to avoid sin.[31] *The Erle of Tolous* seems to acknowledge the possible reality of experiencing desire for someone other than your marital partner, perhaps connecting with readers' own lives and experiences, as matches made on the basis of a short acquaintance or for family priorities rather than individual choice might have made people more likely to experience adulterous desires.[32] However, while *The Erle of Tolous* acknowledges the potential for adulterous desire, it

[30] Arlyn Diamond, '*The Erle of Tolous*: The Price of Virtue', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, pp. 83–92 (p. 92); Wade, 'Ungallant Knights', p. 205.
[31] Crocker observes that by the late thirteenth century, 'perform[ing] good or bad acts [...] would not make that person good or bad. Instead, a person's will determined a person's virtue, but volition was completely, and troublingly, severed from action': *The Matter of Virtue: Women's Ethical Action from Chaucer to Shakespeare*, p. 10. Walter Burley, a fourteenth-century natural philosopher, argues that '[w]e are not made base by contemplating base things but by doing or willing them', referring to Aristotle to support this claim. See Joan Cadden, *Nothing Natural Is Shameful: Sodomy and Science in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), p. 1.
[32] Sara Butler notes that 'strong bonds of affection were not guaranteed', and 'the potential for prolonged marital discontent was notably higher then than now': 'Runaway Wives: Husband Desertion in Medieval England', *Journal of Social History*, 40.2 (2006), 337–59 (p. 337).

urges that such desires should be restrained. As with its inclusion in CUL Ff.2.38, discussed above, the exemplary focus of *The Erle of Tolous* also seems to fit with its place in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61, where 'it provides a complementary tale to the subsequent two exempla (items 22 and 23), which deal with the evil consequences of sexual jealousy', perhaps suggesting that medieval readers would have recognised the nuanced exemplarity of *The Erle of Tolous*'s depiction of unwillingness to commit adultery.[33]

The Erle of Tolous also connects with the circumstances of medieval readers' own lives in other ways. Writing about Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, Hume notes that 'while husbands were away, their wives would be expected to keep friendship networks going for the practical advantages they could provide', engaging with 'respectable neighbour[s]', and 'maintain[ing] [...] part of a social/business network'.[34] In *The Erle of Tolous*, Barnard both is and is not a 'respectable neighbour', as the Emperor has been engaging in (an unjust) war with him; however, this war may make the interactions between the Empress and the Earl even more important and politically oriented, as their connection could foster peace, drawing on the intercessory role of medieval queens.[35] While the Earl and the Empress's meeting takes place in an atmosphere of heightened drama typical of romance literature, it also draws on the models of friendship medieval women were expected to maintain both as representatives of their husbands and in their own right. That such friendships are necessary is highlighted in an extreme way by *The Erle of Tolous*, as the Earl saves Beulybon from a situation in which her husband is legally obliged not to intervene, pointing to the necessity of maintaining friendships with other men, but again in a situation of high drama and life-or-death stakes more reflective of romance plots than real-life issues. *The Erle of Tolous* seems to carefully negotiate the line between chaste friendship and adulterous desire, ensuring that Beulybon earns the Earl's respect and friendship without giving him anything more than the sight of her beauty and a ring.

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[33] Lynne S. Blanchfield, 'The Romances in MS Ashmole 61: An Idiosyncratic Scribe', in *Romance in Medieval England*, pp. 65–87 (p. 66).
[34] Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 37–38; see also Cathy Hume, '"The name of soveraynetee": The Private and Public Faces of Marriage in *The Franklin's Tale*', *Studies in Philology*, 105.3 (2008), 284–303 (p. 292).
[35] See Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 21–22; Liz Oakley-Brown and Louise J. Wilkinson, 'Introduction', in *The Rituals and Rhetoric of Queenship: Medieval to Early Modern*, ed. by Liz Oakley-Brown and Louise J. Wilkinson (Dublin: Four Courts, 2009), pp. 11–19 (p. 13); John Carmi Parsons, 'Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150-1500', in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons (Stroud: Sutton, 1994), pp. 63–78 (pp. 71, 74).

Ultimately, what David Raybin says of Dorigen in *The Franklin's Tale* may be truer of Beulybon in *The Erle of Tolous*:

> The result [...] is that she gets exactly what no small number of people desire for their own romantic lives: a satisfied spouse [...], an admirer who acknowledges her to be 'the treweste and the beste wyf' [...], and an unsullied honor of which she may be rightfully proud.[36]

The Empress retains her chastity as well as earning the respect and allegiance of the Earl, which ultimately benefits her husband as well as herself, as the Earl and the Emperor are accorded because of his role in saving the Empress from the knights' false accusations. *The Erle of Tolous* takes a complex approach to issues of desire, exemplarity, and chastity in its depiction of the Earl and Empress's relationship, which seem to draw upon real-life issues about the necessity of social networks outside of marriage.

Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* also explores some of the complexities of unwillingness to commit adultery, in relation to both exemplarity and genre more widely. My suggestion that Dorigen's rejection of Aurelius shares similarities with the rejections issued by Margaret and Beulybon, indicating some shared conceptions of how adultery ought to be rejected, may be surprising, as Aurelius eventually seems to interpret Dorigen's speech as permission to continue seeking her love. However, Dorigen's speech seems to combine different kinds of romance vocabulary relating to adultery, as Chaucer explores the varied (and sometimes confusing) attitudes the genre offers. From the start of Dorigen's speech until her 'fynal answere' (987), and from '[n]o, by that Lord' (1000) to the end of her speech, Dorigen seems to employ exemplary rhetoric with which to reject adultery. But the middle section of her speech oversteps the mark, shifting from the vocabulary of rejection to the vocabulary of romance conditionality that often characterises single characters' approaches to love (including the proud ladies'). The acknowledgement of Dorigen's 'fynal answere' (985) arguably marks out the point at which her response should end, in accordance with the model of the innocent woman propositioned with adultery, rather than necessarily signalling that nothing after this point should be considered a true part of her response (as some critics have argued).[37] The division

[36] David Raybin, '"Wommen, of Kynde, Desiren Libertee": Rereading Dorigen, Rereading Marriage', *Chaucer Review*, 27.1 (1992), 65–86 (p. 82).

[37] For example, see John A. Pitcher, *Chaucer's Feminine Subjects: Figures of Desire in the 'Canterbury Tales'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 68; Alison Ganze, '"My Trouth for to Holde – Allas, Allas!": Dorigen and Honor in the *Franklin's Tale*', *Chaucer Review*, 42.3 (2008), 312–29 (pp. 317–18); Carol A. Pulham, 'Promises, Promises: Dorigen's Dilemma Revisited', *Chaucer Review*, 31.1 (1996), 76–86 (p. 83). For a discussion of this and a rebuttal of the idea that a promise made 'in pley' compromises the legal

between different parts of her speech is further emphasised by the intervening narratorial comment, '[b]ut after that in pley thus seyde she' (988); while this may make Dorigen's motives ambiguous, it also draws attention to the different parts of her speech and their varied orientations within the behavioural scripts of romance. While the third part of her speech returns to the vocabulary of emphatic rejection, insisting 'wel I woot that it shal never bityde' (1001), the confusion of vocabulary within this speech compromises Dorigen's meaning and paves the way for Aurelius to interpret her rejection of him as a deferral of her love rather than an outright refusal, according with the different models romance literature offers for the initially spurned male lover.

To some extent, despite the similarities between Dorigen, Margaret, and Beulybon, *The Franklin's Tale* seems to position Dorigen as a negative exemplar on account of the confusing response she offers to Aurelius. This is directly stated later in the tale, when Aurelius declares 'every wyf be war of hire biheeste!' (1541) to assert that women should be careful not to end up in a situation like Dorigen's. While this perspective is endorsed by Aurelius, a character with whom readers might not wish to align themselves, it does locate one possibility for interpreting Dorigen as a negative exemplar within the tale itself. However, Dorigen's behaviour is not necessarily condemned, despite the mistaken message she offers Aurelius. The Franklin's introduction to the tale to some extent pre-emptively absolves Dorigen from wrongdoing, as he suggests that

> in this world, certein, ther no wight is
> That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.
> Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,
> Wyn, wo, or chaungynge of complexioun
> Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or speken.
> On every wrong a man may nat be wreken. (779-84)

The Franklin tells us that it is easy to speak rashly, especially in situations of high emotion, ensuring that although Dorigen is a negative example, she is also a sympathetic one. This may encourage readers to reflect on their own conduct and behaviour to a greater extent than simply blaming Dorigen would do, once again developing the moral function of the motif of unwillingness to commit adultery.

validity of Dorigen's vow, see Neil Cartlidge, '"Nat that I chalange any thyng of right": Love, Loyalty, and Legality in the *Franklin's Tale*', in *Writings on Love in the English Middle Ages*, pp. 115–30 (p. 121).

Moreover, even if Dorigen is depicted as deserving some blame for the confusing response she gives to Aurelius's advances, she is not the only blameworthy protagonist in *The Franklin's Tale*, as Aurelius is shown to pursue her in coercive ways. Coercion is a common theme in the accused queen narratives and *The Franklin's Tale*, and the exemplary conduct of Margaret and Beulybon, as well as the sympathetic portrayal of Dorigen's error in *The Franklin's Tale*, may invite readers to respond to this coercion with particular empathy. Just as Dorigen's response to Aurelius seems to interrogate the different kinds of vocabulary used to reject or defer love in the romance genre, Dorigen's experience with Aurelius seems to explore the expectations and fantasies of other romances, particularly those that use adultery or adulterous desire to indicate the desirability of the central protagonist, and those that contain the motif of impossible conditions.[38] What the specific representation of these elements in *The Franklin's Tale* highlights is the significance of Cooper's question: '[r]omances in part feed their audiences' desire for fantasy; but that statement invites the question, whose fantasy?', not only for readers but also for the characters with whom these fantasies are identified.[39] In *The Franklin's Tale*, Chaucer incorporates romance elements that, in different circumstances, could provide a fantasy for Dorigen, with an attentive extramarital lover who highlights Dorigen's desirability and fulfils an impossible challenge for her love. But these elements highlight the extent to which what seems like a fantasy to the hero might feel like 'a trappe' (1341), and a cause of 'feere' (1347) and 'compleynt' (1354), to the heroine.[40] While Alison Ganze suggests that 'Aurelius is forced into the role of rapacious cad', and Mark Taylor argues that 'Aurelius is not a courtly lover at all but conforms to the type of false lover or *tricheor*', who 'operate[s] through threats, explicit or implied', I would suggest that what Chaucer is doing in *The Franklin's Tale* is exploring the similarities between the rapacious cad/false lover and romance's adulterous heroes.[41] *The Franklin's Tale* seems to draw attention to the similarities between romance representations of desire and coercion, interrogating these aspects of a genre that Chaucer evidently felt some ambivalence towards:

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[38] Weiss suggests that adultery is at times offered 'only to enhance the hero': 'The wooing woman', p. 154. Crane notes the romance trope of 'the resistant lady's demand that her suitor perform extraordinary deeds in order to win her love: *Gender and Romance*, p. 64. Impossible conditions also appear in *Sir Torrent of Portingale*, where they are used as a vehicle for fantasy, as Torrent is able to fulfil every condition that is required of him to marry the higher-status Princess Desonell.

[39] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 225.

[40] Pitcher makes a similar argument, but one more focused upon Aurelius, arguing that he 'abandons his intention to sleep with Dorigen only when it becomes clear that she refuses to play the part assigned to her by his fantasy', p. 65.

[41] Ganze, p. 326; Mark N. Taylor, 'Servant and Lord / Lady and Wife: The "Franklin's Tale" and Traditions of Courtly and Conjugal Love', *Chaucer Review*, 32.1 (1997), 64–81 (p. 72).

> Chaucer uses the word 'romaunz' only rarely, and never to describe any of his own works. The sole occurrence of the term in the *Canterbury Tales*, although they certainly include works that we would consider romances, is in the tale of *Sir Thopas*, which [...] satirizes the popular romance tradition.[42]

Edward Donald Kennedy also suggests that 'Chaucer did not think highly of metrical romances in general, and Arthurian romances in particular'.[43] It may be especially significant that Chaucer engaged rarely, and in a very limited way, with the prominent tradition of Arthurian romance, given the adultery characteristic of this body of work (Chaucer's only Arthurian romance is *The Wife of Bath's Tale*). In *The Franklin's Tale*, a romance fantasy is exposed as a nightmare for the woman to whom it happens, perhaps providing a moral warning against adultery as well as exploring the complexities and problems associated with romance representations of love.

The Franklin's Tale also seems to interrogate not just romance ideas about consent and coercion, however, but the limits of punishing coercion in medieval *raptus* laws. This focus of *The Franklin's Tale* explains one of the features of Dorigen's lament which has puzzled some critics: the variety of women with whom she compares herself. As Donald Baker suggests, in lines 1367-1438, Dorigen refers to women who committed suicide to avoid rape or after they had been raped, 'reading [...] her own situation as one of threatened rape' according to Saunders.[44] These references to women like Lucretia pose the question of how Dorigen's situation aligns with medieval conceptions of *raptus*. While Saunders notes that the *Franklin's Tale* 'examines [...] the notions of verbal force and deception', it also interrogates the place of a husband or guardian's consent in medieval laws of *raptus*.[45] '[A]dultery was bound up within *raptus* by the early fourteenth century,' as Caroline Dunn argues, because '[t]he legislators of 1285 sought to prevent, but more obviously to punish, actions that threatened both marriage and the husband's property rights', incorporating a wife's consensual but adulterous departure from her husband into legislation for punishing the abduction of wives.[46] Dunn explains,

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[42] Saunders, 'Chaucer's Romances', p. 85. Windeatt also discusses 'Chaucer's sophisticated distancing of himself from popular English romance' and 'his amused impatience with the characteristic concerns and forms of romance throughout his works': 'Troilus and the Disenchantment of Romance', p. 130.
[43] Edward Donald Kennedy, 'Malory, the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and Chaucer', in *The Stanzaic Morte Arthur and the Middle English Tradition*, ed. by Fiona Tolhurst and K. S. Whetter (= *Arthuriana*, 28.3 (2018)), pp. 51–65 (p. 59).
[44] Donald C. Baker, 'A Crux in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*: Dorigen's Complaint', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 60.1 (1961), 56–64 (pp. 61–62); Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 294.
[45] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 292.
[46] Dunn, pp. 128–29, 126–27.

> Since the English law of coverture prevented a husband from prosecuting his wife [...] husbands commenced action against the lover instead. Husbands (and perhaps their lawyers) eagerly seized upon the 1285 legislation and the writ of wife-ravishment that followed from it as the means to alleviate their concerns.[47]

But what of a wife whose husband consents to her adultery, while she does not? This scenario is dramatised within *The Franklin's Tale* when Arveragus sends Dorigen to Aurelius without her agreement (although Dorigen obeys him, she does so 'half as she were mad', 1511). I would suggest that the reader is meant to feel anxious about this situation, as the Franklin's concern for us to avoid prematurely judging Arveragus implies:

> Paraventure an heep of yow, ywis,
> Wol holden hym a lewed man in this
> That he wold putte his wyf in jupartie.
> Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crie. (1493-96)

The Franklin's apprehension about the pilgrims negatively judging Arveragus highlights that there *is* good reason to judge Arveragus negatively at this point, which we may or may not feel is superseded by the tale's conclusion.

Dorigen's situation, being sent by her husband to commit adultery, raises questions about the usually wide-ranging law of *raptus* in the medieval period, as while husbands could sue for the abduction or rape of their wives, and women could bring an appeal of *raptus* in cases of rape or abduction,[48] Catherine Batt argues that 'a married woman who had suffered a rape, would not have had any other remedy in law but to allow her husband to bring the case on her behalf'.[49] The situation of a woman whose husband *consents* to her adultery while she does not reverses the usual trajectory of *raptus* cases brought by a husband to open up problems with its definition.[50] I am not, of course, suggesting that there was widespread anxiety about husbands consenting to their wives' adultery when their wives themselves did not. Instead, I am suggesting that indicating an omission in the law of *raptus* – however improbable the scenario represented by that omission – may have provided a way for Chaucer to explore and critique contemporary *raptus* legislation. This is something in which Chaucer may have had a personal interest,

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[47] Dunn, p. 144.
[48] On the process of appeal, see Saunders, pp. 56–57, 60, 62–63 and Dunn, pp. 35, 37, 40, 50, 68–72, 77–78, 80.
[49] Batt, p. 82.
[50] Dunn notes that many *raptus* cases brought by husbands seem to have involved a wife who was willingly 'abducted', stating that 'justices were familiar with the practice of abandoned husbands using civil courts to sue for adultery, [...] they deemed the husband the victim, and [...] they were comfortable with the use of a legal fiction that depicted a wife's voluntary departure as a violent kidnapping', p. 143.

given the *raptus* accusations against him discussed in Chapter 1; revealing some of the problems with the definitions of *raptus* may have provided a way to interrogate and perhaps cast doubt on the charges made against him. Once again, then, unwillingness to commit adultery in *The Franklin's Tale* connects with real-life issues, engaging with contemporary law even via an apparently improbable situation.

Similarly, although in a less legalistic framework, the representations of coercion in the accused queen narratives *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous* also open up connections with real-life issues. The false accusations levelled by Marrok in *Syr Tryamowre* and the knights in *The Erle of Tolous* are presented as punitive responses to the rejection of their sexual advances: in *The Erle of Tolous*, the knights vow to 'qwyte [Beulybon] hur mede' (690), and later say that they 'thoght hur to spylle | For sche wolde not do oure wylle' (1126-27), while the opening of *Syr Tryamowre* tells us that '[f]or [Margaret] wolde not to [Marrok] assente, | He dud hur mekyll schame!' (23-24). These punitive responses reflect problematic approaches to romantic rejection in the romance genre and in real life, contributing to a cultural perception of rejection as dangerous, and encouraging rejection to be carefully framed and considered in order not to cause offence, despite the reasonable nature of refusing unwanted romantic advances. This is a concern elsewhere in romance, albeit hyperbolically: in *Chaitivel*, Marie claims that

> Tutes les dames de une tere
> Vendreit il meuz d'amer requere
> Quë un fol de sun pan tolir;
> Kar cil volt an eire ferir.[51]
>
> [It would be less dangerous for a man to court every lady in an entire land than for a lady to remove a single besotted lover from her skirts, for he will immediately attempt to strike back.][52]

While this is a dramatic rather than a realistic claim, it may reflect a more moderate (and less gendered) reality, suggested by the relatively common nature of punitive responses to unwillingness to love in the works discussed in this thesis; more soberingly, it may also reflect real-life contexts, resonating with the modern day phenomenon of 'incel' violence.[53] *Syr Tryamowre* develops the association between revenge for rejection and violence most clearly, as Marrok's advice that the king ought to exile Margaret seems to

[51] Marie de France, 'Chaitivel', in *Marie de France: Lais*, pp. 116–22 (ll. 19–22).
[52] Marie de France, 'Chaitivel', in *The Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 105–08 (p. 105).
[53] See Laura Bates, 'Men Who Hate Women', in *Men Who Hate Women*, pp. 11–62; Debbie Ging, 'Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere', *Men and Masculinities*, 22.4 (2019), 638–57; Amia Srinivasan, 'Does anyone have the right to sex?', *London Review of Books*, 40.6 (2018).

be motivated by his plan to rape her: 'Marrok thoght utturly | To do the quene a velanye, | Hys luste for to fulfylle' (271-73). Amongst the exemplary framework of *Syr Tryamowre*, the association of Marrok's plan with rape further condemns his vengeful response to rejection, indicating the extent to which retributive responses are associated with evil characters in the motif of rejecting adultery. Their actions are strongly condemned and ultimately punished: Marrok is killed by Sir Roger's dog, while the knights in *The Erle of Tolous* are burnt to death, the fate to which they had tried to condemn Beulybon.

The role of punishment within these narratives thus reveals intriguing similarities and differences between representations of unwillingness to commit adultery and romantic a(nti)pathy. At times, romantic a(nti)pathy is met with punitive responses that are portrayed positively or neutrally: Blanchardyn is not criticised for forcibly kissing Eglantine; Ipomadon puts the Fere in situations of increasing despair (although he is criticised more for this in the Middle English *Ipomadon* than Hue's *Ipomedon*); Winglayne is assumed to be deserving of scorn and deception, and to merit separation and unhappiness in the printed versions of *Eger and Grime*; Ettarde dies of sorrow when she is rejected by Pelleas; and Troilus and Guigemar experience some form of violence in response to their romantic a(nti)pathy. While romantic a(nti)pathy is sometimes met with violence and punishment that is depicted as an appropriate or neutral response, then, married characters who reject adultery are (as we might expect) portrayed as unjustly punished. But what happens when these two kinds of narratives are read alongside each other? Might reading narratives of people who reject adultery, upon whom revenge for rejection is wrongfully sought, change the way we understand narratives in which those who are apathetic or hostile to love are punished? Addressing the diversity of gendered roles in medieval popular romance, Joanne Charbonneau and Désirée Cromwell argue that

> [e]ven in the absence of a direct juxtaposition between good and evil archetypes, the distinctive construction of female identity depicted in any given romance stands in stark contrast to their opposing roles in other romance texts. The good daughter or faithful wife thus acts as antidote to the unfaithful and adulterous wife of other romances.[54]

Wade also reminds us that fruitful comparisons can be made not only in a broad generic context, but on a smaller level between works that appear in the same manuscript. He suggests

[54] Charbonneau and Cromwell, p. 101.

> the manuscript contexts of these romances can have a significant effect on how they might have been read for the moral, or rather on how early audiences might have used these miscellaneous combinations of texts to calibrate their understanding of the moral implications of particular romance heroes.[55]

Considering how the negative depiction of a vengeful response to rejected adultery might interact with the positive or neutral depiction of punitive responses to single unwilling lovers, then, might involve focusing particularly on connections between different romances that engage with these themes, and/or examining the manuscript contexts in which such works appear.

Taking *Syr Tryamowre* as an example, it appears not only in CUL Ff.2.38 with *The Erle of Tolous* and *Guy of Warwick*, but also in the Percy Folio (London, British Library, MS Additional 27879) alongside fourteen other romances, including *Eger and Grime* – a romance where romantic a(nti)pathy is treated strikingly punitively. Might reading a romance like *Syr Tryamowre*, which proclaims its heroine's innocence and the wrongful nature of her accusation and punishment, affect the way readers understood Winglayne in *Eger and Grime*? While such an inquiry remains speculative, two main possibilities suggest themselves. The first is that reading a narrative of an innocent woman wrongfully accused and punished in *Syr Tryamowre* might not have affected a reading of *Eger and Grime*, because Winglayne's scornful attitude to Eger (and ultimately his to her) would not belong to the same category as Margaret and Marrok's relationship for a medieval reader. That is, the distinction between rejecting adulterous love and rejecting love as a single person with no obligations to another partner could represent a significant divide that prohibits intersecting responses to the two works. This would not negate Charbonneau and Cromwell's point, as the positive portrayal of Margaret could still act 'as antidote' to the negative portrayal of Winglayne regarding readers' views of women more generally, but the positive portrayal of Margaret might not cause a reader to question the negative treatment of Winglayne's rejection of love, because the two rejections exist in such different categories.[56] A second perspective, however, complicates this division. Although rejecting adulterous relationships and rejecting any relationship as a single person do belong to different categories of behaviour, this division might not be so absolute as to prevent any transfer of meaning and moral between the two kinds of episode. A reader who noted the blamelessness of Margaret in *Syr Tryamowre* (and the way

[55] Wade, 'Ungallant Knights', p. 203.
[56] Charbonneau and Cromwell, p. 101.

in which assumptions of male trustworthiness conspire to allow her to be wrongfully punished) might pause to consider whether Winglayne of *Eger and Grime* really merits so negative a depiction as she receives, without undermining the difference between rejecting adultery and rejecting a potential marital partner. In this case, then, these two episodes might not so much act 'as antidote' to each other, as open up questions and complexities in relation to each other, pointing to more nuanced and intricate considerations than merely a rigid distinction between rejecting adulterous and non-adulterous love, and paving the way for a reconsideration of social and literary norms.[57]

Unwillingness to commit adultery lends itself to a consideration of different kinds of coercive situations compared to the other forms of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis. The false accusation motif in particular offers a different perspective on coercion, not using violence to enforce love or sex upon another but contributing to a cultural environment in which rejections of love must be carefully considered and framed in order to avoid offence – an environment that aligns with the idea of rape culture as 'condon[ing] physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm'.[58] However, these romances clearly position this coercion negatively, associating it with immoral figures (especially in *Syr Tryamowre* and *The Erle of Tolous*) and thus seemingly suggesting a challenge to this cultural situation, and to some extent a challenge to other romances' representation of punitive responses to romantic a(nti)pathy as appropriate. These works also reflect on broader contemporary assumptions about gendered behaviour, contesting perceptions of female fickleness and infidelity by depicting the female protagonists in these romances trying to avoid adultery. In *Syr Tryamowre* in particular, anxieties about female infidelity are shown to be unfounded, as although Ardus believes Marrok's accusations immediately, the reader knows from the beginning that Margaret is '[t]rew of stele' (17 and 27) and will be 'falsely [...] broght in blame' (18), as well as witnessing her virtuous rejection of Marrok. *Syr Tryamowre* also directly condemns Ardus's credulity, the narrator declaring that Ardus's refusal to speak to Margaret before exiling her 'was grete synne!' (234). The romance does ensure that Ardus's credulity is believable, and poignantly so, as the initial difficulties the couple have with conceiving a child form a backdrop against which Margaret's subsequent pregnancy may seem to be evidence of infidelity. But, at the same time, *Syr Tryamowre* exposes the folly of and harm caused by stereotypical perceptions of women. *Syr Tryamowre, The Erle of Tolous*, and *The Franklin's*

[57] Ibid.
[58] Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, p. vii.

Tale to some extent all seem to assuage socio-cultural anxieties about adultery as a temptation for women. However, they do not shy away from the potential links between adultery, coercion, and punishment, developing a particularly emotive and empathetic exploration of vulnerability to coercive practices that reflects the moral alignment of romances that portray unwillingness to commit adultery.

'NEDE HYM BIHOUED | OÞER LACH ÞER HIR LUF, OÞER LODLY REFUSE': DESIRE, HOSPITALITY, AND COERCION IN *SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT*[59]

The anonymous late fourteenth-century romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* takes a slightly different approach to portraying Gawain's unwillingness to commit adultery with the lady at Hautdesert. *Sir Gawain* focuses on resisting adultery not because of a commitment to one's own prior relationship (Gawain quite clearly tells the lady he has no lover, 1790), but because of a desire to avoid adultery with another man's wife. While *Sir Gawain* continues to use unwillingness to commit adultery to explore many of the same issues as the accused queen romances and *The Franklin's Tale*, its alternate focus also incorporates other areas of concern, such as homosociality, as well as different types of coercion and tension.

Like *The Erle of Tolous*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* provides a complex view of unwillingness to commit adultery, as in some ways it implies that Gawain desires the lady but still resists adultery. Gawain is clearly keen to make the lady's acquaintance when he first sees her: after a description of her beauty, in which we are told she is 'wener þen Wenore, as þe wyȝe þoȝt' (945), Gawain greets the two ladies, and '[þ]e loueloker he lappez a lyttel in armez', then 'askez | To be her seruaunt' (973-76). They also enjoy each other's company at the feast:

> Such comfort of her compaynye caȝten togeder
> Þurȝ her dere dalyaunce of her derne wordez,
> Wyth clene cortays carp closed fro fylþe,
> Þat hor play watz passande vche prynce gomen. (1011-14)

Of course, even here the *Gawain*-poet is careful to distinguish between enjoyment of each other's company and adulterous desire: their conversation is 'clene cortays carp closed fro fylþe'. But Gawain's admiration of the lady's beauty and enjoyment of her company suggests he is not straightforwardly undesiring of her. Instead, their relationship seems to be characterised by both desire and restraint, as was the case for Beulybon and Barnard

[59] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, ll. 1771–72.

in *The Erle of Tolous*. This careful balance between desire and restraint is developed by the shift in their relationship that seems to occur when they move from the space of the hall to the space of the chamber. Gawain himself seems particularly concerned about their relationship in the chamber scenes, drawing attention to the difference between their joyful conversation in the hall, where they are watched by others, and the tension of the scenes that take place (apparently) without others watching. When the lady enters Gawain's chamber, Gawain 'schamed' (1189), and he pretends to sleep while he '[c]ompast in his conscience to quat þat cace myȝt | Meue oþer amount – to meruayle hym þoȝ' (1196-97). Gawain's response indicates the unusual and improper nature of the lady's actions: her intrusion into the chamber marks a stage of their relationship with which Gawain seems less comfortable, indicating his unwillingness to overstep the boundary of adulterous desire, and revealing the way in which a relationship might differ (or appear to differ) depending on the space in which it takes place.[60] Although the public/private dichotomy is a post-medieval way of thinking, relative senses of public and private still existed in the Middle Ages, particularly in terms of how a space was used.[61] While the late medieval chamber was not necessarily a 'private' space, Morgan notes that 'the chamber in literary texts is almost always private, and for the sole use of the protagonists', however different this was from the everyday reality for most medieval people.[62] Gawain's concern about spending time with the lady in the relative privacy of the chamber may reflect an anxiety about private encounters that had some basis in reality: Philippe de Beaumanoir states that a husband is permitted to kill his wife and an adulterous lover if he finds them 'seul a seul en lieu privé' ['alone together in a secluded place'], although he warns that 'les presompcions soient mout apertes' ['the presumptions must be very clear'] in order for the husband not to be blamed for this.[63] Gawain's concern about spending time with the lady in a relatively private place reveals the delicate

[60] See further Megan G. Leitch, who argues that 'Gawain's and the Lady's manipulations of the bedchamber space (door, curtains, bed) articulate their desires and intentions', 'seek[ing] to configure the space they inhabit in order to influence the expectations of their encounter': 'Enter the Bedroom', pp. 45, 47.

[61] Shannon McSheffrey writes that 'our public/private dyad is neither natural nor universal', but also suggests that in the medieval period 'the privacy or publicity of a space was to a certain extent contingent on the occasion as much as on the categorization or accessibility of the space': 'Place, Space, and Situation: Public and Private in the Making of Marriage in Late-Medieval London', *Speculum*, 79.4 (2004), 960–90 (pp. 961, 977).

[62] Hollie L. S. Morgan, p. 41.

[63] Philippe de Beaumanoir, *Coutumes de Beauvaisis*, ed. by Am. Salmon, 3 vols (Paris: Picard, 1970), I, chap. 30 (article 934, p. 473); trans. in Philippe de Beaumanoir, *The 'Coutumes de Beauvaisis' of Philippe de Beaumanoir*, trans. by F. R. P. Akehurst (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), chap. 30 (article 934, p. 331).

nature of opposite-sex relationships, the importance of place in these relationships, and the complex and tense boundary between restraining and acting on adulterous desire.

In this exploration of and concern about the boundaries of public and private, and the difference between a relationship conducted openly and in secrecy, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* shares some perhaps surprising similarities with the Carl of Carlisle stories, one of which also shares the beheading motif with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* and *The Carle of Carlisle* both include an episode in which the same concern with public and private acts, and the alignment of this concern with adulterous desire, is explored. In both narratives, the Carl takes Gawain to his own chamber and asks him to get into bed with his wife, kissing her in front of him. Gawain agrees, but becomes aroused and wishes to do more than the Carl had permitted: '[f]or softnis of that Ladys syde [...] | Gawen wolde have doun the prevey far'; 'his flesh began to warme. | Gawaine had thought to have made infare'.[64] Part of the shocking nature of these scenes comes not from Gawain's desire to commit adultery, but from his willingness to commit adultery in front of the very person he would be cuckolding. It is the staging of this scene before observers, and in a setting that ought to be private (within its literary context), but which is not, that makes it so transgressive. Mary Douglas writes of dirt as 'matter out of place', and of 'our pollution behaviour [as] the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications': it is the category violation and out-of-place nature of this scene that makes it so strange and unsettling.[65] This strangeness in turn allows these works to defamiliarise adulterous desire, drawing attention to adultery's shock value (or the shock value it ought to have for medieval readers) by making these scenes directly and explicitly transgressive. Like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the Carl narratives are relatively late romances, *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* dating from around 1400, and *The Carle of Carlisle* surviving only in a post-medieval form in the Percy Folio, but apparently attesting to the presence of another medieval Carl romance as its source.[66] The relatively late date of all three of these works allows them to explore, interrogate, and play off the motif of committing adultery in earlier romances. While *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* offers a more subtle and moralistic

[64] 'Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle', in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 81–112 (ll. 463–66); 'The Carle of Carlisle', in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 375–91 (ll. 342–43).
[65] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002; first publ. 1966), pp. 44–45.
[66] Thomas Hahn, 'Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle: Introduction', in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 81–84 (p. 83); Thomas Hahn, 'The Carle of Carlisle: Introduction', in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 373–74.

exploration of adulterous desire and the way in which desire and boundaries can manifest differently in alternate settings, the Carl romances also seem to force the reader to confront the presence of adultery and adulterous desire in romance literature and to recognise the unsettling and shocking nature of this motif by presenting it in a new, apparently more scandalous light. While the Carl romances are not often thought of as sophisticated literary texts, they seem to share some of the features of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*'s approach to adulterous desire and restraint, in particular the different meaning of acts and desires depending on their settings.

Comparison with the Carl romances also highlights two other prominent themes of *Sir Gawain*: homosociality (a key focus of the Carl romances and *Sir Gawain*) and hospitality (through the imperious/benevolent host motif).[67] These issues are not so prominent in the accused queen romances and *The Franklin's Tale*, but become more significant in the context of *Sir Gawain*'s focus on Gawain resisting adultery with someone else's wife (rather than being unfaithful to his own prior relationship). The *Gawain*-poet seems to connect homosociality and hospitality to issues of coercion, using this particular representation of unwillingness to commit adultery to explore further nuances about who experiences and perpetrates coercion in medieval romance. Gawain's situation, as the guest of Bertilak (who remains unnamed until the poem's *denouement*) and his wife, in some ways recalls that of Horn, Amis, and Bevis: while Gawain is less dependent on Bertilak and his wife than these figures are on their host (as they actually grow up at their host's court and depend on their patronage in some way), Gawain's situation is still temporarily one of dependence upon Bertilak. This is emphasised by the circumstances in which he arrives at the castle, '[n]er slayn wyth þe slete' (729) and praying for 'sum herber þer heȝly I myȝt here masse' (755). There is perhaps always a power imbalance between a host and a guest: Judith Still argues that it is an 'imbalance of power that creates the need for hospitality in the first place', while Jacques Derrida notes that 'hospitality' derives from a combination of *hostis* (stranger/enemy) and *potis* (to have mastery or power), indicating that the potential for violence is inherent within hospitality.[68] Yet the

[67] For a discussion of the Imperious/Benevolent Host motif in relation to *Sir Gawain*, see Lawrence Warner, 'Mary, Unmindful of Her Knight: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the Traditions of Sexual Hospitality', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 35 (2013), 263–87 (pp. 266, 277–86).

[68] Judith Still, *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 13; Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality', in *Acts of Religion*, ed. & trans. by Gil Anidjar (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 356–420 (pp. 401–02, 361–62). See also Emile Benveniste, 'Hospitality', in *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. by Elizabeth Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 71–83, whose etymology Derrida is following; and *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. by

power imbalance between Bertilak and Gawain is particularly pronounced: not only does Gawain depend on Bertilak's assistance to find the Green Chapel and complete his oath to the Green Knight (after encountering no-one else who could tell him of the Green Knight or the Green Chapel on his journey thus far, 703-08), but the knowledge they have of each other is entirely unbalanced in Bertilak's favour. While Gawain does not even know his host's name, Bertilak and his court know Gawain's identity and purpose (901-09);[69] the roles of stranger and host are almost reversed, as Bertilak and his wife seem the strange and unknown figures (to the reader and potentially to Gawain), while Gawain is all too well-known to them (and, of course, is the focal point of the reader's knowledge).[70]

In keeping with this imbalance of knowledge, Bertilak controls and directs their relationship, suggesting the exchange of winnings and their respective roles within it to Gawain: this seems to approach the need to 'act with "excess," make an absolute gift of his property' seen as characteristic of the impossibility of unconditional hospitality in modern philosophy.[71] But this imbalance of power also highlights Gawain's dependency on and vulnerability to Bertilak and his wife. The role of a female host is a complex and ambiguous one, as Still notes: 'men and women have historically had [...] very different experiences of hospitality both as hosts [...] and as guests'.[72] Still argues that women operate more often as hostesses, who 'impl[y] hospitality offered by the master of the house', acting only as 'an intermediary', but in *Sir Gawain* part of the problematic nature of the lady's hospitality is the ambiguity as to whether her treatment of Gawain is an extension of her husband's hospitality, or whether she is effectively acting as a host in her own right within the confines of the chamber.[73] Gawain seems to become torn between what he perceives as two different hosts: he must not offend Bertilak by committing adultery with his wife, but nor must he offend the lady by rejecting her outright. How to avoid either having to 'lach þer hir luf, oþer lodly refuse' (1772)

John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021; first publ. 1997), p. 110 for further discussion.

[69] Derrida addresses the significance of names for the framework of hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle and Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 27–29.

[70] However, their knowledge of Gawain may be somewhat misleading. Larrington comments on the extent to which it is Gawain's reputation in French romance, and not his character in this work, that their knowledge seems to reflect: Carolyne Larrington, 'English Chivalry and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture, 58 (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 264–76 (pp. 269–70).

[71] Caputo, p. 111.

[72] Still, p. 22.

[73] Still, p. 21.

concerns Gawain throughout the bedroom scenes, and he specifically reflects on his loyalty to Bertilak, trying not to be 'traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde aȝt' (1775), and thinking 'mare of hir knyȝt', in Lawrence Warner's reading of the line previously understood as 'Maré' (Mary) thinking 'of hir knyȝt'.[74] If Gawain is vulnerable to Bertilak's potential revenge, however, he is also vulnerable to the advances of the lady, seeking to avoid a 'lodly' refusal, and 'car[ing] for his cortaysye' (1773). The motif of unwillingness to love in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* can once again broaden our understanding of coercion – who perpetrates it and who is vulnerable to it – in medieval romance. It is not difficult to identify elements of coercion in the lady's advances: although she tells Gawain '[m]e behouez of fyne force | Your seruaunt be, and schale' (1239-40), it is she who jokingly threatens to 'bynde yow in your bedde' (1211) and claims to have 'kaȝt' him (1225) – a perspective born out in the interlaced hunting scenes, which seem to position Gawain as the hunted, and therefore imply the lady may be the hunter.[75] However, readings of coercion in *Sir Gawain* have tended to see something comic in the lady's coercion of Gawain: Weiss, for example, refers to Gawain's unease with the lady entering his chamber as 'a delightful moment of comic surprise', noting that '[f]or hundreds of years romances and novels have [...] portrayed women who take the initiative in courtship comically and critically'.[76] Yet the attempted coercion of Gawain by both the lady and her husband might seem less comic, and more threatening, when we consider the vulnerable position of Gawain as a guest of Bertilak and his wife – with all the attendant potential for violence that accompanies hospitality (already a theme of the poem through the beheading game, and the description of the hunt) – as well as when we compare *Sir Gawain* with other episodes of unwillingness to love in medieval romance. *King Horn* and *Amis and Amiloun* (as well as, to some extent, *Bevis of Hampton*) make clear the vulnerability of young men at another lord's court, and the sexual and romantic coercion they can face; likewise, the episodes with Launcelot and Elaine of Corbyn, discussed in the next section

[74] Warner, pp. 265, 268–69.

[75] For the classic view of the interlaced hunting/bedroom scenes and their implications for the role of the lady, see Henry L. Savage, 'The Significance of the Hunting Scenes in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 27.1 (1928), 1–15. Many readings since have built on Savage's interpretation; however, as Rooney suggests, '[t]hat there are parallel and contrasting pursuits taking place appears to be an idea the poet has recognised and signalled rather casually, but not explored or developed at any great length': Anne Rooney, 'The Hunts in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, pp. 157–63 (p. 158). For an alternative helpful perspective on the significance of the hunting scenes, see Trevor Dodman, 'Hunting to Teach: Class, Pedagogy, and Maleness in the Master of Game and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Exemplaria*, 17.2 (2005), 413–44.

[76] Weiss, 'The wooing woman', p. 149. Gerald Morgan notes that interpretations focusing on comedy seem inappropriate to the moral function of the scenes: 'The Action of the Hunting and Bedroom Scenes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Medium Ævum*, 56.2 (1987), 200–16 (p. 200).

of this chapter, illustrate the potentially serious consideration which sexual coercion targeting men could receive in romance. In this light, *Sir Gawain* may further illustrate the range of people who may be the targets of sexual coercion in medieval romance, opening up real-life concerns about hospitality and the potentially problematic nature of a female hostess for a male guest (as well as the difficulties posed by a couple as a host, and the dual, divided requirements that may create for a guest) through the motif of unwillingness to love.

'THAT I DED WAS AYENSTE MY WYLLE': SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND THE VULNERABILITY OF MALORY'S LAUNCELOT[77]

Launcelot in Malory's *Morte Darthur* is associated with yet another kind of unwillingness to commit infidelity. Launcelot's unwillingness to commit infidelity is complicated by the fact that the relationship to which he tries to be faithful is itself adulterous, and is a relationship about which Malory is notably and deliberately ambiguous. At the start of 'Sir Launcelot du Lake', Malory tells us that 'Quene Gwenyvere had [Launcelot] in grete favoure aboven all other knyghtis, and so he loved the quene agayne aboven all other ladyes dayes of his lyff, and for hir he dud many dedys of armys and saved her frome the fyre thorow his noble chevalry' (p. 190), but the kind of love this implies is unclear, and this brief description is indicative of the general, broad, and ambiguous way in which Malory describes their relationship. While Malory seems reluctant to go into much detail, Beverly Kennedy's view that Launcelot and Guenevere only commit adultery once is extreme, misrepresenting Malory's deliberate uncertainty as an avowal of innocence and, as Karen Cherewatuk notes, 'ignor[ing] both Malory's tendencies as a traditional writer who has chosen to follow the adulterous plot of his French sources and his skill as a subtle artist, able to imply a sexual relationship through a deftly chosen verb'.[78] In addition to the specific examples Cherewatuk discusses, the episodes in which Launcelot has sex with Elaine of Corbyn while believing that she is Guenevere are hard to explain if Launcelot and Guenevere's affair is not a physical one: Field notes that 'Galahad is conceived by the act that tells us, almost with certainty, that the rumours of adultery are true'.[79] Similarly, almost all of the women who seek Launcelot's love (the four queens,

[77] Malory, p. 631.
[78] Beverly Kennedy, 'Adultery in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*', *Arthuriana*, 7.4 (1997), 63–91 (p. 79); Karen Cherewatuk, *Marriage, Adultery and Inheritance in Malory's 'Morte Darthur'*, Arthurian Studies, 67 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), p. 46.
[79] 'Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*', in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. by W. R. J. Barron, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, 2 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 225–45 (p. 237).

Hallewes, the two Elaines, and the female jailor in 'The Knight of the Cart'), as well as the damsel who asks Launcelot why he will not take a lover in 'Sir Launcelot du Lake', mention Guenevere as a known obstacle to acquiring Launcelot's love (Elaine of Astolat does not mention Guenevere herself, but the Queen plays a fairly prominent role in the episodes surrounding Launcelot's relationship with Elaine). While Launcelot does not confirm their speculation, and it is not always clear whether he rejects these women because of a prior commitment to Guenevere, this is at least consistently mentioned as a possibility, and by the time of his relationship with Elaine of Corbyn Launcelot does seem to be trying to reject infidelity to his (adulterous) relationship with Guenevere. It may be the ambiguous nature of Launcelot's relationship with Guenevere that paves the way for him to be propositioned with so many other relationships: as Larrington notes, 'Lancelot is constantly implicated as the object of different kinds of desire'.[80] In some ways, Launcelot seems to span the gap between the romantic a(nti)pathy of single people and the rejections of infidelity discussed in this chapter, according with Armstrong's argument that 'Guenevere functions as a single lady for Launcelot', while at the same time Launcelot 'is compelled to serve a multitude of single ladies to hide his singular devotion to Guenevere'.[81] Because his relationship with Guenevere has not been institutionally sanctioned, he can be pursued by other women for marriage or sex, opening up a wide diversity of views on unwillingness to commit infidelity.

Indeed, if Launcelot is the closest comparison to a single unwilling lover, it is striking how often his experiences involve coercion and violence, both from negative characters like the four queens and Hallewes, and from more neutral or positive characters like Elaine of Corbyn. Hallewes and the four queens are directly associated with violent sexual threats and abuses of power: the queens tell Launcelot that he must love one of them 'other ellys to dye in this preson' (p. 194), while Hallewes wishes 'to have thy body dede. Than wolde I have bawmed hit and sered hit, and so to have kepte hit my lyve dayes' (p. 216). Hallewes's necrophilic desire is an addition of Malory's own, as Adam Bryant Marshall notes: in the *Perlesvaus*, Malory's source for this episode, the lady wishes to show Lancelot the tomb she has made for him, but she does not voice

[80] 'Gender/Queer Studies', p. 268.
[81] Dorsey Armstrong, 'Gender, Marriage, and Knighthood: Single Ladies in Malory', in *The Single Woman in Medieval and Early Modern England: Her Life and Representation*, ed. by Laurel Amtower and Dorothea Kehler, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 263 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003), pp. 41–61 (p. 57).

sexual desire for his dead body.[82] The threats posed by these women in Malory's *Morte* can be read as attempts to coerce Launcelot into a relationship with them and simultaneously as punishments for his refusal to love them, which they recognise even as they attempt to force him to accept their desire. While the four queens ostensibly give Launcelot the choice of loving one of them, they also declare that because 'we know well there can no lady have thy love but one, and that is Quene Gwenyvere, now thou shalt hir love lose for ever, and she thyne' (p. 194), positioning the acceptance of their love more as a punishment than a choice. Hallewes's plot also arises because Launcelot's love for Guenevere means that 'I myght nat rejoyse the nother to have thy body on lyve' (p. 216). Both groups of women therefore acknowledge that Launcelot cannot love them of his free will, recognising his inevitable rejection of them, while at the same time working to try and punish him for this. The female jailor in 'The Knight of the Cart' offers a similar model of coercion and acknowledgement of Guenevere, telling Launcelot 'ye may never oute of this preson but if ye have my helpe. And also youre lady Quene Gwenyvere shall be brente in your defaute onles that ye be there' (p. 856); she does not position accepting her love as a punishment, however, perhaps indicating the balance between helpful damsel and distracting seductress in her character. As with the stories of accused queens, then, here punishment for rejecting love that would be unfaithful to a prior relationship is associated with negative characters, in contrast to the more accepted punishment of romantic a(nti)pathy discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis. Like the punitive desires in the accused queen narratives, those of the four queens and Hallewes, as well as the jailor, are also associated with abuses of power – for the queens and Hallewes, a more overtly negative kind of power in the form of magic: although magic is 'generally conceived of as a neutral power in Arthurian romance', Hallewes 'tellingly signal[s] that hers is a wholly sinister brand of magic', and this sinister and subversive use of magic also seems to apply to the four queens for most of the *Morte Darthur*.[83]

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[82] Adam Bryant Marshall, 'Sir Lancelot at the Chapel Perelus: Malory's Adaptation of the *Perlesvaus*', *Arthuriana*, 25.3 (2015), 33–48 (p. 42). In the *Perlesvaus*, the lady tells Launcelot 'je vos ai maintes foiz desiré, e Perlesvax e Monsaignor Gavain, si verroiz les trois riches sarqex que je ai fez a vostre oés' ['I have often desired you, as I have desired Perceval and Sir Gawain, and you shall see the three rich tombs which I have made for you'], and later says that without Launcelot possessing the sword, she 'eüsse tot mon plesir de vos' ['would have whatever I wanted of you'], combining desire and death in a way that may threaten necrophilia, but that does not explicitly detail it as Malory does. See *Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus*, ed. by William A. Nitze and T. Atkinson Jenkins, 2 vols (New York: Phaeton, 1932; repr. 1972), I, pp. 344, 345; trans. in *The High Book of the Grail: A translation of the thirteenth century romance of Perlesvaus*, trans. by Nigel Bryant (Cambridge: Brewer, 1978), pp. 221–22.
[83] Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 16.

However, while the four queens and Hallewes can be seen as negative figures who reinforce the importance of upholding fidelity to prior relationships even in the face of coercion and punishment, they also share some intriguing similarities with the two Elaines, as well as figures associated with romantic a(nti)pathy in Malory such as Pelleas and Ettarde. While Elaine of Corbyn coerces Launcelot into a sexual relationship with her, as I will discuss shortly, aligning her to some extent with the (much more extreme and violent) coercion of the four queens and Hallewes, the narrative patterns of Hallewes, the two Elaines, and Ettarde share a common feature: they all end in the death of the female protagonist.[84] The similarities and differences between the representation of Hallewes and Ettarde are particularly suggestive. As I indicated earlier in this chapter, the shared focus upon punishment in some narratives of romantic a(nti)pathy and some narratives of unwillingness to commit infidelity opens up intriguing questions and possibilities for reading punishment motifs. In Malory, the representation of Hallewes both supports and undermines the punishment of Ettarde for rejecting Pelleas: although Hallewes threatens Launcelot with necromancy, ultimately she is the one who dies in this episode, as Ettarde does in her narrative, positioning death as a punishment for sexual transgression. As Pugh argues, 'normative sexuality kills in medieval romance', with death 'frequently cod[ing] characters as heroes and as villains'.[85] However, the differing nature of Hallewes's and Ettarde's sexual transgression creates an uncomfortable tension: Hallewes's death acts as a punishment for and refutation of her desire for Launcelot (a desire that leads her to plot murder and necrophilia), while Ettarde is punished for refusing to love Pelleas. Of course, the inclusion of murder and violation in Hallewes's desires differentiates her from Pelleas (in addition to Launcelot's prior relationship with Guenevere and Ettarde's single status), but these examples still depict one woman being punished for her unrequited desire, while the other is punished for *not* requiting desire. The episodes establish Hallewes and Ettarde as blameworthy in different ways, highlighting the wide spectrum of behaviour that could be seen as sexually transgressive in women. However, the potential connections between these episodes also open them up to questioning and critical readings that pause to ask why the women are treated

[84] La Farge also notes that Hallewes's ending 'mak[es] her in her demise uncomfortably like Elayne of Astolat': Catherine La Farge, 'Launcelot in Compromising Positions: Fabliau in Malory's "Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake"', in *Blood, Sex, Malory: Essays on the 'Morte Darthur'*, ed. by David Clark and Kate McClune (=*Arthurian Literature*, 28 (2011)), pp. 181–97 (p. 195).

[85] Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, pp. 118, 119. Although death also has other functions in romance, including, as Batt notes, as a common outcome for victims of rape in the *Morte*, the deaths of Hallewes and Ettarde do seem to align with the punishment of sexual transgression: Batt, p. 89.

similarly, enabling some divergent approaches to the punitive treatment of romantic a(nti)pathy.

Even more strikingly, while the four queens and Hallewes are resoundingly negative figures in the *Morte*, coercion is also a prominent issue in Launcelot's relationship with Elaine of Corbyn, where their sexual encounters are framed to some extent as an experience of rape, as Batt and David Grubbs have noted.[86] Although Elaine of Corbyn is a much more sympathetic figure in Malory than in his sources,[87] her role in the plot of the *Morte Darthur* necessitates her coercion of Launcelot, so that they can conceive a son while not destroying the spirit of Launcelot's fidelity to Guenevere: as Larrington comments, Launcelot is (and must be) '[o]bsessively faithful to one woman, except when deceived into sexual intimacy by women's machinations'.[88] However, Malory does not shy away from the coercive aspects of this encounter, but instead explores several different aspects of coercion at work in their relationship, which exceed and problematise medieval definitions of *raptus* in similar ways to Aurelius's coercion of Dorigen in *The Franklin's Tale*. Together, *The Franklin's Tale* and the Elaine of Corbyn episode of the *Morte* perhaps suggest a certain openness to exploring coercion and *raptus* particularly characteristic of the motif of unwillingness to commit infidelity.

In Malory, Elaine's coercion of Launcelot is openly acknowledged through the language Malory uses to describe their encounters: Launcelot insists to Guenevere 'that I ded was ayenste my wylle' (p. 631), and subsequently says to Elaine that he lay with her 'magry my hede' (p. 651). This kind of language is associated with the rape and violation of women in Middle English romance: Saunders notes *Havelok*'s condemnation of those who 'dide maydne shame | Of hire bodi or brouth in blame | (*Bute it were by hire wille*)' (my emphasis),[89] while the Fairy Knight who rapes the Princess in *Sir Degaré* 'dide his wille, what he wolde', and Heurodis in *Sir Orfeo* says that the Fairy King abducts her (performing *raptus*) '[w]old ich, nold ich'.[90] In perhaps the most comparable example to that of Launcelot and Elaine, the demon disguised as the Duchess's husband in *Sir Gowther* '[w]ith hur is wyll he wroghtth', and he reveals himself as a demon '[w]hen he had is wylle all don'.[91] Launcelot's insistence that 'that I ded was ayenste my wylle' (p. 631)

[86] Batt, 'Malory and Rape'; Grubbs.
[87] Cherewatuk, p. 69; Wyatt, pp. 117–18, 135.
[88] 'Gender/Queer Studies', p. 260.
[89] Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 196; *Havelok*, ll. 83–85.
[90] 'Sir Degaré', in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, pp. 101–29 (l. 112); 'Sir Orfeo', in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, pp. 26–41 (l. 154).
[91] 'Sir Gowther', in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, pp. 274–95 (ll. 72, 73).

may imply, then, a link with the violated women who are raped in accordance with men's wills in other Middle English romances: as Batt puts it, 'Malory appropriates for Lancelot the terms of the experience of rape'.[92] The phrase 'magry my hede' (p. 651) also develops this connection: within the *Morte*, it is used to refer to *raptus* in the form of abduction, when Meliot de Logrus says that he heard Nyneve 'complayne that she was with [Outelake] magré hir hede' (p. 93), while elsewhere, in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, for instance, it is used more specifically with reference to rape, when a knight 'maugree hir heed [...] rafte hire maydenhed'.[93] Malory seems to be using the language of rape and *raptus* elsewhere associated with the violation of women to construct Launcelot's encounter with Elaine as comparable to these experiences. I am not suggesting that Malory intends us to read Launcelot as a victim of *raptus* here, however: as discussed in Chapter 3, *raptus* was considered a gender-specific crime in the Middle Ages (and, indeed, in the UK today rape can only be committed by someone with a penis, although people of any gender can be victims of rape).[94] Although Grubbs argues that Launcelot 'was raped', using a positive consent model to foreground 'an emphasis on agency and coercion already present', he acknowledges that '[b]y common medieval legal definitions, what Pelles and Brusen plot is not *raptus*'.[95] However, the specific vocabulary Malory uses for Launcelot does create a conceptual link between the coercion of men and the violation of women, opening up the definition of *raptus* and coercion to include male victims and female perpetrators, and revealing some of the areas of experience not included within the medieval law of *raptus*.

The definition of *raptus*, as for Chaucer, is again a matter potentially of personal interest to Malory, given the *raptus* accusations against Malory (discussed in Chapter 2). As Batt notes, 'appropriat[ing] rape's issues of integrity and volition for the purposes of illuminating a male literary character [...] is not incompatible with the perspective of an apparent rapist'; however, as Batt also observes, 'that very appropriation demonstrates an acute sensitivity to the issues at stake for the individual in cases of rape'.[96] Perhaps

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[92] Batt, p. 84.
[93] Chaucer, 'The Wife of Bath's Tale', ll. 887–88. Grubbs and Batt also quote the line 'magry my hede', but Grubbs emphasises its translation as 'against my will' rather than its association with rape, while Batt mentions it in general terms as one of the ways that Launcelot 'draws [attention] to the fact of his sexual betrayal': Grubbs, p. 173; Batt, p. 92.
[94] See Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 20; Dunn, pp. 30–31. On modern law, see 'Sexual Offences Act 2003 - Rape', *legislation.gov.uk*, 2003 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/part/1/crossheading/rape#:~:text=1Rape,reasonably%20believe%20that%20B%20consents.> [accessed 20 February 2021]; 'What is rape?', *Rape Crisis* <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/looking-for-information/what-is-sexual-violence/what-is-rape/> [accessed 20 February 2021].
[95] Grubbs, pp. 173, 167, 170.
[96] Batt, p. 93.

indicating this personal and specific interest, the episodes involving Launcelot and Elaine raise questions about other aspects of sexual coercion: their encounters seem to encompass what would now be referred to as deceptive sex or rape by fraud, 'an action whereby a person obtains sexual consent and has sexual intercourse of any type by fraud, deception, misrepresentation, or impersonation', as Launcelot is deceived into thinking that Elaine is Guenevere.[97] Deceptive sex or rape by fraud has been the subject of much current legal and media discussion in the modern world, but it also receives consideration in Malory, albeit as a means of plot fulfilment (facilitating the conception of Galahad during Elaine and Launcelot's first encounter) rather than as the subject of extended interrogation.[98] Nonetheless, while the implications of Elaine's deceit are not fully explored, the focus remaining upon Launcelot and Guenevere's relationship, the language that Malory uses for the deception of Launcelot highlights the violation of his consent. The focus on deception here is clear, as Launcelot 'wente that mayden Elayne had bene Quene Gwenyvere' (p. 623), and asks Elaine in the morning '[w]hat arte thou' (p. 624), focusing upon the issue of her identity and his false impression of it as central to his anger and sense of violation. During their second sexual encounter Launcelot also 'wende that he had had another in hys armys' (p. 632). The issue of deceptive sex, mistaken identity, and *raptus* is of course one that occurs prominently elsewhere in Arthurian literature, including in the conception of Arthur by Uther and Igrayne and, to

[97] Michael Mullen, 'Rape by Fraud: Eluding Washington Rape Statutes', *Seattle University Law Review*, 41.3 (2018), 1035–52 (p. 1035).

[98] For some opposing recent legal views of deceptive sex and rape by fraud, see Luis E. Chiesa, 'Solving the Riddle of Rape-by-Deception', *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 35.2 (2017), 407–60; Tom Dougherty, 'No Way around Consent: A Reply to Rubenfeld on "Rape-by-Deception"', *Yale Law Journal*, 123 (2013), 321–34; Jed Rubenfeld, 'The Riddle of Rape-by-Deception and the Myth of Sexual Autonomy', *Yale Law Journal*, 122.6 (2013), 1372–1443; Patricia J. Falk, 'Not Logic, But Experience: Drawing on Lessons from the Real World in Thinking about the Riddle of Rape-by-Fraud', *Yale Law Journal*, 123 (2013), 353–70. I am indebted to Chloë Kennedy, Kyle Murray, and Tara Beattie for their insights on this topic: Chloë Kennedy, 'Criminalising Deceptive Sex: Sex, Identity and Consent' (presented at Consent: Histories, Representations, and Frameworks for the Future, Durham University, 2019); Kyle L. Murray and Tara Beattie, 'Towards a Law of "Conditional Consent"? The Relevance of Mistake and Deception in Sex' (presented at Consent: Histories, Representations, and Frameworks for the Future). For media stories on rape by fraud/deceptive sex, see Linsey Davis et al., 'College Student Hopes Her "Rape by Fraud" Case Will Help Expose a Loophole in Sexual Assault Laws', *ABC News*, 7 January 2019 <https://abcnews.go.com/US/college-student-hopes-rape-fraud-case-expose-loophole/story?id=60211269> [accessed 14 November 2019]; 'Undercover Police: Women Were "Victims of Co-Ordinated Rape"', *BBC News*, 4 March 2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-47240670> [accessed 14 November 2019]; Abby Ellin, 'Is Sex by Deception a Form of Rape?', *The New York Times*, 3 April 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/23/well/mind/is-sex-by-deception-a-form-of-rape.html> [accessed 14 November 2019]; Caroline Lowbridge, 'Sex, Lies and Legal Consent: Can Deceit Turn Sex into Rape?', *BBC News* (Leicester, 26 September 2019) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-49127545> [accessed 14 November 2019]. The cases of Abigail Finney, Michael Kelso-Christy, and the women who had relationships with undercover police officers all involve deception by identity fraud.

some extent, in the conception of Mordred by Arthur and Morgause. But the episodes with Elaine and Launcelot also add a further issue to the consideration of *raptus* and coercion: as well as tricking Launcelot into thinking that Elaine is Guenevere, Brusen the enchantress (enchantresses being strongly associated with the sexual coercion of Launcelot, through the four queens and Hallewes) also gives him a cup of wine in his first encounter with Elaine. This makes him 'asoted and madde' (p. 623), incorporating issues of inebriation within Malory's exploration of coercion as well. 'And so he wente that mayden Elayne had bene Quene Gwenyvere' (p. 623) causally connects Launcelot drinking the wine with his mistaken belief that he is in bed with Guenevere, making it central to this deception and violation.[99] We are not told what the drink contains, whether it is a kind of spell that prevents Launcelot from recognising that Elaine is not Guenevere, an aphrodisiac, or just a strong cup of wine to make Launcelot drunk, but this ambiguity in some ways makes it more powerful. Just as Cooper argues in relation to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that 'it is in the natural order, not the supernatural, that the most important things happen', in Malory the ambiguity of the cup allows Brusen's magical deception to become secondary to a consideration of consent, violation, and Launcelot's experience of these issues in the episodes with Elaine of Corbyn.[100] Together with the other episodes in which Launcelot experiences threatened or actual coercion, the encounters with Elaine open up and challenge our understanding of who might experience sexual and romantic coercion in medieval romance, highlighting the perhaps surprising vulnerability of men and challenging us to rethink our perceptions of sexual violence and coercion as gendered issues in the medieval period and today.[101]

However, while Launcelot's unwillingness to commit infidelity is often associated with coercion – in the episodes with Elaine of Corbyn, the four queens, Hallewes, and his female jailor in 'The Knight of the Cart' – the unusual nature of Launcelot's situation also allows Malory to explore and mobilise a broader range of experiences and affective engagement. In particular, Elaine of Astolat is portrayed sympathetically for desiring Launcelot despite his relationship with Guenevere. Unlike the other women who seek Launcelot's love, Elaine is not associated with coercion, perhaps reflecting her status as

[99] Grubbs discusses inebriation in Elaine's deception of Launcelot, pp. 170–71.
[100] Cooper, 'The Supernatural', in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, pp. 277–91 (p. 291). Leitch also notes that '[r]egardless of Dame Brusen's enchantress powers [...] the operative factor lies in space [...]. If there is an enchantment, it is one that operates through the management and "duplicity" of spaces': 'Enter the Bedroom', p. 49.
[101] For a discussion of the problematic gender stereotypes associated with rape in the modern world, see Sanyal, pp. 4–8.

a human character who has no recourse to magical agency (whether her own or another's), and adding to her appeal and poignancy as a figure with whom the reader can sympathise. Elaine's death famously receives a much more detailed treatment in Malory than in his sources, as Malory adds Elaine's death-bed speech in which she poignantly defends her love for Launcelot, insisting 'my belyve ys that I do none offence, though I love an erthely man, unto God, for He fourmed me thereto, and all maner of good love commyth of God'.[102] Malory also alters Elaine's final letter to Launcelot from the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*: whereas the maid in the Stanzaic *Morte* writes a 'plaint' decrying Launcelot as 'churlish of manneres', 'unhendle of thewes', and bewailing 'the wrong that me is wrought',[103] the letter of Malory's Elaine is 'unlike the previous letters of bitterness and accusation; she exhibits no hint of reproach or anger'.[104] This alteration again makes Elaine a more sympathetic figure, albeit along stereotypical lines, with sympathy for Elaine increasing in accordance with the extent to which she suffers in a 'correct' way, not demonstrating anger with Launcelot but rather a self-effacing grief.[105] Nonetheless, this attentiveness and empathy for Elaine poignantly exposes the anxiety and tragedy of unrequited love, perhaps an implicit counterpart to many of the representations of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis.

The affective reach of this experience is demonstrated when even Guenevere herself sympathises with Elaine. Although Guenevere initially calls Launcelot a 'false traytoure' (p. 818) for wearing Elaine's sleeve at a tournament, in an interesting inversion of the association Tracy notes between treachery and female adultery, particularly because Launcelot is more literally a traitor through his fidelity to Guenevere than any infidelity to her, Guenevere also comments negatively upon the way in which Launcelot ultimately rejects Elaine.[106] When Elaine dies and her body reaches Camelot in a ship, Guenevere wishes that Launcelot 'myght have shewed hir som bownté and jantilnes whych myght

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[102] Malory, p. 827. On Malory's extension of this episode from his sources, see Wyatt, pp. 125, 129, 135; D. S. Brewer, 'Introduction', in *Malory: The Morte Darthur, Parts Seven and Eight* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), pp. 1–37 (pp. 24–25).
[103] 'Stanzaic Morte Arthur', in *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English 'Stanzaic Morte Arthur' and 'Alliterative Morte Arthure'*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1986), pp. 1–111 (ll. 1056, 1078, 1081, 1057).
[104] Carolyn Hares-Stryker, 'The Elaine of Astolat and Lancelot Dialogues: A Confusion of Intent', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 39.3 (1997), 205–29 (p. 224). Hares-Stryker's reference to 'the previous letters' refers to those in *La Mort le Roi Artu* (primarily) and the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*. See also Wyatt, pp. 128–30.
[105] Larrington notes that 'she is propelled into the passive self-directed violence of the hysteric': Carolyne Larrington, 'Sibling Relations in Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in *Blood, Sex, Malory: Essays on the 'Morte Darthur'*, pp. 57–74 (p. 71).
[106] Tracy, 'Introduction: The Shameful Business of Betrayal and Treason', p. 4.

have preserved hir lyff' (p. 830). Given Guenevere's earlier fury, this is an ironic and humorous line, typifying Guenevere's erratic nature in Malory's *Morte* (the line is unparalleled in the Stanzaic *Morte*), and again pointing to the association between women and anger.[107] However, Guenevere's response also indicates the perception of a right and wrong way in which to reject infidelity. This exemplary focus is quite vague and undefined, in contrast to the precise vocabulary and specific conduct of the women who reject adultery in the accused queen romances, suggesting that romances may be less prescriptive about men's rejections of adultery compared to women's. This is also supported by *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where Gawain worries about refusing the lady in a 'lodly' way, but how he manages to avoid this is not entirely clear. But Guenevere's criticism of Launcelot also reveals the sympathy Elaine receives for her unrequited love: in some ways, Guenevere's wish that Launcelot could have 'shewed hir som bownté' (p. 830) points to the impossibility of providing enough 'bownté' to make up for the inability to return Elaine's love. Launcelot points out that he offered Elaine money for a dowry to help her marry any other knight, but 'she wold none other wayes be answerede but that she wolde be my wyff othir ellis my paramour, and of thes too I wolde not graunte her' (p. 830). Elaine needs the only thing Launcelot cannot give her: his love. As Cherewatuk notes, there is an 'incredible sense of waste in Elaine's death, not only to Sir Barnarde and his sons, but to the larger society: as both Gawain and Bors recognize, Elaine *could* have served Launcelot as a fine wife'.[108]

Through Elaine, Malory explores the waste and futility of unrequited love, and its inability to lead to narrative progression. The episode with Elaine of Astolat to some extent probes the line between unwillingness to commit adultery and the romantic a(nti)pathy of single characters: Launcelot's relationship with Elaine is balanced between infidelity and the potential for marriage, given the complex nature of his relationship with Guenevere. The empathy Malory invites us to feel for Elaine aligns with the drive towards resolving romantic a(nti)pathy in narratives of single unwilling lovers, indicating the possibility of a socially normative role for Launcelot. Yet the unpredictable, uncontrollable nature of desire, which Launcelot himself comments on in relation to Elaine, insisting 'I love nat to be constrayned to love, for love muste only aryse of the harte selff, and nat by none constraynte' (p. 830), makes this resolution impossible for Launcelot. Balanced between the roles of single unwilling lovers who avoid marriage and

[107] On female anger, see Saunders, 'Gender, Virtue and Wisdom in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', p. 169.
[108] Cherewatuk, p. 66.

those of committed lovers who avoid infidelity, Launcelot's experiences of unwillingness to love are varied and diverse, encompassing coercion, empathy, and tragedy to reveal the range of experiences of unwillingness to love represented within medieval romance, and the affective, didactic, and interrogative uses to which this motif can be put.

CONCLUSION

The representation of unwillingness to commit infidelity in the romances discussed in this chapter frequently serves an exemplary function, aligning with the Christian prohibition of adultery by upholding rejections of adulterous propositions as the exemplary and correct course of action, and often offering particular models of behaviour for readers to reflect on and emulate. In this light, these works seem to indicate some of the appeal romances may have held for married readers: while romance is often thought to hold special appeal for the young and unmarried (or those imaginatively identifying with this state), the works discussed in this chapter indicate some of the ways romance attended to the desires, concerns, and fears of married readers.[109] Although romance 'audiences [...] resist generalisation and easy classification', married couples certainly owned romances, and Riddy argues that they were 'read within the family'.[110] Wills occasionally provide evidence for romances owned by married women: George Keiser records that Joan, widow of Ralph, Lord Cromwell, bequeathed a volume of *Lybeaus Desconus* to a parish church on her death in 1434, while Meale notes that Isabel Lyston, widow of Robert Lyston, left her copy of 'an englyssh boke called partonope' to her daughter, Margery London (the fourth wife of William London).[111] Other romances are known to have been owned, read, and even compiled within marital and family contexts: Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6, usually known as the Findern Manuscript and containing the romances of *Sir Degrevant* and *Alexander-Cassamus*, was owned and possibly copied by the Findern family of Derbyshire, and was read by other gentry families within the region.[112] Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.3.1, containing *Sir Amadace*, *Sir Gowther*, and *Sir Isumbras*, was owned by the Sherbrooke family, while Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 9 (the Ireland Blackburn manuscript), containing *The Avowyng of Arthur*, *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, and *Sir Amadace*, was owned by

[109] See Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 225; Riddy, pp. 239–45.
[110] Meale, 'Romance and Its Audiences', p. 225; Riddy, p. 237.
[111] See George R. Keiser, 'Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe', *Studies in Bibliography*, 32 (1979), 158–79 (p. 174); Meale, 'Romance and Its Audiences', p. 222.
[112] Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 128–37; Kate Harris, 'The Origins and Make-Up of Cambridge University Library MS Ff. 1.6', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 8.3 (1983), 299–333 (pp. 302–03).

the Ireland family of Lancashire.[113] Amongst the romances discussed in this chapter, an even more tantalising example survives: *The Erle of Tolous* is preserved in a manuscript that may have been a wedding or engagement gift from a groom to his bride,[114] while the other manuscripts that include this romance have been identified as 'household' books or gentry miscellanies, available within family contexts.[115] As Wade argues, despite the ambiguous representation of the Empress's relationship with the Earl, attending to the virtues associated with the Empress in this work reveals 'why a young man in the 1520s might think it appropriate reading matter for his bride-to-be': 'her virtues are not so strictly pious as worldly wise, an example for all those women, perhaps like Maid Maria, living in a complex and morally ambiguous world'.[116] *The Erle of Tolous*, I have suggested, acknowledges the potential reality of extramarital desire, while still asserting the need to restrain this desire, perhaps indicating an even more apt resonance for this work in the context of a new marriage. While the possibility of adultery may not seem to be an appealing subject for married couples, the widespread motif of rejecting adultery suggests that romance could be seen as a fantasy for married people, as well as a fantasy for young men in need of a wealthy bride. Representations of unwillingness to commit adultery complement the other forms of unwillingness to love discussed in this thesis by engaging with many of the same themes, particularly the complexity of issues of consent and coercion, but the works discussed in this chapter also open up new and different perspectives on the appeal romance as a genre may have held for married people, broadening our understandings of the genre's appeal, affective invitations, and exemplary focus.

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[113] Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 128, 130, 142–44, 206–50.

[114] For a discussion of this copy of *The Erle of Tolous* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 45), see Meale, 'An Early Sixteenth-Century Presentation Copy of *The Erle of Tolous*'; Perkins, 'Introduction: The Materiality of Medieval Romance and *The Erle of Tolous*', pp. 1–3, 10–18.

[115] *The Erle of Tolous* survives in three other manuscripts: MS Ashmole 61; Cambridge University Library, Ff.2.38; and Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91 (the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript). Ashmole 61 has been identified as 'an example of the reading material popular with middle-class English families in the later Middle Ages', with strong interests in domestic life and the family: George Shuffelton, 'Introduction', in *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. by George Shuffelton, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), pp. 1–17 (p. 1; see also pp. 11-12). Cambridge Ff.2.38 has been described as a household book by Meale: 'Romance and Its Audiences', p. 220. The Lincoln Thornton Manuscript is one of gentry scribe Robert Thornton's two codices, which features seven other romances. Johnston notes that Thornton produced his books 'for his own (and presumably his family's) consumption': Thornton had married in 1418, while he probably compiled his manuscripts 1420-60: see Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 159, 160, 173.

[116] James Wade, 'Confession, Inquisition and Exemplarity in *The Erle of Tolous* and Other Middle English Romances', in *The Culture of Inquisition in Medieval England*, ed. by Mary C. Flannery and Katie L. Walter (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 112–29 (p. 129).

CONCLUSION: UNWILLINGNESS TO LOVE IN MEDIEVAL AND MODERN CONTEXTS

Unwillingness to love does not appear in the romance genre without precedent, and nor does it disappear from literature after the decline of medieval romance. The impact of romance literature's use of this motif can most clearly be seen in the works of William Shakespeare, in plays such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Measure for Measure*. Shakespeare's works develop several of the functions of unwillingness to love in medieval romance, building primarily on it as what might be termed a comic motif, a strategy to both delay and provide the fulfilment of the happy ending. However, Shakespeare's use of this motif also raises questions about consent and coercion, again similarly to romance portrayals, particularly in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Measure for Measure*. After Shakespeare, unwillingness to love continues to appear in a range of literary works right up to the present day, from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* to contemporary romance novels and films.[1] The ongoing popularity of this motif demonstrates the enduring relevance of this topic: many of the issues raised or perpetuated by this trope in medieval romance literature are still current and meaningful today.

This may be because unwillingness to love is not just a literary motif, but rather a human experience, which remains present in our world today, whether it manifests as aromanticism, resistance to a particular relationship or kind of relationship, or whether it is experienced from the alternative perspective, as the pain of unrequited love. In this thesis, my aim has not been to trace the representation of a real emotional state in romance literature, but rather to explore some of the opportunities and challenges unwillingness to love offers to the romance genre as a literary motif. Nonetheless, the romances discussed in this thesis do offer insights into unwillingness to love as an emotional experience. Their focus on unwillingness to love in relation to young protagonists synthesises some of the concerns and fears young readers may associate with the process of growing up and entering into the adult worlds of love, sex, and marriage. (This does not narrow the affective appeal of the motif, however, as older readers may

[1] This trope appears in various forms listed on TV tropes: see, for example, 'Dogged Nice Guy', *Tvtropes* <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/DoggedNiceGuy> [accessed 21 February 2021]; 'Deconfirmed Bachelor', *Tvtropes* <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/DeconfirmedBachelor> [accessed 21 February 2021]; 'Rejection Affection', *Tvtropes* <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/RejectionAffection> [accessed 21 February 2021].

also imaginatively and nostalgically identify with these concerns; indeed, given the high rate of remarriage after the death of a partner in medieval society, these concerns may in some ways be no less relevant to older readers.)[2] These anxieties may in part reflect specific historical issues, such as the high rate of mortality in childbirth, which, unsurprisingly, may have contributed to the anxieties young women might have felt about marrying and conceiving children.[3] But the motif of unwillingness to love perhaps also reflects a broader, trans-historical concern about maturing from childhood into adulthood, another subject that is common to both medieval and modern literature. At the same time, while the association of unwillingness to love with adolescence allows this motif to draw upon precise anxieties about growing up, making important life choices about marriage and family, the focus on young protagonists also delimits the questions that unwillingness to love can raise about forms of normative desire. As Chess argues in relation to early modern plays, the association of unwillingness to love with childhood and adolescence meant that 'authors could explore the limits and possibilities of asexuality without overtly suggesting it as a life-long option or orientation'; in romance, this takes on a broader meaning, as any form of queerness that may be suggested by unwillingness to love can be curtailed within a framework that presents queer alternatives as only temporary possibilities.[4] In almost every case, with the notable exception of Malory's Dynadan (and the less surprising exception of rejecting infidelity), unwillingness to love is resolved by the endings of the romances in which it appears. The romances discussed in this thesis therefore dramatise but often also reassure socio-cultural anxieties about growing up, and about normative and non-normative models of desire and gendered behaviour, positioning the acceptance of love as necessary to and constitutive of a happy ending.

While this accords with generic expectations, it also reveals the political implications of unwillingness to love, in medieval romance and in its representations and manifestations in the modern world. This thesis has demonstrated that some forms of unwillingness to love, especially romantic a(nti)pathy, are treated as gendered issues. Female romantic a(nti)pathy is seen as a more problematic issue than male romantic a(nti)pathy, and women's romantic a(nti)pathy is portrayed as more socially disruptive,

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[2] Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, pp. 10–11; McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture*, pp. 17, 20–21, 23; Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, pp. 23, 62–64.
[3] Hume, p. 21; McCarthy, pp. 133–34; Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry*, pp. 58–60. Harris discusses the frequency with which aristocratic women were expected to be pregnant, and the large numbers of children fertile couples could have: Barbara Harris, pp. 30–31.
[4] 'Asexuality, Queer Chastity, and Adolescence in Early Modern Literature', p. 32.

preventing the transfer of political and economic power between men, and offering a temporary challenge to the prerogative of male rule. To some extent, this aligns unwillingness to love in medieval romance – and particularly the resolution of this *topos* – with 'compulsory heterosexuality', or what we might call a kind of proto-heteronormativity.[5] The resolution of unwillingness to love, especially in relation to women's romantic a(nti)pathy, serves patriarchal interests, transferring political and economic power back into the hands of men, and ensuring the continuance of patriarchal dynasties and the subjugation of women in marriage. As Weisl argues, '[t]he drive of romance as a genre towards its fixed conclusion, the "happily ever after" of courtly marriage, coerces woman into compliance that limits her'.[6] While the political and economic impact of male romantic a(nti)pathy is less overtly addressed, the resolution of male romantic a(nti)pathy also upholds gendered and sexual norms, maintaining dynastic interests and expectations.

Other types of unwillingness to love also have political valence, however. In the modern world, Amia Srinivasan has recently explored the way in which 'the sex-positive gaze risks covering not only for misogyny, but for racism, ableism, transphobia, and every other oppressive system that makes its way into the bedroom through the seemingly innocuous mechanism of "personal preference"', arguing that '[t]here is no entitlement to sex, and everyone is entitled to want what they want, but personal preferences [...] are never just personal'.[7] This draws attention to the complexities and the socio-political orientations of desire, the will, and unwillingness to love: our desires and our will are shaped by our socio-cultural environments and their attendant prejudices, making our perceptions of 'free choice' perhaps not so free after all. The forms of unwillingness to love discussed in the last three chapters of this thesis are particularly significant for the way they combine the personal and the political, facilitating intersectional considerations of unwillingness to love. Unwillingness to love can reinforce socio-cultural boundaries, drawing dividing lines between who is and is not to be considered desirable, in ways that perpetuate racial and religious discrimination, and reinforce class boundaries (as apparently interclass relationships usually, though not always, turn out to be between people of comparable social status, and representations of how these relationships begin

[5] See Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'.
[6] Weisl, '"Quiting" Eve', p. 121.
[7] Srinivasan, 'Does anyone have the right to sex?'. Srinivasan's forthcoming book, *The Right to Sex*, will elaborate on this discussion.

often position them as problematic and transgressive). The trope of unwillingness to love in medieval romance literature therefore reveals the political nature of love itself.

While romance portrayals of unwillingness to love are usually resolved in a way that circumscribes the questions and problems this motif opens up, such resolutions often suggestively indicate the difficulty of maintaining clear boundaries and binaries in relation to concepts as complex as gender and sexuality. Coercive strategies are repeatedly used to overcome romantic a(nti)pathy and reinforce normative desires, exposing the manufactured and even violent construction of love in romance literature, and raising questions about love's claim to being natural. As yingchen and yingtong argue, 'the first big ruse of romance is that it is ubiquitous because it is natural, and it is natural because it is ubiquitous'.[8] The genre of medieval romance forms a key stage in the naturalisation of heterosexual-like relationships, making expectations of love and marriage an almost ubiquitous expectation of the genre (although there are of course exceptions, especially penitential romances). However, the presence of unwillingness to love as a motif across the genre's various forms can help us to denaturalise its celebration of love, exploring what kind of stakes the endorsement of love upholds. As such, this study of unwillingness to love seeks to add to queer readings of medieval romance literature by making heterosexual-like relationships the subject of critical inquiry in order to understand the consensual and coercive strategies by which they are negotiated, enforced, and constituted as normative within the genre. There is scope for much further work in this area, particularly for studies of asexuality and aromanticism, a growing field and one to which studies of medieval romance could make a valuable contribution.[9]

The variety of consensual and coercive approaches to relationships discussed in this thesis, aside from indicating the romance genre's determined construction of marriage as its inevitable ending, also reveals the complexity and nuances of consent and coercion in medieval literature and life. Consent and coercion are not a dichotomy of extreme experiences, and romance does not deal only with the most polarised issues of *raptus* and free consent to marriage. Rather, it incorporates a varied continuum of consensual and coercive practices. Significantly, unwillingness to love can reveal the

[8] yingchen and yingtong, *An Aromantic Manifesto* (Calaméo, 2018), p. 7 <https://en.calameo.com/read/0056336139d7e661d8f3c> [accessed 21 February 2021].
[9] See, for example, Melissa E. Sanchez, 'Protestantism, marriage and asexuality in Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare / Sex: Contemporary Readings in Gender and Sexuality*, ed. by Jennifer Drouin (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2020), pp. 98–122; Simone Chess, 'Opting Out: Anorexia, Asexuality, and Early Modern Women', *Early Modern Women*, 15.1 (2020), 117–28; Chess, 'Asexuality, Queer Chastity, and Adolescence in Early Modern Literature'; Arkenberg; Milks and Cerankowski.

vulnerability of men to coercion – especially certain types of men, such as (apparently) lower-class men, but also more surprisingly the most desirable knights who populate romance, Launcelot and Gawain. The romances discussed in this thesis thus reveal the complexities of coercion and sexual violence, encompassing forced kisses to deception, psychological coercion to punitive responses to romantic rejection. While women are often suggested to be more vulnerable to coercion than men, particularly through the motif of romantic a(nti)pathy, aspects such as class and social influence are also shown to be important, and even where a woman's rank does not outweigh a man's, men are still shown to be vulnerable to female coercion at times. Studying unwillingness to love therefore provides a nuanced perspective of issues of consent and coercion in medieval literature and society, revealing more of 'the whole story' of sexual violence, gendered constraints, and coercive practices in the medieval period.[10] Again, there is scope for much more work in this area: even a thesis of this length cannot include 'the whole story' of consent, coercion, and gendered relationships in one genre of literature, and more work on understanding the nuances of this story, particularly in relation to male victims of coercion, is necessary.

Revealing more of this 'whole story' can foster a greater understanding of sexual violence and coercion in the medieval and modern worlds. Issues of consent and coercion in the medieval period have become a surprisingly topical issue today through the cultural prominence of George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and the hit HBO adaptation *Game of Thrones*. Their repeated focus on sexual violence has been much discussed, and the question of whether this violence is excused or even necessitated by Martin's claim to a kind of historical realism has brought issues of historical sexual violence into the public eye.[11] Martin has argued that

> My novels are epic fantasy, but they are inspired by and grounded in history. Rape and sexual violence have been a part of every war ever fought [...]. To omit them from a narrative centered on war and power would have been fundamentally false and dishonest,

[10] I take this phrase from Sanyal, who asks '[w]hat does it say about our culture that it's so hard for us to speak about rape other than as a crime that *only* men do to *only* women – even though that's not the whole story?': Sanyal, p. 8.

[11] See, for example, Carolyne Larrington, *All Men Must Die: Power and Passion in 'Game of Thrones'* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 5, 11, 58–59, 178–84, 186, 210, 212; Shiloh Carroll, *Medievalism in 'A Song of Ice and Fire' and 'Game of Thrones'*, Medievalism, 12 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2018), pp. 10, 15, 17–18, 56–57, 73, 85–94, 96, 98–100, 103–6, 134–44, 166–67, 178–85; Carolyne Larrington, *Winter is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019; first publ. Tauris, 2016), pp. 27–29.

> and would have undermined one of the themes of the books: that the true horrors of human history derive [...] from ourselves'.[12]

The identification of 'ourselves' in this argument is a key point of contention: do Martin's novels, and the HBO series, encourage us to confront rape and sexual violence as crimes that are still being committed today – by, against, and amongst 'ourselves' – or do they displace these issues into an imagined brutal past (not to mention a fantasy universe), and encourage us to assume that rape and sexual violence were much greater issues then than now?[13] Of course, sexual violence was more prevalent and, in some ways, more accepted in the medieval world than in our own.[14] More problematic ideas about sexual violence also circulated more widely.[15] But the divide between medieval and modern issues and representations of sexual violence is not so great as it might appear. Focusing on unwillingness to love, and the more nuanced ideas about consent and coercion this motif reveals, rather than concentrating only on extreme cases of sexual violence in the form of rape or abduction, can challenge some of the more simplistic dividing lines between a violent past and a modern, progressive present. Many of the issues addressed by the romances discussed in this thesis are still problems that need confronting today; unwillingness to love can help break down binaries between the past and the present too.

The romances discussed in this thesis illustrate the genre's capacity to create a 'slippage between [...] modes of realism and fantasy': they use the motif of unwillingness to love to connect fiction and reality, incorporating medieval readers' concerns and affective experiences within apparently fantastic scenarios.[16] Unwillingness to love may continue to bridge the gap between fiction and reality in modern writing as well as medieval romance, but this function is perhaps particularly striking in romance literature because of its more overt fantasy content. Unwillingness to love is also particularly widespread in medieval romance literature, appearing again and again across the full range

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[12] Dave Itzkoff, 'George R.R. Martin on "Game of Thrones" and Sexual Violence', *New York Times*, 2 May 2014, ArtsBeat <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/02/george-r-r-martin-on-game-of-thrones-and-sexual-violence/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=3> [accessed 21 February 2021]. Also cited in Larrington, *Winter is Coming*, p. 28. See further James Hibberd, 'George R.R. Martin Explains Why There's Violence against Women on "Game of Thrones"', *Entertainment Weekly*, 3 June 2015 <https://ew.com/article/2015/06/03/george-rr-martin-thrones-violence-women/> [accessed 21 February 2021].

[13] Carroll notes that the medievalist fantasy setting may be seen as 'allowing readers and writers to gloss over the fact that modern life has many of these same issues, to believe in the myth of progressive history and relegate inequality and savagery to the distant past': Carroll, pp. 181–82.

[14] Some canonists considered marital rape legal: see Brundage, pp. 396, 471, 532.

[15] The belief that 'for pregnancy to occur as a result of rape was impossible: pregnancy would therefore prove that the woman had taken pleasure in the sexual act, even if she had not consented' is one example: see Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 29.

[16] Saunders, 'A Matter of Consent', p. 105.

of romances written in medieval England, from canonical to lesser-known works. Unwillingness to love, and the way in which it is used by writers and approached by readers, is not exclusive to medieval romance, but it is an especially prominent and striking motif within this genre, which reveals some of the ways in which romance engages with its readers' concerns, evokes their emotional sympathies and anxieties, and educates, guides, and models their behaviour.

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