Looking beyond Guinevere: depictions of women in Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances, the cult of saints, and religious texts of the twelfth century

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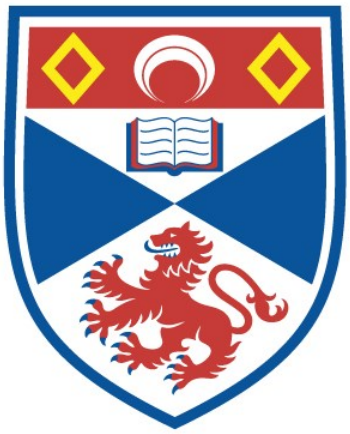

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Abstract

This thesis provides a reading of Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances that reflects the cultural and intellectual context of twelfth-century Christianity. The impact of this context on Chrétien's romances is examined by identifying the influence that contemporaneous biblical expository texts, hagiography, and the material culture of the cult of saints had upon his work. Although scholars have devoted much attention to the study of Chrétien's romances, and some have examined the potential influences of various medieval Christian beliefs, practices, and symbols on his work, none have yet to produce a thorough study of these elements while focusing specifically on the female characters.

Scholars have identified the influence of the cult of saints on the depiction of Guinevere in *The Knight of the Cart*, but have not examined this influence on the depictions of the ladies in the other four romances in detail. I look beyond Guinevere, examining all of the female protagonists in the Arthurian romances, comparing their attributes and actions to those of biblical women in contemporaneous biblical exposition and those of saints in hagiography. At the heart of this comparison is the relationship between the lady and her knight, a relationship that is described in similar terms to that between a biblical woman and God and that between saint and devotee.

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I would especially like to thank the entire medieval postgraduate community for your friendship and support, which made writing this thesis feel less isolating. The laughter and the pints will never be forgotten. Thank you especially to Frances Murray, Ethan Birney, Sarah White, Anna Peterson, Sarah Greer, and Cory Hitt for your encouragement and commiseration. Perpetual gratitude is owed to John Young for his continued support, which began when I was an undergraduate. I am thankful to have you as a mentor and friend.

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To my parents.

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Introduction

The aim of this work is to provide greater insight into the influence of the cultural and intellectual context of medieval Christianity on the writing of medieval romance literature. At the same time, it provides a new reading of Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances, placing greater emphasis on the attributes and roles of the female protagonists. Medieval religion is examined broadly, looking at both monastic and scholastic texts, as well as hagiography and the material culture of the cult of saints.

As a study of medieval culture and thought, this work is concerned with identifying interpreting religious literary symbols. Examining religious symbolism in Chrétien's work through the attributes and actions of the female characters, necessitates a close reading of the relationships between ladies and knights as well. Examining these gendered relationships is a secondary, but vital, aspect of this study. The twelfth century witnessed a rise in affective literature and piety, resulting in similar language and techniques being used to describe the love relationships between God and humanity, Christ and the Church, and the lady and the knight. Additionally, the twelfth century also witnessed a growth in female and feminine religious models.[1] This is not to say that male religious figures were unimportant or even diminished in importance, but rather that women, such as the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen, and feminine figures, like the soul or the Bride in the Song of Songs, were widely used in biblical exposition to explain the relationship between God and humanity.

It should also be noted that although the relationship between ladies and knights is the most important element in Chrétien's romances and a major theme of this thesis, courtly love will not be discussed in great detail. Many scholars have previously examined the influence of courtly love on Chrétien's romances. My ultimate goal is to provide another reading of Chrétien's work, based on the religious symbols circulating during his lifetime. That being said, my reading of Chrétien's romances is not unrelated to courtly love theory, because courtly and religious themes share many similarities. When courtly love themes and theories arise in a discussion of the romances, they will be addressed. My thesis will partially embrace the Bernardine-Marianist theory of courtly love, which states that the mysticism of Bernard

[1] This is a topic that is explored in great detail in Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982) and in Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary* (New York, 2002).

of Clairvaux and the cult of the Virgin Mary influenced the development of courtly love.[2] Although Bernard and the Virgin will feature heavily in this thesis, I believe this theory should be interpreted more broadly, encompassing not only texts on the Song of Songs, but also the wider corpus of religious texts including biblical exposition and hagiography. Additionally, instead of just considering the influence of the Virgin Mary, other biblical women and female saints should be examined. It is also important to bear this courtly love origin theory in mind, as it further attests to the fact that the secular and the sacred are intertwined during the High Middle Ages.

This work is also a reaction to three general approaches that many scholars have taken when studying religious symbolism in medieval romance literature. First, although there have certainly been studies of religious symbolism in twelfth-century courtly love literature, many of these studies have focussed primarily on Marian and Christological symbolism.[3] Scholars who have examined the saintly attributes of female characters in courtly love literature typically focus on the thirteenth century and beyond, when comparisons between saints and ladies became particularly acute.[4] Second, scholars who have acknowledged religious symbolism in Chrétien's romances tended only to highlight specific instances, such as Guinevere's comparison to a relic in the *Knight of the Cart*, rather than examining all such instances in his Arthurian romances.[5] Third and finally, when dealing exclusively with religious symbolism in Chrétien's romances, scholars have tended to restrict the scope of these symbols by arguing that all interpretations must be allegorical.[6] These three observations, their associated scholarship, and the interpretive problems they may pose will be discussed below.

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[2] Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship* (Manchester, 1977), p. 83.

[3] For just a few examples, see: Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago, 1985); M. Amelia Klenke, 'The "Christus Domini" Concept in Medieval Art and Literature,' *Studies in Philology* vol. 56, no. 1 (1959), pp. 14-25. Emmanuel Mickel, 'A Reconsideration of Chrétien's "Erec",' *Romanische Forschungen*, 84. Bd., H. 1/2 (1972), pp. 34-44.

[4] For more on this, see the discussion of the works of Brigitte Cazelles and Chantal Hoffsten in this thesis: Introduction, pp. 6-7.

[5] See previous footnote.

[6] See discussion of Tom Artin and Jacques Ribard: Introduction, pp. 3-5.

Some Previous Scholarship

The only single work to focus exclusively on the ladies in all five of Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances was Myrrha Borodine's 1906 doctoral thesis entitled *La femme dans l'oeuvre de Chrétien de Troyes*. Borodine analyzed the roles of Chrétien's ladies to determine how they fit into the courtly love tradition.[7] Since this time there have been countless works written on women in romance literature, which have included studies of some of the women in Chrétien's work.[8] There have also been many studies which examine religious symbolism in his romances. There has not, however, been a study that simultaneously examines both themes in all five of his Arthurian romances, which is what my work aims to do. Some of the more relevant works on religious and spiritual themes in Chrétien's romances will be discussed below, divided into three sections looking at biblical themes, secular and sacred love, and the cult of saints.

Studies of biblical themes in Chrétien's romances have often yielded purely allegorical readings. For instance, Jacques Ribard provides an allegorical reading of *The Knight of the Cart* in his work *Le Chevalier de la Charrette: essai d'interpretation symbolique* (1972). For Ribard, Lancelot represents Christ, Guinevere is the soul, Maleagant is Lucifer, Maleagant's father King Bademagus is God the Father, and King Arthur represents mankind.[9] While something like Lancelot rolling a gravestone over and reading an inscription that he is destined to rescue the prisoners from Gorre may be similar to Christ rolling away the boulder from his tomb and redeeming mankind, there is no justification for painting Lancelot as a Christ figure throughout the narrative.[10] Lancelot may share certain attributes with Christ, as do many of the knights in medieval literature, but occasions of

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[7] Myrrha Borodine, *La femme dans l'oeuvre de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris, 1909). For the scholarly views of medieval love around the time that Borodine was writing her doctoral thesis, see: Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'The Varieties of Love in Medieval Literature According to Gaston Paris,' *Romance Philology* vol. 40, no. 3 (1987), pp. 301-27.

[8] There have been several studies which have acknowledged the unique roles that women play in Chrétien's romances. See, for example: Yasmina Foehr-Janssens, *La jeune fille et l'amour: pour une poétique courtoise de l'évasion* (Genève, 2010); John W. Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France: The Romances of Jean Renart and Gerbert de Montreuil* (Baltimore, 2000), p. 123, 154.

[9] Jacques Ribard, *Chretien de Troyes. Le Chevalier de la Charrette: essai d'interpretation symbolique* (Paris, 1972).

[10] Ribard, pp. 84-86. Evelyn Mullally, 'The Artist at Work: Narrative Technique in Chrétien de Troyes,' *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* vol. 78, no. 4 (1988), p. 152.

Christ-likeness do not make him a Christ figure. This same argument may also be applied to the other characters within Ribard's allegorical reading.

Similarly, in *The Allegory of Adventure* (1974), Tom Artin selects crucial events from Chrétien's romances and argues that they were meant to be read as biblical and Christian allegories. Unlike Ribard, Artin does not argue that each romance should be read as an allegory in its entirety. Instead, he focuses on events such as the *Joie de la Cort*, which he reads as Erec the Christ figure redeeming mankind, and the magical fountain in *The Knight with the Lion*, which he believes is an allegory for baptism.[11] Although the potential issues posed by Ribard's interpretation of *The Knight of the Cart* may also be found in Artin's work, Artin has a better source base for supporting his allegorical interpretations. While Ribard uses the Bible as his source, Artin argues:

> …the major equipment necessary for the interpretation of these romances is really quite basic: a knowledge of Scripture, and of common exegesis of important passages, such as is represented by the *Glossa Ordinaria*; a knowledge of the liturgy; an understanding of the sacraments and their administration; and access to such popular sources of symbolism as the Bestiary, lapidaries, and the like.[12]

Although this is a solid source base for examining religious symbolism in medieval literature, Artin neglects to examine the potential influence of hagiography. The cult of saints would certainly have influenced the writing of Chrétien's work, especially the ways in which he portrayed religious symbols. Collectively, both Artin and Ribard are intent upon ascribing biblical and religious meaning to Chrétien's work by allegorizing the romances, at the risk of overlooking much symbolism. Here I am using Marie Dominique Chenu's distinction between symbolism and allegory, which reads:

> Symbolism arises out of a persistent habit of nature. In the course of intellectual experience, we somehow 'hide' our clear perception inside images that mediate mystery to us and so acquire their force and value….As for allegory, it does not start from such aesthetic experience and rise to the purely intellective level; it starts with critical analysis and from it derives abstract thoughts which it ultimately employs in a didactic presentation.[13]

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[11] Tom Artin, *The Allegory of Adventure: Reading Chrétien's 'Erec' and 'Yvain'* (Lewisburg, 1974), pp. 118-32, 141-62; this was also argued by Maxwell S. Luria in his article 'The Storm-Making Spring and the Meaning of Chrétien's "Yvain",' *Studies in Philology* vol. 64, no. 4 (1967), pp. 565-85.

[12] Artin, p. 28.

[13] Marie Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, tr. Jerome Taylor and Lester Little (Chicago, 1968), p. 144.

Although I agree with many of the observations made by Artin and Ribard, and I do believe Chrétien employs both symbolism and allegory, I do not subscribe to the argument that Chrétien's works should be read exclusively as biblical allegories. There are certainly elements of religious symbolism in his texts, but insisting on purely allegorical interpretations of his work risks overlooking subtle symbolism. It should also be noted that neither Artin nor Ribard gives great importance to the women in the narratives.

In a similar vein to the two previous works, Emmanuel Mickel wrote an article entitled 'A Reconsideration of Chrétien's "Erec"' (1972) arguing that, because of the interest in biblical translation at the court of Champagne,[14] biblical symbolism could be read into the relationship between Erec and Enide. He does not read the romance as a biblical allegory, but rather argues that the relationship between this knight and lady mirrors the relationship between Christ and the Church, specifically as the latter is described in the forty-fourth Psalm.[15] Enide has holy qualities; for instance, she is chaste on quest, she demonstrates humility throughout the narrative, and she protects Erec. However, these attributes could not only support a comparison with the Church, but could also suggest a comparison with the Bride in the Song of Songs or any other exemplary biblical woman. Although Erec does demonstrate Christ-like qualities, the argument Mickel makes to support this is not entirely convincing. It is based primarily on the fact that Erec establishes himself as the most powerful knight in the world and is crowned king on Christmas day.

The three aforementioned works are crucial for examining the ways that biblical symbolism in Chrétien's romances has been studied previously. The greatest error that they make is only allowing for one interpretation of these romances when there are actually several possible interpretations available. Since it is impossible to determine specifically which biblical narratives or expository texts Chrétien read or which ideas he was exposed to, it is vital to look at a broad sampling when arguing for religious symbolism in his work. To suggest that Chrétien's romances are biblical allegories, as Artin and Ribard do, is to limit them. His romances contain layers of symbolism and meaning which will be overlooked if only read allegorically.

Additionally, Chrétien's use of biblical motifs has led scholars to argue over whether or not this appropriation of religious themes should be considered intentionally subversive. It has been suggested by certain scholars, beginning with Alexander Denomy (1947), that

[14] The forty-fourth Psalm will be discussed later in the introduction in the section on 'Contextualizing Chrétien'.

[15] Mickel, 'A Reconsideration of Chrétien's "Erec",' pp. 34-44.

courtly love was a heresy. Denomy read courtly literature as something intentionally hostile to orthodox Christianity.[16] Helen Laurie (1989), who argues that Chrétien was part of a love religion that emerged with courtly love's cult of the lady, compares the encounter between Lancelot and Guinevere with that between the Bride and Bridegroom in the Song of Songs. Within this context, she suggests that Guinevere is the divinity and Lancelot is the soul.[17] While I believe that the love relationship in the Song of Songs, and the expository tradition following from it, influenced the depiction of the relationship between knight and lady in romance literature, I do not see a parallel between the Song and Lancelot and Guinevere's consummation.[18] The argument that Chrétien was part of a love religion that worshipped the cult of the lady has long been discredited, but this scholarship is important because it demonstrates two things: one, there are many religious symbols attached to the ladies in romance literature, and two, these symbols should not be read as part of a rigid system of thought.[19]

The approach taken by Denomy and Laurie also calls into question how seriously a reader should interpret the use of religious symbols in Chrétien's romances. Arguing that Chrétien is employing religious symbolism subversively, suggests all symbols should be read as having a singular and serious purpose. This does not account for narrative technique, and could lead the reader to overlook when humor or irony is attached to these symbols. I do not believe that all religious symbols in Chrétien's romances should be taken at face value. However, I also do not believe that humor and irony preclude religious symbolism; a humorous event could still be influenced by an important Christian symbol. I am ultimately

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[16] Alexander Denomy, *The Heresy of Courtly Love* (New York, 1947). For a similar perspective, see: Jeffrey Russell, 'Courtly Love as Religious Dissent,' *Catholic Historical Review* vol. 51, no. 1 (1965), pp. 31-44.

[17] Helen Laurie, 'Chrétien de Troyes and the Love Religion,' *Romanische Forschungen* 101. Bd., H. 2/3 (1989), pp. 178-81.

[18] For more on love in *The Knight of the Cart*, see: Fanni Bogdanow, 'The Love Theme in Chrétien de Troyes's "Chevalier de la Charrette",' *The Modern Language Review* vol. 67, no. 1 (1972), p. 50-61.

[19] John Benton's reaction to the argument that Marie de Champagne commissioned Chrétien's *The Knight of the Cart* to disseminate her personal views on love, supports my point regarding symbolism: 'We are dealing with a literary work of subtle construction; modern critics have suggested that Chrétien's romances are as full of symbolism as medieval sculpture and that we must beware of a strong strain of irony. It is not surprising that current interpretations of Lancelot are not in agreement, since irony, symbolism, allegory, or other literary devices can be demonstrated convincingly only by reference to conventions independent of the story itself.' Benton, 'The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center,' *Speculum* vol. 36, no. 4 (1961), p. 562.

interested more in how Chrétien was influenced by religious symbolism circulating within his cultural and intellectual context than in how he is using these symbols.

In addition to studies pertaining to biblical exposition, there have been many studies of the high and late medieval saints' lives that depict female saints similarly to the ladies in courtly romances. Brigitte Cazelles' *The Lady as Saint* (1991) is one such example of this scholarship.[20] Cazelles argues that female saints in thirteenth-century French saints' lives share attributes and behaviors with ladies in the courtly love tradition. Similarly, in her PhD thesis *Reading the Cors Saint* (2009), Chantal Hoffsten compares the function of relics in the cult of saints to that of the women in romance literature. She explains, 'While epic and hagiographic literature posit the relic as a site of political sovereignty or saintly power, romance instead explicitly links this sacred icon to the erotic body of the *amie*, transforming the beloved into a feminized relic, a true *cors sainte*.'[21]

Both authors cite a single example from Chrétien's work:[22] the moment in *The Knight of the Cart* when Chrétien claims that Lancelot placed more faith in Guinevere than in any holy relic.[23] They also compare Lancelot's quest to be with Guinevere to a pilgrimage, which culminates in contact with his saint.[24] I find Cazelles' argument that courtly motifs are embraced in romance saints' lives of the thirteenth century convincing. What is potentially problematic is that there is no acknowledgement beyond the Guinevere reference that hagiographic motifs may have influenced depictions of women in twelfth-century court literature.[25] If these themes were available to Chrétien, this suggests that courtly literature may have been influenced by the cult of saints prior to the courtly love motif being appropriated for thirteenth-century saints' lives. Furthermore, both Cazelles and Hoffsten have concentrated on *The Knight of the Cart*, not looking at examples from Chrétien's other

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[20] Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1991).

[21] Chantal Hoffsten, *Reading the* Cors Saint*: Relics and the Allegorical Body in Medieval French Romance*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2009, p. vii.

[22] Hoffsten (pp. 79-119) also refers to *Lancelot* again, comparing the protagonist's deceptive oath over relics to Isolde's oath in Beroul's *Tristan*.

[23] *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris, 1981), lines 4652-4653 (henceforth cited as: *Lancelot* 4652-4653). '…si l'aore et se li ancline / car an nul cors saint ne croit tant.'

[24] Cazelles, p. 45; Hoffsten, p. 112.

[25] For an examination of Guinevere's various roles in the romances, see: Peter Noble, 'The Character of Guinevere in the Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes,' *Modern Language Review* vol. 67, no. 3 (1972), pp. 524-35.

romances where ladies or their objects are described similarly to saints or relics. For instance, Fenice's fake death in *Cligés* is strikingly similar to that of virgin martyrs in hagiography, something that was observed by Simon Gaunt in *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature* (2006).[26] There has, therefore, been only limited recognition of hagiographic motifs in Chrétien's work.

Perhaps more than any other theme in the romances, much scholarship has been produced on the love relationship between knight and lady. Joan Ferrante has written several works on the coexistence of and interaction between secular and sacred love in romance literature, with the most relevant to Chrétien's romances being *In Pursuit of Perfection* and *Woman as Image* (both 1975). In the first work, she argues that love in the romances serves a salvific function, as it guides the knight along his quest for self-betterment.[27] In the second, she argues that the lady is not only the object of the knight's affection, but also the mirror through which he sees himself. The lady is the one who inspires the knight to greatness and to self-improvement, including spiritual betterment.[28] As Ferrante observes, 'If love inspires a man to embrace the highest moral values of society in order to be worthy of his lady, then it should provide the ideal motivation for action in the romance, where the man is expected to serve society by defending those values.'[29] While it is true that love for a lady is one of the strongest motivating forces in the romances, this does not say much about the attributes or actions of the lady herself.

Penny Schine Gold (1985), in her discussion of romance literature in *The Lady and the Virgin*, argues that the lady is essential to the development of the knight, but the experiences and emotions of the lady are only important insofar as they influence the knight's actions. Gold writes, 'The love felt by the woman is unimportant, rather, the woman serves as the inspiration for the man.'[30] This love, according to Ferrante, 'means a rebirth; it awakens the hero to a new sense of himself, inspiring him not so much to great deeds as to a higher

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[26] Simon Gaunt, *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature: Martyrs to Love* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 25-27.

[27] Joan Ferrante and George Economou, *In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature* (Port Washington, 1975).

[28] Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth-Century to Dante* (New York, 1975).

[29] Ferrante, *In Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 144.

[30] Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin*, p. 27. For a contrary perspective that analyzes the individuality of all characters in the romances, see: Robert Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven, 1977).

purpose and responsibility.'[31] It is most likely that the knight does not necessarily see who he wishes to become in the lady, but rather the lady, through her love, aids in facilitating his development along his personal quest for self-betterment.

Gender scholarship opened up a new realm for examining women in medieval literature by placing the emphasis on the relationship between the knight and lady, rather than simply focusing on the knight as the primary character.[32] At times, this leads to overemphasis in one of two directions: 1) the lady is given a greater role in the narrative than may have intended by the author, or 2) in order to demonstrate the misogyny certain scholars view as inherent in the Middle Ages, the lady is painted as a subjugated character with little agency. There is no doubt that women play a vital role in Chrétien's romances, but, with the exception of *Erec and Enide* and possibly *Cligés*, the woman is not the primary character, nor is she depicted as being on equal footing with the knight; however, this does not mean that she does not have an influential role in the narrative.

The majority of the aforementioned works were written during the 1970s and 1980s when twentieth-century cultural and intellectual history, and the related emphasis on symbolism in literature, peaked. The works by Cazelles, Gaunt, and Hoffsten are the exceptions, being written in 1991, 2006, and 2009, respectively. A gap still remains in these studies in that the themes they cover have not been connected to provide a broad analysis of religious and spiritual symbolism in Chrétien's romances, reflecting the probable influence of his milieu on his work. Furthermore, a study has yet to be written that examines the ladies in all five of Chrétien's romances within the context of religious symbolism in biblical expository texts and the cult of saints.

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[31] Ferrante, *Woman as Image*, p. 74.

[32] Some examples of this scholarship include, but are not limited to: Jane Burns, 'Courtly Love: Who Needs It? Recent Feminist Work in the Medieval French Tradition,' *Signs* vol. 27, no. 1 (2001), pp. 23-57; Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge, 1995); Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, 1987); Karen Taylor, 'The Gendered Journey: Feminizing the Quest Motif in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain or Le chevalier au lion*,' *Cincinnati Romance Review*, vol. 29 (2010), pp. 106-17. Although scholarship on women certainly increased from the 1980s – 2000s, this does not mean that scholars were not writing about the women in Chrétien's romances prior to these gendered interpretations. However, prior to this scholarship, the ladies were typically given less attention than the knights.

Contextualizing Chrétien

Contextualizing Chrétien's work is not without its difficulties, as Chrétien de Troyes, the man, remains an enigma. What is known about his identity, education, and patronage all come from his work.[33] Since little is known about Chrétien, except that he was from Troyes and was associated with the court of Champagne, an examination of the court under Countess Marie and Henry I will provide context regarding his milieu and the possible influences on his work.

The dedication of Chrétien's romance, *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, to Countess Marie provides the most substantial evidence for his association with the court of Champagne:

> Since my Lady of Champagne wills me to undertake the making of a romance, I shall undertake it with great goodwill, as one so wholly devoted that he will do anything in the world for her without any intention of flattery. But another man might begin this in order to flatter her; he would say, and I could only agree, that she surpasses all living ladies as the south wind blowing in April or May surpasses all other winds….[Chrétien] is beginning his book of the Knight of the Cart. The Countess presents him with the matter and the meaning, and he undertakes to shape his work, adding little to it except his effort and his careful attention.[34]

Chrétien most certainly wrote this romance for Marie, but his frequency at the court is impossible to determine. Additionally, his name is evidence that he was born in Troyes, but there is no way to prove whether he was a permanent resident of the town or not. The more speculative assertions as to the identity of Chrétien the man will be examined after looking at the context of the court of Champagne under the regency of Marie.

At the beginning of *Le Conte du Graal*, Chrétien's fifth and final Arthurian romance, he dedicates the work to Philip of Flanders.[35] It is believed that Chrétien died before

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[33] Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes The Man and His Work*, tr. Raymond J. Cormier (Athens, Ohio, 1982), p. 3.

[34] David Staines, tr., *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 170; *Lancelot* 1-13, 24-29. 'Puis que ma dame de Chanpaigne/ vialt que romans a feire anpraigne,/ je l'anprendrai molt volentiers/ come cil qui est suens antiers/ de quan qu'il puet el monde feire/ sanz rien de losange avant treire;/ mes tex s'an poïst antremetre/ qui li volsist losenge metre,/ si deïst, et jel tesmoignasse,/ que ce est la dame qui passe/ totes celes qui sont vivanz,/ si con li funs passe les vanz/ qui vante en mai ou en avril….Del Chevalier de la Charrete/ comance Crestïens son livre;/ matiere et san li done et livre/ la contesse, et il s'antremet/ de panser, que gueres n'i met/ fors sa painne et s'antancïone.'

[35] Chretien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: 1972), 7-15. 'Crestïens seme et fet semance/ d'un romans que il ancomance,/ et si le seme an si bon leu/ qu'il ne puet estre sanz grant preu,/ qu'il le

completing the romance. The relationship between Chrétien and the count is unknown, but Philip did have ties with the court of Champagne. Theodore Evergates argues convincingly that Philip and Marie were well-acquainted. There had been discussions of a marriage between Philip and Marie, but for whatever reason it was never to be. Philip sponsored the betrothal of Marie's children, Henry II and Marie, to the children of his sister Margaret countess of Hainaut.[36] Despite Philip's patronage of *Perceval*, it is clear that *La Charrete*, and perhaps *Le Chevalier au Lion*, may have been written for Marie.[37]

Marie ruled for a total of nearly two decades during Henry I's absence on pilgrimage and, after his death, during the minority of her sons, Henry II and Thibaut. Henry went on pilgrimage from May 1179 to February 1181. When Henry died on 16 March 1181, Marie ruled with her son Henry II until July 1187 when he came of age and she entered the convent of Fontaines-les-Nonnes.[38] She returned to rule in the place of Henry II when he went on Crusade in May 1190 and then died in September 1197. Marie continued to rule with her son

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fet por le plus prodome/ qui soit an l'empire de Rome:/ c'est li cuens Phelipes de Flandres,/ qui mialx valt ne fist Alixandres,/ cil que l'an dit qui tant fu buens.' For more on Philip of Flanders and Perceval, see: William Nitze, 'The Bleeding Lance of Philip of Flanders,' *Speculum* vol. 21, no. 3 (1946), pp. 303-11; Helen Adolf, 'A Historical Background for Chrétien's Perceval,' *PMLA* vol. 58, no. 3 (1943), pp. 597-620.

[36] Theodore Evergates, 'Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne' in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Evergates (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 78.

[37] The reason for assuming that *The Knight with the Lion* (which will also be referred to as *Yvain*), like *The Knight of the Cart*, may have also been written for Marie is because it appears that Chrétien could have written both works simultaneously. There are direct references to two events that occur in *Lancelot* within *Yvain*. 1) Chrétien has Lunete explain to Yvain that Gawain was unable to come to her aid because he has gone in search of a knight who took Guinevere while the queen was being escorted by Kay. *Yvain*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris, 1999), 3696-3709. 2) When the two sisters are competing over their inheritance, Chrétien refers to Guinevere returning from Maleagant's prison, where Lancelot was still being held. *Yvain* 4734-4739. Since this type of overlap does not occur in any of the other romances, it may suggest that they were written together, or at least in close succession.

[38] It was common for nobles to retire to a monastery later in life. It was less common for them to return to the court after taking their vows. Countess Ermengarde d'Anjou, Countess of Brittany, moved back and forth between the convent and the court. William Schenck's description of Ermengarde may also be applicable to Marie: '…secular and religious life both offered advantages and restrictions, and Ermengarde chose to move between the two as the circumstances of her life changed.' 'From Convent to Court: Ermengarde d'Anjou's Decision to Reenter the World' in *Shaping Courtliness in Medieval France*, eds. Daniel O'Sullivan and Laurie Shepard (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 208.

Thibaut until her death in 1198.[39] The relationship between Marie, her council, and her county is summarized by Kimberly LoPrete when describing the social and political roles of noblewomen:

> In a world where lordly households were centers of political activity, lands and tithes were largely transmitted within families, and effected power depended on the ability to command the loyalty of other powerful people, and love ideally thought to bind family members to each other and followers to their lords could not be taken for granted. This love had to be actively fostered and renewed, through the exchange of gifts and favors, effective protections, and generous patronage. Women's roles in lordly households and pivotal positions in aristocratic families assumed that many would find themselves well placed to enter the public political arena.[40]

Countess Marie entered the political arena when she assumed the role of a count, vacated by her husband and then by the death of her eldest son, ruling with a council receiving petitions, arbitrating disputes, granting benefactions to the church, managing private transactions, receiving homages, and confiscating and granting fiefs.[41] Through these actions, she fostered relationships with lords, monasteries, houses of canons, and other ruling nobles. In the Chronicle of Tours, Marie is said to have ruled Champagne '*viriliter*'.[42] Referring to her as *viriliter* is a compliment, but more than that it emphasizes that she ruled well in the absence of a man. It is possible that the strong female characters in Chrétien's romances were influenced by his strong female patron.

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[39] Theodore Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne* (Philadelphia, 2007), p. 24.

[40] Kimberly LoPrete, 'Adela of Blois: Familial Alliances and Female Lordship' in *Aristocratic Women*, ed. Evergates, p. 42. For her comprehensive work on Adela, see: LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord* (Dublin, 2007).

[41] LoPrete, 'Adela of Blois,' p. 24. One example of Marie ruling with Henry II and her officials, deliberating the holding of a fief in a charter from 1186, can be found in Evergates, ed., *Littere Baronum: The Earliest Cartulary of the Counts of Champagne* (Toronto, 2003), pp. 78-79, Charter 37.

[42] 'Chronicle of Tours,' in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* XVIII, ed. Martin Bouquet (Farnborough, 1967), p. 293; cited in John Benton, *Culture, Power and Personality in Medieval France*, ed. Thomas Bisson (London, 1991), p. 41. 'Cujus mater [Henry II's mother], Marie nomine, quae comitatum Campaniae viriliter regebat, cum de morte filii sui et sororis suae Reginae Hungariae nuncium accepisset, nimium indoluit, nec multo post obit: cui Theobaldus filius ejus, frater dicit Henrici, in comitatu Campaniae successit.' Similarly, in the thirteenth century, Blanche of Champagne is said to have campaigned on behalf of her infant son and, according to the Chronica of Aubri of Trois Fontaines, she 'triumphed over her enemies in a manly and energetic fashion' (*viriliter et strenue de adversariis triumphavit*); cited and translated in Megan McLaughlin, 'The woman warrior: gender, warfare and society in medieval Europe,' *Women's Studies* vol. 17 (1990), p. 199.

Before examining Marie's literary interests and potential education, it is worth briefly examining Henry's, as more evidence exists to support his education. Most of this evidence is provided by letters addressed to the count. For instance, Nicholas of Montiéramey wrote a letter to Henry in which he mocked illiterate laymen, something that he would have been unlikely to do if the count himself were illiterate.[43] Philip of Harvegnt also wrote to Henry, praising him for his education and reminding him that it should be used for God. Philip further praised Henry for leading the life of a knight, prince, and cleric.[44] In another letter to Henry, Pierre de Celle called the count an intelligent and pious man. While such terms are not uncommon in letters to noblemen, the letter also contains metaphors which led Reto Bezzola to suggest that Henry must have been intelligent to understand them.[45] Perhaps the greatest indication of Henry's level of education, as well as his literary interests, comes from John of Salisbury's reply to a letter with several inquiries. Most significantly, Henry asks questions pertaining to the books of the Old and New Testaments and their authors, a letter by St Jerome, and the works of Virgil and Homer. As John Benton notes, while these questions show that Henry had a knowledge of religious and classical literature, and read Latin, they are not especially complex. Benton also argues that John of Salisbury treats 'the questions as those of a novice and not of an intellectual equal.'[46]

In addition to the letters proving his education, Henry was also rumored to have had an extensive library in St-Etienne-de-Troyes, the house of canons he founded. The contents of this library are difficult to determine, as they may have been lost in the fire of 23 July 1188.[47] However, Patricia Dans Stirnemann argues convincingly that some of the contents listed in an early fourteenth-century library inventory from St-Etienne are datable to the twelfth century and belonged to the count and countess.[48] The contents of this library will be

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[43] Ad Putter, 'Knights and Clerics at the Court of Champagne: Chrétien de Troyes's Romances in Context,' in *Medieval Knighthood V* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1992-1995), pp. 243-44.

[44] Reto R. Bezzola, *La Littérature Courtoise en Occident* 3.2 (Paris, 1963), p. 371.

[45] Ibid., p. 373.

[46] Benton, *Culture, Power, and Personality*, pp. 25-26.

[47] 'Episcopalis ecclesia plumbeis tegulis decenter operta illo tunc incendio conflagravit. Necnon et sancti Stephani basilica, quam comes Henricus fundarat et dotarat reditibus aurique et argenti ornamentorumque varia supellectile adornarat.' Robertus canonicus Sancti Mariani Autissiodorensis, 'Chronicon,' *MGH SS* 26, p. 253.

[48] Patricia Dans Stirnemann, ''Quelques bibliothéques princières et la production hors scriptorium au XIIe siècle,' *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des Travaux historiques et scientifiques* n.s., 17-18A (1984), p. 22.

discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.[49] Henry was also good friends with Nicholas of Montiéramey, who was secretary to Bernard of Clairvaux and later became Henry's personal chaplain. Henry and Nicholas were known for sharing a love a books and often frequented monastic libraries together.[50] Henry was in the center of an international friendship group, which included John of Salisbury, Pierre de Celle, Peter the Venerable, and Nicholas, all of whom often exchanged letters and books.[51] Henry's friendships and his love of books reveal a great deal about the intellectual atmosphere of Champagne.

Returning to Marie, in addition to ruling Champagne in the absence of her husband and sons, she also expressed her power through the commissioning of literary work. William Schenck asserts, 'Women like Marie of Champagne and those praised in lyric poetry were not simply the passive object of men's devotion, but had the economic and cultural power to influence what was written for or about them…'.[52] Marie's patronage of poetry and translations is essential to any discussion of Chrétien's context. John Benton refers to the court of Champagne as a 'literary center'[53] due to the presence, whether frequent or infrequent, of various writers and clerics. Scholars have also noted, 'Twelfth-century Troyes was not a place that would foster the works of highly specialized logicians, theologians or scientists. But it was a place where works of specialists could be digested and translated into forms and languages understandable by a broader audience than monks and scholars.'[54]

In addition to commissioning work from Chrétien, Marie also commissioned Evrat's translation of Genesis and the anonymous *Eructavit* (Psalm 44), discussed in detail below, during her widowhood.[55] Marie's education, and Henry's, perhaps explains her interest in biblical-themed translations as well as her taste for Chrétien's work, rich with symbolism. A charter from 1158, addressed to the abbey of Avenay, sealed by Henry and witnessed by Marie, states that Marie would remain at the abbey to be educated until her marriage to

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[49] Chapter 1, pp. 31.

[50] Theodore Evergates, Henry the Liberal: Count of Champagne, 1127-1181 (Philadelphia, 2016), pp. 87-99.

[51] Evergates, *Henry the Liberal*, pp. 91-92.

[52] Schenck, p. 211.

[53] Benton, 'The Court of Champagne,' pp. 551-91. For more on the literary patronage of Marie and her family, see: Rita Lejeune, 'Rôle littéraire de la famille d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine,' *Cahiers de civilization médiévale* 1e année vol. 3 (1958), pp. 319-37.

[54] Zrinka Stahuljak, Virginia Greene, Sarah Kay, Sharon Kinoshita, and Peggy McCracken, *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 7.

[55] Evergates, 'Aristocratic Women,' p. 79.

Henry.[56] She was around eight when she entered the abbey and she married Henry when she was around nineteen.[57] Spending approximately eleven years in the abbey guarantees that Marie was educated, but whether or not she was literate in Latin remains uncertain. She commissioned biblical translations, which may suggest that she could not read Latin. However, the term 'translation' is used very loosely here; the translations were not direct, but were expansions of the original scripture.[58] Another significant literary work, *De amore* by Andreas Capellanus was also likely written at the request of the countess. Whether or not Marie could actually read this Latin text is unknown. Latin literacy has no bearing on her ability to read Chrétien's French romances, but her literacy could have implications for the type of texts that Chrétien could have accessed when at court. Given Henry's circle, it is likely that Chrétien would have had access to a wide variety of text from both France and England.

Whether or not she could read Latin, the works Marie commissioned suggest that she was capable of understanding and appreciating biblical allegory. In the French translations of both Genesis and the *Eructavit*, the scripture is translated into French, but is also greatly expanded upon to give it a narrative structure, probably to make it suitable for oral performance. As June McCash argues, it is quite possible that Marie commissioned these two translations in order to provide her court with direct access to biblical texts in the vernacular.[59] Further on this, Morgan Powell writes that these translations gave 'the lay public the experience of a cleric's reading'.[60] Both assertions are supported by the author of the *Eructavit*, who apologizes to 'all good clerics' for translating the Latin, suggesting that

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[56] Evergates, 'Countess Marie and Her Tutor at Avenay' in *Feudal Society in Medieval France: Documents from the County of Champagne* (Philadelphia, 1993), p. 64, Charter 45.

[57] Evergates, 'Aristocratic Women,' p. 77.

[58] Psalm 44 is approximately twenty-six lines long, compared to the Eructavit's 2168 lines.

[59] June Hall Martin McCash, 'The Role of Women in the Rise of Vernacular,' *Comparative Literature* vol. 60, no. 1 (2008), p. 53. For an examination of the relationship between Marie and Eleanor of Aquitaine, see another article by McCash: 'Marie de Champagne and Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Relationship Reexamined,' *Speculum* vol. 54, no. 4 (1979), pp. 678-711.

[60] Morgan Powell, 'Translating scripture for Ma Dame de Champagne: The Old French Paraphrase of Psalm 44' in *The vernacular spirit: Essays on medieval religious literature*, eds. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, et. al. (New York, 2001), p. 83.

the text is certainly meant for consumption by lay listeners, but that clerics may also be among the audience of the court.[61]

The content of the *Eructavit* further demonstrates its intended reception by the court audience. Psalm 44 is supposed to represent the words of David. In the *Eructavit*, David is transformed into a jongleur who is performing for God. Powell notes that the translation of the Psalm into French, which would then be performed, opens up four levels of communication in the text: 1) God's to David, 2) David's to the King and Queen of Heaven, 3) the poet's to Marie, and 4) the performer to the wider audience.[62] There is perhaps another level of communication missing from this: God's communication to Marie and the audience. This would complete the cycle, allowing the secular context of sacred scripture in vernacular to transcend to its intended spiritual goal. Powell misses this fifth level, but does suggest that the translation of the *Eructavit* accomplishes 'a sacralization of the vernacular performance space'.[63] Powell eloquently summarizes Marie's function in the text:

> Marie's privileged reception of the poet's message performs a role for the lay public that is both analogous to and dependent upon the experience of the Bride – and the individual woman, Mary – as it applies to all humanity. Marie is the Bride of the vernacular Eructavit. Her role displays coalescence between a tropological understanding of scripture – its application to our moral lives – and its grounding in a historical, or literal, meaning.[64]

The relationship between Chrétien and the author of the *Eructavit* is not known. However, the author appears to quote Chrétien's *Erec and Enide* with the use of the phrase 'joie de la cort' (*...Que droiz est que chascuns s'atort/ Contre la joie de la cort*).[65] This could suggest that the author was exposed to *Erec and Enide*, perhaps at the court of Champagne.[66] Even though this phrase would not necessarily be exclusive to Chrétien, the context of both works, and the desire for the author of the *Eructavit* to place his biblical text within the courtly context suggests the possibility of him borrowing motifs from familiar courtly

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[61] *Eructavit: An Old French Metrical Paraphrase of Psalm XLIV*, ed. T. Atkinson Jenkins (Dresden, 1909), lines 139-144. Powell (p. 87) argues that this is a rhetorical gesture and does not substantiate the assumption that churchmen would be at the court. While I agree with Powell that the author's statement alone does not prove the presence of clerics in the audience, the witness lists on various charters associated with the court almost guarantee that they would be there.

[62] Powell, pp. 87-88.

[63] Ibid., p. 94.

[64] Ibid., pp. 96-97

[65] *Eructavit* 33-34.

[66] Powell, p. 92.

sources, such as *Erec and Enide*.[67] This point is significant for two reasons, the first being that Chrétien's work may have influenced the author of the *Eructavit* and the second being that the audience for these texts no doubt shaped their content.

Although a great deal is known about the court of Champagne, what is known about Chrétien's education boils down to the introduction to Cligés, which reads, 'The man who wrote of Erec and Enide, translated Ovid's *Commandments* and his *Art of Love*, composed *The Shoulder Bite*, and wrote of King Mark and the blonde Iseult, and about the metamorphoses of the hoopoe, the swallow, and the nightingale, takes up a new tale about a Greek youth of the line of King Arthur.'[68] In order for Chrétien to have translated Ovid, he must have been proficient in Latin.[69] Unfortunately, his translations do not survive and their dates of composition are unknown, but this does add further evidence to the argument that the court of Champagne seems to have taken a special interest in the translation of Latin texts into French. Latin proficiency would mean that Chrétien would have been a cleric, not simply an educated layman.[70] Chrétien wrote during a time that witnessed a great influx of clerics

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[67] Powell further defends this argument, stating: 'At the court of Champagne where Chrétien de Troyes composed for the same patroness, these lines could hardly fail to remind the audience of the grand concluding *avanture* of his *Erec et Enide* (ca.1170), in which the name of the exploit, *joie de la cort*, comes to comprise all that the hero, Erec, seeks and must deliver. There, and at the earlier wedding of the two protagonists of his romance, Chrétien himself gave two memorable accounts of the variety of entertainers and their arts present at great court feasts. The echo in the *Eructavit* corresponds perfectly to the poet's attempt to embed his vernacular exegesis in the court literary milieu. This includes the use of the terms of courtly love lyric (*douce amie*, *fin amors*) for the love of Bridegroom and Bride, and possibly the use of the word *avanture* for the story of Daniel and the lions. The appropriation of the terms of the love lyric, addressed to Marie and her "court of love," conflates sacred and secular, and the poet uses his reference to Chrétien's romance to similar effect' (Powell, p. 92).

[68] Staines, p. 87; *Cligés*, ed. Alexandre Micha (Paris, 1975), lines 1-10. 'Cil qui fist d'Erec et d'Enide,/ Et les comandemanz d'Ovide/ Et l'art d'amors an romans mist,/ Et le mores de l'espaule fist,/ Del roi Marc et d'Ysalt la blonde,/ Et de la hupe et de l'aronde/ Et del rossignol la muance,/ Un novel conte rancomance/ D'un vaslet qui an Grece fu/ Del linage le roi Artu.'.

[69] For more on the influence of Ovid on Chrétien's work, see: D.W. Robertson, 'Chrétien's *Cligés* and the Ovidian Spirit,' *Comparative Literature* vol. 7, no. 1 (1955), pp. 32-42.

[70] It is generally assumed that Chrétien was a cleric, but there are arguments to the contrary; see: Evelyn Vitz, 'Chrétien de Troyes as minstrel: Further reflections on orality and literacy in twelfth century French courts' in *Orality and Performance in Early French Romance* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 86-135. Vitz argues that Chrétien was not a cleric, but a minstrel. For more on the relationship between clerics and jongleurs in the court, see: Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio, 'Clercs et jongleurs dans la société médiévale (XIIe e XIIIe siècles),'

into the court. There was a large population of secular clergy in the area, with the Augustinian Abbey of St-Loup, the Cathedral of St-Pierre, and the collegiate Church of St-Etienne all in Troyes.[71]

Using this knowledge, Urban Holmes provides a creative, but not altogether convincing, argument for Chrétien's identity. He first establishes the rarity of the name Chrétien or Christianus and then offers six charters originating in and around Troyes.[72] The first is a charter of the Premonstratensian abbey of La-Chapelle-aux-Planches near Troyes, dated 1173. This charter was witnessed by three canons of St-Loup, one of them being named Christianus. The second charter is from 1188, in which the Bishop of Langres bequeaths a church at Jaucourt to the Premonstratensian Abbey of Beaulieu. It is signed by Magister Galterus (Walter) and dominus Christianus. Bearing this charter in mind, Holmes offers a third from 1193 wherein the canons of St-Loup give Gui de Gampierre the use of a house within their property at Troyes. This charter was drawn up by a man who calls himself Walter, son of Chrétien. Holmes asserts that this is the same Galterus and Christianus referenced in the previous deed. The charter was ratified by Countess Marie and drawn up by Galterus, who was her chancellor. The following year a fourth charter involving the same Gui was drawn up and notarized by Galterus, chancellor of Marie. Holmes states that the archivist-in-chief at Troyes examined the handwriting on these charters issued or signed by a Galterus, claiming they are likely by the same person.

The fifth and sixth charters, from 1172 and 1179, are signed by a Xristianus, chaplain at St-Maclou at Bar-sur-Aube, which was established by Count Henry. Holmes asserts that this may be the same man who witnessed the aforementioned 1188 charter. His title as dominus in this later charter could be explained if he had retired from his post as a chaplain of St-Maclou. Furthermore, this would mean that Galterus, Marie's chancellor, may have been his son. Since a Christianus, canon of St-Loup was also a witness to the 1173 charter, Holmes points out that it is possible for a canon at St-Loup to later become a chaplain at St-Maclou, especially if this appointment were supported by the count or countess.[73] Were any

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Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales vol. 34, no. 5 (1979), pp. 913-28. For a defense of Chrétien as cleric, see: Levilson C. Reis, '*Clergie*, Clerkly *Studium*, and the Medieval Literary History of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances,' *The Modern Language Review* vol. 106, no. 3 (2011), pp. 682-96.

[71] Urban T. Holmes and Sister M. Amelia Klenke, *Chrétien, Troyes, and the Grail* (Chapel Hill, 1959), p. 15.

[72] Holmes and Klenke, *Chrétien*, pp. 52-56.

[73] All information regarding these charters is taken from: Holmes and Klenke, pp. 56-59; charters 1-4 can be found in Charles Lalore, *Collection des principaux cartulaires du diocese de Troyes* (Paris, 1954), IV, pp. 22-4;

of this provable, it would establish a concrete link between Chrétien the canon and Marie de Champagne.

Arguing that Chrétien de Troyes was first a canon at St-Loup, then became a chaplain at St-Maclou, who then retired and witnessed a charter as a dominus, though not impossible, seems unlikely especially since this rests upon the canon turned chaplain having a son, as well. Although Holmes' speculation is not convincing, it is useful even if one of the Christianuses mentioned in the charters is not Chrétien de Troyes. The charters ratified by Marie attest to the connections between houses of canons and the court of Champagne and provide evidence of Marie's activities during her regency. If Chrétien was one or both of the men named Christianus, the connections between these houses and Marie demonstrate how he may have been associated with the court if he had been a canon at one of these houses.

What is known for certain is that Chrétien wrote for a court that tended to favor canons and clerics over monks. Count Henry was recognized for his generosity, hence his title Henry the Liberal, but he was also known for being more generous to houses of secular clergy than to monasteries. This patronage would have likely continued under Marie in Henry's absence.[74] Monks held two prevailing views of the secular court: 1) the court was a 'place of violence, coercion, and sexual sin that stands in contrast with the convent or monastery, a place of peace, self-denial, and contemplation' and 2) 'the cultural, economic, and political power wielded there can be used for some positive end, whether for the defense of the weak, the support of religious life, or even the production of literature.'[75] Although Henry patronized monasteries to gain their support, he favored the secular clergy over monks. King Louis VII reportedly asked Henry why he was giving his money to 'effeminate clerics' (*delicatos clericos*), implying that they were not 'manly' enough for monastic asceticism.[76] Henry replied that a prebend could only hurt the recipient if he misused it, but giving money to an abbot could affect the entire community. Whether or not this correspondence took place is irrelevant, what is significant is that Henry's favoritism was obvious enough to have been recorded. There are two likely reasons why Henry favored secular clergy: one, his palace was

VI, p. 283; I, pp. 155-5; IV, pp. 39. For more on charters 5 and 6, see: Benton, *Culture, Power and Personality*, p. 13.

[74] For an in-depth study of the relationship between the nobility and the Church, see: Constance Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister: Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980-1198* (Ithaca, 1987).

[75] Schenck, p. 211.

[76] 'Ex chronico anonymi canonici Laudunensis,' in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* XIII, ed. Martin Bouquet (Paris: 1869), pp. 578-80.

in close proximity to houses of canons in Troyes, and two, many clerics were employed in or attached to Henry's court. Benton points out, according to witness lists from the charters, that approximately one-third of those who traveled with the court were clerics.[77]

The influx of clerics into courts in the twelfth century, especially when they took up official positions, did not escape the attention of monks; for instance, Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, 'Now I ask you what kind of monster is this who, wanting to seem at once a cleric and a knight, is neither?'[78] Ad Putter argues that the presence of both clerics and knights, or lower nobility, within the court yielded a kind of cultural hybridity: '…clerics and knights rubbed shoulders at court, and not only that: the court placed them in an entirely new relationship to one another. Both were involved in the making and execution of policy.…The culture that this union produced was neither exclusively clerical, nor exclusively chivalric: it was a blend of both.'[79] It should also be noted that presenting knights and clerics as two unrelated entities in the first place is problematic, as they would likely come from the same families.

The relationship between clerics and the court is significant mostly because it provides an audience for Chrétien's romances. Literary works at the court would probably have been intentionally written to appeal to both knights and clerics.[80] Furthermore, clerics would have been educated in the Bible and by extension would have been aware of allegory and symbolism in literary work. It is quite possible that Chrétien would encourage clerics to seek out these devices in his work. To this end, Putter offers a compelling suggestion: 'Chrétien's allusions to Christ's parables in the prologues to his romances extend that invitation, for they imply that Chrétien's creations demand the same interpretive effort as the word of God.'[81] One may argue further that perhaps when Chrétien intersperses his work with obvious biblical symbolism, such as Lancelot rolling away the stone to free the prisoners at Gorre,[82] he is intentionally doing so to draw the listeners' attention to his more subtle uses of biblical and spiritual imagery throughout the narrative.

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[77] Benton, *Culture, Power and Personality*, p. 42.

[78] Bernard was directing this comment to Stephen de Garlande, who was both a deacon at Notre Dame in Paris and a seneschal of the royal court. Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Epistola 78' in *Sancti Bernardi Opera* VII, p. 208; cited by Putter, p. 260.

[79] Putter, p. 258.

[80] Ibid., p. 244.

[81] Ibid., p. 265.

[82] *Lancelot* 1899-1914. 'Et letres escrites i a / qui dïent : <<Cil qui levera/ cele lanme seus par son cors/ gitera ces et celes fors/ qui sont an la terre an prison,/ don n'ist ne clers ne gentix hon/ des l'ore qu'il i est antrez;/

Even with up to one-third of the court being comprised of clerics, laymen would make up the majority of the potential audience. The latter would probably not possess the same interpretative skills as the clerics, but other elements of the romances, such as the fighting, the knights' personal and spiritual quests, and the love relationships, would particularly appeal to the laymen in the audience. These more obvious elements of Chrétien's work would provide entertainment for laymen, while the subtle symbols would provide additional entertainment for clerics. Furthermore, beyond the entertainment value of the piece, there was a moralizing quality to the romances. C. Stephen Jaeger argues, 'The courtly romance was the single most powerful factor in transmitting ideals of courtesy from the courtier class in which they originated to the lay nobility.'[83] The quest of the knights in the romances, including the personal and spiritual lessons learned, provided a model for lower nobility and clerics alike to emulate. It may be argued that romances served prescriptive functions, not unlike biblical commentaries, monastic treatises, or biblical translations.

Despite what little is known for certain about Chrétien de Troyes, four invaluable conclusions can be drawn about his life: he was from Troyes, he wrote for the court of Champagne, up to one-third of his audience could have been comprised of clerics, and he was a cleric himself. Secular literature flourished in the twelfth century with surprisingly little opposition from the Church.[84] One possible reason for this is that many of the men, like Chrétien, who wrote these romances or made up the audience, were churchmen themselves. His biblical education provided him with the tools not only to create narratives rich with symbolism, but also to characterize the individuals in his romances. It may also be suggested that writing under the patronage of Countess Marie during her regency influenced his depictions of the female characters in his romances, as well. A counter to these suggestions is that it is not known if Chrétien wrote any romance other than *La Charrete* for Marie. However, looking closely at the court of Champagne provides, at the very least, a case study for the twelfth-century court context and the relationship between the court and the Church.

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n'ancors n'en est nus retornez:/ les estranges prisons retienent;/ et cil del pais vont et vienent/ et anz et fors a lor pleisir.>>/ Tantost vet la lame seisir/ li chevaliers, et si la lieve,/ si que de neant ne s'i grieve,/ mialz que dis home ne feïssent/ se tot lor pooir i meïssent.'

[83] C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals* (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 14.

[84] Peter Haidu, 'Repetition: Modern Reflections on Medieval Aesthetics,' Modern Language Notes vol. 92, no. 5 (1977), pp. 882-83.

All of these factors would have influenced the ways in which Chrétien depicted the attributes and roles of the ladies within his romances.

The Arthurian Romances

Since the examinations of these romances will be thematic, rather than chronological in relation to the narratives themselves, it will be useful to briefly summarize the narratives before proceeding. In the second and fourth chapters, Guinevere's attributes and roles in *The Knight of the Cart* will always be examined first, since it is being argued that qualities and behavior scholars have associated with her may also be associated with the ladies in the other four romances. A summary of Guinevere's role in *The Knight of the Cart* will be followed by a summary of the ladies in the other four narratives in order of production: *Erec and Enide*, *Cligés*, *The Knight with the Lion*, and *The Story of the Grail*. The summaries will not be all inclusive, but will address some of the main events which will be relevant to the following chapters and will provide a chronological outline of these events.

In *The Knight of the Cart* (or *Lancelot*), Guinevere first appears when Maleagant storms into King Arthur's court during a feast and demands that a knight bring the queen into the forest and face him in single combat. Maleagant has also taken prisoner many individuals from Arthur's court and explains that if he is challenged and defeated, they will be released, but if not, he will also take the queen. It is then that Kay tells Arthur that he will no longer be staying at the court, so Arthur has Guinevere go and beg Kay to stay. Kay agrees to stay when he is entrusted with Guinevere and is able to challenge Maleagant. Kay is defeated and Guinevere is taken hostage. Lancelot sees the queen being led away and jumps into a prison cart in order to pursue her captors, although he is unable to catch them up. Guinevere is taken to the kingdom of Gorre and held there by Maleagant, but is protected by his father King Bademagus, who does not support his son's evil doings. Lancelot, still in search of the queen, becomes lost in thought over her, and is knocked from his horse by a knight. After defeating this knight, Lancelot encounters a lady who offers him lodging in exchange for sex. He reluctantly accepts her offer, but in the end does not have to sleep with her because she can sense that he has no desire for her. He and this lady set off for the Sword Bridge, which leads to Gorre. On the path, Lancelot finds a comb with Guinevere's hair in it; he gives the lady the comb, but keeps the queen's hair. They then travel to a church where Lancelot discovers a stone grave slab that no man has been able to lift. He lifts it and finds out that the man who can do so has been prophesied to release the prisoners from Gorre. Later, Lancelot reaches the Sword Bridge and crosses into Gorre alone. Lancelot and Maleagant face off in single

combat for the queen's freedom. King Bademagus, fearing for his son's life, convinces them that the fight should be postponed and fought one year later at Arthur's court. Guinevere does not speak to Lancelot, only realizing the depth of her affection for him when he leaves to find Gawain and is presumed dead. Upon his return, Lancelot and Guinevere have sex in secret, but Lancelot's wounds leave blood on the bed. The wounded Kay, who is sharing a room with Guinevere, is accused of adultery with the queen. Lancelot and Maleagant swear over relics that the queen is innocent or guilty, respectively, of adultery with Kay. The two knights fight, but Bademagus persuades them to finish this trial along with the other postponed battle. Lancelot leaves the court once more in search of Gawain, but is taken hostage on Maleagant's order. The jailor's wife agrees to let Lancelot leave to fight in a tournament at Arthur's court as long as he returns. When he returns, Maleagant has him imprisoned in a tower where he tries to hold Lancelot so he will be unable to face him again in combat. Maleagant's sister figures out where Lancelot is being held and frees him. Lancelot then returns to Arthur's court, faces Maleagant and kills him.

At the beginning of *Erec and Enide*, King Arthur and some of his knights are engaged in a stag hunt. Some of the ladies from court are accompanying them and Guinevere and her maiden are offended by an unknown knight they encounter in the forest. Erec pursues this knight to his town, where he meets Enide. He challenges the offensive knight to armed combat, after claiming that Enide, and not the knight's lady, is the most beautiful woman in the world. There was a competition at that time that the most beautiful woman would be awarded a sparrowhawk. Erec defeats the knight, returning to Arthur's court with Enide. The two are married at Arthur's court and then they return to Erec's father's kingdom, where they stop at a church and leave offerings at the altars of Christ and the Virgin. After some time passes, Erec begins to neglect all knightly pursuits in favor of making love to Enide. The lady knows that Erec's men believe he is damaging his reputation. After he catches her crying, Enide tells him what everyone is saying. He then immediately sets out on a quest, taking only Enide with him. Erec orders her not to speak to him, unless he first speaks to her. She repeatedly breaks this promise, warning him of dangerous knights and vagabonds who try to attack him, incurring his wrath. At one point in their journey, a count named Galoain who becomes enamored of Enide, threatens to kill Erec on the spot and take her away. She seduces the count in order to buy Erec more time. The next day, the count attacks, but soon regrets his uncourtly behavior and calls his men away. Erec then fights a knight named Guivret, who later pledges his loyalty to Erec. Later, Erec is badly wounded after battling and defeating two giants. Enide believes him to be dead and is found grieving by Count Oringle,

who takes Enide and Erec's body back to his land. The count forces Enide to marry against her will, and hits her when she refuses to stop mourning Erec. Hearing Enide under duress, Erec wakes, as if rising from the dead, kills the count and leaves with Enide. The couple are completely reconciled after this moment. They meet back up with Guivret, who initially does not recognize Erec and is scolded by Enide. Erec is taken to Guivret's home and has his wounds treated. When he is well again, they all set off together and encounter Brandigan Castle where Erec hears of the Joy of the Court. He engages in this adventure, fighting and freeing the knight who has been imprisoned in the garden by his lady. Erec then returns with Enide to Arthur's court. Erec hears that his father has died, so he and Enide return to Estre Gales where they are crowned king and queen.

Cligés is a romance that may be broken into two relationships: in the first half, Alexander and Soredamors are a couple; in the second half, Cligés and Fenice are a couple. Alexander is heir to the throne of Constantinople, but he goes to Britain in order to be knighted by King Arthur. Alexander then travels with Arthur to his other court in Brittany, where Alexander and Soredamors meet, but they hide their love from one another. Not long after this journey, Arthur hears news that a count in Britain plans to take Arthur's lands, so they all return and fight, with the support of Alexander and his men. Before one of the battles, Guinevere gives Alexander a tunic that Soredamors had sewn. She had also woven her hair into the material, without knowing that it would be given to Alexander. When he finds out about the hair he adores his tunic. With Alexander's aid, King Arthur defeats the count. After this, Guinevere helps Soredamors and Alexander express their feelings for one another. The two are then married and they have a child, named Cligés. Meanwhile, Alexander's father dies and Alexander's brother Alis takes the throne. Even though Alexander is the rightful emperor, he agrees to govern while allowing Alis to have the title of ruler as long as Alis swears an oath that he will never marry or bear children, so that Cligés could become emperor after him. Many years later, after Alexander and Soredamors have died, Alis' advisors convince him to ignore his oath and marry. Fenice is the bride that Alis chooses, although she has already been promised to the Duke of Saxony. With the help of Cligés, Alis' wins and marries Fenice. The lady has already fallen in love with Cligés and she refuses to share her body with two men. Her nurse makes a potion that makes Alis believe he has had sex with her so she never has to. Cligés leaves Constantinople to see Arthur in Britain, but he and Fenice remain in love. When he returns, Fenice devises a plan for the two to be together. She fakes her death and the lovers run away from court, living in a tower together. They are

discovered and forced to flee to Britain. Eventually, Alis dies and Cligés and Fenice are crowned emperor and empress of Constantinople.

The Knight with the Lion (or *Yvain*) opens with Yvain hearing the story of a magical fountain that can create a great storm. It is guarded by a knight who badly defeated his kinsman. Wishing to avenge his kinsman and see the fountain for himself, Yvain leaves Arthur's court. He kills the knight defending the fountain, and is pursued by the knight's men, but is protected by Lunete, a woman who is both servant and advisor to the lady of the land, Laudine. Lunete gives him an invisibility ring, allowing him to remain protected inside the castle. Yvain falls in love with Laudine and Lunete convinces the lady to marry him, despite the fact that he killed her husband. After the marriage, Yvain leaves to go tourneying with Arthur's knights at the behest of Gawain. Yvain promises Laudine that he will return after one year and she gives him a ring that will protect him from harm. He forgets to return to her, she sends a lady to take her ring back, and she forbids him to return to her. He goes mad and lives in the forest. After some time, he is healed by a lady who has her damsel anoint him with ointment that restores his senses. He then defends this lady against a count who is encroaching on her land. Soon after, he encounters a lion fighting a serpent and saves the lion who becomes his loyal companion. When Yvain tries to return to Laudine, he sees that Lunete has been imprisoned in the chapel by the fountain and is going to be executed for defending him. He rescues Lunete and restores her relationship with Laudine without revealing his true identity. Yvain also defends several other women and men throughout the narrative. He is chosen to be the champion of a young woman who was disinherited by her sister; her sister has chosen Gawain. Yvain and Gawain fight without knowing each other's true identity, when they discover who they are fighting, they cease battling and Arthur decides the outcome, ruling in favor of the younger sister. Yvain then returns to Laudine, but first, Lunete tricks Laudine into swearing over relics that she will reconcile the Knight with the Lion with his lady. Laudine then has no choice but to receive Yvain back.

The Story of the Grail (or *Perceval*) opens with the young Perceval encountering a group of knights in the forest. He has been living isolated from everyone except for his mother and those that work on her land. He mistakes the knights for God and angels and, when he finds out the truth about them, he vows to become a knight. His mother, who lost her two sons to death in battle and her husband from the grief of their death, tried to shelter Perceval from lifestyle of a knight. When she fails, she sends him off to King Arthur with some practical and spiritual advice, which he very soon ignores. While watching Perceval leave, his mother collapses from the grief of losing him, but he does not turn back. He soon

encounters a damsel in a tent; he forces himself upon her, kissing her, and stealing her ring. When her knight finds out what happened, he does not believe her and instead thinks the encounter resulted in consensual sex. Perceval goes to Arthur's court, defeats a knight who has insulted the king, and takes his armor. Kay slaps a maiden who laughs and tells Perceval he will be a great knight and Perceval promises to avenge her. According to the court jester, her laugh fulfils a prophecy implying that Perceval will become the greatest knight in the world. Perceval leaves the court and is trained by a vavasour who teaches him how to fight and contradicts the advice given by Perceval's mother. Perceval then happens upon the land belonging to the lady Blancheflor. He falls in love with her and offers to defend her land against an encroaching lord in exchange for her love. After defeating the lord, Perceval leaves to go in search of his mother. He takes lodging at the castle of the Fisher King, where he witnesses the procession of the Grail; a lance that sheds a single drop of blood was carried through the room, followed by the Grail, a bowl which contains a single host, which sustains the Fisher King's father, the Grail King. Perceval, remembering the vavasour's advice that he should not speak often, does not inquire about this procession. He later finds out that, had he asked, he could have healed the Fisher King's thigh wound and restored the kingdom of the Grail king. After leaving, he encounters his cousin who tells him that he could not ask the question because he was responsible for his mother's death, as she died from the sorrow of losing him. He then sees the damsel that he molested at the start of the narrative being mistreated by her knight. Perceval defeats the knight, frees the damsel from punishment, and sends them both to Arthur's court. Later, Perceval sees a falcon wound a goose, leaving three drops on blood on snow. This reminds him of Blancheflor's complexion and he becomes lost in thought. He is challenged by two of Arthur's knights, whom he defeats; one of them is Kay, so Perceval makes good on his promise to avenge the maiden who was slapped by him. After being reunited with Arthur's knights, a hideous looking damsel arrives, condemns Perceval for not asking about the lance and Grail, prompting him to undertake a quest to find the Grail. Five years pass and Perceval is said to have forgotten God. He encounters a group of knights and ladies on Good Friday, who tell him the story of Christ. They point him in the direction of a hermitage, where he discovers that the hermit is his uncle. Perceval then confesses his sins, does his penance, and receives absolution. The narrative shifts to a discussion of Gawain's adventures where he finds the castle of maidens, including his own mother, his sister, and King Arthur's mother. Perceval's strand of the narrative is not picked back up, as Chrétien did not finish this romance.

These romances are discussed in the second and fourth chapters. This work is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 examines the depictions of biblical women in monastic and scholastic texts. Most of these texts are from the twelfth century, but others which remained influential in this century, including some patristic and early medieval texts, are also analyzed. Many of the texts were written by monks located in France, but others from England and modern-day Germany are also included because of their influence. The selected group of Old and New Testament women who are examined were chosen because they represent broader characterizations, in literature and reality, of women during the High Middle Ages. The types of women examined include, but are not limited to, the mother, the bride, the heroine, the servant, the contemplative, and the sinner. Chapter 2 uses the material from the previous chapter to compare the ladies in the romances with biblical women. The first woman that is examined here, and at the start of Chapter 4, is Guinevere since she is the typical example cited by scholars; analyses of the ladies in the other four romances follow. First, ladies who are associated with biblical women, and Chrétien mentions these biblical women by name, are discussed. Second, the attributes and actions shared by both ladies and biblical women are examined.

Chapter 3 shifts the focus from the biblical context to examine women in hagiography and the broader context of the cult of saints. The female saints mentioned in this chapter were chosen because they are representative of the greater whole. They are representing both biblical saints and virgin martyrs, and espousing the traditional saintly attributes of beauty, chastity, wisdom, and asceticism. Also, some of their lives were translated into French and Anglo-Norman during or near the time Chrétien was writing. In addition to the attributes and actions of the saints, the importance of relics and the relationship between the saints and their devotees is examined. Finally, Chapter 4 uses the context of the cult of saints to draw comparisons between ladies and saints, and tokens and relics. Some of these women are directly compared to a relic or described as having saint-like qualities, whereas others may be associated with female saints because they share similar attributes or act in a similar fashion.

Chapters 1 and 3 provide the lens through which Chrétien's work may be contextualized. This structure was chosen because the purpose of this thesis is to argue that Chrétien's portrayal of women is reflective of multiple sources and is derived from exposure to multiple religious contexts. Additionally, the purpose is not only to examine the influence of biblical exposition or the cult of saints on Chrétien's work, but also to examine how he and his contemporaries, or near contemporaries, collectively perceived women and the feminine and how they constructed religious symbols based upon these perceptions.

Chapter 1: Women and Their Attributes in Chrétien's Bible

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive study of women in biblical expository texts, but to shed some light on how women were described in the types of religious texts whose authors were Chrétien's contemporaries or near-contemporaries. These texts provide insight into the intellectual milieu surrounding Chrétien's work. Without knowing specifically who he was or where he studied, it is necessary to examine a sampling of some of the most influential biblical expository texts circulating in the twelfth century. While it is impossible to know what Chrétien read, it is possible to examine the texts and ideas that were available during his lifetime. This will reveal how some of the most prominent writers of the twelfth century, and earlier authors whose works remained influential in that century, characterized certain women. Medieval views of Old and New Testament women provide a vital starting point for an analysis of medieval authorial portrayals of women in general.

The main reason medieval authors focused on both the actions and attributes of certain women in the Bible was so that they, as well as their readers or auditors, would be able to imitate these women.[85] Embracing the virtues and behavior of the Old and, perhaps especially, the New Testament women would allow believers to comprehend better their relationships with God through the examples of these women. There are many ways that authors and their audiences may have identified with biblical women. For instance, they may have witnessed their own shortcomings in the characters of Eve or Mary Magdalen; or, perhaps they aspired to imitate the relationships virtuous women had with God by defending the Church with Debbora and Jael or imitating the virtues of the Virgin. The relationships between biblical women and God the Father, or Christ, take many forms in biblical exposition. This includes, but is not limited to, relationships between mother and son, between friends, or between lovers as allegorized in the Song of Songs. This chapter will examine the attributes espoused, actions taken, and relationships engaged in by Old and New Testament women, as they are described by medieval authors.

As Chapter 2 will reveal, it is the shared attributes and behavior that provide the greatest evidence for association between biblical women and the ladies in Chrétien's romances. The only Old Testament woman to be mentioned by name in the romances is Eve,

[85] This is not to suggest that biblical men were not also important as imitable models, but rather that this thesis is primarily concerned with portrayals of women.

while the only New Testament woman is the Virgin Mary. However, the similarities between the ways that biblical women are depicted by medieval authors reveals many shared attributes with the ladies in the romances.

Before delving into twelfth-century biblical exposition's treatment of women, it is first vital to look at the sources that will be examined. In the twelfth century, more texts were written on the Gospels than on historical parts of the Old Testament, including Esther, Judith, and Judges. In addition to the Gospels, the most popular books appear to have been the Psalms, the Pauline Epistles, the Canonical Epistles, the Sapiential books, Genesis, Job, and the Song of Songs.[86] This disparity does not hold true for all circles of medieval scholarship. For instance, the rising cathedral schools would have placed a great emphasis on the historical books of the Bible. In monastic circles, however, the books which offered insight into love, wisdom, or the life of Christ, which could be applied to the lives of believers, took precedence over the more historical books. Also, it appears that earlier allegorical commentaries on the historical books of the Bible remained important, perhaps especially in monastic circles.

The above may be one explanation for why Rabanus Maurus' ninth-century allegorical commentaries on the books of Esther, Judith, and Judges maintained their authority and popularity in the twelfth century. His commentaries allegorized the narratives of Esther, Judith, Jael, and Debbora as the Church defending the people of God,[87] which is also the interpretation embraced by twelfth-century writers. Beryl Smalley mentions Rabanus many times in *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, usually in conjunction with the twelfth century, even though he was writing in the ninth. She notes that his commentary on Judith served as the authority for the *Glossa Ordinaria* on the book of Judith.[88] Furthermore, his commentaries on the historical parts of scripture were a favorite of copyists, which is why his works will dominate the discussion of the figures of Judith, Jael, Debbora, and Esther. It is unlikely that Chrétien would have read Rabanus' commentaries, but it is significant that Rabanus remained the authority on these works from the ninth century throughout the High Middle Ages. This means that his allegories and the women and feminine figures which were

[86] Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden, 2009), p. 179.

[87] In the *Venice*, 1603 manuscript of the *Glossa Ordinaria* on Judith and Esther, there are notes throughout the biblical text that suggest substituting 'Esther' or 'Judith' with 'Ecclesia', confirming that, at least by the thirteenth century when the *Gloss* was finalized, these two books were commonly interpreted as biblical allegory.

[88] Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1983), p. 227.

described in them remained a vital aspect of biblical scholarship. This includes not only Judith, Jael, Debbora, and Esther, but also the Church and the soul, two feminine entities which will continue to be described in similar ways by Bernard of Clairvaux, as will be discussed. It is also worth noting that Rabanus' commentaries on Judith, Esther, and Judges are listed in a library inventory from Clairvaux, which may suggest that Bernard was well-acquainted with Rabanus' work.[89]

The *Glossa Ordinaria* was probably the most important biblical expository text compiled in the twelfth century. The *Gloss* was one of the standard texts used by masters teaching theology in the cathedral schools.[90] If a text was included in the *Gloss* that at least attests to its popularity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For the purposes of this thesis, the *Gloss* was a useful source for determining which biblical expository texts were considered to be the most important to its compilers in the twelfth century.[91] This chapter will examine the works of Origen, Rabanus Maurus, Rupert of Deutz, Hugh of St Victor, and Peter Comestor, whose texts are cited in the *Gloss*. Other influential authors whose works will be mentioned include Honorius of Autun, Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Cantor, and William of St Thierry. Since Bernard was involved in many different circles, including the court of Champagne, his *Sermons* will be discussed throughout this chapter. Bernard's writing will pull all of the diverse sources together, demonstrating that similar ideas were circulating among the monasteries, schools, and courts, at least in regard to their depictions of biblical women.

The reason why biblical expository texts were chosen primarily based upon whether or not they appear in the *Gloss* is because library inventories for twelfth-century Troyes and the surrounding areas are unfortunately sparse. For this reason, it is impossible to make any

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[89] André Vernet and Jean François Genest, *La Bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Clairvaux du XIIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1979), pp. 103-104, 148-149. The earliest complete library catalogue from Clairvaux was compiled in 1472. It is therefore impossible to determine whether or not Rabanus' work was in the library during the twelfth century, although this is certainly possible.

[90] John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, Vol. 1 (Princeton, 1970), p. 92.

[91] One of the reasons why the *Glossa Ordinaria* does not feature on its own in this chapter is because it was not a complete text as it survives today. A variety of different glosses on the Bible were brought together to create 'the Gloss', beginning in the twelfth century. For a concise description of the relationship between the *Gloss* and the twelfth-century Bible, see: Frans van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible* (New York, 2014), pp. 152-156.

definitive observations regarding their contents.[92] Of the secular houses of canons in Troyes, St-Etienne has the most thorough inventory, which was also composed the closest chronologically to Chrétien. Since St-Etienne was founded by Count Henry and was rumored to have held the count's personal library, it is highly possible that Chrétien would have had access to the library. The earliest complete inventory from St-Etienne dates to the first quarter of the fourteenth century.[93] Many of the contents listed were written in the twelfth century or earlier. While there is no way to prove that the texts were physically in the library during the twelfth century, their continued use does suggest that they were influential during the High Middle Ages more broadly. Another library worth mentioning is that belonging to St-Pierre in Beauvais. Chrétien states that he copied the story of Cligés from a book in that library.[94] Although this is likely a formulaic statement, it is still significant that Chrétien chose to mention Beauvais. This does not prove that he had previously accessed the library, but it does suggest a kind of familiarity with the library's contents.

The majority of the biblical expository texts discussed in this chapter could likely have been found in the libraries of St-Etienne, Beauvais, or Clairvaux in the twelfth century. St-Etienne held a copy of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons*. There may have also been glosses on Genesis, the Song of Songs, and all four Gospels.[95] Beauvais had copies of Origen's work on the Song of Songs and Judges, Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, and the *Glossa Ordinaria* on the Song of Songs.[96] Clairvaux had Rabanus' commentaries on Judges, Judith, and Esther, several works by Hugh of St Victor, Bernard's *Sermons*, Origen's work on the Song of Songs, and Peter Cantor's *Verbum Abbreviatum*.[97]

Some of the texts examined in this chapter could not be found in these library inventories, but were chosen because of the popularity of the ideas espoused by their authors.

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[92] Even the prominent French monastery of Clairvaux only has a single page fragment surviving from its twelfth-century inventory. The texts listed on this fragment include works by Augustine and Jerome and a copy of Bernard's *Sermons*. For a complete list of works from the fragment, see: Vernet and Genest, *La Bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Clairvaux*, pp. 349-356.

[93] Stirnemann, 'Quelques bibliothéques princières,' pp. 22, 33-34.

[94] *Cligés* 18-23.

[95] Charles Lalore, *Inventaires des principales églises de Troyes*, Vol. 2 (Troyes, 1893), pp. 270-271.

[96] The earliest surviving library inventory for Beauvais dates to the early fifteenth century. For the full list of documents, see: Henri Omont, 'Recherches sur la bibliothèque de l'église cathédrale de Beauvais,' *Mémoires de l'Institut national de France*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1916), pp. 18-34.

[97] Vernet and Genest, pp. 103-104, 109, 155-157, 226.

For instance, neither Rupert of Deutz nor Honorius of Autun appear to have been very popular in France, which is evidenced by the fact that their works were not listed in the aforementioned library inventories. However, their works on the Song of Songs were chosen because they were the first Marian interpretations of the Song. This reflects the growing importance of the Virgin Mary in medieval culture and thought during the time. They demonstrate a new facet of religious devotion that was forming in the twelfth century. Even if their texts could not be found in many libraries in France, the ideas espoused within them continued to spread.[98]

Many of the biblical expository texts used in this chapter were written in a monastic milieu, primarily for a monastic audience. The chief concern of their authors would have been communal or individual devotion to and contemplation of God. In contrast, the *Gloss* was compiled in the schools and was therefore written for the purpose of preaching and teaching.[99] It was compiled primarily as an instructive tool for understanding the Bible, rather than primarily as a tool for contemplating one's own relationship with God; although the latter would have been important to the majority of scholastic authors as well. This difference in textual traditions sometimes led to tension between monastic contemplation and early scholasticism.[100] School versus monastery is not a strict dichotomy. Content also depended on the author and the book of the Bible upon which the text was focused.

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[98] Honorius' work was also written around the time when the Feast of the Conception was being celebrated in England. Bernard of Clairvaux was strongly opposed to celebrating this feast day and therefore it is likely he would have been aware of Honorius' work, as he likely was of Wace's *Conception Notre Dame*. Wace, *The Hagiographical Works*, eds. Jean Blacker, Glyn S. Burgess, and Amy V. Ogden (Leiden, 2013), p. 15, 34. For more on the rise of Marian devotion in England, see: Kati Ihnat, *Mother of Mercy, Bane of the Jews: Devotion to the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Norman England* (Princeton, 2016). Rupert of Deutz came under fire for his support of Berengar of Tours, which would have likely given him some publicity in France. Rupert had public debates with students sent by Anselm of Laon, whose prominence would suggest that even if Rupert's work was not as popular in France as it was in Germany and Switzerland, French theologians had been exposed to his writing. John Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 30, 158-164.

[99] Anselm of Laon and his brother Ralph are accredited with writing the *Gloss* on the Song of Songs, John, and Luke. Scholars continue to debate whether or not they also wrote the *Gloss* on Matthew and Mark. Smith, pp. 20-23.

[100] Some monks, such as Rupert of Deutz and Bernard of Clairvaux, believed that secular schools 'threatened to turn the individual struggle to know God into a matter for the syllabus and the examination.' Smith, p. 11. For more on the rise of cathedral schools and the intellectual environment they created, see: C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia, 1994).

Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* and Peter Cantor's *Verbum Abbreviatum*[101] were written in the scholastic setting. Both men are best known for being masters at Notre Dame in Paris. However, it should also be noted that Comestor was born in Troyes, while Cantor appears to have had an amicable relationship with Count Henry's father Thibaut, who was also a friend of Bernard of Clairvaux.[102] Comestor's purpose was to provide a historical reading of the Bible, while Cantor's was to provide a moral reading of the Bible primarily focusing on the Gospels. Both authors mentioned Old and New Testament women in their works, either to describe their roles in salvation history or to use them as moral or amoral examples. In comparison with monastic texts, biblical women are mentioned more briefly in their works. Ultimately, the purpose of monastic and scholastic authors was similar; they both examined the relationship between biblical women and Christ to obtain knowledge of God's relationship with humanity and to understand their place in this relationship. This is why both genres will be examined together.

The diversity of the sources chosen for this study is intentional. Many of them were chosen because they could have been physically available to Chrétien. For some of the texts, it was impossible to substantiate evidence for their existence in Troyes, but they were available in other locations either in or near Champagne. Other texts were chosen because of the ideas contained within them. When all of these texts are combined, whether they appear disparate or not, they reflect the intellectual and cultural atmosphere of twelfth-century France. The relationship between the court of Champagne, the houses of canons in Troyes, the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris, and the monastery of Clairvaux is at least enough to substantiate a flow of ideas between these institutions.[103]

As previously noted, New Testament texts were given more attention than Old Testament texts in the twelfth century. It then follows that much more attention was given to

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[101] Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* does not examine the Song of Songs and provides a conflated summary of the Gospels. The audiences for Cantor's work are other theologians and those responsible for teaching, preaching, and pastoral care. It not only summarizes the Gospels, but also functions as a manual for the aforementioned individuals. For more on Comestor, manuals, and teaching the Bible in the Middle Ages, see: James H. Morey, 'Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible,' *Speculum* vol. 68, no. 1 (1993), pp. 6-35; Sandra Rae Karp, *Peter Comestor's* Historia Scholastica*: A Study in the Development of Literal Scriptural Exegesis* (Ann Arbor, 1985).

[102] Baldwin, *Peter the Chanter*, pp. 255-256.

[103] For more on the relationship between courts, monasteries, and cathedral schools in conjunction with the production of manuscripts and the spread of ideas, see: Stirnemann, pp. 7-10.

New Testament women, especially the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, and Martha, than was given to Old Testament women. There is no single explanation for this new focus, but the growing interest in the humanity of Christ would no doubt have increased the popularity of the women with whom he had relationships. Understanding the relationship that New Testament women had with the living Christ would have better enabled believers to have a relationship with the resurrected Christ. Even though the Old Testament women did not have a relationship with Christ, the living God, many of them carried out the work of God the Father by protecting the Israelites. Like the New Testament women, they are also models of obedience, courage, faith, and other virtues. Eve and Delilah, on the other hand, were mentioned in Old Testament exposition to provide examples of women who should be avoided, not imitated.

There are key differences in depictions of women in the Old and New Testaments, especially of those who are the concern of this chapter. The women of the Old Testament were exalted for their bravery. They put themselves in danger to do the work of God or to defend God's people. For Debbora, Jael, and Judith, this meant placing themselves in the midst of battle. For Esther, it meant petitioning a king who, though he was her husband, was known for his changeable behavior. The New Testament women were exalted for their devotion to Christ and the ways in which they express this devotion. For the Virgin Mary, this meant embracing the will of God and giving birth to Christ. For Mary Magdalen and Martha, it meant ministering to Christ by worshiping him or serving him respectively.[104]

Furthermore, although the focus of this chapter is to examine the attributes and roles of certain biblical women, there are two feminine entities that cannot be separated from this discussion: the soul and the Church. These two entities are crucial to any reading of the Song of Songs, a text whose popularity was booming in the twelfth century. Also, authors of biblical texts associated both Old and New Testament women with the soul and Church, both

[104] The New Testament women play a more emotive role in their obedience to the will of God than do the battle-ready heroines of the Old Testament. This is best understood when reading the Bible chronologically. God the Father first manifested himself through the victories of the Israelites in the Old Testament, whereas Christ appears as a peaceful version of God in the New. This shift is also present in the Middle Ages. Unlike the early Middle Ages when Christ was depicted as a man-God who either fought or suffered with his people, in the twelfth century there was a movement towards love and imitation of Christ. The loving Christ, not to mention the loving mother Mary, emerged during a time when love was a topic in the Church, monastery, schools, and, perhaps especially, in the court. For a detailed argument that traces the changes in perceptions of Christ and the Virgin Mary, see: Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*.

within and without the framework of the Song. For instance, virtuous Old Testament women were said to foreshadow the Church in that they were behaving the way that the Church would in Christ's absence. This demonstrates that the association of a woman with the soul or the Church worked without reference to the Song. If these women were associated with the Church when the Church was operating as the bride of Christ, then they were mirroring the relationship in the Song.

New Testament women were more closely associated with the individual soul. Those who were closest to Christ would demonstrate how souls should approach a relationship with God. This division is not without overlap, as some women were said to represent both the soul and the Church. For instance, when commenting upon the Song of Songs certain authors said that the Bride was the soul, while others said she was the Church. Additionally, the Virgin Mary is described as espousing qualities of the ideal soul, while having a relationship with Christ that foreshadows the one he will have with the Church. These and similar mentions of the soul and Church will surface during the examination of the qualities and roles of biblical women. These two feminine entities serve vital functions in medieval authors' descriptions of the relationship between humanity and God.

As this chapter is concerned with what twelfth-century individuals may have thought and read, it is organized thematically, rather than chronologically. Therefore, patristic and early medieval texts will be examined simultaneously with twelfth-century texts. Origen will be the main patristic author to feature in this chapter because twelfth-century authors continued to portray women in a similar fashion to the way he had portrayed them in his work. For instance, Origen's work on Judges, and his portrayal of Jael and Debbora, was also embraced by Rabanus in the ninth century, and then Rabanus was embraced in the twelfth century, demonstrating that Origen's views of women survived the test of time. Augustine, while certainly the most popular patristic author in most medieval libraries, did not write that much about biblical women in his texts, when compared with twelfth-century authors. Augustine will not feature much in this chapter because his views of women were typically polarized between those who were like Eve and those who were like Mary. Also, like all medieval Christian authors who followed him, Augustine believed that the Virgin, by giving birth to Christ, redeemed the sins of Eve.[105] Authors from the Early and High Middle Ages accepted Augustine's views of Mary and Eve, but also greatly expanded upon his initial

[105] Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas*, tr. Charles H. Talbot (Washington, 1981), pp. 73-79.

views of biblical women. This chapter takes the Old Testament women first, followed by the New Testament women. It provides a brief summary of their individual stories in the Bible, followed by an analysis of how they were described in biblical exposition.

Old Testament Women

The first woman mentioned in the Bible and the first person to sin is, of course, Eve. Surprisingly little is written regarding Eve's betrayal of Adam and her responsibility for the Fall in the biblical expository texts chosen for this examination. That is not to say that writers believe she is without fault, but rather that they focus more generally on humankind's sin as a consequence of her deception rather than pointing the finger of blame at Eve specifically.

Delilah is another example of a sinful woman who betrayed her man. In some commentaries Delilah is referred to as a prostitute, in others she is called Samson's wife.[106] She manipulated Samson into telling her the secret of his power by claiming that each time he lied to her about its source he did not love her. When he eventually told her that his hair was the source, she cut it and handed him over to the Philistines. While in their custody, once his hair had grown back and he regained his strength, he made the building collapse, killing himself and his captors.

Debbora and Jael are two heroines in the book of Judges who brought victory to the Israelites in battle. Jael was directly involved in the battle, while Debbora was responsible for foreseeing her victory. Debbora was a prophetess and the only female judge of the Israelites during the time following the death of King Aod when Israel had forgotten God. She told Barac to go with her against the army of King Jabin of Canaan, as this is what God had commanded. She also informed Barac that she had foreseen that the victory would belong to a woman. That woman was Jael, who pretended to give Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, refuge in her husband's tent, but instead drove a nail through his head while he slept. Killing Sisera allowed the Israelites, under the leadership of Debbora and Barac, to overcome Jabin's army.

Judith emerged as a heroine when king Nabuchodonosor of the Assyrians was expanding his power. The Israelites refused to acknowledge him as a god and braced for his attack. They decided to wait five days before attacking, to see if God would intervene. Judith

[106] Rabanus Maurus refers to her as 'mulierem meretricem' (*Commentaria in Librum Judicum* (*Judges*), PL 108: 1194C), while Hugh of St Victor calls her 'uxorem Samson' (*Adnotatiunculae Elucidatoriae in Librum Judicum* (Judges), PL 175: 93B).

was a beautiful and wealthy widow, who lived an isolated and pious life. She wore a haircloth on her loins and she fasted most days. When she heard that her people were holding off the attack for five days, she appealed to the elders and then prayed that God would allow her to go to the battlefield and the enemy would fall at her hand. She went to speak with Holofernes, commander of the army, wearing rich clothes, jewelry, and oils, pretending to be a spy against Israel. Judith dined with the general, plied him with alcohol, and convinced him that she would have sex with him. While he slept, she decapitated him and sent the head to the Israelites, causing the fearful Assyrians to flee.

King Assuerus wed Esther at the conclusion of his search for an obedient queen.[107] Her beauty caught his attention and she quickly became his favorite wife. She did not reveal to the king that the Israelites were her people until they were in danger. The king's high prince, Aman, required that the Israelites pay homage by bowing before him and since they considered this to be idolatry, they refused. Aman planned the total destruction of the Israelites, but Esther petitioned the king on behalf of her adopted father Mardochai, whom Aman planned to hang. Esther's favor with the king gave her courage to appeal to him and when the king was notified that Aman planned to kill Esther's people, he hanged Aman instead, gave his house to Esther, and spared the Israelites. Esther was further permitted to write to the Israelites under the king's seal, telling them to fight back against their attackers and claim spoils.

Eve and Delilah

Eve and Delilah are not examples of women who should be imitated, but they are much more than counterexamples for authors of biblical expository texts. They are used to demonstrate the condition of humanity without God. This is especially true of Eve who was responsible for humanity's fallen state. It is also important to note that women like Eve and Delilah were not always described as enemies of humanity; rather, these women were used to demonstrate the vulnerability of humanity to sin. Eve is often mentioned in conjunction with the Virgin Mary, who redeemed her sin and the sins of all humanity through living a perfect life and giving birth to Christ.

Some of the most aggressive comments about Eve come from Rupert of Deutz, who berates her in his commentary on the Song of Songs, referring to her as an enemy and a

[107] Rabanus, *Expositio in Librum Esther*, PL 109: 645C-646B. This comparison is also found in the *Bibliorum Sacrorum cum Glossa Ordinaria* on Esther (Venice 1603, col. 1621).

viper.[108] His vehement comments toward Eve are meant to exalt the Virgin Mary by contrast. He also emphasizes that 'Eve made us cry, Mary made us rejoice.'[109] Rupert's purpose was to demonstrate that Mary was the new mother of humanity and the one that redeemed the sin of Eve. He may have also been reacting to his own desire to be more like Mary and less like Eve.[110] Unlike Rupert, Peter Comestor, in the portion of his *Historia Scholastica* pertaining to Genesis, only mentions Eve directly by name twelve times and does not provide personal comments on Eve, likely because his purpose was to write the history of the Fall.[111] Honorius of Autun refers to Eve as the mother of humanity and suggests that her status was praiseworthy before the Fall. He then states that the Virgin Mary became the new mother of humanity to repair the damage done by Eve.[112]

Honorius' comments demonstrate that Eve is closely associated with sin, but she is not necessarily an example of a purely evil woman. Peter Cantor blames Eve for allowing sin to enter the world, quoting Jeremiah 9:31, 'Death entered through the window, Eve saw that the apple was pleasant to behold…'. Death is meant to be sin and the window is Eve when she ate the apple.[113] Eve and Delilah as personifications of sin is a common interpretation. In

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[108] Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum*, PL 168: 867B. '*Eva namque quasi inimica, Eva quasi vipera*, Eva quasi deformis et ignominiosa. Mihi inimica, viro suo vipera, sibimet confusa ignominia. Inimica per superbiam, qua intus tumuit, vipera per malitiam, quam ex serpente concipiens, foris tentata, facile cessit. Ignominiosa per pruritum libidinis, qua statim scaturire coepit, unde et nudam se cognoscens, folio pudenda contexit.'

[109] Rupert, PL 168: 845A. 'Ex hoc et nos, et qui venturi sunt post nos, «exsultabimus et laetabimur in te,» et cantabimus, dicentes quia *Eva nos fecit plorare, Maria nos fecit exsultare*.'

[110] This will be discussed in greater detail in reference to Rupert's devotion to the Virgin Mary in the section on New Testament women (see p. 56). For more on Rupert's contributions to medieval biblical exegesis see: Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*: *The Four Senses of Scripture* Vol. 3, tr. E.M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, 2009), pp. 163-176.

[111] Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, PL 198: 1071B, 1074A-B, 1075B, 1076C, 1106A.

[112] Honorius Augustodunensis, *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum*, PL 172: 478D-479A. 'Mater humani generis humana natura, quae ante peccatum erat incorruptibilis, impassibilis, immortalis, per fallaciam autem diaboli corrupta, facta est passibilis et mortalis. Porro genitrix ejus erat Eva mater omnium, quae erat ante peccatum inviolata, quia nec concupiscentia, nec sordibus polluta; quae serpentina suasione violata, mox concupiscentiae et sordibus et doloribus est subacta; sed Christus corruptae matri incorruptionem reddidit, dum humanam naturam in sui persona incorruptibilem resurgens a morte fecit. Genitricem violatam reparavit, dum Virginem, genitricem suam, inviolatam servavit.'

[113] Cantor, *Verbum Abbreviatum*, PL 205: 321B. 'Mors intravit per fenestram (Jer. IX); Eva vidit pomum pulchrum visu, etc. (Gen. III).'

some texts, there is a greater emphasis on sin than on the women themselves. This may be especially true in texts like Cantor's *Verbum Abbreviatum* because he is most concerned with using biblical examples as a teaching tool to demonstrate both correct and incorrect behavior. The reader is not necessarily left with an overly negative view of the biblical women, but rather with an example of how not to behave. Similarly, Bernard of Clairvaux states, '…Eve still lives in our flesh, and because of our inborn lust the serpent schemes ceaselessly to win our consent to his rebellion.'[114] Bernard further uses Eve to explain how the immortal soul desires worldly, mortal things, stating, 'Consider Eve, and how her soul of immortal glory was infected by the stain of mortality through her desire for mortal things.'[115] One must rid oneself of this lust, born of Eve, in order to live again. Bernard explains, 'You resist the flesh, you begin to live again; if by the spirit you begin to mortify the works of the flesh, if you crucify the flesh with its defects and lusts you live again.'[116] Ultimately, humanity desires things of the flesh because Eve drove away wisdom through her sin, but it is possible to regain this wisdom. This latter point will be discussed in greater detail in reference to the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen.

As with Eve, Delilah is not described in a purely negative light, but she is equated with sin. For instance, Peter Cantor uses the example of Samson and Delilah when he is writing to encourage abstinence and sobriety.[117] Rabanus allegorized Delilah's betrayal of Samson in his commentary on Judges. He identified Delilah as the evils of the flesh. Samson was identified as the Church, the Bride of Christ, who, though tempted by worldly things, emerged triumphant and pure. Samson losing his hair and being blinded by the Philistines was his penance, and his forgiveness was signified by the regrowth of his hair and his victory over the enemy. From this it may be discerned that Rabanus described Samson at once as the

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[114] Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, Vol. 4, tr. Irene Edmonds (Kalamazoo, 1980), p. 70; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, ed. Jean Leclercq, Sermon 72.8 (henceforth cited like S. 72.8). '…Eva utique vivente in carne nostra, cuius per hereditariam concupiscentiam serpens nostrum suae factioni sedula satagit sollicitudine vindicare consensum.'

[115] Edmonds, Vol. 4, p. 174; S. 82.4. 'Evam attende, quomodo eius anima immortalis immortalitatis suae gloriae fucum mortalitatis invexit, mortalia utique affectando.'

[116] Ibid., p. 71; S. 72.9. 'Huic si repugnas, respiras; *si spiritu facta carnis mortificas*, respirasti; si hanc *cum vitiis et concupiscentiis suis crucifigis*, respirasti.'

[117] PL 205: 332A. 'Patet ergo ex sanctorum auctoritatibus abstinentiam et sobrietatem collactaneas et nutrices esse continentiae, gulam vero luxuriae. Venter enim mero aestuans de facili labitur in libidine…. Samson inter epulas Philisthaeos prostravit (Judic. XVI).'

soul and the Church. As the soul, he received forgiveness for falling victim to the sin of lust. As the Church, he emerged victorious over the enemy and therefore over all sin.[118] Typically, commentators focus much more attention on Samson's behavior than on Delilah's. Similar to Eve, she is depicted as a personification of the sin that all of humanity should resist.

Overall, Eve and Delilah are not painted as anti-heroines, but they are archetypal sinful women. Authors of biblical exposition use these women to illustrate two different concepts: first, they represent how humanity has been corrupted by sin; second, their interactions with others, such as Samson, demonstrates how humanity may overcome sin. Virtuous biblical women are used to demonstrate either the perfection of virtue, as in the case of the Virgin Mary, or the path to redemption, as in the case of Mary Magdalen. The Old Testament women, as they existed before Christ, foreshadow the actions and virtues of the Church, through which forgiveness could be attained. The following will discuss some of the most important attributes of virtuous Old Testament women, which were identified by medieval authors: nobility, beauty, their relationships with men (including chastity and marital status), physical strength, and leadership.

This section will also focus on how the attributes of biblical women are described in their respective narratives and how the authors commenting on these biblical texts perceived the attributes and roles of these women. This is especially important because these are the kinds of texts and ideas that Chrétien would have been exposed to and of the types of biblical women that he would have encountered. Furthermore, and in general, this reveals a great deal about how biblically educated medieval authors, as a whole, perceived sinful and virtuous women. As will become clear in the following chapter, not all of the ladies in Chrétien's romances are associated with a specific biblical woman, but they do share attributes with many biblical women. This is why the most significant shared attributes of certain Old Testament women will be discussed, rather than the individual women themselves. A discussion of New Testament women will follow.

Nobility and Beauty

In the Bible, Judith is referred to as a wealthy widow. Her wealth not only suggests that she was noble, but also that she would have been allowed a higher degree of influence among the Israelites than if she were a woman of lower social standing. The fact that the elders listen to her when she approaches them with her plan to stop Holofernes' army is a

[118] Rabanus, *Judges*, PL 175: 1198C-1199A.

good indication of her place in society. Her nobility is also juxtaposed with her life of piety, emphasizing that she lived modestly and fasted out of choice, rather than necessity. The only time that Judith displays her wealth is when she adorns herself in fine clothing and jewelry to seduce Holofernes. Judith donning her wealth to do the work of God has been compared to the beauty and the actions of the Church by Rabanus. This occasion and its implications will be discussed in greater detail in relation to her beauty.

Even more so than Judith, Esther is clearly noble, as she is a queen.[119] However, she was noble before marrying the king and she displayed her wealth and status along with a number of women brought before the king as potential wives. Rabanus noted that the prospective brides going to the bedchamber of the king were like souls going before Christ. The brides were washed and anointed with precious oils, which Rabanus compared to the purification of holy baptism that all souls must undergo to become part of the Church, the Spouse of Christ.[120] Esther, of course, was the king's chosen bride, just as the Church is Christ's one Bride. Esther's nobility is also justification for her use of force against the enemies of Israel, which will be discussed in greater detail in the section on leadership. Nobility and the wealth associated with it is used to describe virtue. This is not uncommon and will continue to resurface as a theme in both biblical exposition, saints' lives and the romances. Living a virtuous life, while wealthy, is a test of faith. Being adorned in the virtues that bring one closer to God is the equivalent of adorning oneself with rich clothing, perfumes, and jewels.

For the Old Testament women, nobility, beauty, and virtue are closely intertwined. Judith provides a good example of this relationship because, despite her wealth and beauty, she lives chastely and modestly until she is required to use her assets to defeat the enemies of God. For instance, when she was preparing herself to go to Holofernes' camp, God made her

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[119] Rabanus dedicated his commentary on Esther to Ermengarde, the wife of Lothar I. He thanked her for her hospitality when he stayed at the court, presumably when he was writing his commentary on Jeremiah. Lynda Coon notes, 'Hrabanus provided royal politicians with helpful Hebrew models for imitation by drawing on his vast knowledge of biblical kingship and military history. For royal women, Hrabanus allegorized the heroic verses of Esther and Judith.' *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West* (Philadelphia, 2011), p. 37.

[120] Rabanus, PL 109: 647D. '…et aliis sex, pigmentis et aromatibus variis uterentur, nisi quod omnes animae quae ad sacri baptismi perceptionem et ad veri Sponsi, regis videlicet Christi, thalamum invitantur, oleo myrrhino, hoc est lumine fidei et pinguedine dilectionis, cum aromatibus virtutum perfecte imbuuntur; quatenus ejus consortio dignae fieri mereantur.'

more beautiful. Rabanus noted that this was not for the sake of sensuality, but because of her virtue.[121] Even though it was Judith's beauty that allowed her to defeat Holofernes, Rabanus was careful to point out that her exterior beauty was a mirror of her interior virtue. Additionally, while preparing, Judith was washing herself and donning rich clothing and jewelry. Rabanus noted that bathing symbolized the soul doing penance for past sins, cleansing itself with the tears of repentance.[122] Each item of clothing or jewelry represented another aspect of her piety. For instance, the crown on her head symbolized the helmet of salvation, her sandals represented the teaching of the Gospels, and the ring she wore was a seal of faith.[123] These interpretations apply not only to Judith, but also to other Christians who wish to cleanse themselves of sin and adorn clothing of virtue. Rabanus further explained that like Judith the Church also adorned herself with ornaments to amplify the beauty of her virtue.[124]

Bernard similarly speaks of the beauty of the Church in his commentary on the Song of Songs, comparing worldly beauty to spiritual beauty. This is especially clear when Bernard compares how the Bridegroom describes the beauty of the Bride in Song 1:7 versus Song 4:1.[125] In the former verse, the Bridegroom refers to the Bride as 'fairest among women', but in the latter he tells her straightforwardly that she is beautiful. This subtle difference is very important to Bernard, as he believes that the first verse describes the soul, while the second describes the Church. Being beautiful among women means that the soul is aspiring to love

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[121] Rabanus, *Expositio in Librum Judith*, PL 109: 565B. He quotes Judith 10:4, 'Cui etiam Dominus contulit splendorem: quoniam omnis ista compositio *non ex libidine, sed ex virtute pendebat*: et ideo Dominus hanc in illam pulchritudinem ampliavit, ut incomparabili decore omnium oculis appareret.'

[122] Ibid., PL 109: 565B. 'Lavat corpus suum, cum actus corporis sui poenitentiae lacrymis mundat.'

[123] Ibid., PL 109: 565C. 'Imponit mitram capiti, cum galeam salutis circumdat menti. Induit pedes suos sandaliis, cum gressus operum suorum evangelicis munit doctrinis. Assumit dextraliola et lilia, et inaures et annulos. In dextraliolis spes futurorum bonorum exprimitur, quae in dextra Dei sanctis in futuro dantur. In liliis castitas, in inauribus obedientiae devotio, et in annulo signaculum fidei designatur.'

[124] Ibid., PL 109: 565C. 'His ergo omnibus ornamentis se sancta Ecclesia ornat, quia omnium virtutum decore se illustrare certat.'

[125] Song 1:7 'If thou know not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth, and follow after the steps of the flocks, and feed they kids beside the tents of the shepherds.' Song 4:1 'How beautiful art thou, my love, how beautiful art thou! Thy eyes are doves' eyes, besides what is hid within. Thy hair is as flocks of goats, which come up from mount Galaad.' All biblical quotes are from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate, unless otherwise noted.

more purely, but she is still existing among the world,[126] perhaps still relying upon physical jewelry and clothing to enhance her beauty. Being beautiful beyond compare means loving God perfectly, as the Church loves Christ.[127] Bernard makes it clear that God seeks both the soul and the Church, quoting Psalms 44:12, 'And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty,' in reference to both Brides.

As with Judith's beauty, which prefigures the beauty of the Church, the beauty, both physical and spiritual, of the Church-Bride is a quality that is to be imitated. The Church is sometimes outwardly beautiful, adorned with jewels. Other times, she is inwardly beautiful, and black on the outside, demonstrating both her humility and the fact that she embraces the sins of all souls.[128] There are clearly parallels between the descriptions of beauty associated with Judith and those associated with the Church.

Relationships

Relationships are often what give greater meaning to the actions of these women. For instance, the chastity of the widow Judith and the married status of Jael both lend themselves to varying symbolic interpretations when these women are associated with the Church. Rabanus said that Jael, as the wife of Aber Cinei, is referred to as blessed among women because she was loyal to her husband and his people. Furthermore, her marital status had an even greater significance because it lent itself to an interpretation of Jael as a prefiguration of the Church, the Bride of Christ. She served her husband by killing Sisera, just as the Church served Christ by defeating his enemies. Rabanus stated that the Church, the 'most noble bride', was prefigured in Jael.[129]

Unlike Jael whose marriage lent itself to a comparison with the Church, Judith's widowhood and chastity were praised by commentators. Writing before Rabanus, Origen had also commented on this specifically, referring to chastity as a type of martyrdom, as it was technically a death of the expected life of a woman, since she was supposed to bear

[126] S. 38.4-5.

[127] S. 45.3.

[128] S. 28.1-2.

[129] Rabanus, PL 108: 1150A-B. 'Haec inter mulieres benedicitur, quia ab omnibus sanctis animabus opportune laudatur, quae etiam fuit uxor Aber Cinei, cum Christi regis et Domini nostri triumphatoris utique mortis sponsa nobilissima esse praedicatur…'.

children.[130] He had also emphasized how difficult it was for women, as a sex, to remain chaste, but especially those who were young and beautiful.[131] Judith's chastity was an important aspect of her faith primarily because it could be used to divorce her beauty from her sexuality, despite the fact that she defeated the enemy through seduction. For instance, the elders praised Judith for her deeds, saying 'you have done manfully (*fecisti viriliter*), and your heart has been strengthened, because you have loved chastity, and after your husband have not known any other: therefore also the hand of the Lord has strengthened you, and therefore you shall be blessed forever.'[132] They also added, 'For their mighty one did not fall by the young men, neither did the sons of Titan strike him, nor tall giants oppose themselves to him, but Judith the daughter of Merari weakened him with the beauty of her face.'[133] The elders' words highlight two very significant, yet seemingly opposing attributes of Judith: her feminine beauty and her chastity. The Church functioned likewise as the chaste bride of Christ. Within this comparison, Rabanus twice repeated the term 'viriliter'; the first time was the aforementioned occasion in Judith 15:11 when she was praised by the elders, but the second time Rabanus mentioned this term, he was referring to the Church triumphing over her enemies.[134] The term 'viriliter' may be used to emphasize how out of the ordinary Judith's actions were, since she essentially accomplished the deeds of a man. However, there is clearly more to this because Judith's feminine qualities, including her sex appeal, were

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[130] The equivocation of chastity with death is especially clear in the cult of saints, which will be discussed in reference to St Margaret in Chapter 3 (see p. 104).

[131] Origen, *Homilies on Judges*, tr. Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro (Washington, 2010), p. 114. Origen's writing remained influential from the fifth century to the thirteenth century and his work on Judges clearly influenced Rabanus. Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, Vol 1, tr. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, 1998), p. 172.

[132] Judith 15:11. '…quia **fecisti viriliter**, et confortatum est cor tuum, eo quod castitatem amaveris, et post virum tuum, alterum nescieris: ideo et manus Domini confortavit te, et ideo eris benedicta in aeternum.' It is worth reiterating that Marie de Champagne was said to rule manfully in the place of her husband and sons. It does not appear uncommon for writers to describe a woman as 'acting manfully' when she does something out of the ordinary, which requires her to act in the capacity of a man. The elders' characterization of the biblical Judith may or may not be the model for describing women as behaving *viriliter*, but within the context of this thesis, the comparison is significant (see p. 12).

[133] Judith 16:8.

[134] Rabanus, PL 109: 579D-580A. 'Gloria ergo Jerusalem est sancta Ecclesia, quia ad coelestem pertinet civitatem Dei, et societatem et beatitudinem sanctorum angelorum, quae fecit viriliter, contra mundi confligens principatum, contemnendo minas et persecutiones hostium.…'

exalted both in scripture as well as in the commentaries because they allowed her to falsely seduce Holofernes. It is possible that the use of the term 'viriliter' is intended not only to draw attention to the extraordinary quality of Judith's actions, but also to separate Judith's masculine act of killing Holofernes from her feminine act of seducing him at the start. Furthermore, Origen and Rabanus focused less on her physical strength and her masculine action than on her chastity. Judith's chastity was amplified by her widowhood, as even the elders noted that she did not remarry after the death of her husband. Right after quoting the elders telling Judith that she had done manfully, followed by praise for her chastity, Rabanus launched into a discussion of the Church's chastity and purity.[135] Judith's chastity, piety, fasting, and wearing hairshirts made Judith the perfect candidate for representing the Church, who, like her, was a widow waiting for and serving God, her true spouse.[136] All of these factors, set Judith apart from the typical woman and led commentators to associate her with the Church.

Physical Strength

Medieval writers praised Jael's defeat of Sisera. For instance, Peter Comestor notes that she 'acted valiantly'.[137] Within this context, Origen had also mentioned Judith, praising her feminine strength as greater than masculine strength. Masculine strength implied weapons and fighting in battle, whereas feminine strength implied prayer and faith, which he had seen as far more important.[138] Rabanus' allegorical interpretation of Jael killing Sisera was identical to Origen's,[139] which most likely suggests that he copied from the authority,

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[135] Rabanus, PL 109: 580A. '...castitatem amavit, quia sinceritatem fidei servavit, per quam omnem multitudinem fidelium Apostolus se coelesti regi desponsasse gloriabatur dicens: «Desponsavi enim vos uni viro, virginem castam exhibere Christo (II Cor. XI).» Cujus thoro immaculatam ipsa se custodit, nec haereticorum errori communicare ullo modo consentit. Ad benedictionem pontificis et presbyterorum respondit: *Fiat, fiat,* hoc est: Amen, amen: quia a majoribus sive minoribus filiis matris Ecclesiae ipsa sola in toto orbe praedicabitur, et condigna coelesti sponso ubique et semper laudabitur.'

[136] For an argument that holy widowhood gave a women greater perceived intercessory power, see: Katherine Clark, 'Purgatory, Punishment, and the Discourse of Holy Widowhood in the High and Later Middle Ages,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 16, no. 2 (2007), pp. 169-203.

[137] Comestor, PL 198: 1277C. 'Postea benedixit Jahel, quoniam fortiter egit, et quievit terra per quadraginta annos.'

[138] Origen, *Judges*, p. 113.

[139] Rabanus, PL 108: 1136A-D. Origen had interpreted Jael's defeat of Sisera as a symbol of the Church defeating sin and vice. First, Jael was a foreigner and the Church was assembled from foreign peoples; second,

although he elaborated on the symbolism. Jael's left hand holding the nail to Sisera's head symbolized casting off the sins and desires of the flesh, while her right hand holding the hammer symbolized taking on the spiritual life and following the word of God. This symbolism is wrapped up in the metaphor of Christ's crucifixion, with the double meaning of Jael hammering the nail, as Christ was nailed to the cross.[140]

Ultimately, Sisera's death represented the victory of the Church over the sin of the world. Sisera lay dead at the feet of Jael, much in the same way that all enemies of Christ will fall at the feet of the Ecclesia.[141] Rabanus also spoke of Jael as if she were an anti-Eve figure. He quoted Genesis 3:15 where God told the serpent 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman [Eve], and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel', followed by Luke 10:19 where Christ gave his disciples the power to tread on serpents. By crushing Sisera's head, Jael, like the Church had defeated an enemy of Christ, and unlike Eve, had crushed the head of the serpent.[142]

Like Jael, writers describe Judith as being most like the Church when she uses her physical strength to defeat Holofernes. First, when Judith spoke to the ancients about her plan for preventing war with the Assyrians by killing Holofernes, Rabanus interpreted her words as having to do with the time when the Church will overthrow wickedness. He noted that the Holy Spirit was foreshadowed through the mouth of a woman, as her plan to overthrow the Assyrians was similar to the Church's goal of triumphing over her enemies.[143] Everything

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Jael means 'ascent' and the Church was the only means of ascent to heaven; and third, Sisera means 'vision of the horse', and by killing him Jael rose from the animal or carnal to the spiritual (*Judges*, p. 80). Origen had written, 'Jael, the Church, having concealed Sisera, the prince of vices, with skins, that is, having put him to sleep by the death of his members, handed him over to eternal slumber' (*Judges*, p. 81). Thus, his interpretation was heavily dependent on the meaning of names.

[140] Rabanus, PL 108: 1150C-D. 'Manum ergo sinistram misit Jael nostra ad clavum, cum ad similitudinem crucis Christi carnalia in se abstinendo mortificavit desideria; et dexteram ad fabrorum malleos, cum intentionem animi sui ad meditandum praeparavit libros sanctorum apostolorum ac prophetarum.'

[141] Ibid., PL 108: 1151A. 'Praedo nefandus inter pedes mulieris ruere ac jacere, et mortuus esse describitur, quia hostis antiquus sub pedibus Ecclesiae superatus, prostratus atque contritus esse dignoscitur, cum per potestatem sibi a Christo collatam, omnem mortis dominationem vincendo damnat atque conculcat.'

[142] Ibid., PL 108: 1151A. 'Unde in Genesi Dominus de muliere ad serpentem ait: *Ipsa conteret caput tuum, et tu insidiaberis calcaneo ejus* (Gen. III). Hinc et Salvator in Evangelio discipulis ait: *Ecce do vobis potestatem calcandi super serpentes et scorpiones, et super omnem virtutem inimici* (Luc. X).'

[143] Rabanus, PL 109: 564D. 'Hoc enim Spiritus sanctus per os sanctae feminae voluit praemonstrare, quod sciebat nefarium principem nequitia sua promereri: nec non illud in mystico opere praesagere, quod omnis

that Judith was praised for at the start of the book came together to produce that result. It was her chastity and her virtue that gave her the physical strength to defeat the enemy

Even within the context of the Song of Songs, Bernard paints the Church as not only the spouse but also the defender of God. For instance, Bernard explains this in connection with Song 1:8, 'To my company of horsemen amid Pharaoh's chariots have I likened you, o my love.' Here, the Bridegroom is speaking to his Bride, who is the defender of his faith. This especially pertains to the Church as Bride, but may also be applied to the individual soul as well. Bernard explains, 'And do not be surprised that one *soul* is compared to a company of horsemen, for if that one *soul* is holy an army of virtues is at hand: well-ordered affections, disciplined habits, prayers like burnished weapons, actions charged with energy, awesome zeal, and finally unrelenting conflicts with the enemy and repeated victories.'[144] This verse is unique, as the Bride is typically described as a lover, rather than a warrior. By extension, the Church as Bride is primarily described as God's spouse rather than God's army. However, as was demonstrated in the aforementioned examples of Judith, Jael, and Debbora, females who fight on behalf of God, both metaphorically and physically, have a significant place in the medieval exegetical tradition. Rabanus notes that like Judith and Esther, the Church would always triumph over her enemies.[145] Also, as Bernard did when describing the strength of the Church, Rabanus referred to Judith as a type of the Church. He also acknowledged that her story was applicable to believers, as they should follow the example of this woman who overcame both spiritual and corporal enemies.[146]

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haereticus, sive schismaticus, sive Judaeus, sive etiam paganus, qui Ecclesiam pravo dogmate, sive perverso exemplo corrumpere voluerit, proprio superbiae suae gladio caput voluntatis iniquae per sententiam justi judicis amputabitur, et inferni cruciatibus subjiciendus poenas dolorum sentiet in aeternum.'

[144] Bernard, *On the Song of Songs*, Vol. 2, tr. Kilian Walsh (Kalamazoo, 1976), p. 194; S. 39.4. 'Nec miraberis unam animam equitatus multitudini similatam, si advertas quantae in ipsa una, quae tamen sancta anima sit, virtutum acies habeantur: quanta in affectionibus ordinatio, quanta in moribus disciplina, quanta in orationibus armatura, quantum in actionibus robur, quantus in zelo terror, quanta denique ipsi cum hoste conflictuum assiduitas, numerositas triumphorum.' Italics denote my changes to the translation of 'unam animam' from 'one person' to 'one soul' and 'anima' from 'person' to 'soul'.

[145] Rabanus, PL 109: 541A. '…per ipsius scilicet gratiam, qui illas sanctas mulieres triumphare fecerat, et universam Ecclesiam suam quam ipsae typo praeferebant, perpetua victoria triumphantem, coelestis patriae secum efficiat possessorem, Jesus videlicet Deus et Dominus noster, qui vos intus et foris, hic et ubique, nunc et semper custodire dignetur. Optamus vos bene valere, domina Augusta, memorem nostri.'

[146] Ibid., PL 109: 540B. 'Quae quidem ob insigne meritum virtutis, tam viris, quam etiam feminis sunt imitabiles, eo quod spiritales hostes animi vigore, et corporales consilii maturitate vicerunt.'

Leadership

Leadership is often interrelated with the other attributes espoused by these women. For instance, some led through a display of physical strength or through their position of power as a member of the nobility, while others led through example. All of these women continued to lead believers, beginning with the authors who commented on their narratives. The attributes and actions of these biblical women were then used to advise and lead medieval Christians who read or heard about their examples. Leadership is therefore transmitted from female example to author to audience.

Although leadership and physical strength may be combined, as in the case of Judith, it appears that in some cases, authors praise leadership over physical strength. For instance, despite the fact that it was Jael who killed Sisera, medieval writers tend to comment more on Debbora's involvement in the Israelite victory. Origen had praised Debbora, saying that 'a fear caused by lack of faith did not disturb her feminine mind.'[147] Here Origen had praised the fact that Debbora did not lose her faith like the men of Israel. Furthermore, he may have also suggested that this is praiseworthy because a woman would be weaker of faith than a man. In the Book of Judges, in his portion of the Song of Debbora, Barac sang, 'The valiant men ceased and rested in Israel, until Debbora arose, a mother arose in Israel.'[148] Rabanus used this verse to make comparison between Debbora and Mary. He followed this verse with Paul in Galatians, 'God sent forth his son, made of a woman.'[149] In Rabanus' interpretation, God used Debbora to bring victory to the Israelites through Barac even though they had forgotten God, just as God used Mary to bring forth Christ to atone for the sins of humankind.[150] Even though Jael technically won the victory by killing Sisera, without Debbora foreseeing this action and mobilizing Barac to fight victory would not have been assured. Unlike Origen and Rabanus, Hugh of St Victor appears a bit more surprised, noting

[147] Origen, *Judges*, p. 113.

[148] Judges 5:7.

[149] Galatians 4:4.

[150] Rabanus, PL 108: 1141A. '…quem Debbora mater, hoc est, vera prophetia futurum praecinebat, ut benedictionem daret ipse, qui legem dedit, qui signaculum legis et prophetarum omnium fuit….Hinc quoque Paulus ait: *Postquam venit plenitudo temporis, misit Deus Filium suum factum ex muliere, factum sub lege, ut eos, qui sub lege erant, redimeret* (Galat. IV).'

that it was a miracle from God that victory was achieved with so few men and under the leadership of a woman.[151] He is also speaking of Debbora in this sense and not Jael.

As with Debbora, Esther's greatest attribute is her leadership. She used her position as queen to defend the Israelites, but she did so through a demonstration of humility, rather than through strength. After Mardochai told Esther what was to happen to himself and the other Israelites, she went to the king, falling at his feet to beg him for mercy. This is an act that should be imitated by sinners repenting before Christ, through the Church.[152] When the king agreed to have vengeance upon Aman and halt the massacre of the Israelites, he set his seal upon the message, which Rabanus likened to the Holy Spirit's seal upon the Gospel.[153] Finally, when Aman had been killed and the Israelites had defeated their attackers, Esther asked that the king kill Aman's ten sons, which Rabanus compared to relentlessly pursuing the enemies of Christ.[154]

Here again, Rabanus presented an allegory where the theme of the Church, as the dutiful spouse of Christ who defeats her enemies, remained much the same as the previous examples in Judges and Judith. While occasionally there appears to be tension in commentaries with women using force, such as Jael and Judith in battle, Esther is not treated the same way. It is true that she did not use physical strength against her enemy, but she did orchestrate physical violence against them. This is probably because she was a queen and thus in a position of power, which allowed her to exercise this type of authority.[155] At the same time, her position as queen seems to detract from the power of her actions. Unlike

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[151] Hugh of St Victor, PL 175: 90A-B. 'Et ut majus sit miraculum Dei, hoc non solum duce femina, sed et[iam] parva manu pugnante factum est.'

[152] Rabanus, PL 109: 662B. 'Quid est ergo Esther procidere ad pedes regis eumque pro salute populi exorare, nisi sanctam Ecclesiam pro ereptione filiorum suorum quotidie Dominum omnipotentem per fidem et mysteria incarnationis Unigeniti Dei humiliter postulare, quatenus ejus gratia et hostium comprimatur audacia, et de manibus eorum fidelium liberetur innocentia.'

[153] Ibid., PL 109: 662C. 'Signantur ipsae litterae ex nomine regis scriptae annulo ipsius, quia omnino evangelica doctrina, quae ex nomine Christi in toto orbe praedicatur, Spiritus sancti signaculo confirmata ubique declaratur...'.

[154] Ibid., PL 109: 666D. 'Intentio haec reginae Esther, qua hostes suos valide insequi et exstirpare contendit, studium atque solertiam verae reginae, hoc est sanctae Ecclesiae, exprimit, quae hostes suos sine cessatione persequitur, et funditus prosternere atque sibi subjicere certat.'

[155] In the *Gloss*, as in Rabanus, Esther's intercession as a queen is compared to the Church's intercession on behalf of her people. This is perhaps unsurprising as the majority of the glosses on Esther would likely originate from Rabanus' commentary. (Venice, col. 1633).

Debbora, Jael, and Judith who are unlikely sources for a victory in battle, and perhaps more worthy of praise for this reason, a queen intervening on behalf of her people, while virtuous, is expected. Her queenship, in a sense, separated her from her natural femininity, which could explain both the biblical author's and Rabanus' simple acceptance of her inciting a rebellion and executing Aman's sons. Unlike Debbora, Jael, and Judith, Esther used her office of queenship, rather than her own strength, to accomplish these feats. Furthermore, Esther's story lends itself much more easily to being an allegory for the Church as queen, and spouse of Christ the king, defeating her enemies. This would mean that Rabanus would not have to fit the narrative to the allegory, as he had to with the other three women.

All of the attributes and actions of these Old Testament women relate to their status as types of the Church, especially in Rabanus' commentaries. It was also shown that these women share attributes with the Bride in the Song of Songs, perhaps especially when the Church is being placed in this role. There is also the suggestion made by medieval authors that although these women represent the Church, believers should emulate their attributes because this will allow them to aspire to the relationship that God had with these women and that Christ has with the Church.

New Testament Women

Discussion of Old Testament women has demonstrated that one purpose of biblical expository texts was to show interconnectivity between the Old and New Testaments by identifying prefigurations of Christ and the Church. A second purpose of these texts was to expand upon the meaning of scripture and its contemporaneous relevance to commentators and their audiences. By doing so, commentators ensured that their audiences could read or hear the relevant scripture at once and understand that the entirety of the Bible points not only to Christ, but also to humanity's position in salvation history. This contributed to a third objective, which was to arrive at a human understanding of the relationship between the natural world and the divine, at the core of which was the relationship between humanity and God, whether this was on an individual level or through the Church. The ultimate purpose of these texts was to describe the various relationships that God the Father had with individuals prior to Christ, those that Christ had with individuals during his life, and the relationships Christ continued to have with the soul and Church after his death.

The experiences of Old Testament women, especially the warrior women, were difficult to imitate within the context of a relationship with God. These women likely remained popular during the Crusades because they were said to represent the Church

defeating her enemies, but their books do not appear to have received much rewriting, as Rabanus remained the authority. No matter how relevant these women were to the twelfth-century experiences of the Church, they were difficult to imitate on an individual level. This is not to say that some of their attributes could not be imitated, but rather that they did not have an intimate relationship with the living God. In some ways, humanity could identify with Old Testament women, even Eve and Delilah with whom they shared common sins.

In New Testament texts, those closest to Christ included not only his disciples, but also his mother and Mary Magdalen and perhaps her sister Martha. The movement toward affectivity and the use of female biblical models to describe the relationship between God and humanity in the twelfth century may help to explain the prominence of biblical exposition on the Gospels. Commentators explained that the biblical narratives of these women were applicable to all Christians, as their narratives described the appropriate ways for a Christian to approach his or her relationship with Christ. The specific attributes of these women will not be dealt with individually, as they were with the Old Testament women, but rather will be discussed in the context of significant encounters that the New Testament women had with Christ. The Old Testament women foreshadowed the relationships that Christ would be able to have with humanity and these relationships were cemented in the narratives of New Testament women. The New Testament women who will be examined had a variety of different experiences with Christ, unlike the Old Testament women who all typically experienced their relationships with God through the singular act of interceding on behalf of their people.

In addition to texts on the Gospels, texts on the Song of Songs, which refer to New Testament women, will also be examined. The Song is a more symbolic text and therefore lends itself to various interpretations. Commentators speak of the Song as concerning the marriage of Christ and the Church, the perfection of the soul through God, the consummation of the soul with God, or even a conversation between the Virgin Mary and Christ. However, the main purpose of each of these interpretations, and each expository text, remained to provide an understanding of humanity's relationship with God. One way this was accomplished was by expanding upon biblical narratives that involved the women who were

closest to Christ. Humanity was therefore able to comprehend their relationship with God through the relationships these women had with Christ.[156]

The experiences of the Virgin and of Mary Magdalen were accessible experiences with Christ. It is likely this reason why these women are referenced in many twelfth-century expository texts. Their roles being applicable to humanity's relationship with Christ would have made these women popular subjects who were commonly written and read about in a variety of biblical texts. The Virgin Mary will resurface in the following chapter, as she is directly mentioned in Chrétien's romances in association with some of the ladies. Even when not mentioned, the relationships between these New Testament women and Christ, and the importance of these relationships for medieval believers, will be argued to have parallels with the relationships between the ladies and their knights.

There are specific events in the lives of these women that authors of biblical exposition focus on most often. For the Virgin Mary, this is the Annunciation, the Incarnation of Christ, and Mary's mission after the death of Christ. For Mary Magdalen, authors focus on her falling at Christ's feet to beg for forgiveness, listening at Christ's feet while Martha served him, anointing the feet and head of Christ, and witnessing the Resurrection.

The Virgin Mary

The unique love relationship that the Virgin Mary had with Christ is eloquently summarized by Rachel Fulton:

> It was a love that was itself the very perfection of empathy, beyond the experience of the mendicant who might know Christ only through contemplation, beyond the experience of the communicant who might know Christ in body only through bread, beyond the experience of the flagellant who might know Christ only in pain…Mary had known Christ in all of these ways, with this difference: she alone knew what it had been to carry God in her womb.[157]

Mary had the closest possible relationship with Christ and enriching the details of her experiences would better enable Christians to participate in this relationship. Understanding

[156] For a thorough explanation of how this applies within the context of the Song of Songs, see: Fulton, 'Mimetic Devotion, Marian Exegesis, and the Historical Sense of the Song of Songs,' *Viator* vol. 27 (1996), pp. 85-116.

[157] Fulton, *Judgement*, p. 464.

the life of Christ in the Bible was one matter, but being able to experience it was entirely different. Mary made this experience possible for medieval Christians.[158]

Some of the most intimate depictions of the relationship between Mary and Christ derive from the Song of Songs tradition, especially the Marian commentaries by Rupert of Deutz and Honorius of Autun, and also in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons*.[159] Those passages from the Song texts which directly pertain to Mary's relationship with Christ and her role in the biblical narrative will be discussed here, as will Mary Magdalen's following discussion of the Virgin. The discussion of Mary, as a whole, will focus primarily on her role as mother and the attributes that made her deserving of being the mother of God.

Bernard explains, in relation to Song 2:10, 'my beloved speaks to me', that each soul responds differently to being spoken to by Christ. He writes, 'It conforms to each person's deserts, inspiring some with fear but bringing solace and security to others. For "he looks on the earth and it trembles", whereas he looks on Mary and fills her with grace.'[160] All souls should aspire to being as confident and peaceful in the presence of God as Mary was when she conceived Christ. Bernard further refers to the spiritual meaning of the physical union of Mary and Christ during conception. When responding to Song 2:3, 'In his shadow, for which I longed, I am seated, and his fruit is sweet to my taste,' Bernard writes, 'His shadow is his flesh; his shadow is faith. The flesh of her own Son overshadowed Mary; faith in the Lord overshadows me. And yet why should his flesh not overshadow me too, as I eat him in the sacrament?'[161] Bernard uses this verse as a way to compare the relationship that Mary had with Christ in the flesh and the one that he personally has with the risen Christ through the sacrament. Additionally, Bernard explains that in the Virgin's body 'he who is by nature

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[158] Ibid., p. 197.

[159] For more on the Marian exposition of the Song of Songs, see: E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 151-177.

[160] Bernard, *On the Song of Songs*, Vol. 3, tr. Walsh and Edmonds (Kalamazoo, 1979), p. 97; S. 57.2. 'Vides intuitum Domini, cum in se semper maneat idem, non tamen eiusdem semper efficaciae esse, sed conformari meritis singulorum quos respicit, et aliis quidem incutere metum, aliis vero magis consolationem et securitatem afferre. Denique *respicit terram et facit eam tremere*, cum e regione respexerit Mariam et infuderit gratiam.'

[161] Ibid., p. 17; S. 48.6. 'Umbra eius, caro eius; umbra eius, fides. Mariae obumbravit proprii Filii caro, mihi Domini fides. Quamquam et mihi quoque quomodo non obumbrat caro, qui in mysterio manduco eam?'

invisible might be seen, and so all mankind should see the salvation of God on his coming in the flesh.'[162]

These examples from Bernard demonstrate the relationship between Mary and Christ's humanity. Mary gave Christ his humanity and without this humanity his crucifixion would not have lent itself to suffering for the sake of humankind. Furthermore, believers would not have been left with the Eucharist after his death. Honorius emphasizes Mary's role in Christ's humanity by referring to the Eucharist, stating, '…the faithful feast on [his] flesh, which he took from the Virgin.'[163] Along similar lines, Bernard writes, '…let us meanwhile be fed with the flesh of Christ, let us honor his mysteries, follow his footsteps, preserve the faith, and we will certainly be living in his shadow.'[164] It is this shadow which clothed Mary in grace and is available to all believers through the Eucharist. The Eucharist was one of the most intimate experiences that believers could have with the body of Christ and the closest they could possibly come to experiencing Mary's feeling of having Christ physically in her body.

The way in which Mary nourished Christ both inside and outside of her womb was often compared to the ways in which the Church and Christ himself nourished believers. This may include nourishment through the Word of God, nourishment through Mary's example as a devoted believer, or nourishment through the reception of the sacrament. In relation to nourishment, nursing metaphors also play a significant role in crafting the association between Mary as the mother of Christ and the Church as the mother of believers. An abundance of such metaphors may be found in biblical expository texts and they are especially prominent in texts on the Song. For instance, Honorius explains Song 7:7, your breasts [are like] to clusters of grapes, through the words of Christ the Bridegroom speaking to Mary the Bride, '…that is, your merits shall be imitable by all, like my gospels, which are clusters of the vine, namely, the drink of the Church.'[165] Mary's breasts represented her

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[162] Ibid., p. 65; S. 53.7. '…ut in eo in se invisibilis videretur, et sic *videret omnis caro salutare Dei* cum *in carne venisset*.'

[163] Honorius Augustodunensis, *The Seal of Blessed Mary*, tr. Amelia Carr (Toronto: 1991), p. 63; *Sigillum Beatae Mariae ubi Exponuntur Cantica Canticorum*, PL 172: Col. 505B. '…quia fideles de carne, quam de Virgine sumpsit, epulantur.'

[164] Walsh and Edmonds, Vol. 3, p. 19; S. 48.7. '…Christi interim carne pascamur, mysteria veneremur, exempla sectemur, fidem servemus, et vivimus profecto in umbra.'

[165] Carr, pp. 79-80; PL 172: Col. 514A. 'Et tunc *erunt ubera tua sicut botrus vineae*, id est merita tua erunt omnibus imitabilia, ut mea Evangelia, qui sum vineae botrus, scilicet Ecclesiae potus.'

virtues, which were to be imitated by believers. The reference to wine also suggests that the virtues of Mary would allow believers to have an experience with Christ, made possible in his absence by the Church in the form of the Word of God and, potentially, the Eucharist. Honorius writes, 'He who nourishes the angels in the bosom of the Father, here on earth sucked the breasts of the virgin Mother.'[166] Similarly, William of St Thierry, in his commentary on the Song, writes, 'From [his breast] is to be sucked the milk of all the mysteries accomplished in time for our eternal salvation, in order to attain to the food which is the Word of God….For Christ, in his humility, is our milk; God equal with God, he is our food.'[167] Thus, Christ who had been physically nourished by Mary during his life nourished her and all others through his symbolic breasts after his death. It is Mary's relationship with Christ which opens up these experiences to believers. Mary nursing Christ is a tangible, human experience that may be comprehended and understood by all believers.

Being the mother of Christ is the Virgin's most important role in the Bible. This is also closely related with Mary being the new mother of humanity, not only because she was the bearer of salvation, but also because she redeemed the sins of Eve. For instance, Bernard writes:

> So it was folly which drove the taste for good from the woman, because the serpent's malice outwitted the woman's folly. But the reason which caused the malice to appear for a time victorious, is the same reason why it suffers eternal defeat. For see! It is again the heart and body of a woman which wisdom fills and makes fruitful that, as by a woman we were deformed into folly, so by a woman we may be reformed to wisdom.[168]

Mary's perfection is what allows her to become the mother of God and the new mother of humanity, but it should also be noted that her perfection made it more difficult to imitate the virtues of the Virgin. Mary's virginity serves as one example of this difficulty. As the mother of God, Mary's virginity is an important point of discussion for medieval writers.

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[166] Carr, p. 53; PL 172: Col. 500A. 'Qui pascit angelos in sinu Patris, hic suxit ubera Virgins matris.'

[167] William of St Thierry, *Exposition on the Song of Songs*, tr. Mother Columba Hart (Kalamazoo, 1968), pp. 36-37; *Expositio altera super Cantica Canticorum*, PL 180: Col. 488C. '…ex quibus lac sugitur omnium sacramentorum, pro salute nostra aeterna temporaliter gestorum, ut perveniatur ad cibum, quod est verbum Dei, Deus apud Deum. Humilis enim Christus lac nostrum est; qualis Deo Deus cibus noster est. Lac nutrit, cibus pascit.'

[168] Edmonds, Vol. 4, p. 204; S. 85.8. 'Ita insipientia mulieris saporem boni exclusit, quia serpentis malitia mulieris insipientiam circumvenit. Sed unde *malitia* visa est *vicisse* ad tempus, inde se victam dolet in aeternum. Nam ecce denuo Sapientia mulieris cor et corpus implevit, ut qui per feminam deformati in insipientiam sumus, per feminam reformemur ad sapientiam.'

Most simply emphasize that she remained a virgin even after giving birth, while some go so far as to claim that her labor was painless. The Anglo-Norman poet Wace, for instance, describes Mary giving birth to Christ as sunlight passing through a window.[169] Virginity was defined as never having sex, and moreover was a physical state, that could be tested if need be.[170]

While Mary's virginity is inseparable from her perfection, it is this perfection that makes her perhaps less accessible to all medieval Christians. For instance, as will be discussed in reference to Mary Magdalen, sinful women who became virtuous, or who were capable of demonstrating great virtue despite their imperfections, are more relatable and more practical to emulate than the Virgin. On the other hand, Mary's virginity did not necessarily make her experiences inapplicable for monks. This could explain why monks like Bernard, Honorius, and Rupert were especially devoted to Mary and saw her as someone whose experiences they could share. For example, Rupert of Deutz's devotion to Mary leads him to describe sharing an experience with her in his commentary on the Song of Songs. In this commentary, Rupert begins with the first verse of the Song, 'Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth,' which he says symbolized the Annunciation of Mary.[171] The kiss not only marked the moment when Mary became pregnant with Christ, but also when she became knowledgeable of the word of God.

Rupert later writes that when Christ was no longer a child, Mary was called to preach the Gospel on behalf of Christ, her beloved. Rupert quotes Song 5:4, 'My beloved put his

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[169] Wace, '*The* Conception Nostre Dame,' in *The Hagiographical Works*, p. 102-4, lines 1033-1041. '…Ne pot faire virgene enfanter / E sa virginité garder? / Une semblance vos dirai: / Issi cum li solelz sun rai / Par la verrine met e trait / Qu'a la verrine mal ne fait, / Issi e molt plus sotilment / Entra e issi chastement / En Nostre Dame li fiz Dé.' For an art historical perspective suggesting Mary experiences the pain of labor at the cross instead of during childbirth, see: Amy Neff, 'The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross, *The Art Bulletin* vol. 80, no. 2 (1998), pp. 254-273.

[170] It should be noted that Mary's pain-free labor was not doctrine at this point in time, but this popular view extended back to early Christianity. It became more popular in the thirteenth century with Thomas Aquinas. For more on medieval thought related to the Immaculate Conception, see: Marilyn McCord Adams, 'The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophical Theology,' *Harvard Historical Review* vol. 103, no. 2 (2010), pp. 133-159.

[171] Rupert of Deutz, PL 168: 0839A. '«Osculetur me osculo oris sui.» Quae est ista exclamatio tam magna, tam repentina? O beata Maria, inundatio gaudii, vis amoris, torrens voluptatis, totam te operuit totamque obtinuit, penitusque inebriavit, et sensisti quod oculus non vidit, et auris non audivit, et in cor hominis non ascendit (Isa. IV), et dixisti: «Osculetur me osculo oris sui.»'

hand through the keyhole and my stomach trembled at his touch,' which he used to describe Christ touching Mary's stomach. The touch of her beloved's hand spurred her to spread his word. This is likely also referring back to the Annunciation, when God touched Mary's stomach by placing Christ in her womb, which made her the vessel through which his word first entered the world. Rupert embraces Mary's experience of trembling at the touch of Christ's hand as his own by describing his experiences with God in terms of trembling. He describes this as trembling with desire for God, trembling with joy over Christ, and even trembling at the sight of Christ crucified.[172] These types of trembling comprised a visionary experience Rupert had where Christ appeared to him and commanded him to become an exegete. Mary, through the Songs, becomes a relatable figure for Rupert. Through his shared experience with Mary, Rupert is able to be closer to Christ. Although in biblical exposition, Mary's role as mother is given the most attention, much more can and will be said about Mary's place in medieval Christianity in Chapter 3, in reference to her role as a saint.

Mary Magdalen

In addition to the Virgin, Mary Magdalen and Martha also had close relationships with Christ during his life. Mary Magdalen features more than her sister in the commentaries, and she was definitely closer to Christ. Besides the Virgin, there are various Marys mentioned in the Gospels, the woman possessed by demons, the repentant sinner who washed Christ's feet with her tears, and the sister of Martha and Lazarus, but by the twelfth century they had merged into one.[173]

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[172] Rupert of Deutz, PL 168: 0914A – 0915B. For more on the significance of touch in the Middle Ages, see: Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'Touch and Transport in the Middle Ages,' *Modern Language Notes* vol. 124, no. 5 Supplement (2009), pp. S115-S136.

[173] All twelfth-century Gospel commentaries used in this chapter identify Mary Magdalen as these three Marys. Even though her identity was debated up to this point, as early as the ninth century, Paschasius Radbertus associated all three Marys with Mary Magdalen in his *Expositio in Evangelium Matthaei*, PL 120: 875A-883D. For more on the different Marys, see: Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London, 1993), p. 14-23. Victor Saxer divides Mary into eight Marys based off of the different times she was mentioned in the Bible: 1) the unnamed sinner who anointed Christ's feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50); 2) the sister of Martha (Luke 10:38-42); 3) the sister of Lazarus (John 11:1-45); 4) the woman who anointed Christ's head in Bethany (John 12:1-8, Matthew 26:6-12, Mark 14:39); 5) the woman possessed by seven demons (Luke 8, Mark 16:9); 6) the woman who went to Judea as a follower of Christ (Matthew 27:55-6, Mark 15:40-1, Luke 23:49, John 19:25); 7) the woman who went to anoint Christ's body after his death (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 26:1-8, Luke 24:1-10, John 20:1-10); 8) the first person to see the resurrected Christ, who then

One vital occasion where Mary appears without Martha is when she petitions Christ for forgiveness.[174] She becomes a prominent model of repentance and humility. If it were not for Mary falling at the feet of Christ, anointing his feet with her tears, and drying them with her hair, she would not have become a prominent figure in his ministry and, it appears, one of his closest friends. This event is interpreted in various ways by medieval writers. Rupert explains that it shows the power of Christ on earth and the Holy Spirit after his death. He notes, in his commentary on Matthew, that following the example of Mary, who humbled herself at the feet of Christ and listened to his word, would allow mankind to rise above both sin and death.[175] Bernard describes the repentant sinner[176] falling at the feet of Christ and washing his feet with her tears in a way that is directly accessible for his auditors, stating, 'It is up to you, wretched sinner, to humble yourself as this happy penitent did so that you may be rid of your wretchedness. Prostrate yourself on the ground, take hold of his feet, soothe them with kisses, sprinkle them with your tears and so wash not them but yourself.'[177] This kiss is then followed by the kiss of the hands and then, if one is so fortunate, the kiss of the head. Peter Cantor uses Mary's example in describing both oral confession and the granting of mercy. He explains that Mary was forgiven by Christ after washing his feet with her tears and was later given the honor of anointing his head, as will be discussed in the section pertaining to the resurrection of Lazarus.[178]

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went to tell the apostles (John 20:11-18, Mark 16:9-11). Saxer, *Le Culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident des origines à la fin du moyen âge*, Vol. 1, Société des fouilles fachéologiques et des monuments historiques de l'Yonne (Auxerre, 1959), p. 2.

[174] Luke 7:36-50.

[175] Rupert, *De Gloria et Honore Filii Hominis super Mattheum*, PL 168: 1509D-1510A. '...quia per fidem ejus videmus, ambulamus, mundati sumus, audimus, a morte peccati innumerabiles secundum exemplum Mariae resurreximus (Luc. XVII), et ita evangelizati sumus…'

[176] Bernard does not refer to her as Mary Magdalen directly here, but rather calls her 'the repentant sinner', whom most writers in the twelfth century agree is Mary. Bernard's description of the unnamed sinner is further evidence of the lack of consensus among authors as to the identity of Mary Magdalen. For more, see: Haskins, p. 14-23. For another thorough study of Mary Magdalen, see: Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2000).

[177] Walsh, Vol. 1, p. 17; S. 3.2. 'Huius igitur beatae paenitentis exemplo prosternere et tu, o misera, ut desinas esse misera: prosternere et tu in terram, amplectere pedes, placa osculis, riga lacrimis, quibus tamen non illum laves, sed te…'.

[178] Cantor, PL 205: Col. 282B. 'Secundum dulcius, quia mitigatum, quando peracta poenitentia, a rigatione pedum Domini lacrymis facta, surgit poenitens cum Maria in serenitate conscientiae ad osculum capitis Deitatis

Perhaps the most significant event in the Gospels concerning the two sisters is when Christ entered the house of Mary and Martha. Mary listened at the feet of Christ while he preached and Martha served him. Christ says that Mary chose the better vocation of the two by sitting at his feet in contemplation.[179] Commentators associate the sisters with the contemplative and active lives of Christians, respectively. Rupert states that the sisters represent the 'present state of the Church'[180] because there are those in the Church who participate in both lives. Bernard in his *Sermons* also quotes this example and explains that in the monastic context, contemplation is the highest form of life, but before attaining it, one must experience the active life.[181] Bernard explains that although Mary's contemplation ranks above Martha's action, both play a fundamental role in Christian development. For instance, he writes: '…to give one's attention to something other than God, although for God's sake, means to embark on Martha's busy life rather than Mary's way of contemplation. I do not say that this soul is deformed, but it has not yet attained to perfect beauty, for it worries and frets about so many things, and is bound to be stained to some degree with the grime of worldly affairs.'[182] One must therefore learn how to focus entirely on God to achieve contemplation.

Additionally, Honorius opens his *Seal of Blessed Mary* with a discussion of how the Virgin Mary incorporates the lives of both sisters into her own. This could be emphasizing the significance of all three of these women in the life of Christ. He notes that the active life of Martha and the contemplative life of Mary Magdalen were both perfected in the Virgin,

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(Luc. VII), gratias agens super peccato sibi dimisso, dicens etiam cum Apostolo: «Nihil mihi conscius sum, sed non in hoc justificatus sum (I Cor. IV)».'

[179] Luke 10:39-42.

[180] Rupert, *Commentaria in Evangelium S. Joannis*, PL 169: 633D. 'In Martha quoque et Maria praesignare voluit praesentis Ecclesiae statum…'.

[181] S. 22:9; S. 40:3. For more on the active life, see: Suzanne LaVere, 'From Contemplation to Action: The Role of the Active Life in the "Glossa ordinaria" on the Song of Songs,' *Speculum* vol. 82, no. 1 (2007), pp. 54-69; see also: Constance B. Bouchard, 'The Cistercians and the "Glossa Ordinaria",' *The Catholic Historical Review* vol. 86, no. 2 (2000), pp. 183-92. For more on the relationship of Mary and Martha and how this influenced medieval thought, see: Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 1-142.

[182] Walsh, Vol. 2, p. 201; S. 40.3. 'Porro, e contrario, intendere in aliud quam in Deum, tamen propter Deum, non otium Mariae, sed Marthae negotium est. Absit autem ut quae huiusmodi est, quidquam illam dixerim habere deforme. Nec tamen ad perfectum affirmaverim pervenisse decoris: quippe quae adhuc *sollicita est et turbatur erga plurima*, et non potest terrenorum actuum vel tenui pulvere non respergi.'

just as they are in the Church.[183] The division of active and contemplative lives was clearly important because it remained a division by which those in the Church viewed themselves. The purely contemplative life was open only to monks, while clerics were typically associated with both lives.

The active and contemplative divide was a widely-recognized metaphor during the High and Late Middle Ages. For instance, in the *Historia Scholastica* Peter Comestor devotes one chapter to Mary specifically, 'On Mary Magdalen', and one to Martha, 'On the Ministry of Martha'.[184] Even though his comments are brief, dividing the sisters into two chapters intentionally draws greater attention to them, regardless of the reason. Why Comestor believed Christ's visit to the sisters' home merited being divided into two sections cannot be determined with certainty. He could have just as easily said in a single sentence that Mary listened at the feet of Christ, while Martha ministered to his physical needs. Perhaps the most logical explanation is that he felt the need to distinguish between the contemplative Mary and the active Martha, thus demonstrating the significance of both. This becomes more likely when one considers that Comestor was attached to the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris, which means that he had chosen the active life of a theologian rather than the contemplative life of a monk.

Judging from what Rupert, Honorius, Bernard, and Christ himself said about the active and contemplative lives, monks believed that their profession entailed a constant state of progression from the former to the latter life. For example, Bernard emphasizes how he himself and other holy men struggle to achieve a balance between the active life of Martha, which for them is preaching, and the contemplative life of Mary. Perhaps most importantly, he emphasizes that no one in the temporal world is capable of remaining solely in the contemplative life and, therefore, must alternate between the two lives. Bernard explains, '…as often as she falls away from contemplation she takes refuge in action, from which she will surely return to the former states as from an adjoining place, with greater intimacy, since these two are comrades and live together: for Martha is sister to Mary.'[185] Here, the

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[183] Carr, p. 48. PL 172: 0497A-B. '*Et mulier quaedam Martha nomine excepit illum in domum suam, et huic erat soror nomine Maria*. Per Martham activa vita; per Mariam contemplativa designatur, quam utramque perpetua Virgo Maria in Christo excellentius excoluisse praedicatur.'

[184] Comestor, PL 198: Cols. 1571A-B.

[185] Walsh and Edmonds, Vol. 3, p. 41; S. 51.2. 'At quoties, ut dixi, corruit a contemplativa, toties in activam se recipit, inde nimirum tamquam e vicino familiarius reditura in idipsum, quoniam sunt invicem contubernales hae duae et cohabitant pariter: est quippe soror Mariae Martha.'

relationship between the sisters and how they serve Christ is a vital component in the relationship between the soul and God. Bernard further adds, 'And though she loses the light of contemplation, she does not permit herself to fall into the darkness of sin or the idleness of sloth, but holds herself within the light of good works.'[186] Christians whose souls have fallen from contemplation may use the example of Martha's action as a way to make sure they remain on the path to God. In the same vein, Bernard also compares himself to Mary at the feet of Christ, stating:

> There have been times, if I may digress a little, when as I sat down sadly at the feet of Jesus, offering up my distressed spirit in sacrifice, recalling my sins, or again, at the rare moments when I stood by his head, filled with happiness at the memory of his favors I could hear people saying: "Why this waste?" They complained that I thought only of myself when, in their view, I could be working for the welfare of others.[187]

In the quotation above, Bernard is debating contemplation versus action and attempting to arrive at a balance between doing good works and contemplating God. He ultimately concludes, '…this life does not cater for constant contemplation or prolonged leisure, since we are impelled by the more cogent and more immediate demands of work and duty.'[188] He stops considering contemplation and argues for taking responsibility for the guidance of souls. The Church is able to sit in repose with Christ as his perfect Bride, but the men of the Church, of whom Bernard is one, must continue to preach and lead others through their developmental stages. This often includes using the examples of biblical individuals, like Mary and Martha, who also walked this spiritual path.

Those, like Comestor, who were not monks would remain in the active life. Their occupation within the Church allowed them to perform a good service, but it would not lead to the human perfection of contemplation in the temporal world. Comestor's background may suggest that he felt a need to extol both lives. Similarly, the fact that the active and contemplative lives would have been highly relevant to Chrétien as a cleric should also be

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[186] Ibid. 'Neque enim, etsi a contemplationis lumine cadit, patitur tamen ullatenus incidere tenebras peccati seu ignaviam otii, sane in luce bonae operationis se retinens.'

[187] Walsh, Vol. 1, p. 83; S. 12.8. 'Nonnumquam ego, ut modicum faciam excessum, cum *sederem* mihi ad pedes Iesu *maerens*, et *offerens sacrificium spiritus contribulati* in recordatione peccatorum meorum, aut certe ad caput si quando vel raro starem, et exsultarem in recordatione beneficiorum eius, audivi dicentes: Ut quid perditio haec? causantes videlicet quod soli viverem mihi, qui, ut putabant, multis prodesse possem.'

[188] Walsh and Edmonds, Vol. 3, p. 108; S. 58.1. '…et quia non sit in hac vita copia contemplandi nec diuturnitas otii, ubi officii et operis cogentior urget instantiorque utilitas.'

noted. It is difficult to know specifically which narratives of biblical women he was exposed to, but there is little doubt that he would have been exposed to the Virgin, Mary, and Martha.

Lazarus Raised from the Dead

One of the reasons why Mary is believed to have been a close friend of Christ is because he came to her home after her brother Lazarus had died and subsequently raised Lazarus from the dead. Rupert's commentary on John uses the resurrection of Lazarus to describe the resurrection of the body. He also uses both the earlier repentance of Mary Magdalen and the anointing of Christ to describe the resurrection of the soul, explaining that the soul is the first to be resurrected after death, followed by the resurrection of the body.[189]

In an act of thanks for healing her brother and in an act of worship, Mary brings out a container of oil and anoints some part of Christ. Different Gospels provide different accounts, but the commentaries mention all of them. Mary anoints his feet in John, his head in Matthew and Mark, and his feet and head in Luke.[190] Again, while Mary does this, Martha serves Christ's physical needs. When Mary anoints the body of Christ, the scent of the oil is said to fill the entire house. This is compared to the Song of Songs when the Bride speaks to the Bridegroom saying: 'thy name is as oil poured out' and 'while the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof'.[191] Furthermore, in many Gospel and Song texts, the scent filling the house is said to be symbolic of the Holy Spirit filling the Church after Christ's death. Unlike the Virgin, Mary Magdalen is not typically considered a prefiguration of the Church, although Origen had referred to her as a type of Church in this instance, stating, 'Let us see the Bride Church in this passage in the character of Mary of whom it is said with all fitness that she brings a pound of ointment of great price, and anoints the feet of Jesus, and wipes them with her hair.'[192] Similarly, Bernard mentions Mary Magdalen in conjunction with the oils of the Bridegroom because of her association with forgiveness and repentance. The oil of the Bridegroom has two meanings: first, it is the ointment that the soul as Bride must pour out when seeking forgiveness; second, it is the oil that the Bridegroom

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[189] Rupert, PL 169: 807C-D. 'Quanta enim gloria Dei est, quod in Maria quidem, resurrectionem animarum, in Lazaro autem ostendere dignatus est, quam vere, quam potenter universalem, sicut jam dictum est, facturus sit resurrectionem corporum.'

[190] Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-8.

[191] Song 1:2, 1:11; For instance, William of St Thierry refers to these verses in his *Exposition on the Song of Songs*. PL 180: 486A; 499A

[192] Origen, *The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies*, tr. R.P. Lawson (New York, 1978), p. 160.

pours out when forgiving the soul. When she is seeking forgiveness, the Bridegroom receives three ointments poured out by the Bride: contrition, devotion, and piety.[193] Bernard wrote:

> It trickled from the hands of the sinner, pouring over the feet [of Christ], the body's extremities; and yet it was not so paltry, not so contemptible, as to prevent the house's being filled with the power of its aroma, the sweetness of its scent. So if we consider how the great fragrance with which the Church is perfumed in the conversion of one sinner, what a sweet smell of life leading to life each penitent can become! Provided that his repentance is wholehearted and visible to all, may we not with equal assurance say of him: "The house was full of the scent of the ointment".[194]

More typically, writers associate Mary Magdalen's actions with the functions of the Church. For instance, anointing the entire body of Christ was said to portend the salvific power of the Church in his absence. Peter Cantor also suggests that Mary anoints Christ prior to his death because she is unable to anoint him after the crucifixion. When he appeared to her at the tomb she could not touch him because he had not ascended. Mary being unable to touch Christ after his death is used to explain that believers must approach him though the Church. This is also understood as believers being purified before they are able to encounter Christ through his word.[195] Additionally, the Church, like Mary who was not believed by the disciples, persists in teaching the promise of the resurrection and eternal life despite those who challenge her.[196]

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[193] Walsh, Vol. 1, p. 63; S. 10.4. For a sensual reading of the anointing and the odor, see: Dominika A. Kurek-Chomycz, 'The Fragrance of Her Perfume: The Significance of Sense Imagery in John's Account of the Anointing in Bethany,' *Novum Testamentum* vol. 52 (2010), pp. 334-354.

[194] Ibid., p. 65; S. 10.6. 'Peccatricis manibus distillabatur, et extremis membris corporis, id est pedibus, fundebatur, et tamen non usque adeo contemptibile aut vile fuit, quin totam domum vis aromatum et suavitas repleret odoris. Quod si attendamus quanta in unius peccatoris conversione fragrantia respergatur Ecclesia, et quantis fiat *odor vitae ad vitam* quivis paenitens, si publice perfecteque paeniteat, profecto et de hoc aeque indubitantur pronuntiabimus, quia *domus impleta est ex odore unguenti*.'

[195] Cantor, PL 205: Col. 38B. 'Si Mariae Magdalenae ferventi in dilectione prohibitum est a Domino ne tangeret pedes ejus, quia nondum ascenderat ad Patrem in corde suo (Joan. XX), quanto magis prohiberi deberemus a tactu horum pedum, scilicet sacrae Scripturae, qui minus diligimus, quorum etiam vita criminibus deturpata Domino fetet!'

[196] Rupert, PL 169: 807C-D. '«Venit Maria Magdalene annuntians discipulis, Quia vidi Dominum, et haec dixit mihi.» Et usque hodie, imo usque in finem saeculi venire non desinit Ecclesia secundum similitudinem, quae in Maria praecessit, prima nunc animarum resurrectione resurgendo, et secundam corporum, quae in novissimo futura est, nescientibus annuntiando, quamvis plerique non credant, imo et irrideant, sicut et tunc verba Mariae nuntiantis, quia vidi Dominum, ut alius evangelista testatur (Luc. XXVI), quasi deliramenta, coram discipulis videbantur.'

Even in conjunction with Lazarus' resurrection, the active and contemplative lives of Martha and Mary are on the minds of some commentators. For instance, Bernard explains that when the Bride is preaching she is called 'friend'; when she is confessing and praying to God for forgiveness, she is called 'dove'; finally, when she is in divine contemplation, she is called 'beautiful one'.[197] Bernard then applies these labels to the three siblings, referring to Martha as the serving friend, to Mary as the contemplative dove, and to Lazarus as the soul desiring forgiveness and mercy.[198]

Despite her close relationship with Christ, Mary was unable to touch him when he appeared to her at the tomb. Bernard uses this example to make a point about the differences between spiritual and carnal knowledge. He notes that Mary Magdalen, a former sinner, became 'a virtuous and holy woman'. On the other hand, later in another sermon, he states, 'The woman whose wisdom was still carnal was rightly forbidden to touch the risen flesh of the Word, because she depended more on what she saw than on what she heard, that is, on her bodily sense, rather than on God's word.'[199] Here Bernard is referring to Mary's encounter with Christ outside of the tomb when he instructed her not to touch him. Mary Magdalen, an example of a soul-Bride in the context of the Song, could only comprehend her relationship with Christ the Bridegroom in carnal terms because she knew him when he was on Earth.

Additionally, Mary Magdalen's relationship with Christ has also been used by Bernard when explaining the relationship between carnal and spiritual love. Bernard explains that because humans are in the world, they can first only understand the spiritual love of and for God as carnal love because it is this love that they have experienced for themselves.[200] Deuteronomy 6:5 instructs Christians to love God with their whole heart, soul, and strength;

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[197] S. 57.9. 'amica'; 'columba'; 'formosa'.

[198] S. 57.10.

[199] Walsh, Vol. 2, p. 22, p. 95; S. 22.9, S. 28.8. 'Iusta profecto et sancta…'; 'Merito carnem redivivam Verbi tangere prohibetur mulier carnaliter sapiens, plus quippe tribuens oculo quam oraculo, id est carnis senui quam verbo Dei.'

[200] Furthermore, Jean Leclercq also argued that the Song of Songs was a favored medium for describing loving God because many of those who entered the Cistercian order would have been nobles who would have had experience with marriage, family, and children. Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France* (Oxford, 1979), p. 104. For a thorough study of the relationship between the erotic and Christian symbolism in writing on the Song of Songs see: Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo, 1995).

to this Bernard adds, 'Notice that the love of the heart is, in a certain sense, carnal, because our hearts are attracted most toward the humanity of Christ and the things he did or commanded while in the flesh.'[201] Carnal love therefore is the natural form of love for humankind. Human love is a tangible experience. This is the reason why Christ was sent to Earth and was physically touched by individuals like Mary Magdalen. Bernard explains, 'Because carnal men did not perceive this work of the Spirit…it was necessary that the sinner should receive pardon for her sins while lying prone at God's feet of the flesh, kissing these same feet with the lips of her flesh. In this way…he leads the wicked to repentance, [and] is made manifest to those in bondage to the senses.'[202] Not only is carnal love natural, but it is also a basis for Christians beginning their journey to God. Furthermore, God is able to communicate with humankind because they have this understanding of love. Bernard explains that if one has no basis for understanding love, then its language will be lost on that person.[203] Christ therefore 'wanted to recapture the affections of carnal men who were unable to love in any other way, by first drawing them to the salutary love of his own humanity, and then gradually to raise them to a spiritual love.'[204] The relationships between Christ and the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, and Martha are examples of how Christ made manifest the mystery of spiritual love to humanity. It should be noted that the relationship between carnal and spiritual love also appears in Chrétien's romances in the relationships between ladies and knights. There are many occasions where their love will be shown to have meaning beyond the carnal, perhaps not unlike the relationship between the Bride and Bridegroom.

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[201] Walsh, Vol. 1, p. 152; S. 20.6. 'Et nota amorem cordis quodammodo esse carnalem, quod magis erga carnem Christi, et quae in carne Christus gessit vel iussit, cor humanum afficiat.'

[202] Walsh, Vol. 1, p. 35; S. 6.5. 'Itaque hoc opus Spiritus, quia caro non percipiebat…opus fuit, ut corporalibus pedibus corporaliter incubans, et corporalibus labiis pedes eosdem deosculans, veniam peccatorum peccatrix perciperet, sicque *illa mutatio dexterae Excelsi*, qua mirabiliter, sed invisibiliter *iustificat impium*, etiam carnalibus innotesceret.'

[203] S. 79.1.

[204] Walsh, vol. 1, p. 152; S. 20.6. 'Hanc ego arbitror praecipuam invisibili Deo fuisse causam, quod voluit in carne *videri et cum hominibus* homo *conversari*, ut carnalium videlicet, qui nisi carnaliter amare non poterant, cunctas primo ad suae carnis salutarem amorem affectiones retraheret, atque ita gradatim ad amorem perduceret spiritualem.'

Summary

The foregoing examination of women in biblical expository texts is by no means exhaustive, but it does touch on some of the most important women mentioned in influential twelfth-century texts. The diversity of female characters in the Bible includes, but is not limited to, the mother, the bride, the heroine, the servant, the contemplative, and the sinner. Examining texts written by monks and scholastics, revealed that common themes shared among biblical women transcended context.

Although monks and scholastics may have had differing intentions for their texts, they were all using biblical women to illustrate their arguments. Many writers in the twelfth century began to favor New Testament texts which could give them insight into the life of Christ. They were also focusing on Old Testament texts, like the Song of Songs, whose carnal relationship provided an ideal metaphor for the spiritual relationship between God and the soul. Authors were also interested in how Old Testament women foreshadowed the roles of the Church. All texts were both descriptive and prescriptive, describing the ways in which Old Testament women approached their relationship with God the Father and New Testament women approached their relationship with Christ, providing medieval Christians with models to imitate in their own relationships with God.

Chrétien would have been familiar with these biblical women, their narratives, actions, and attributes. Taken as a whole, the biblical exposition examined in this chapter revealed the overall views that many medieval authors and medieval believers held with regard to some of the most significant biblical women. Even if individuals, including Chrétien, were not imitating these women directly, the experiences of Old and New Testament women would be fresh in their minds and would serve as a tangible symbol of the spiritual relationship between humanity and God.

As the next chapter will reveal, some of these biblical women are mentioned by name in Chrétien's romances, while others are alluded to through the attributes the ladies share with them. The Arthurian ladies share the virtues of nobility, leadership, and physical and mental fortitude. Furthermore, the relationships that they have with their knights and others in the romances are described in similar ways to those that biblical women have with God, their friends and family, and their enemies.

Chapter 2: Chrétien's Ladies and Their Biblical Models

The women and feminine figures mentioned in the previous chapter were some of the most popular in expository texts circulated during Chrétien's lifetime: the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, her sister Martha, from the New Testament and Eve, Judith, Jael, Debbora, Esther, the soul, and the Church from the Old. While it is certainly true that not all women in Chrétien's romances were modeled on a biblical woman, the attributes and narratives of these popular biblical women would have been on his mind. Furthermore, analyzing similarities between biblical women and Chrétien's ladies is not claiming that Chrétien based his ladies solely upon these biblical models, but rather suggesting that, as he would have been aware of these models, similar depictions of women would have seeped into his romances, consciously or subconsciously.

The direct comparison between ladies and biblical models, especially the Virgin Mary, in the romance tradition does not fully emerge until the thirteenth century.[205] However, there are occasions where Chrétien specifically mentions biblical women, but the association between these women and the ladies in the romances are often subtle. There are occasions where ladies share attributes with biblical women, although a direct comparison or association is not made.

Guinevere

One aspect of this thesis is to argue that the attributes and roles associated with Guinevere, which have been explored in detail by certain scholars[206] are present to an equal or greater extent in the characters of the ladies in the other romances. Guinevere's potential association with biblical women in the *Knight of the Cart* will be explored here, before moving on to the ladies in the other four romances. Aspects of Guinevere's behavior provide the opportunity to compare her with Eve and Delilah.

Guinevere's similarities to Eve are most apparent when she creates trouble in the courts of both Arthur and Maleagant and when she directly and indirectly controls Lancelot. At the start of the narrative, Maleagant takes hostage individuals from Arthur's court.

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[205] Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p. 152; also see Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*.

[206] See discussion of the works of Hoffsten and Cazelles in the Introduction (pp. 6-7). For a consideration of why there are so many interpretations of *Lancelot*, see: Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, 'An Interpreter's Dilemma: Why are There so Many Interpretations of Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrette?,' *Romance Philology* vol. 40, no. 2 (1986), pp. 159-180.

Maleagant agrees to release them if one knight from the court brings Guinevere into the woods, and confronts him, stating, 'By my word, I will wait for him there and if he is able to defeat me in combat and bring the queen back, I will return all the prisoners to you who are held captive in my land.'[207] His words indicate Arthur's lack of power in the situation. Maleagant speaks as if he is already in possession of Guinevere, even though he is not. Guinevere is potentially being offered up as a sacrifice, in the event that the knight who fights on her behalf loses the battle, which he does.

Despite being treated as a hostage in this situation, Guinevere is not powerless and inadvertently creates trouble by allowing Kay to be the knight who fights Maleagant. Directly after Maleagant challenges Arthur's authority, Kay informs Arthur that he will be leaving the court. Arthur tells Guinevere, 'Go to him, my dear lady. Since he will not deign to stay for my sake, beg him to stay for yours and throw yourself at his feet if necessary.'[208] The queen begs Kay to stay and promises him that the king will grant him anything he wishes if he stays. Kay asks to be the one who fights Maleagant and his request is granted.

As with Maleagant's false claim to the queen, this event again indicates the lack of power of both Arthur and Guinevere, as they are openly manipulated by Kay who is depicted unfavorably by Chrétien. For instance, even at the time that this event occurs, it is Ascension Day and Arthur is holding a grand feast, but Kay is seated, eating with the servants, suggesting that he may have intentionally separated himself from the other knights.[209] Also, when he requests to accompany the queen, Arthur is noticeably unhappy, the queen is upset, and the rest of the court believe Kay's request to be proud, outrageous, and unreasonable.[210] Kay is primarily the one to blame for the queen's capture, but it is Guinevere's promise to Kay that he will be granted anything, which facilitates her capture and the further weakening of Arthur's power. Although Arthur authorizes the queen to beg, he does not tell her to offer Kay anything he wants.

Guinevere may be considered Eve-like because of her rash decision to grant Kay anything, but Arthur also has a hand in this error. The Arthurian court is not necessarily

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[207] *Lancelot* 75-79. '…par un covant l'i atandrai/ que les prisons toz te randrai/ qui sont an prison an ma terre,/ se il la puet vers moi conquerre/ et tant face qu'il l'an ramaint.'

[208] *Lancelot* 122-125. '…alez a lui, ma dame chiere,/ quant por moi remenoir ne daigne,/ proiez li que por vos remaigne/ et einz l'an cheez vos as piez…'.

[209] Chrétien notes that Kay planned the feast (*Lancelot* 41-42), which could explain why he was seated with the servants, but this still appears out of the ordinary.

[210] *Lancelot* 186. '…orguel, outrage et desreison'.

Eden-like before Guinevere falls victim to Kay's manipulation, but this is the beginning of its downfall. Prior to Arthur's display of weakness when confronted by Maleagant, there is a sense of stability, grandeur, and religious celebration, as Arthur is holding a great feast in observation of Ascension Day when Maleagant bursts in. Although not a perfect allegory for Eden, there is a sense that Kay is similar to the snake in the garden, whose whims are catered to by an Eve-like Guinevere.

Although there are similarities between how Guinevere weakens the Arthurian court and how Eve's behavior results in the Fall, it should also be noted that Guinevere's behavior toward Kay is an example of the literary motif of the *don contraignant*. Speaking specifically of Chrétien's romances, Jean Frappier describes this motif as requesting an unspecified '*don*', which must be granted without knowledge of what will be requested even if the request turns out to be unpleasant.[211] This means that Guinevere's behavior is not necessarily out of the ordinary in a courtly love narrative. However, Guinevere's behavior is still foolish because it leads to the weakening of the Arthurian court. Another time the *don contraignant* is used by a lady with potentially Eve-like characteristics is in *Erec and Enide* when the lady traps her knight in the garden; this lady and knight will be discussed later in this chapter.[212] In the case of Guinevere and this lady, the *don* had very negative consequences, but this is not always the case. As will be mentioned in Chapter 4, when Lunete requests the *don* of Laudine it is simply to protect herself from being punished for bringing Yvain back, and there are no broader negative repercussions.[213]

Scholars continue to debate the literary origins of the *don contraignant*, but there are potential biblical examples.[214] For instance, Esther's request from Assuerus may be considered an example of this motif as she appears before the king to ask him to protect the

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[211] Lisa Jefferson, 'Don – Don Contraignant – Don Contraint: A Motif and Its Development in the French Prose Lancelot, *Romanische Forschungen*, 104. Bd., H. 1/2 (1992), p. 28. For a detailed examination of the *don contraignant*, see: Jean Frappier, *Amour Courtois et Table Ronde* (Geneva, 1973), pp. 225-64. For a reevaluation of Frappier's theory, see: Philippe Ménard, 'Le don en blanc qui lie le donateur: Réflexions sur un motif de conte,' *An Arthurian Tapestry: Essays in Memory of Lewis Thorpe*, ed. K. Varty (Glasgow, 1981), pp. 37-53.

[212] See: pp. 77-78.

[213] Chapter 4, p. 143.

[214] Corinne Cooper-Deniau, 'Culture cléricale et motif du « don contraignant ». Contreenquête sur la théorie de l'origine celtique de ce motif dans la littérature française du XIIe siècle et dans les romans arthuriens', *Le Moyen Age* 2005/1 (Tome CXI), p. 9-39.

Israelites and, before she can ask, he offers her anything she desires.[215] Not all scholars accept that Assuerus' gift to Esther is an example of the *don contraignant* because she is offered the *don*, rather than having to make the request herself. However, if one accepts that this is a biblical example of a courtly motif, it stands as an instance where the *don* had positive consequences, extending beyond the recipient. It also stands as an example of the intersection between biblical and courtly love literature.

The only clear conclusion that may be drawn from the above discussion of this motif is that Guinevere's behavior, while neither shocking nor perhaps inherently sinful, has disastrous consequences for the Arthurian court. Furthermore, Guinevere humbling herself before Kay by physically falling at his feet, may also prefigure her moral fall from chaste queen to Lancelot's lover, as suggested by Theresa Ann Sears.[216] It is when she has the affair with Lancelot that Guinevere could be said to be most like Eve. Eve's sin was commonly associated with sexual sin. Since Eve instigated the Fall of humanity, some theologians believed that women were the spiritually weaker sex, incapable of withstanding temptation, especially sexual temptation.[217]

Guinevere's adultery with Lancelot alters the balance of power in Maleagant's court in Gorre, creating problems for Lancelot.[218] After Lancelot and Guinevere have sex, his blood, from cutting himself on the bars when he entered her room, has stained the bed. Maleagant accuses Guinevere of having sex with the wounded Kay. Lancelot is forced to swear on holy relics that the queen is innocent and to fight against Maleagant to defend her honor. Lancelot responds to Maleagant's accusation:

> 'I accuse you of perjury,' Lancelot said, 'I swear Kay did not lie with her or touch her. May it please God to reveal the truth and take vengeance on the man who has lied. Yet like it or not, I shall swear another oath. If I am

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[215] Chapter 1, pp. 37, 49-50.

[216] Theresa Ann Sears, 'And Fall Down at His Feet': Signifying Guinevere in Chrétien's Le Chevalier de la Charrete, *Arthuriana* vol. 6, no. 2 (1996), pp. 45-6.

[217] Mary McLaughlin, 'Peter Abelard and the Dignity of Women: Twelfth Century <<Feminism>> in Theory and Practice,' in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable: les courants philosophiques, littéraires et artistiques en occident au milieu du XIIe siècle, Abbaye de Cluny, 2 au 9 Juillet 1972* (Paris, 1975), p. 301.

[218] The affair potentially spills over into the Arthurian court because when Lancelot returns to the court at the end of the narrative, Godefroy de Lagny (the author who completed this romance, supposedly at the behest of Chrétien) states that they still desired each other and would later meet in private, but they would keep their feelings secret. *Lancelot* 6846-6853.

> allowed to defeat Maleagant today, I will have no mercy on him, as truly as I place my trust in God and the saint whose relics are here.'[219]

He is technically not perjuring himself over the relics, but he is deceiving Maleagant by swearing this oath, as he knows the queen is guilty of adultery, just not with Kay.[220]

Chrétien's audience is placed in the role of judge during this instance because they are the only ones who know the truth about Lancelot's actions. The audience would likely have found this deception clever, insofar as it defends the queen against Maleagant. Lancelot and Maleagant are unable to finish their battle, but later engage in combat at Arthur's court, where Maleagant is defeated. In the Arthurian world Chrétien has created, Guinevere would have ultimately been found innocent of accusations of adultery because Lancelot won the battle, but Chrétien's audience would have known the truth. Like God knowing that Adam was lying, the audience would have known Lancelot's oath was dishonest because he was defending the fidelity of the queen and she clearly had not been faithful to Arthur. There is another subtle nod to the adulterous relationship and the queen's potentially Eve-like behavior at the end of the narrative, right before Lancelot defeats Maleagant in battle. In order to watch the battle, Arthur sits alone beneath a sycamore tree, which was planted during the time of Abel. The sycamore tree was said to represent foolishness in the world, but wisdom in God.[221] It is possible that this particular tree, planted by the child of Adam and Eve, is a nod toward Arthur's ignorance of the adultery and, thus, his foolishness in the eyes of Guinevere, Lancelot, and especially the audience of the text.[222]

In addition to committing adultery and escalating the conflict between two powerful courts, there is also the issue of Guinevere's control over Lancelot, which not only supports

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[219] Staines, pp. 230-231; *Lancelot* 4971-4984. 'Et je t'an lief come parjur,/ fet Lanceloz, et si rejur/ qu'il n'i jut ne ne la santi./ Et de celui qui a manti/ praigne Dex, se lui plest, vangence/ eet face voire demonstrance./ Mes ancor un autre an ferai/ del seiremanz, et jurerai,/ cui qu'il enuit ne cui qu'il poist,/ que se il hui venir me loist/ de Meleagant au desus,/ tant m'aïst Dex et neant plus/ et ces reliques qui sont ci,/ que ja de lui n'avrai merci.'

[220] Swearing deceptive oaths over relics will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 4. for more on this see: Ralph Hexter, *Equivocal Oaths and Ordeals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, 1975).

[221] For the possible biblical and medieval interpretations of the sycamore tree, see: D.W. Robertson, Jr., 'The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory,' *Speculum* vol. 26, no. 1 (1951), p. 29.

[222] This portion of *The Knight of the Cart* was written by Godefroy de Lagny. Although the sycamore is not used directly by Chrétien, it was a well-known symbol at the time he was writing.

the argument that she is Eve-like, but may also suggest that she shares common attributes with Delilah as well. Perhaps the best examples of her control over Lancelot occur during combat, not entirely unlike Samson battling with the Philistines. For instance, Lancelot attends a tournament in disguise because he has temporarily escaped from imprisonment. Guinevere believes that she knows which knight he is, but she tests him to be certain. She sends one of her maidens to him, requesting that he do his worst;[223] when he complies, she knows the knight is Lancelot. One the second day of the tournament, Guinevere obviously knows which knight is Lancelot, but she decides to test his love for her, by again asking him to do his worst. After her maiden tells her that he has agreed, Chrétien writes, '…for she now knew without doubt that the knight was none other than the one to whom she belonged completely and the one who belonged completely to her.'[224] She then orders Lancelot to do his best, which appears to be a reward for proving that he loves her.

During this tournament, Guinevere controls Lancelot's fate damaging, albeit temporarily, his reputation. She is not a direct match for Delilah in this situation, but Guinevere's behavior toward Lancelot is reminiscent of the biblical lovers. Like Delilah, Guinevere exploits Lancelot's love for her. She uses her control over him in order to weaken him. Lancelot, like the weakened Samson, is losing the tournament and has to work even harder for victory. According to the parameters of courtly love, Guinevere, as Lancelot's *domna*, has every right to request that he sacrifice pride and honor to prove his love for her.[225] However, this does not change the fact that she is causing him physical and emotional pain, not unlike Delilah and other sinful biblical women who betrayed their men.

Although Guinevere's behavior during the tournament bears a closer resemblance to Delilah than to Eve, she also exhibits great pride in the fact that the other ladies watching the tournament desire her Lancelot. Upon hearing the ladies talk of marrying Lancelot, Chrétien writes, 'And the queen, overhearing their boastful pledges, laughed to herself, knowing that, even if he were offered all the gold of Arabia, the knight beloved by all of them would not choose the greatest, the most beautiful, or the most noble among them.'[226] Pride may be

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[223] *Lancelot* 5836-5844.

[224] *Lancelot* 5873-5875. '…por ce c'or set ele sanz dote/ que ce est cil cui ele est tote/ et il toz suens sanz nule faille.'

[225] L.T. Topsfield, *Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 159.

[226] *Lancelot* 6007-6014. 'Et la reïne qui antant/ ce dom eles se vont vantant,/ a soi meïsme an rit et gabe;/ bien set que por tot l'or d'Arrabe,/ qui trestot devant li metroit,/ la meillor d'eles ne prandroit;/ la plus bele ne la plus gente,/ cil qui totes atalante.'

added to the list of Guinevere's Eve-like characteristics, as Eve was said to commit the first sin of pride by offering Adam the apple.[227] Guinevere offers Lancelot her love in exchange for his altered behavior and, like Adam, Lancelot accepts her offering.

Lancelot is also distracted and weakened by Guinevere even when she is not present, as thoughts of Guinevere also often distract him. Chrétien at one point writes about Lancelot nearly having a mental breakdown:

> Like one powerless and defenseless against Love's control, the knight of the cart fell into such thoughts that he lost thought of himself. He did not know if he was alive or dead, did not remember his own name, did not know whether he was armed or not, did not know where he was going or whence he was coming. He remembered nothing except one person, and for her he put everyone else out of mind. He thought so much about her alone that he heard, saw, understood nothing.[228]

Lancelot is so distracted by thoughts of Guinevere that he is not prepared for battle. As a result, he is knocked from his horse by the knight guarding the Sword Bridge.[229] This type of behavior continues throughout the narrative, as Lancelot nearly falls from his horse when he finds a comb containing the queen's hair on the ground and he sacrifices his honor in order to make her happy by doing poorly in the tournament.[230] Lancelot also exhibited this behavior at the start of the narrative when he is looking at the queen and almost falls from a window, and perhaps even when he jumps into the cart to pursue her captors.[231] Some scholars have argued that this is an example of love making a knight act foolishly,[232] which has validity, but it is also evidence of the extent of Guinevere's control over Lancelot. It

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[227] John Flood, *Representations of Eve in Antiquity and the English Middle Ages* (New York, 2011), pp. 67-75.

[228] Staines, pp. 178-179; *Lancelot* 711-724: '…et cil de la charrete panse/ con cil qui force ne deffanse/ n'a vers Amors qui le justise;/ et ses pansers est de te guise/ que lui meïsmes en oblie,/ ne set s'il est, ou s'il n'est mie,/ ne ne li manbre de son non,/ ne set s'il est armez ou non,/ ne set ou va, ne set don vient;/ de rien nule ne li sovient/ fors d'une seule, et por celi/ a mis les autres en obli;/ a cele seule panse tant/ qu'il n'ot, ne voit, ne rien n'antant.'

[229] *Lancelot* 725-771.

[230] Perhaps the best examples of Lancelot sacrificing his honor for Guinevere, with the exception of riding in the cart, include the time when he fought behind his back so he could watch the queen, and the occasion when he obeyed her requests to do poorly during the tournament (*Lancelot* 3669-3678 and 5636-5703). For an interesting commentary on how this eroticizes the tournament, see: Helen Solterer, 'Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France,' *Signs* vol. 16, no. 3 (1991), pp. 522-549.

[231] *Lancelot* 560-574; 360-377.

[232] Peter Noble, *Love and Marriage in Chrétien de Troyes* (Cardiff, 1982), p. 65-68. Joan Ferrante addresses both the humor and the themes of love and devotion in this scene in *In Pursuit of Perfection*, pp. 153-154.

appears that Chrétien is using love for the female character to control the actions of the male character, further cementing her fundamental role in the narrative.[233] It is also possible that Lancelot's symbolic falls in the narrative may suggest further comparisons between Guinevere and Eve. Eve is blamed for coaxing Adam into complicity during the Fall, a tradition which originates with Augustine.[234] The connection between Eve and Guinevere here is somewhat tentative but Guinevere causes Lancelot to fall into sin, as he commits adultery with her, and he is only redeemed when he returns to Arthur's court at the end of the narrative and defeats Maleagant.

Not all of the interactions between Lancelot and Guinevere are entirely negative, however. It is worth noting that the aforementioned quote detailing Lancelot's psychological and physical reactions to thoughts of the queen bears striking similarities to the language used by Bernard of Clairvaux in his *Sermons* to describe love for God. For instance, when Bernard speaks of Song 2:9, 'My beloved is mine and I am his', he writes, 'O strong and burning love, O love urgent and impetuous, which does not allow me to think of anything but you, you reject all else, you spurn all else but yourself, you are contented only with yourself.'[235] This is not unlike the love between individuals in romances, where the love is so strong it consumes and torments the lovers. Bernard further adds, 'All the Bride's thoughts and words are full of nothing but your music and fragrance, so completely have you taken possession of her heart and tongue.'[236] At this stage of love, the Bride cannot even use reason to articulate the love that she is feeling for the Bridegroom. This is not unlike the deep and all-consuming love that Lancelot feels for Guinevere.

The similarities between the language used to describe secular and spiritual love relationships demonstrates the potential flexibility of biblical models. As will be argued, some of the ladies may appear inherently sinful, but they are described in similar ways to virtuous women. Furthermore, the love relationships between knights and ladies, the soul and

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[233] For more on the formative role of the lady in the romance tradition, see: Joan Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature*. For more on love in this romance, see: Fanni Bogdanow, 'The Love Theme in Chrétien de Troyes's "Chevalier de la Charrette"'.

[234] Flood, p. 72.

[235] Edmonds, Vol. 4, p. 137; S. 79.1. 'O amor praeceps, vehemens, flagrans, impetuose, qui praeter te aliud cogitare non sinis, fastidis cetera, contemnis omnia prae te, te contentus!'

[236] Ibid. 'En omne quod cogitat ista, et quod loquitur, te sonat, te redolet, et aliud nihil: ita tibi ipsius et cor vindicasti et linguam.'

God, or a biblical woman and God, are all described in the same fashion.[237] Love being a force that both condemns and redeems is a common theme in the Bible, its exposition, and the romance tradition.[238] Understanding the complex roles of biblical women and ladies in the romances allows for a deeper reading of the role of love in these texts. Regardless of whether it is a biblical warrior, the soul, or a lady, their behavior, attributes, and relationships dictate the outcome of each narrative.

Ladies and Their Biblical Counterparts

The comparison of Guinevere with Eve and Delilah presents one example of how a lady can share attributes with biblical women. In her case, these are sinful biblical women, who led their men into sin. Some of Chrétien's other ladies also share attributes with these sinful women, but many of them mirror the attributes of virtuous biblical models. The following section will look at romances where biblical women are referenced by name. Enide and Laudine are associated with the Virgin Mary, while Fenice is associated with Eve. After examining the role that these associations play in the respective narratives, the second section will examine ladies who share attributes with biblical women in romances where biblical women are not directly mentioned by Chrétien.

Of Chretien's romances, *Erec and Enide* perhaps presents the best example of a comparison between a lady and biblical models, as the knight and lady appear to be directly associated with Christ and the Virgin Mary, respectively.[239] This association begins when Erec and Enide offer silver, various valuable items, and relics[240] at the altars of Christ and Mary, and concludes at the end of the narrative when they are greeted by monks carrying relics.[241] In order to examine the potential association of Enide with the Virgin Mary, it is vital to analyze both of these scenes and the impact they have on the narrative as a whole.

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[237] Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France*, p. 132.

[238] John Moore, 'Love in Twelfth-Century France: A Failure in Synthesis,' *Traditio* vol. 24 (1968), pp. 432-33.

[239] For one of the earliest and most comprehensive studies of *Erec and Enide*, mostly from the perspective of Erec, see: William Albert Nitze, 'The Romance of Erec, Son of Lac,' *Modern Philology* vol. 11, no. 4 (1914), pp. 445-89.

[240] Both individuals leave offerings at the shrine. Erec leaves a gold cross, said to be from the time of Emperor Constantine, which contained a relic of the true cross. *Érec et Énide*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris, 2009), lines 2318-2383 (henceforth cited like *Erec* 2318-2383).

[241] *Erec* 6826-6844. This will be mentioned again in Chapter 4 (see p. 145).

When Erec and Enide arrive at his father's kingdom of Estre-Gales, after being at King Arthur's court, the first thing they do is enter a church. Erec is led to the altar of Christ and Enide to the altar of Mary. This direct and no doubt intentional pairing of a knight and lady with Christ and Mary is not found in the other of Chrétien's romances.[242] There are at least two ways to interpret this scene. The first is that it is a tradition for the royal couple to give offerings to the church after marriage,[243] though none of the other couples in Chrétien's romances do this, suggesting that he intends this scene to have a greater significance beyond tradition. The second possibility is the most likely: Erec and Enide are brought before the altars in order to set them up as being Christ-like and Mary-like, so that the narrative may be read as a story of redemption. This does not mean that they are types of Christ or Mary, but that their attributes and actions in parts of the romance may be best understood through these biblical comparisons.

Perhaps the most significant event in the development and manifestation of love on the couple's quest occurs when Erec is injured and presumed dead[244] and Count Oringle prevents Enide from killing herself out of sorrow. The count desires to have Enide for his own, so he has her brought back to his court with Erec's body. The count hastily marries Enide even though she does not consent. While she is crying over Erec, the count tells her, 'Certainly you should know that grief does not bring a dead man back to life, nor has anyone seen that happen.'[245] However, this is exactly what happens. When Enide continues to weep

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[242] *Erec* 2318-2383.

[243] Christopher Brooke suggests that Chrétien describing the Archbishop of Canterbury blessing the marriage of Erec and Enide, followed by their donations at the altars of Christ and Mary, is a description of a 'good conventional wedding'. *The Medieval Idea of Marriage* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 180. I think, symbolically, the latter event is of far greater significance.

[244] When he left the company of Arthur and his knights, eager to get back to his quest, Chrétien writes, 'Then you could have seen them weeping and grieving as strongly as if they had seen them already dead.' 'Lors les veïssiez toz plorer/ et demener un duel si fort/ con s'il le veïssent ja mort.' *Erec* 4262-4264. Chrétien also uses this phrase in the *Knight of the Cart*, referring to the sorrow of the court when Guinevere accompanies Kay in search of Maleagant. *Lancelot* 215-219. The most likely meaning in this case is that they feared the queen would not return alive. It may have a more significant meaning in *Erec and Enide* because soon Erec will be injured to the extent that he appears dead, and then he will come back to life. Chrétien is using this phrase to foreshadow this event and perhaps also to mold Erec's rebirth after his assumed death. It is after Erec's rebirth that he and Enide are completely reconciled.

[245] *Erec* 4758-4759. 'Certainnemant poez savoir/ que por duel nul morz ne revit,/ n'onques nus avenir nel vit.'

and to refuse the count, he strikes her and at this moment Erec awakes and kills the count. Chrétien writes that 'wrath and the love he had for his wife gave him strength'.[246]

Erec swiftly kills the count, marking the moment when he is reborn. At this moment, he recognizes that love for his wife and combat may coexist. This is something he has not truly experienced since the first time he fought on behalf of Enide, at the start of the narrative when he defeated Yder to win the sparrowhawk. During that battle, Chrétien writes, 'Erec looked toward his love who was praying very tenderly for him and the moment he saw her his strength increased. Because of her love and her beauty, he regained great strength.'[247] By drawing attention to the fact that Enide's love once again emboldens Erec, Chrétien may be encouraging his reader to think back to the start of the narrative. Erec's near death experience is symbolic of his rebirth. His association with Christ near the start of the narrative culminates in his resurrection.[248] It is after this resurrection that he faces the greatest challenge of all, while saving a fallen knight and lady. The previous association of Enide and Erec with Mary and Christ is most apparent again near the end of the romance. All of the struggles that the couple experience on the quest together conclude with one final adventure referred to as the Joy of the Court.[249]

This adventure involves Erec challenging one final knight under supernatural circumstances. The knight is living within a magically enclosed garden. He is forbidden to leave until a knight comes who is capable of defeating him. No knight who has challenged him has survived, but Erec determines that he will fight this knight and he succeeds. Most significantly, the knight Erec defeats has been imprisoned by his lady, Enide's cousin, because she loved him so much that she feared losing him. She traps him by using the *don contraignant*, as he promises to grant her anything and she demands he stay with her forever in the garden until another knight defeats him. By defeating this knight, Erec frees him from captivity. Most scholars assert that when Erec defeats the knight it is symbolic of him completely overcoming his former self.[250] Defeating the knight is certainly another way for Erec to develop and to prove himself. Most importantly, this event allows Erec to see that,

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[246] *Erec* 4824-4825. '…ire li done hardemant,/ et l'amors qu'an sa fame avoit.'

[247] *Erec* 907-912. 'Erec regarde vers s'amie,/ qui molt dolcemant por lui prie:/ tot maintenant qu'il l'ot veüe,/ se li est sa force creüe;/ por s'amor et por sa biauté/ a reprise molt grant fierté…'.

[248] *Erec* 2318-2383

[249] The joyous element of the Joy of the Court comes after Erec defeats the knight. It is called the Joy in anticipation of the feasting that will occur when the knight is freed from captivity.

[250] Claude Lutrell, *The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance: A Quest* (London, 1974).

unlike the lady who has trapped her knight in the garden, Enide actually freed him by convincing him that love of her had made him weak.

The Joy of the Court also supports the potential association of Erec with Christ and Enide with Mary. It is no doubt significant that the knight Erec challenges has been imprisoned in a garden by, and with, his lady. The garden bears some similarities to Eden, especially in regards to the significance of its fruit. For instance, Chrétien writes, 'Such a spell was on the fruit that it could be eaten inside but not taken outside. Whoever wanted to carry some outside would never know the way out, for he would not find the exit until he returned the fruit to its place.'[251] Additionally, the garden is described has having various species of plants and animals, as well as being capable of comfortably sustaining the knight and lady within. The garden is not walled in by physical material, but the air around it is described as being as hard as iron.[252] The knight and lady are the only two people who live in the garden. Every man who entered before Erec was killed by the imprisoned knight. The knight and lady are protected, sheltered, and fed within this garden, but it is still stained with the couple's transgression. Although this transgression is not the same as the sin of Adam and Eve, it is very close. As Eve did to Adam, the lady has dragged her knight into sin because she has corrupted the idea of courtly love and forced him to forsake the proper pursuits of knighthood out of love for her. This may be directly contrasted to Erec and Enide's situation. Although Erec initially blamed Enide for distracting him from knightly pursuits, she did not force him to spend all of his time with her, as the jealous lady in the garden did. Furthermore, Enide is the one who told Erec that he was losing the respect of his men, leading him to go on quest. The lady's desire to imprison her knight is not unlike Eve's desire to deceive Adam and have him eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Additionally, the knight appears, like Adam, to assent to this willingly, despite being unhappy with his circumstances in the future.

Especially when considering Erec and Enide's earlier association with Christ and Mary, it is possible that Erec and Enide redeeming the folly of this knight and lady is symbolic of Christ and Mary redeeming the sins of Adam and Eve, as both follow the model of a pure couple redeeming the sins of an impure couple. By defeating the knight, Erec, similar to Christ, is overcoming the sins of the knight, who is Adam. Enide is the pure lady,

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[251] Staines, p. 71; *Erec* (5698-5704). '…et li fruiz avoit tel eür/ que leanz se lessoit mangier,/ mes au porter hors fet dongier;/ car qui point an volsist porter/ ne s'an seüst ja mes raler,/ car a l'issue ne venist/ tant qu'an son leu le remeïst.'

[252] *Erec* 5689-5714.

Mary, who is juxtaposed against her transgressive cousin, who is Eve. Furthermore, the Joy does not happen long after Erec's symbolic resurrection, following the defeat of Oringle. After this resurrection, Erec defeats the knight to attain the Joy, saving the knight and lady from their fallen state in the garden.[253] The correlation between these individuals does not mean that the Joy of the Court is a perfect allegory for the fall and redemption of humanity, but rather suggests that Chrétien may have been influenced by the Fall when writing this scene.

The Virgin Mary is also mentioned by name in *Yvain*. This occurs when Yvain is debating whether or not to go tourneying with Arthur's knights, because he is concerned about leaving Laudine behind soon after their wedding. Gawain exclaims, 'May he who diminishes himself by marrying be shamed by Holy Mary!' ('Honiz soit de sainte Marie/qui por anpirier se marie!').[254] There is much going on in these deceptively simple lines. First, the play on words that exists between '*Marie*' and '*marie*' suggests a correlation between the Virgin Mary and Laudine, even if it is only linguistic on the surface.[255] Second, Chrétien may be using this statement to highlight the irony that Yvain later diminishes his worth by essentially forgetting that he is married and bound to return to Laudine. Third, the one who shames Yvain is not the Virgin, but rather Laudine. It is because Yvain breaks his oath to his wife that he is rejected by her and goes mad. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, after undergoing a penitential quest revolving around the defense of women, Yvain is redeemed by Laudine. Many of the comparisons that can be made between Laudine and Mary apply to Mary as saint, and therefore will be discussed in the final chapter.[256]

Additionally, there is a brief allusion to Eve in *Cligés*, which may appear subtle, but is vital for interpreting the narrative. Eve is invoked at a crucial point in the narrative when Fenice is telling Cligés that she will not have a physical relationship with him as long as her husband believes that she is alive. At the same time, she also tells Cligés that she has not had

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[253] Artin argues that an individual 'who rests under a shade tree in the garden of earthly delights is to be identified with Adam and Eve…'. *Allegory*, p. 126-127.

[254] *Yvain* 2489-2490.

[255] Jan Ziolkowski argues that invocations of saints, even casual ones, reflect the culture at the time the author was writing. 'Saints in Invocations and Oaths in Medieval Literature,' *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* vol. 87, no. 2 (1988), pp. 179-192. Even in examples like this one, where Mary is being used by Gawain to swear at Yvain, it is because Mary was known for shaming those who behaved badly.

[256] Chapter 4, pp. 145-146.

sex with her husband, stating that he has not known her 'as Adam knew his wife.'[257] There is more than one way to interpret this statement, but all interpretations are potentially applicable. The first possible interpretation of this statement is that Chrétien intends Fenice's words to be ironic. By this point in the narrative, Fenice has deceived her husband by giving him a love potion that makes him believe she has had sex with him, when she has not. Additionally, she will deceive him further by faking her own death and leaving with Cligés. Chrétien may have Fenice say these words as a way of pointing out that her behavior is Eve-like, despite the fact that she is denying association with Eve.

While the above inference is likely true, there is a second interpretation that adds another dimension to Fenice's complex character. Even though she may be acting similarly to Eve by deceiving her husband, she is also desperate to preserve her virginity. In addition to mentioning Eve at this moment, Fenice also refers to the Tristan legend, explaining that she refuses to share her body with both Cligés and the emperor, as Isolde did with Tristan and King Mark.[258] Fenice's chastity will be discussed in greater detail in relation to her sanctity in Chapter 4, but it is important to examine how her commitment to chastity conflicts with the idea that she is only Eve-like.

After Fenice fakes her death to be with Cligés,[259] she is taken to a tower, belonging to one of Cligés' serfs. The tower is connected to a walled garden, which encircles an orchard. The lovers are spotted by a young man from Alis' court, who is hunting when his falcon flies over the wall. They are outside of the tower in the garden for the first time when this happens, lying naked under the largest tree in the orchard. While enjoying the beauty of the garden, the *locus amoenus*, was certainly a part of noble life both in reality and in literature, it is likely that the majority of symbolism attached to gardens would have been biblical. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the garden could have represented Paradise, the Fall, the Bride in the Song of Songs, or the Virgin Mary.[260] Overall, the walled garden of both religious and

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[257] *Cligés*, ed. Alexandre Micha (Paris, 1975), 5178-5179. 'Onques ancor ne me conut,/ Si com Adanz conut sa fame.' The only other time that Eve is mentioned is in *Perceval* when Gawain states, 'Not since God formed the first woman from Adam's side has there been a lady so renowned…'. 'Puis que Dex la premiere fame/ ot de la coste Adan formee,/ ne fu dame si renomee…'. *Perceval* 7928-7930.

[258] *Cligés* 5199-5203, 5249-5253.

[259] This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, in reference to martyrdom (see pp. 138-141).

[260] Derek Pearsall, 'Gardens as Symbol and Setting in Late Medieval Poetry,' in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. Elisabeth Blair MacDougall (Washington, 1986), p. 237. For more on the medieval garden and the Virgin Mary,

courtly literature tended to be a safe and private space for lovers to meet,[261] but in *Cligés* it is depicted as more exposed and dangerous because it is where the falconer witnesses Fenice losing her virginity.

Fenice's behavior in the garden may be an allusion to Eve, as Fenice has convinced Cligés to leave the tower with her and make love under the tree.[262] Previous scholarship has pointed out that this tree bears many similarities to the tree of vices in the *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*, as it has branches that grow downward toward the ground, concealing the lovers lying beneath it.[263] Fenice has left the space in which she is permitted to be after deceiving Alis. Furthermore, by engaging in a sexual relationship with Cligés, she crosses the boundary she previously established when she committed herself to not acting like Isolde. By coming out of hiding, or perhaps imprisonment, she enters a space that is more open and vulnerable than the locked tower. This may be compared with Eve taking the fruit from the tree of knowledge, the tree she had been forbidden to touch, and convincing Adam to follow her into that sin.[264] Also, since they are caught, Fenice and Cligés are forced to flee to Britain under the protection of King Arthur; thus, they are literally and symbolically expelled from the garden.

This is one interpretation of this event. It is also possible that the walled garden is a reference to the Bride in the Song of Songs, as the author of the Song describes his beloved as 'a garden enclosed, a sealed fountain.'[265] Furthermore, the first Marian commentaries on

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see: Brian E. Daley, 'The "Closed Garden" and the "Sealed Fountain": Song of Songs 4:12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary,' *Medieval Gardens*, pp. 253-278.

[261] For more on the *hortus conclusus*, see: Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'The Medieval Hortus conclusus: Revisiting the Pleasure Garden,' *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* vol. 50, no. 1 (2014), pp. 5-10; Naoe Kukita, 'The Virgin in the Hortus conclusus: Healing the Body and Healing the Soul,' *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* vol. 50, no. 1 (2014), pp. 11-14. For more on the *locus amoenus*, see: Dagmar Thoss, *Studien zum Locus amoenus im Mittelalter* (Vienna, 1972).

[262] This is similar to the account in the thirteenth-century *Quest of the Holy Grail* where the author relates the tale of how the Tree of Life was planted by Adam and Eve. This example will be discussed in greater detail in the Conclusion (see pp. 163-164).

[263] Robertson, 'Medieval Literary Gardens,' pp. 26-27, 39-40; Artin, pp. 126-128. Robertson has argued that the tree is used to highlight the irony and humor behind Fenice's attempt to paint herself as an anti-Isolde, and potentially an anti-Eve. However, as I argue, I believe this is used to highlight her human struggle with sin.

[264] Robertson refers to Cligés and Fenice as a 'twelfth century Adam and Eve'. Ibid., p. 40.

[265] Song, 4:12; S. 22:2. The virginity of the Bride in the Song of Songs is described using tower and garden imagery. William Phipps, 'The Plight of the Song of Songs,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol.

the Song of Songs were emerging in the twelfth century. Even non-Marian commentaries frequently compared the behavior and attributes of the Bride in the Song to those of Mary in the Gospels. Mary is placed in the role of the Bride, or compared with the Bride, in the enclosed garden because of her virginity. Although Fenice, by this point in the narrative, has begun a sexual relationship with Cligés, she previously went to great lengths to preserve her virginity. When she first enters the walled garden, she is a virgin.

Fenice's physical presence within the walled garden, following her refusal to know her husband or Cligés as Adam knew Eve, is perhaps Chrétien's subtle suggestion that Fenice is neither fully like Eve or fully like Mary. She may share similar attributes and actions with both biblical women, but so do all humans. Authors of biblical expository texts use biblical women to describe humanity's relationship with God. Some women are sinful and some women are virtuous, but perhaps the main concern of the authors is that all of humanity struggles with sin. Chrétien depicts Fenice as a woman who struggles to overcome sin. Fenice is a character who desperately wants not to be like Eve, but her humanity is an impediment. Through a combination of her deception and the preservation of her chastity, Chrétien paints the picture of the lady as a virtuous sinner. By nature and because of Eve, Fenice is sinful, but she desires to overcome her flaws. Chrétien has Fenice associate herself with the biblical model of Eve and the fictional model of Isolde to illustrate all of humanity's struggle with sin.[266] Fenice is redeemed by the association with Mary's walled garden, and her redemption culminates in the lovers' coronation as king and queen of Constantinople at the end of the narrative.

Fenice's struggle with sexual sin is perhaps most evident when she refused to become like Isolde and made the decision to maintain her virginity.[267] It is perhaps significant that in order to carry out their affair, Tristan and Isolde are forced to flee to the forest, whereas Fenice and Cligés hide in a garden. In the romances, the forest is considered a place of confusion, danger, and perhaps also sin, whereas the garden is a well-kept and protected area,

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42, no. 1 (1974), p. 83. Mary's virginity is also signified through the enclosed garden, M.B. Pranger, *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Shape of Monastic Thought* (Leiden, 1994), p. 155.

[266] Frappier originally put forth the argument that Fenice is an anti-Isolde figure in *Chrétien de Troyes: The Man and His Work*, pp. 90-91. For a challenge to this argument, see: Grimbert, 'On Fenice's Vain Attempts to Revise a Romantic Archetype' in *Reassessing the Heroine in Medieval French Literature*, ed. Kathy Krause (Gainesville, 2001), pp. 87-106.

[267] *Cligés* 5199-5203, 5249-5253.

perhaps representing virtue.[268] The Garden of Eden itself is a symbol of virtue and pleasure before the Fall. Fenice appears to embody both Eve and the Virgin, perhaps highlighting her struggle to overcome the sins of the former by attempting to imitate the virtues of the latter. Along these lines, Jean Frappier eloquently uses nature to compare the romances of *Tristan* and *Cligés* stating:

> [*Cligés*] is comparable to the grafted pear tree in the orchard, the shelter for Cligés and Fenice, with its branches skillfully pruned downward by a gardener in the shape of a screen. This elegant image of courtly artifice contrasts significantly to the bel arbre, the bower in the forest of Morois, spreading forth naturally, and which…shaded Tristan and Iseut. By means of Chrétien's "neo-Tristan," the forest is transformed into a garden of delights.[269]

In addition to the previous examples, there are three other invocations of Mary that should be mentioned before moving on to the discussion of Old Testament attributes. In the first example, Cligés is fighting with the Duke of Saxony on behalf of his uncle the emperor to win back Fenice. Fenice, who has already fallen in love with Cligés witnesses him receiving a nearly fatal blow and shouts, 'Holy Mary!'[270] The potential implications of this scene will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, as this may pertain more to Mary as saint, rather than Mary as biblical woman. The two other invocations of Mary are both found in *The Knight with the Lion*. In the first example, a family begs Yvain to defeat a giant who is attacking their land. One of the maidens begs him not to leave them in the name of 'the glorious Queen of Heaven and the Angels, and in the name of God'.[271] In the second example, a young girl who has been disinherited by her older sister sends a maiden out to search for Yvain, who later comes to her aid. On the journey, the maiden is said to constantly invoke 'God first, then his mother after, and then all the saints…'.[272] The invocations from both of these examples could pertain to either Mary as saint or Mary as biblical woman. These instances do not appear to have a direct impact on the reading of the romances as the previous examples have, but they do add further support the argument that Chrétien was consciously or unconsciously influenced by biblical or saintly models while writing. These

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[268] Ellen Kosmer, 'Gardens of Virtue in the Middle Ages,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol. 41 (1978), pp. 302-307.

[269] Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, pp. 90-91.

[270] *Cligés* 4056.

[271] *Yvain* 4056-4060. '…si li prie de demorer./ Come destroite et angoisseuse/ *por la reïne glorieuse/ del ciel et des anges li prie,/ et por Deu*, qu'il ne s'an aut mie,/ einz atende encore un petit…'.

[272] *Yvain* 4847-4849. 'Et por ce reclamoit adés/ Deu avant, et sa mere aprés,/ et puis toz sainz et totes saintes…'.

types of invocations are not unique to Chrétien, as similar examples may be found throughout romance literature. However, the prevalence of such invocations further demonstrates that the Virgin and the saints were culturally significant to authors of romance literature as a whole.

Chrétien's Ladies and Their Biblical Attributes

In addition to referring directly to, or invoking the names of, biblical women, Chrétien also ascribes attributes to his ladies that are similar to those of biblical women. The biblical attributes espoused by the ladies, how these attributes affect their relationships with their knights, and the impact of these attributes on the narrative as a whole will be examined. This will include looking at occasions where the ladies appear to have parallels with a specific biblical woman and those where they only share common characteristics.

There are potential associations between ladies and New Testament biblical women in *Yvain*. Although not direct parallels for Mary Magdalen and Martha, Laudine and Lunete offer a comparison between the active and contemplative lives espoused by these two biblical women. As previously mentioned, the contemplative and active lives of the two biblical sisters was a well-known metaphor used to describe various occupations within the Church, as well as the overall state of the medieval Church. While monastic authors tended to praise the contemplative life of Mary above the active life of Martha, as a whole, most authors of biblical exposition believed that both lives contributed to the perfection of the Church.

Yvain is the only one of the five romances where the knight's love relationship depends upon two women. With her intervention and work, Lunete makes Yvain's relationship with the more sedentary Laudine possible. Although not a perfect metaphor for the lives of Mary and Martha, similar contemplative and active lives are embodied in the two ladies, making their involvement in the romance a close secular equivalent. This is not meant to suggest that Yvain is Christ-like, as Yvain shares more similarities with Lazarus. His relationships with Lunete and Laudine, his symbolic resurrection when he is cured of madness, and his penitential quest representing his renewed soul attest to this. The similarities between the Arthurian trio and the biblical siblings are further supported by Bernard when he writes:

> For we discover Martha as the Savior's friend in those who do the daily chores. We find Lazarus, the mourning dove, in the novices just now dead to their sins, who toil with fresh wounds and mourn through fear of the judgment…so they amount to nothing until Christ's command removes the burden of fear that crushes them like a block of stone, and they can breathe again with the hope of pardon. We find a contemplative Mary in those who,

> co-operating with God's grace over a long period of time, have attained to a better and happier state.[273]

Lunete fulfills a similar function to Martha as the one who is constantly serving either Yvain or Laudine. Yvain, not unlike Lazarus, has to symbolically die and be reborn in order to rectify the transgressions he commits against Laudine. With the help of Lunete and the pardon of Laudine, Yvain learns the power of penance and forgiveness. The comparison between Laudine and Mary is perhaps less obvious. However, they are similar in that Mary remains engaged in contemplation and detached from the world, while Laudine remains stoically in her land with limited engagement in the narrative.

Mary Magdalen, perhaps especially as she is described in Song of Songs texts, may also be a model for another woman in Yvain, the damsel with the ointment. This damsel appears after Yvain has gone mad and has lived in the forest for some time. She is given ointment by her lady to cure Yvain's madness in the hope that he will come fight on her behalf. The damsel is told to apply the precious ointment only to Yvain's temples because that is where his illness lies, but the damsel covers Yvain's entire body instead. Many scholars interpret this scene as humorous because of the amount of ointment applied to Yvain's body by the damsel, and it likely is meant to be funny. Chrétien suggests that even if the maiden had thirty-five liters of ointment, she would have done the same.[274]

The damsel is presumably in possession of a large quantity of ointment anyway, since she is able to cover Yvain's entire body with it. Mary Magdalen anointing Christ with precious oil is a fitting comparison. In the account of the anointing recorded in the Gospel of John, Mary takes one pound of oil and uses it all to anoint Jesus' feet.[275] Like the excessive

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[273] Walsh and Edmonds, Vol. 3, p. 106; S. 57.11. 'Habemus siquidem Martham, tamquam Salvatoris amicam, in his qui exteriora fideliter administrant. Habemus et Lazarum, tamquam *columbam gementem*: novitios utique, qui nuper *peccatis mortui*, pro recentibus adhuc plagis *laborant in gemitu suo* sub timore iudicii, et *sicut vulnerati dormientes in sepulcris, quorum nemo est memor amplius*, sic se non putant reputari, donec ad Christi iussionem sublato pondere timoris, tamquam prementis lapidis mole, respirare in spem veniae possint. Habemus quoque Mariam contemplantem in illis, qui processu longioris temporis, cooperante gratia Dei, in aliquid melius et laetius proficere potuerunt…'.

[274] *Yvain* 3004-3005. 'S'il en i eüst cinc setiers,/ s'eüst ele autel fet, ce cuit.' A 'setiers' is a measurement equal to approximately seven liters. Lucienne Carasso-Bulow, *The Merveilleux in Chrétien de Troyes' Romances* (Genève, 1976), p. 119

[275] Gospel of John 12:3. 'Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of right spikenard (*libram unguenti nardi*) of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.'

use of the ointment smeared on Yvain by the damsel, Mary did not require one pound of oil to anoint the feet of Jesus, but chose to pour it all out anyway. In the accounts recorded in Matthew and Mark, Mary takes an unknown quantity of oil in an alabaster jug, breaks the jug, and pours the oil over Christ's head, rather than his feet.[276] The disciples, especially Judas, are outraged by the wasted oil because it could have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor. Jesus defends Mary, explaining that she anointed him in such an excessive way because she was preparing him for burial,[277] foreshadowing the fact that his body would not be there when she came to anoint him after the crucifixion. Authors of biblical exposition have noted comparisons between Mary, the Bride in the Song of Songs who anoints her Bridegroom with spikenard, and the Church who is filled with the fragrance of the Holy Spirit as the house was after Mary anointed Christ.[278] Pouring all of the oil out on Christ's body and filling the house with its fragrance symbolizes the salvific power of the Holy Spirit in Christ's absence. The maiden rubbing ointment over the entire body of Yvain symbolizes Yvain's impending redemption.[279] All of these examples were deemed applicable to the lives of medieval Christians, as the anointing of Christ symbolized repentance, penance, and forgiveness. Similarly, the anointing of Yvain represents the beginning of his penitential quest.

As is the case with many Old Testament biblical women, the attributes of Chrétien's ladies often coexist or operate simultaneously to achieve a goal. For instance, in the case of Judith, she used her beauty and mental fortitude to seduce Holofernes, and her physical strength to behead him. Additionally, there are also attributes that appear to be positive, but are used by the women in a negative way to try and lead men into sin; this is attested by the attributes and behavior of Eve and Delilah.

Beauty

Beauty is a quality that many Arthurian ladies share. Occasionally, beauty is used as a weapon, as in the case of Enide seducing Galoain, discussed below in relation to mental fortitude. Other times, the beauty of a lady is meant to amplify her virtue, which will be particularly relevant to the comparison of ladies with female saints. However, the beauty of

[276] Matthew 26:7; Mark 14:3.

[277] Matthew 26:8-12; Mark 14:4-8; John 12:4-7.

[278] See Chapter 1, pp. 62-63.

[279] Robert Cook, 'The Ointment in Chrétien's *Yvain*,' *Mediaeval Studies* vol. 31 (1969), p. 342.

Enide and the way in which her beauty is expressed at the start of the narrative may be particularly relevant to a comparison between ladies, certain Old Testament women, and the Church. Enide's beauty is clear to everyone, despite the fact that she is living in poverty. Erec insists that Enide wear her poor clothing to King Arthur's court, which is reminiscent of the Song of Songs, where the Bridegroom desires the beauty of the Bride to such a degree that he does not care that she comes to him poor. For instance, Bernard writes, '…he comes to meet them…like a magnificent and powerful king, giving courage to his timid and poverty-stricken bride, stirring up her desire by showing her the ornaments of his glory, the riches of his wine-presses and storehouse…and finally introducing her to his private apartments.'[280] This is very similar to the progression of Enide from poor, but beautiful and virtuous, to wealthy princess.[281] Beauty, either with or without religious connotations, is highly significant in the courtly love tradition. In courtly literature, if an individual is noble, it will then follow that he or she is beautiful.[282]

Beauty is sometimes also a source of temptation that knights are supposed to avoid. One biblical parallel would be Samson failing to resist Delilah and perhaps even Adam failing to resist Eve. Lancelot and Yvain are two knights who successfully resist the temptation of beautiful women. While Lancelot shows no restraint with Guinevere, he does resist the advances of a beautiful woman who offers him lodging. When he is desperate to find some place to stay for the night, he is forced to agree that he will have sex with the lady in exchange for lodging. Chrétien notes that many men would have thanked her for the offer Lancelot receives,[283] but Lancelot feels no desire for her. Later, when she is in bed with him, he faces away from her and does not touch her because he is thinking of Guinevere. Chrétien even compares Lancelot to a lay brother writing, 'Careful not to touch her, he lay on his back and kept his distance, maintaining absolute silence like a lay brother forbidden to speak when lying in his bed.'[284] The lady senses that he has no desire for her and does not force him to

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[280] Walsh, Vol. 2, p. 130; S. 31.7. 'Item aliquando occurrens, quasi praedives aliquis paterfamilias, qui *in domo sua abundet panibus*, immo tamquam rex magnificus et potens, qui sponsae pauperis videatur pusillanimitatem erigere, provocare cupiditatem, demonstrans illi omnia desiderabilia gloriae suae, divitas torcularium ac promptuariorum, hortorum et agrorum copias, demum etiam introducens eam in ipsa secreta cubiculi.'

[281] Enide's beauty will be discussed again in reference to her saintly virtues (see Chapter 4, pp. 127-130).

[282] Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life*, p. 128.

[283] *Lancelot* 946-948.

[284] Staines, p. 185; *Lancelot* 1216-1220. 'De tochier a li molt se gueite,/ einz s'an esloingne et gist anvers,/ ne ne dit mot ne c'uns convert/ cui li parlers est desfanduz,/ quant an son lit gist estanduz…'.

fulfill his promise. Lancelot's staunch commitment to abstinence is magnified by the lady's strong sexual desire.

Yvain also resists the temptation of a beautiful lady, although in his case, she is not actively pursuing him. After he is healed by the damsel with the ointment, he begins his penitential quest to return to Laudine. Yvain does not use his reputation as one of Arthur's knights and abandons his name altogether, going simply by the Knight with the Lion after he rescues the lion from the serpent.[285] The fact that the lion becomes part of Yvain's identity symbolizes his triumph over pride and his devotion to something greater.[286] The knight then comes to the aid of the lady who had sent her damsel with the ointment to cure him. This begins his penitential quest during which he comes to the aid of various women. All good Arthurian knights are said to aid women, but Yvain becomes known throughout the land for doing so. For instance, the maiden who has been denied all rights to her late father's land by her elder sister determines that 'she would never stop searching through every land for the Knight with the Lion who did everything he was able to help women in need of assistance'.[287] In addition to this maiden, Yvain defeats Count Alier for the lady who healed him; he saves Gawain's niece from a giant; he saves Lunete from the flames; and he defeats two demon brothers in the land of Dire Adventure, breaking the oath whereby they receive thirty maidens per year from the Isle of Maidens.

After defeating the aforementioned demons, he also rejects the hand of the daughter of the lord of Dire Adventure. He does so because he wishes to return to Laudine, but this is no easy task, as Chrétien notes that the daughter is so beautiful that the God of Love would have become human and struck himself with his own arrow so that he could be with her.[288] Yvain clearly overcomes lust in this scenario, but there is more to his rejection, as he knows that he needs Laudine to forgive him.

Although examining how Lancelot and Yvain overcome temptation in these scenarios appears to place greater focus on the knights than the ladies, it does reveal how even some of

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[285] *Yvain* 3337-3411.

[286] Jean Charles Payen, *Le motif du repentir dans la literature française médiévale* (Genève, 1967), p. 387. For a detailed study of the lion, see: Julian Harris, 'The Rôle of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain,' *Modern Language Association* vol. 64, no. 5 (1949), pp. 1143-1163.

[287] *Yvain* 4809-4812. '…ne finera par tote terre/ del Chevalier au lÿon querre/ qui met sa poinne a conseillier/ celes qui d'aïe ont mestier.'

[288] *Yvain* 5374-5378. 'Por li server devenist hon,/ s'issist de sa deité fors/ et ferist lui meïsme el cors/ del dart don la plaie ne sainne/ se desleax mires n'i painne.'

the more minor Arthurian ladies share similarities with biblical women. Additionally, the ways in which the knights interact with these women is dictated by their relationships with their ladies. For biblical women, the ways in which medieval authors described their interactions with others was dictated by their relationship with God.

Relationships

Love and friendship relationships between knights and ladies needs no further discussion, as they have been a constant presence thus far. Motherhood, on the other hand, is a relationship relevant to the comparison between biblical women and ladies that has not been discussed in relation to the romances. *Perceval* is the one romance where motherhood is an important theme. Not only is Perceval's mother a significant figure in the romance, but the mothers of Arthur and Gawain are also present.[289] The role that the latter two of these women would have played in the narrative is unknown, as their characters were just being developed when Chrétien ceased writing.

Perceval's mother is a widow, who lives isolated in the forest, in the hope of sheltering Perceval and preventing him from becoming a knight.[290] When she fails to accomplish this goal, she sends him off to King Arthur's court with some advice for how he should conduct himself. It appears that throughout his childhood, she has instructed him about the Bible, but it does not appear that he was exposed to any other Christian observances. This is especially clear when he encounters the knights in the forest and thinks that they are angels and one of them is God.[291] Additionally, when he is leaving, his mother tells him to stop at chapels and churches to pray whenever he passes them and she has to describe these buildings to him.

Perceval's mother also provides him with practical advice about how he should interact with people, especially ladies and noblemen. She tells him that when he finds a lady he should ask for her love and then ask for her kiss and only her kiss; he may also take her

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[289] Much is said about mothers in this romance, but there have been studies on other family members. For a study of fatherhood in *Perceval*, see: Irit Ruth Kleinman, 'X Marks the Spot: The Place of the Father in Chrétien de Troyes's "Conte du Graal",' *The Modern Language Review* vol. 103, no. 4 (2008), pp. 969-982. For more on family in Chrétien's romances in general, see: Jerome Mandel, 'The Idea of Family in Chrétien de Troyes and Sir Thomas Malory,' *Arthuriana* vol. 12, no. 4 (Winter 2002), pp. 90-99.

[290] For a study of how atypical his mother's situation was, see: Ewa Slojka, 'Escape from Paradox: Perceval's Upbringing in the "Conte du Graal",' *Arthuriana* vol. 18, no. 4 (2008), pp. 66-86.

[291] *Perceval* 137-154.

ring if she offers it as a token of love. Perceval ignores the consent aspects of his mother's advice when he encounters the damsel in the tent. He forces himself on her and steals her ring.[292] Perceval's mother also instructs him to speak to gentlemen because they are good company and he will be able to learn from them. It is because Perceval speaks to gentlemen that he meets the vavasour who gives him further instruction and teaches him how to use a sword. The vavasour informs Perceval that he should not tell others that his mother instructed him because they will not take him seriously. If it were not for his mother's advice, he would not have met the vavasour. Also, if he had listened closely to his mother's teaching then he would not have shamed the damsel in the tent. Perceval's greatest problems occur when he ignores his mother's advice. Perceval would also have asked the question regarding the Grail and healed the Fisher King had he followed his mother's advice. She is the one who instructed him to always talk to gentlemen, but the vavasour cautioned him against speaking too much, so he kept quiet at the Grail Castle.[293]

Perceval's mother dies from the sorrow of losing him, but even after her death she remains a heavily influential figure in the narrative. When Perceval, who does not know of her death, is searching for his mother, he encounters his cousin who tells him that he was unable to ask about the Grail because he was responsible for the death of his mother. This is later reaffirmed by the Hideous Damsel, prompting Perceval to seek the Grail. Five years later, Perceval runs into a group of penitential knights and ladies on Good Friday who tell him the story of Christ and direct him to a hermitage where he can receive absolution. The hermit happens to be Perceval's maternal uncle, who is aware that his sister has died and that Perceval is responsible for her death. After confessing his sins, doing penance, and receiving absolution, Perceval continues on his journey to find the Grail.

Perceval's mother, his salvation, and the Grail appear to be closely intertwined, but, unfortunately, because the romance was not completed there is no way of knowing what significance Perceval's mother would serve at the conclusion of the narrative. Perceval's mother does not bear any similarities to depictions of the Virgin Mary in the Bible, but the way that medieval authors extrapolate Mary's motherhood does provide some comparable aspects. Both mothers have their redemptive, or potentially redemptive in the case of Perceval, sons in common. Perceval may be considered Christ-like because of his potential to unlock the mystery of the Grail, heal the Fisher King, and restore the kingdom of the Grail

[292] Ibid., 667-833.

[293] Ibid., 3243-3252.

King. Presumably, this would make the mystery of the Grail, a metaphor for salvation, available to everyone. This could suggest a correlation between Mary and Perceval's mother, as they are both the mothers of bearers of salvation. However, the strongest comparison between Mary and Perceval's mother is their role as nurturers. Unlike Perceval's mother, Mary is not said to play a great role in the education of Christ, but she is said to provide a model for Christians to imitate in their own relationships with him, suggesting that she is capable of educating believers. Mary's place as the new Eve makes her the nurturing mother of all humanity. Mary nursing Christ represents the wisdom that all believers are capable of receiving from the Church, as a type of mother for humanity.

Leadership and Fortitude

Enide's role as Erec's protector may suggest a comparison with the Old Testament women who defended the Israelites, but who especially assumed roles the men would not. She is perhaps most similar to Judith in the encounter with Count Galoain. Enide's protection of Erec on the quest involves risking her life by seducing the count. Her actions are not a direct parallel to Judith, but the comparison between the two is worth noting. Count Galoain finds Erec and Enide traveling and provides them with food and shelter. He soon becomes enamored of Enide and tells her that he plans to kill Erec and take her. She lies to the count, telling him that she wants to go with him, but that he should defeat Erec honorably and attack in the morning. She knows that this lie would give her time to warn Erec. After Galoain agrees not to attack until the following day, Chrétien writes, 'Then [Enide] accepted his promise, but it was of little worth or value to her except as a way of saving her lord. She knew well how to seduce a scoundrel with words when she set her mind to it. It was better that she lie to him than for her lord to be cut to pieces.'[294] Enide plays the role of seductress in order to protect Erec, even going so far as telling the count 'I would like to feel you naked beside me in bed'.[295] Enide is not worried about lying, putting herself in danger, or pretending to seduce the count. Her only concern is for Erec's safety. Unlike Judith who beheads the enemy, Enide does not kill Galoain, but through her ruse she prevents him from killing Erec. Furthermore, it is her devotion to Erec and willingness to sacrifice herself for

[294] *Erec* 3407-3413. 'Lors en a cele la prise;/ mes po l'an est et po la prise:/ por son seignor fu delivrer./ Bien sot par parole enivrer/ bricon, des qu'ele i met l'antante:/ mialz est asez qu'ele li mante,/ que ses sire fust depeciez.'

[295] *Erec* 3390-3391. 'Je vos voldroie ja santir/ an un lit certes nu a nu.'

her knight that results in Galoain lamenting his behavior and calling his men away.[296] Unlike Holofernes, who was murdered by Judith as an enemy of God, Galoain is a good Christian knight who recognizes his sinful behavior.

After the incident with Count Galoain, Erec continues to threaten Enide, but Chrétien writes that 'now Erec could truly see proof of his wife's loyalty to him'.[297] This is a significant development. Prior to this scene, Enide had warned Erec of danger by crying out, but Erec always had secretly seen the danger coming; he pretended not to see threats to test whether Enide would obey him or speak. During the encounter with the count, however, Erec has no idea that he is going to be attacked. Enide truly saves his life by disobeying him. It is at this moment that Erec not only recognizes that Enide is loyal to him, but that he needs her to come to his aid. Erec recognizes the benefit of his wife's strength and self-sacrifice. This is not unlike the Israelites rallying around Judith, Jael, Debbora, and Esther to ensure the defeat of the enemy. Something must also be said for the fact that Enide is the wife of Erec. Jael was praised by Rabanus for defeating the enemy, as the wife of Aber Cinei, acting in the place of her husband as the Church acts on behalf of Christ. While Enide is perhaps most similar to Judith, who was a widow, this comparison is not as explicit; however, all of these virtuous warrior women were said to foreshadow the behavior of the Church, the Bride of Christ, which makes them all symbolic brides of Christ.

In the same vein as fortitude, leadership, a quality belonging to many of the Old Testament women, but perhaps most closely associated with Debbora and with Esther, is also shared with the ladies. The ladies are typically leaders because of their social status. Enide is a princess and Laudine and Blancheflor are ladies with sole rulership over their lands. Enide demonstrates her leadership qualities when she protects Erec, as previously examined. The leadership espoused by Laudine and Blancheflor is inseparable from their mental fortitude, as they prove themselves capable of convincing the knights to defend their lands. This is not unusual in Chrétien, as the majority of the relationships between the knights and their ladies are based upon reciprocity. In this case, love is traded for protection. The knight comes to the aid of a lady that he desires and once he has aided her, or while he is aiding her, she grants him her love. This type of reciprocity will be discussed in greater detail within the context of the cult of saints. Although the relationships between knights and ladies are typically characterized by love, the fact that the ladies also employ the knights to defend their land is a

[296] *Erec* 3625-3646.

[297] *Erec* 3480-3481. 'Or ot Erec que bien se prueve/ vers lui sa fame lëaumant…'

sign of good leadership. It is not uncommon for ladies in the courtly love tradition to be depicted as feudal lords to their knights, which adds to their leadership role in the romances. The lady as *domna* was discussed in reference to Guinevere at the start of the chapter and will be discussed again in reference to Laudine in Chapter 4.[298]

Summary

This chapter examined the potential influences that biblical exposition, and the ideas contained within it, may have had on Chrétien's work. Whether consciously or subconsciously, Chrétien's education and cultural surroundings would have influenced the writing of his romances, including the way in which he portrayed his ladies. As with biblical women, Chrétien's ladies may be divided into categories of sinful, virtuous, or morally ambiguous, depending upon the qualities they share with certain biblical women.

The closest associations between ladies and biblical women is when a biblical woman is directly invoked. This was seen, for example, when Enide was associated with the Virgin Mary or when Fenice painted herself as an anti-Eve. Even in cases where biblical women are not mentioned by name, there is still enough evidence to suggest that ladies share virtues with certain biblical models. For instance, Enide using seduction against Galoain to protect Erec is similar to Judith seducing Holofernes to save the Israelites. Additionally, the anointing of Yvain was described in similar terms to the anointing at Bethany when Mary Magdalen anointed Christ. This does not necessarily mean that Chrétien was basing his ladies on these models, but rather that these were common ways to describe the attributes and actions of women in the twelfth century, both in biblical exposition and romance.

The next chapter will examine hagiography and the material culture of the cults of female saints. Some aspects of this chapter will be familiar having come from a discussion of biblical exposition. For instance, analysis of hagiography pertaining to the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen will build upon their biblical traditions; furthermore, the attributes and actions of female saints, although described in a different literary form with a different purpose, will be similar to those of biblical women.

[298] Chapter 2, p. 72; Chapter 4, p. 143-144.

Chapter 3: Female Saints in the World of Chrétien de Troyes

Devotion to the saints was one of the most vital facets of popular piety throughout the medieval period because the saints were perceived to be intermediaries between the temporal and spiritual worlds.[299] Most significantly, medieval saints served as intercessors in the relationship between humanity and God. In addition to the New Testament biblical saints, many of whom knew Christ, other saints experienced a close relationship with God through martyrdom or asceticism. The legacy of the saints included interceding on behalf of supplicants and providing models for believers to imitate; both were made possible by the two most important mediums of the cult of saints: hagiography and relics.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it aims to explore some of the attributes and abilities of female saints and how these qualities impacted their relationships with believers and non-believers. Secondly, it also aims to provide a brief survey of the cult of saints during Chrétien's de Troyes' lifetime, as this religious and cultural phenomenon would have influenced him, either consciously or subconsciously. As with the biblical texts, knowing which hagiographic texts Chrétien read for certain is not possible. However, with the great tradition surrounding the cult of saints and especially the female saints that will be discussed in this chapter, it is likely that he would have, at the very least, been acquainted with aspects of their legends and pilgrimage sites. Overall, this chapter will argue that the depictions of female saints and their relationships with believers influenced the depictions of the ladies and their relationships with the knights in Chrétien's romances. There are two female saints mentioned by name in Chrétien's romances, St Foy and the Virgin Mary, both of whom will be examined here in the context of hagiography and their cults.

The aim is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of female saints, but rather to take a sampling of the works, either contemporary or near-contemporary with Chrétien, written about some of the most influential saints. As with the biblical expository texts in Chapter 1, versions of the saints' lives examined in this chapter were chosen for different reasons. Most were chosen because they were the earliest or most complete vernacular versions of the lives, or because the texts were widely circulated. Anglo-Norman texts have been included with Old French texts because, even though library inventories are sparse, there is evidence to suggest a great influx of Anglo-Norman writers and texts into Champagne during Count

[299] Achille Luchaire asserts that the true religion of the Middle Ages was the veneration of relics. *Social France at the time of Philip Augustus*, tr. Edward Benjamin Krehbiel (London, 1912), p. 28.

Henry's lifetime.[300] Some texts were chosen because the ways in which the authors described female saints were similar to the way women were described in biblical exposition and in Chrétien's romances, demonstrating that many of the desired attributes of saints, biblical women, and ladies are universal.

Hagiography and miracle tales for six female saints, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, Mary of Egypt, Margaret of Antioch, Catherine of Alexandria, and Foy of Agen, will be examined. It should be noted that the church of St-Etienne was in possession of relics belonging to the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, Margaret, Mary of Egypt, and Catherine, suggesting that their legends would have been well-known in Troyes.[301] It is highly likely that the cathedral canons would have celebrated the feast days of these saints by reading extracts from their lives.[302] There is unfortunately no way to determine which version they would have read at St-Etienne, but this does mean that they would have been acquainted with the legends of these female saints. Although St-Etienne did not possess Foy's relics, she appears to have been well-known throughout France, as will be discussed. The second half of this chapter will analyze the relationship between these saints and their sources and the material culture of the cult of saints, especially relic veneration, pilgrimage, and miracles.

The Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen occupied a privileged position in the cult of saints as two biblical women who had known Christ personally. The Virgin was not a typical saint, in that her sanctity needed no defending. Since she had been chosen by God to be the mother of Christ, there was no doubt surrounding her purity, power, or virtues. The Virgin Mary's attributes and efficacy will be examined in three texts dating from the early twelfth century to the early thirteenth century, written in French or Anglo-Norman. These are Wace's *The Conception of Our Lady* (1130-40), the anonymous *Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour* (1172-1173), and Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles of our Lady of Soissons* from the first quarter of the thirteenth century, which draws upon Hugh of Farsit's early twelfth-century Latin text of the same name.[303] The miracle tales are valuable because they describe experiences with Mary and her relics that would have been transmitted orally by pilgrims, as

[300] Evergates, *Henry the Liberal*, pp. 86-96, 115-123,

[301] St-Etienne possessed the hair and clothes of the Virgin, the hair of Mary Magdalen, the oil of Catherine, the hair of Margaret, and a bone belonging to Mary of Egypt, among other items. For the full list, see: Lalore, *Inventaires*, pp. 4-27.

[302] Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, 2013), pp. 507.

[303] Gautier de Coinci, *Les Miracles de Notre Dame de Soissons*, ed. Lauri Lindgren (Helsinki, 1963), pp. 11-21.

well as textually. Wace's Anglo-Norman text was chosen for this chapter because it is the earliest Marian narrative written in a French dialect; furthermore, the number of surviving manuscripts and fragments suggest that it was popular and widely circulated during the High Middle Ages.[304]

Like the Virgin, Mary Magdalen's case for sainthood largely, if not entirely, derives from her relationship with Christ. The most important experience of her life, which not only proved her status as a saint, but was also a vital element of her relationships with believers, was when she witnessed the resurrection of Christ. As discussed in the first chapter, she is also known for being healed by Christ and for anointing Christ. After the death of Christ, she was said to have sailed to the south of France in order to preach the Gospel, which is a popular theme in her hagiography.[305] There is a long Latin hagiographical tradition surrounding Mary Magdalen, but the French tradition is thought to have begun around the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. The *Romance of Mary Magdalen* by Guillaume le Clerc, dating to the first third of the thirteenth century, is believed to be the first verse version of her life and one of the earliest French versions.[306] Guillaume keeps very closely to the well-known Latin tradition of Mary Magdalen's life, recording details of her ministry in France and her relationship with the ruler of Marseilles. This text will be used for an examination of Mary's attributes and efficacy.

Moving on from biblical saints to early Christian saints, Mary of Egypt is perhaps the best-known female hermit saint from the early tradition.[307] She is also infamously known as the reformed prostitute saint who embraced an ascetic life to atone for her sins. Not long before her death, Mary was found by the monk Zosimas, who began his monastic career as a pure man, but allowed his piety to transform into pride. Mary served as a type of guide for the monk, helping overcome this sin by telling him about her own struggles. Mary of Egypt's life is also important because of her association with Mary Magdalen. In the thirteenth century, the identities of Mary of Egypt and Mary Magdalen were often conflated.[308] This may have

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[304] Wace, *The Hagiographical Works*, pp. 52-3; for a list of the surviving manuscripts, see pp. 13-14.

[305] For information on the possession of Mary Magdalen's relics, see: Susan Haskins, 'Mary Magdalen and the Burgundian Question,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol. 73 (2010), pp. 99-135.

[306] Guillaume le Clerc de Normandie, 'Saint Mary Magdalen' in *Verse Saints' Lives Written in the French of England*, tr. Delbert W. Russell (Tempe, 2012), p. 65.

[307] For more, see: Ruth Mazo Karras, 'Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 1, no. 1 (1990), pp. 3-32.

[308] For more on how Mary of Egypt was associated with Mary Magdalen, see: Jansen, pp. 34-39.

occurred because they were both thought to be reformed prostitutes and applying the background story of Mary of Egypt to Mary Magdalen would further flesh out Magdalen's story of repentance. Hildebert of Lavardin's *Life of Saint Mary of Egypt* dates from the late eleventh to the early twelfth century.[309] Although this text is written in Latin, rather than in French or Anglo-Norman, it was chosen because of Hildebert's importance as a scholar and bishop. Hildebert's work was widely read among both scholastic and monastic communities.[310]

The final three saints are all virgin martyrs. Margaret was martyred during the Late Roman Empire for refusing to denounce God and marry her tormentor. She sacrificed her life and bodily integrity in order to preserve her chastity. This storyline is typical of the majority of the virgin martyr lives. Margaret's story varies slightly, as while she was imprisoned she was also attacked by a dragon and a demon, both of which she defeated. Wace's Anglo-Norman *Life of Saint Margaret* (1130-1140) is the earliest French or Anglo-Norman version of the saint's life and will be referenced in the later discussion of her attributes.[311] Although this text does not appear to have been as widely circulated as Wace's *Conception Notre Dame*, Margaret was a popular saint in France and England at this time, attested by the chapels and churches dedicated to her. It appears that her legend was already well-known, as Wace does not hint toward any audience ignorance of her life.[312] Perhaps the only alteration Wace's translation makes to the Latin tradition is that he singles out women as devotees of Margaret. The fact that the saint was said to intervene on behalf of women during childbirth further suggests that Wace's text would be read or heard by a lay audience.[313]

Like Margaret, Catherine also chose her faith over her life. In addition to suffering on behalf of her faith, she also debated with the wisest men among her captors, converting many to Christianity. The examination of Catherine's attributes and deeds will come from the Anglo-Norman *Life of St Catherine* by Clemence of Barking, written between 1163-1189,

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[309] For more on the life of Mary in the twelfth-century context, see: Duncan Robertson, 'Twelfth-Century Literary Experience: The Life of St Mary the Egyptian,' *Pacific Coast Philology* vol. 22, no. 1/2 (1987), pp. 71-77.

[310] *Saint Mary of Egypt: Three Medieval Lives in Verse*, translated and introduced by Hugh Feiss and Ronald Pepin (Kalamazoo, 2005), pp. 23-30. See also: A.G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature 1066-1422* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 64.

[311] Wace, *The Hagiographical Works*, p. 166.

[312] Ibid., pp. 162-163.

[313] Ibid., pp. 185.

which is one of the earliest vernacular lives of the saint.[314] Although this text does not appear to have been popular outside of England, Clemence's version follows the widely circulated Latin version of Catherine's life very closely.[315] However, this text is also unique in many ways and that is why it was included in this chapter. It was written by a female author, which adds another dimension to the circulation of ideas and the ways in which individuals in the twelfth century viewed women. Clemence gives this text a female perspective and a female voice.[316] It is highly unlikely that Chrétien would have read this text, but the fact that it is a part of the culture at the time makes it significant. St Catherine was known in Troyes, attested by her relics in St-Etienne, which suggests her legend would have been known as well. Clemence's version keeps closely to the Latin life of Catherine. The main difference is that Clemence gives Catherine more of a voice in the text and makes her more of a personal model for women. This is worth noting, as Chrétien gives his women greater roles in the romances as well, which will be discussed in the following chapter. It is possible that Clemence's version of Catherine's life, Chrétien's romances, and the biblical texts from Chapter 1 are all part of the same movement that is beginning more and more to use women as literary examples.

St Foy is the youngest among the aforementioned virgin martyrs. After refusing to sacrifice to Diana, Foy was tortured and then burned over a gridiron.[317] Her Passion may have been written as early as the fifth century, but the earliest manuscripts it survives in date to the tenth century.[318] The Latin *Miracles of St Foy* are dated between 1020-1060, with the first two books being written by Bernard of Angers, who studied at the cathedral school of Chartres, and the other two by anonymous authors, one of which appears to have been a monk in Conques. The readership of the miracles outside of Conques is difficult to

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[314] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Glyn S. Burgess, trans., *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths: Two Exemplary Biographies for Anglo-Norman Women* (London, 1996), p. xxiii.

[315] Ibid., p. xxvii-xxviii.

[316] Diane Auslander, 'Clemence and Catherine: The Life of St Catherine in its Norman and Anglo-Norman Context,' in *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture: Authorship and Authority in a Female Community*, eds. Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfanso Bussell (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 164.

[317] Different versions of her *Passio* use different terms for the object upon which she was burned. 'Lectum' is used in a tenth-century manuscript, but 'craticula' is used in others. Pamela Sheingorn, *The Book of Sainte Foy* (Philadelphia, 1995), p. 288, Note 5. The 'bed' could suggest sexualization of Foy's martyrdom. For more on this theme, see: Eileen Marie Harney, *The Sexualized and Gendered Tortures of the Virgin Martyrs in Medieval English Literature*, Ph.D. dissertation, Centre for Medieval Studies, Toronto, 2008.

[318] Sheingorn, pp. 21-22.

determine; however, the fact that Bernard became interested in St Foy while a student at Chartres, demonstrates the reach of Foy's legend and cult.[319] The anonymous Occitan *Chanson de Sainte Foy* was written between 1065-1070. This text does not appear to have been widely read, but it still remains an interesting example of the relationship between court literature and the cult of saints. The Chanson follows Foy's Latin Passion quite closely, while also bearing a striking similarity to a chanson de geste.[320] Simon de Walsingham wrote the Anglo-Norman *Life of Saint Foy* within the first decade of the thirteenth century. Walshingham's later text was chosen because it demonstrates that Foy was depicted similarly in both the Latin and Anglo-Norman traditions. All of these texts are valuable for their descriptions of Foy's virtues and miracles.

Attributes of Saints

It is perhaps the actions of the saints that have the most impact on believers. However, the significance of the attributes which allowed the saints to perform these actions, especially beauty, chastity, wisdom and good sense, and asceticism, cannot be overlooked. The authors of the various aforementioned texts placed a great emphasis on the attributes of the saints for two specific reasons: the first being that these virtues amplified the deeds of these saints and helped to prove their efficacy; and, the second being that, while it may have been difficult to attain miracles from the saints, the attributes of saints were imitable. Through the lives of the saints, believers would have had the ability to follow their virtuous examples in the hope of aspiring to have the same relationship with God that the saints had.

Beauty and Chastity

The most recognizable attribute of a female saint is her beauty. Beauty indicates physical attractiveness, but far more than that, it is often directly associated with nobility.[321] Beautiful women in the Middle Ages were expected to be beautiful inside and out. External beauty sometimes received greater notice, not only because it was obvious, but also because it was believed that if a woman were beautiful on the outside it was because of her inner

[319] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[320] Ibid., p. 26.

[321] Wace describes St Margaret as 'gente' and 'bele' (line 9); Clemence of Barking describes Catherine similarly, 'Maneit une jofne pulcele/ Ki mult par esteit noble e bele' (lines 135-136, via the Electronic Campsey Project, copied from MS Paris BnF n.a.f. 4503).

virtue. It also meant that it was harder for a beautiful woman to be virtuous because she would be exposed to greater temptation than an unattractive woman, an issue that will be discussed in reference to chastity.[322] Additionally, external beauty would be the first feature that a saint's captor would recognize and this is what would make him desire the saint. For this reason, a saint's beauty amplified her chastity.[323]

The beauty of child saints is described differently from that of adult saints. Take St Foy, for example: on the one hand, the prefect Dacian recognizes her beauty, noting, 'You have a body of noble bearing; you seem to be the daughter of an emperor';[324] on the other hand, there is no indication that the tormentor is sexually attracted to her, as there is with Catherine or Margaret, which will become clear. In her *Passio*, the prefect does suggest to Foy, 'Take the advice required by your beauty and your youth and abandon this religion.'[325] In this example, Dacian is attempting to use Foy's beauty and her nobility as a way to manipulate her into forsaking God. Unlike in the cases of the other two virgin martyrs, this prefect does not wish to take Foy's virginity himself, but there is perhaps the subtle implication that beauty and youth do not correlate well with the chastity demanded by Christianity. This difference is especially clear when comparing the ways their captors attempt to persuade Foy and Margaret to forsake Christianity. In the *Chanson*, in addition to telling Foy that someone so beautiful should not remain devoted to God, Dacian tells her, 'If you leave this youthful foolishness and agree to do as I desire [sacrifice to Diana], I will give you a diadem of gold and clothing of true purple. A hundred damsels will follow you, and a thousand outfitted knights.'[326] In Wace's *Life of Margaret*, the saint is also bribed, but Olybrius adds a clause stating, 'If you abandon your god and your faith, you will remain with

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[322] For more, see: D.S. Brewer, 'The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature,' *Modern Language Review* vol. 50, no. 3 (1955), pp. 257-269.

[323] Origen had pointed out that it was rare for a woman to be chaste. The fact that Judith was a beautiful and wealthy widow was meant to directly contrast with the fact that she was chaste and lived modestly as if poor. This was discussed in Chapter 1 (see pp. 43-44).

[324] *La chanson de Sainte Foi d'Agen: poème provençal du XIe siècle*, ed. Antoine Thomas (Paris: Champion, 1925), lines 241-242. 'Corps avez de genta tenor;/ Filla semblanz d'emperador.'

[325] Sheingorn, p. 34.

[326] Robert L.A. Clark, tr., 'The Song of Sainte Foy' in Sheingorn, p. 279; Thomas, *Chanson*, lines 253-257. 'Si laissaz aqest foll jovent/ E volez fairel meu talent,/ D'aur vos farei lo liament,/ De vera purpral vestiment;/ Segre vos aun donzellas cent,/ Mil cavaller ab guarniment.'

me in splendor; I shall make a wealthy woman of you and place you in my bed.'[327] Both saints are bribed by their tormentors, but only Margaret is required to have sex with hers in exchange for her life.

Aesthetically pleasing clothing is another aspect of beauty, which in the virgin martyr texts also seems to be unique to Foy. An angel clothes her in a gown after she is burned on the grid iron. It is significant that she receives this spiritual gown after she is martyred. Since she is from a noble family, one would most likely expect the author to describe her as wearing noble clothing from the beginning of the text. This may suggest that prior to martyrdom, although she is described as having beautiful corporeal features, her clothing is irrelevant because the focus is on her interior virtue. Simon de Walsingham focuses on Foy's spiritual beauty, explaining that she was 'beautiful of face, but even more beautiful of faith'; also, she was 'the most beautiful maiden after Mary'.[328] After her death, when her inner virtue had been clearly displayed through her suffering, the beauty of her martyrdom is amplified by the garment.[329] In her *Passio,* Caprais, a witness to her torment who later becomes a saint himself, is described seeing her adorned by the angel, 'And he saw the blessed martyr adorned with a brilliant snow-white garment radiant with bright light. Then he understood that she had already attained the palm of triumph and the prize of victory, which was eternal salvation.'[330] Her glittering gown is also mentioned when she appears to devotees in her miracle tales. Bernard of Angers writes, 'If we are able to accept her clothes exceeding the measure of her person as the armor or protection of abounding faith, then the golden radiance of her clothing figures overtly the illumination of spiritual grace. Why the delicacy of the embroidery or the pleating of the sleeves if they do not reveal that she was clothed in divine wisdom?'[331] Again, the beauty of her clothing, as well as her body which he also describes, is a physical indication of her spiritual virtues.

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[327] Wace, 'Life of Saint Margaret,' tr. Blacker, Burgess, and Ogden, p. 195, lines 159-162. 'Se tun deu guerpis e ta lei,/ Richement remandras o mei,/ Riche feme de tei ferai,/ Dedenz mun lit te cucherai.'

[328] Simon de Walsingham, *La Vie sainte Fey, virgine et martire,* Campsey 10. 'Bele de vis, de fei plus bele' (line 20); '…Apres Marie la plus bele' (line 48).

[329] This is not unlike Enide when she is first brought to King Arthur's court in rags and is then dressed in Guinevere's clothing after the royal couple has already been convinced of her virtues. This will be discussed in Chapter 4 (see pp. 128).

[330] 'Passion of St Foy,' tr. Sheingorn, p. 35.

[331] 'Miracles of St Foy,' tr. Sheingorn, 1.1, pg. 46; *Liber Miraculorum Sancte Fidis,* ed. Luca Robertini (Spoleto, 1994), p. 81. '…nam preclarum in se hec eadem gerunt portentum, siquidem vestes mensuram persone

The beauty of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen is described differently from that of the virgin martyr saints. One likely reason for this is because they have a biblical tradition supporting their sanctity and authors would only need to recount their lives. Non-biblical saints would need their attributes described in detail in order to defend their claim to sanctity. The Virgin gave birth to Christ and Mary Magdalen was healed by, repented to, and anointed Christ. It is possible that this is the reason why references to the physical attributes of the Virgin and Mary Magdalen are typically used to highlight their biblical roles. For instance, when describing Mary Magdalen preaching in France, Guillaume le Clerc writes, 'Many who found her quite beautiful paid attention to her argument, and listened to her quietly, for she spoke most nobly. And it was not surprising that her beautiful crimson lips, which had kissed the feet of God, knew how to speak courteously.'[332] Even though he is referring to a biblical event, there is still the indication that physical beauty is related to spiritual beauty. Implying that those she preached to listened to her because she was beautiful, probably suggests that her inner virtue was so great that it was physically visible to everyone. This is the event that authors of biblical exposition devote a great deal of attention to as well. Referring to Mary kissing Christ's feet in her life may also be highlighting the impending conversion of those she is preaching to, or this may be suggesting a model of proper penitence to Mary's devotees.

Unlike the aforementioned saints, Mary of Egypt is the only one who intentionally loses her beauty on the path to sanctity. Unlike Margaret, Catherine, or Foy, when Mary was a beautiful young woman, she did not resist sexual temptation, but rather sold herself in prostitution and even paid men for sex.[333] When she embraced an eremitic life, she exposed her naked body to the elements of the desert. Hildebert describes her as 'stained by rain-storms, black from the sun, bent by old age, hairy in her exposed parts, uncovered in parts

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excedentes, armaturam sive protectionem exuberantis fidei possumus accipere, quarum aureus fulgor spiritalis gratie illuminationem aperte figurat. Quid subtilitas picture manicarumve rugositas, nisi divine sapientie indaginem prefert?'

[332] Guillaume le Clerc, 'The Romance of Mary Magdalen,' tr. Delbert Russell, p. 188; *De sainte Marie Magdalene*, Campsey 5, lines, 51-58. 'Plusurs qui la virent tant bele/ Entendirent a la querele/ Et l'escuterent dulcement,/ Kar ele parlot mult noblement./ Et ce n'esteit mie merveillie/ [Ke] la buche (ms:est) bele et vermeillie,/ Ki les piez Deu beisé aveit,/ Curteisement parler saveit'.

[333] Hildebert of Lavardin, *Vita Beatae Mariae Aegyptiacae*, PL 171: Col. 1329D.

that should be covered.'[334] For the virgin martyrs, their beauty is a symbol of their purity; for Mary, her virtue is shown through her ugliness.[335] For instance, Hildebert conflates her ardent prayers and her aged face, writing that 'While she prayed thus, Zosimas was amazed, and he revered her mouth, her hair, her face – all possessing much piety – and her pale cheeks now full of the foreboding of death. All the assertions of blessed men are that whatever was seen, it bore witness to her virtue.'[336] Mary's weathered appearance attests to her piety and furthermore it allows her to be a vehicle of repentance for Zosimas as well. It is perhaps especially because Mary punished her body for her sexual transgression and allowed her beauty to fade, that it was possible for her to provide guidance for the monk.

It is clear from the previous examples that beauty and chastity are closely related in many of the saints' lives, as often one virtue could not be discussed without referring to the other. As previously suggested in reference to her beauty, St Foy, as a child saint, is also treated differently from the other virgin martyrs when it comes to her chastity. This may be because child saints had not entered puberty and therefore had not experienced sexual temptation, which would have required them to make a conscious effort to preserve their chastity.[337] Not having to resist temptation to preserve one's chastity would mean that it would be more of a physical state than a spiritual commitment. For instance, Clemence says of Catherine, 'In God she placed her whole life and her fair youth, and she showed disdain

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[334] Hildebert, 'The Life of Saint Mary of Egypt' in *Saint Mary of Egypt: Three Medieval Lives in Verse*, p. 81; PL 171: Col. 1326A. '…Imbribus infecta, nigra Phoebo, curva senecta,/ Hispida promendas partes, intecta tegendas…'.

[335] There is not a clear equal for Mary of Egypt in Chrétien's romances. Perhaps one example would be the damsel in the tent in *Perceval*. When her knight believes she has had sex with Perceval, rather than him having forced himself on her, the knight becomes enraged. He never lets the lady change her clothes or bathe, nor does he allow her horse to be reshod, so she is unable to ride after a while and ends up walking for what appears to be months. The difference is that Mary has sinned, where the damsel has not. The penance the damsel endures is forced upon her by her knight, despite her innocence. (*Perceval* 665-830, 3677-3931). There is only one other example of an ugly damsel in Chrétien, which is also found in *Perceval* (4584-4613). This is Hideous Damsel who appears to Perceval when he is with Arthur's knights in the forest, and tells him the consequences of not inquiring about the Grail. There is nothing to indicate who this woman is or why she is deformed. Her deformity is explained in Wolfram's *Parzival* and is discussed in greater detail in the Conclusion (see pp. 165).

[336] Hildebert, p. 85; PL 171: Col. 1327C. 'Dum sic oratur, Zosimas stupet et venerator/ Ora, comas, vultum, pietatis habentia multum,/ Pallentesque genas jam funeris omine plenas./ Quidquid spectatur, virtutem testificatur/ Cuncta beatorum sunt argumenta virorum.'

[337] Donald Weinstien and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints & Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago, 1982), p. 73.

for all mortal lovers, devoting herself to an immortal lover whose love is chaste and pure and everlasting in its delight.'[338] Unlike Margaret and Catherine, who are said to have been desired by men, there is no indication that anyone who knew Foy desired a sexual relationship with her. It is likely that chastity which was promised to God and consciously maintained was more valuable than circumstantial chastity.

Like Catherine, Margaret is also said to have pledged her chastity to God. Significantly, she did this after hearing the tales of other early Christian martyrs, which means that her chastity is being directly equated with martyrdom. Wace writes, 'When Margaret heard tell of the torment and the pain that was being suffered for the love of God by those who loved him so and believed in him, she vowed to our Creator to be chaste out of love for him; God loved her chastity and supported her in great goodness.'[339] In one sense, this is foreshadowing what is to happen to her and, in another sense, this is suggesting that chastity is a form of asceticism, similar to martyrdom. She devoted her entire life to God before ever knowing that she would sacrifice her life for God.

Despite their differing circumstances, Margaret, Catherine, and Foy are able to preserve their physical and spiritual chastity, but all three willingly sacrifice their bodily integrity though torture and death. Chastity was a prized virtue for saints primarily because it was difficult to maintain. In the case of the aforementioned female saints, their chastity represented their belief and devotion to God. Not all of these saints shared the same degree of chastity, as some, like the martyrs, were virgins, while some, like Mary of Egypt, were not. Chastity, defined here as abstinence from sex, rather than virginity, was an important saintly virtue because it was one that devotees could have imitated, even if just for limited periods of time.[340]

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[338] Clemence of Barking, 'The Life of St Catherine,' in *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths: Two Exemplary Biographies for Anglo-Norman Women*, edited and translated by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Glyn S. Burgess (London, 1996), p. 5; Campsey 13, lines 148-152. 'En Deu mist tute sa entente,/ Sa valur, sa bele juvente./ Tuz ses mortels amanz despit/ Et a nent mortel amant se prist,/ La k'amur est chaste et pure/ Et dunt deliz tut tens dure.'

[339] Wace, 'The Life of St Margarete,' p. 191, lines 73-80. 'Quant oï Marguerite dire/ E le turment e le martire/ Que cil pur amur Deu sufreient/ Qui tant l'ameient e creeient,/ Voa a nostre Creatur/ A estre chaste pur s'amur;/ E Deus ama sa chasteé/ Si la maintint en grant bunté.'

[340] Weinstien and Bell, p. 77.

Wisdom and Good Sense

Wisdom and good sense are two additional virtues of the saints. Wisdom more typically implies knowledge of God, but may also indicate mastery of factual knowledge, whereas good sense is more commonsensical and implies advanced reasoning capabilities. These terms are closely related and sometimes appear to be interchangeable in the context of the saints' lives. It is also worth noting that in many of the lives written from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, female saints are either said to be from noble families or they are ascribed courtly attributes such as nobility and courtesy. This may suggest that depictions of these women were influenced by the attributes of the nobility contemporaneous with the authors. It is possible that the audience, realizing the saints were described as if they shared their context, would have assumed that these saints had been educated.

Saints are typically praised for their wisdom and good sense regardless of whether or not they have been educated. In the case of female saints, they are often said to be as wise or wiser than they are beautiful. For instance, in the *Chanson* of St Foy, the author describes the saint stating, 'Her body was beautiful and small in size; even nobler was her wisdom [*senz*] that was within. Her eyes were pretty and her face white, and the wisdom [*senz*] of her heart was worthier still.'[341] All of the aforementioned female saints are wise in some way and this is usually expressed through their preaching or the way they communicate with their captors. Even just the act of choosing God over the Roman gods is a demonstration of wisdom.

Age also appears to be an important factor in determining how the saints' wisdom is described. For instance, in Wace's *Conception of Our Lady*, he describes the young Virgin Mary stating:

> As Mary was growing, she improved more and became more learned; she exceeded those of her age, for she was better and wiser than any other girl her age…for she was so young and so worthy, so holy and so knowledgeable; her strength, her goodness and her reputation I would not, and dare not, describe. What would the man be who would say so much about her goodness, because he knows of no greater, and her remarkable chastity?[342]

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[341] 'The Song of Saint Foy,' tr. Clark, p. 276; Chanson, VIII, lines 76-79. 'Lo corps es belz, e paucs l'estaz;/ Lo sen[z] es gencer, qe dinz jaz./ Los oilz a gentz, e blanca faz;/ El senz de cor es mais prezaz.'

[342] Wace, 'Conception Nostre Dame,' p. 85, lines 605-610, 615-622. 'Issi cum Marie cresseit,/ Plus amendot e plus saveit,/ L'enor de li e la bonté,/ Ot tut sun aage passé./ Quar mieldrë ere e plus sage/ Que nule altre de sun aage…Quar tant ert juevene e tant vaillant/ E tant saintisme e tant sachant,/ Sa vertu, sa bonté, son los,/ Ne puis escrire ne nen os./ Que sereit cil qui tant direit/ De sa bonté, que plus n'en seit,/ Sun bien, son sens, sa saintité,/ Sa merveillose chasteé.'

The young virgin martyrs are described in a similar fashion, perhaps suggesting that wisdom among young women is not as common as it is with older women. Thus, having these virtues at such a young age is another signifier of their sanctity. For instance, similarly to the Virgin, Foy was said to be 'young in age, but not young in heart [and] she desired to acquire knowledge rather than worldly possessions.'[343]

Although all of the aforementioned saints demonstrated some form of wisdom, arguably the only one whose education is emphasized is Catherine, as she openly debates the wisest men employed by her captor. Catherine's ability to defend her faith gave her a power beyond enduring martyrdom. She is portrayed as a saint who was capable of logically defending herself and her belief, rather than one who simply resigned herself to die for her faith. Furthermore, Clemence obliquely connects Catherine's knowledge to the wisdom of God, suggesting that wisdom, or at the very least the capacity to reason, is an important part of humanity made in the image of God. This is evident when Catherine first encounters the emperor in the temple and says:

> Emperor, your rank demands that you receive a greeting. If you were willing to honor God, who can damn or save you, and to love him alone, and to serve with all your heart the one who brought about your birth and will bring about your death, and if you had within you the faculty of reason, you would not worship anything other than him alone. But, instead, you worship the images made of him by his creatures. What you worship was made by man: they were given limbs and a body, but not intelligence.[344]

Unlike Catherine who debates with educated men, the other saints typically preach to or argue against those who are described as being less wise than themselves. St Foy is an example of this, as the author of the *Chanson*, who earlier praised her reason and wisdom, writes that the prefect Dacian 'had no good sense'.[345] The wisdom of the saints is ultimately expressed through their devotion to God. Educated or not, the saints are wise because they are Christian. For instance, the older Christian saints, such as Mary Magdalen and Mary of Egypt, and even the Virgin to a certain extent, are described as being pious and articulate

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[343] Walsingham, Campsey 10, lines 143-146. 'Juvencele esteit de age/ Mes ne ert jovene de curage;/ Ele desire [estre] de saver/ Mut meuz guarnie ke de aver'.

[344] Clemence, p. 6; MS Paris BnF fr. 23112, via Electronic Campsey Project, lines 201-212. '"Empereres, te dignetés/ Requiert que soies salués./ Se voloies Dieu aorer,/ Qui dampner te puet et salver,/ Lui seul amer et lui server/ Qui te fist naistre et fera morir,/ Et s'avoies en toi raison/ Ja n'ameroies se lui non./ Et tu auroies se faiture/ Qui faite est de se creature./ Che que aores, hom les fist;/ Membres et cors sans (ms:son) sens i mist."'

[345] 'Chanson,' line 133, 'Aqo fo hom non ag bon sen.'

preachers who speak nobly or courteously, but not necessarily intelligently. The virgin martyrs are wise because they have so much faith in God that they willingly die for him.

Wisdom and good sense would take on different forms in the relationship between saint and devotee. On the one hand, wisdom acquired through education would not be available to all devotees. The saint's wisdom would serve as a source of admiration for the uneducated laymen and an inspiration for the educated. On the other hand, wisdom or good sense that, according to the examples of the saints, could be achieved through devotion to God and the Christian faith was easily attainable for all believers.

Asceticism and Martyrdom

The quality that every saint embraced is a rejection of the world, but they did not all reject the world in the same way. Most of the early Christian saints received their title because they had been martyred, but once Christians were no longer persecuted those who became saints were typically ascetics. Three of the six aforementioned female saints were martyred, which has been discussed in the previous sections, but the other three were not and this warrants some explanation.

The Virgin Mary's asceticism derives from her complete devotion to God, which she demonstrated primarily through giving birth to Christ. Witnessing the crucifixion and preaching the Gospel after the death of Christ are also important aspects of her sainthood and could potentially be considered ascetic experiences. Additionally, despite the lack of biblical evidence, Wace, in his *Conception*, delves deeper into Mary's childhood and adolescence. He explains that from the age of three to the age of fourteen, Mary is raised in the temple. This implies that the Virgin is raised in a quasi-monastic setting receiving a religious education, while simultaneously devoting her chastity and life to God, prior to being wed to Joseph.[346] Wace therefore demonstrates that the Virgin lives an untraditional and spiritually rigorous life from the age of three until her death.

Despite being a late bloomer, Mary Magdalen's experiences were somewhat similar to the Virgin's, as she too devoted herself to following Christ during his life and to preaching the Gospel after his death. However, Mary Magdalen was also commonly associated with the unnamed sinner in Luke, and thus her devotion to and sacrifice for Christ would have been largely motivated by penance, as well. In the *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* the author describes St Mary stating:

[346] Wace, 'Conception,' pp. 82-88, lines 571-692.

> …the most worthy remains of the Blessed Mary Magdalene must first of all be rightly worshipped by pilgrims. She is, in fact, that glorious Mary who, in the house of Simon the Leprous, watered with her tears the feet of the Savior, wiped them off with her hair and anointed them with a precious ointment while kissing them most fervently. Accordingly, she was remitted of her many sins because she had much loved Him who loves the universe, that is to say, Jesus Christ, her Redeemer. It is she who…went by sea as far as the country of Provence, namely the port of Marseilles.[347]

This description of Mary takes up approximately one third of the entire description of the saint and her pilgrimage site. This suggests that her penance is one of the most significant aspects of her sanctity. The connection between the remission of her sins and her voyage to Marseilles also implies a close association between Mary the repentant sinner and Mary the missionary saint, perhaps suggesting that this voyage is crucial to her abstemious life.

As has been mentioned, an important relationship existed between asceticism and martyrdom in the Middle Ages. Once Christians were no longer persecuted for their faith, as the aforementioned virgin martyrs had been, some turned to asceticism in order to suffer for Christ in a way that was somewhat similar to the martyrs. For instance, the desire to be martyred was also a motivation for Crusade, as the Crusades presented an opportunity to be killed by the perceived enemies of Christ in a similar location and fashion to Christ.[348] Even with the Crusades presenting the opportunity for potential martyrdom, imitating saints such

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[347] William Melczer, tr., *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York, 1993), p. 104; *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela: A Critical Edition*, Vol. 2, ed. Paula Gerson, et.al. (London, 1998), pp. 42-44. '…primitus Beate Marie Magdalene corpus dignissimum iuste a peregrinantibus uenerandum est. Hec enim est illa Maria gloriosa, quae in domo Simonis leprosi saluatoris pedes lacrimis rigauit, capillisque suis tersit, et precioso unguento suo diligenter osculando unxit, quapropter dimissa sunt ei peccata multa, quoniam dilexit multum amatorem uniuersorum, Ihesum Cristum scilicet remissorem suum. Hec uero post dominicam Ascensionemá Iherosolimitanis horis cum Beato Maximino Cristi discipulo aliisque dominicis discipulis usque ad Prouincie patriam per mare, scilicet per portum Marsilie peruenit….' For more on the varying legends of Mary Magdalen, see: Herbert Thurston, 'St Mary Magdalen: Fact and Legend,' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* vol. 23, no. 89 (1934), pp. 110-123.

[348] The Crusades, with their emphasis on martyrdom, may also be one reason for the production of vernacular texts of the virgin martyr lives at this time as well. One may safely assume there would be a renewed interest in the subject of martyrdom in general. However, in his work on the Crusades, William Purkis emphasizes that Crusaders were largely motivated by *imitatio Christi* and were inspired to both literally and symbolically take up the cross and follow Christ into battle. Crusaders were perhaps more interested in pilgrimage than the stories of the saints. For more on spirituality during the Crusades, see: William J. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c. 1095-c.1187* (Woodbridge, 2008).

as Mary of Egypt and Mary Magdalen would have been more practical for the majority of believers. These saints could have been imitated through monastic life, clerical life, or simply through pilgrimage or penance.

The lives and miracle tales of these saints were important to believers, as they related stories of how the saints preserved their virtues, overcame enemies of the faith, and performed miraculous deeds in the name of God. Hagiography was written to provide an account of the life and miracles of a saint, but most importantly to provide virtuous examples for Christians to follow.[349] Gregory the Great emphasized that though the saints were capable of performing miracles, their virtues were more important; miracles were an outward sign of the grace within.[350] Perhaps more important to devotees than hearing about the virtues of the saint was the opportunity to be physically close to the saint's relics in order to experience these wonders for themselves.[351]

Saints and Their Relics

In the Middle Ages, there existed a hierarchy of relics: primary relics were corporeal, that is belonging to the body of the saint; secondary relics were objects that came into contact with the saint such as his or her clothing or possessions; and tertiary relics were objects or mediums, such as cloth, oil, jewelry, or stones, that touched the saint's relics or tomb.[352] In the High Middle Ages saints' bodies were broken apart, which allowed their relics to multiply in power as they became more accessible throughout Christendom.[353] After this occurred, a part of a body, or indeed a fragment of that part, was considered equally as

[349] Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 510.

[350] William McCready, *Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto, 1989), p. 4, 23.

[351] André Vauchez argues that believers were more interested in the saints' miraculous intervention, rather than their virtues. *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, tr. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1997), p. 434.

[352] In Chapter 4, when relics are compared with tokens or objects belonging to Chrétien's ladies, all three types of relics will be examined.

[353] Caroline Walker Bynum and Paula Gerson, 'Body-Part Reliquaries and Body Parts in the Middle Ages,' *Gesta* vol. 36, no. 1 (1997), p. 4; Cynthia Hahn, 'The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries,' *Gesta* vol. 36, no. 1 (1997), p. 21.

efficacious as the whole body.[354] This was true whether the relic was a limb, a sliver of bone, or a piece of cloth.[355]

There was also another hierarchy of relics created by the hierarchy of the saints themselves. For instance, even though Christ and the Virgin Mary were believed to have been assumed into heaven, leaving no bodily relics behind, their secondary and tertiary relics would be more valuable than the primary relics of any other saint. The efficacy and desirability of saints' relics would normally be, in descending order, first, relics from biblical saints and early Christian martyrs, second, relics of a founder of a Church or an important bishop or abbot, and third, relics of medieval saints.[356]

Tertiary relics varied and often included objects that would not typically have been considered efficacious before having contact with the saint's remains. The precious stones and metals that adorned the reliquary, the water poured over the saints' bones or tomb, and even the oil in the lamps that burned above the shrine would be considered efficacious tertiary relics.[357] In some cases, even objects fashioned out of materials that dated back to the time of Christ would be considered relics. This is the case of the carved wood statue of the Virgin Mary, known as the Black Madonna of Rocamadour. It is believed that this statue served in lieu of Marian relics, which the church at Rocamadour did not possess, but it is difficult to know for certain that the present statue existed when the church's miracle collection was written.[358] The miracle tales suggest that although many pilgrims visited this church, not all of them were convinced of the statue of Mary's efficacy within. In one example, a knight who has returned from pilgrimage in the Holy Land visits Mary's statue at Rocamadour and openly doubts its efficacy because it is unlike the other shrines he has seen.

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[354] G.J.C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden, 1995), p. 15.

[355] Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1990), p. 34.

[356] Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Aldershot, 1987), pp. 33-4. Ward notes that distance from the shrine also played an important role in determining the efficacy of the relics, as well as the type of miracle that was being sought.

[357] Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 26.

[358] Marcus Bull, tr. *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 40. For a thorough description of a similar Romanesque Marian statue, see: Margaret B. Freeman, 'A Romanesque Virgin from Autun,' *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* New Series, vol. 8, no. 4 (1949), pp. 112-116.

Mary responds by crippling him until he publicly proclaims the efficacy of her church at Rocamadour.[359]

Housing the Saints: Reliquaries, Tombs, and Shrines

The ways in which relics were displayed was also believed to influence their efficacy. For instance, in the miracles of St Foy, Bernard records that a man who believed the statue of Foy to be comparable to a pagan idol was beaten by the saint in a dream and died the next day.[360] The miracle performed by Foy proved that the statue which housed her relics was not an idol, but was instead a way for devotees to connect with the saint on a corporeal level. Bernard writes that the statue had two functions, 'The image represents the pious memory of the holy virgin before which, quite properly and with abundant remorse, the faithful implore her intercession for their sins. Or, the statue is to be understood more intelligently in this way: it is a repository of holy relics, fashioned into a specific form only because the author wished it.'[361] Here, Bernard distinguishes between the ways in which the lay faithful and the educated faithful perceived the statue of Foy. He appears to conclude that the statue played a role in the spirituality of devotees, but on the other hand was only as valuable as the relics it held inside.

The most important element of a reliquary, including the aforementioned statue, is certainly the relic inside, but many reliquaries, tombs, and shrines cover or partly obscure the relic. Therefore, it would be necessary for the significance and power of the relic to be represented by the grandeur of the reliquary.[362] This is not unlike the female saint herself, whose exterior beauty was an outward symbol of her interior virtue. For instance, the bejeweled statue of St Foy communicated to her devotees that the relics inside represented her entire body and thus they were powerful. Just as the statue represented the living saint, the jewels and gilding represented the virtues of the saint. The jewels in Foy's statue have

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[359] *Les Miracles de Notre-Dame Roc-Amadour au XIIe Siècle: Text et Traduction d'Après les Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, ed. Edmond Albe (Paris, 1907), 3.11, pp. 288-292.

[360] *Liber Miraculorum*, I.13, pp. 112-114.

[361] Miracles of St Foy, tr. Sheingorn, p. 79; *Liber Miraculorum*, I.14, p. 114. 'Nullus ergo argumentandi locus relictus est, utrum sancte Fidis effigiata species venerationi debeat haberi…sancte virginis piam memoriam, apud quam multo decentius ac corpiosiore fidelis cordis compunctione, eius pro peccatis efficax imploretur intercessio. Vel quod prudentissimum est intelligi, sanctorum pignerum potius hec capsa est ad votum artificis cuiusvis figure modo fabricate….'

[362] Cynthia Hahn, 'What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?,' *Numen* vol. 57 (2010), p. 289-290.

been described as 'glittering as if transfigured by a divine presence'.[363] The materials adorning reliquaries were perhaps especially significant for shrines, but also carried significance for portable relics as well.

Portable relics were common from the earliest origins of the cult of saints, but may have become more popular with the growing interest in pilgrimage and the Crusades.[364] Thus, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was common practice to carry relics on one's person, especially when making long journeys. This sometimes also included taking the host on Crusade or pilgrimage.[365] Since the laity were not typically considered worthy enough to carry corporeal relics or the host, the most common portable relics were tertiary.[366] Portable relics were also worn contained in jewelry, such as pendants or rings.[367] The setting of the relic in jewelry was significant because certain stones were thought to heighten the efficacy of the relic, when worn close to the skin.[368] Rings were not only one of the most common settings for portable relics in jewelry, but were also the most common jewelry *ex voto* left at the shrine of a saint, though other jewelry was also left. As will be discussed in reference to miracles, St Foy was particularly fond of rings.[369] Relics, whether set in jewelry or not, were also bequeathed as gifts to signify a variety of relationships.[370] Relics contained in jewelry or treated as private, personal possessions will be an important aspect of the following chapter, comparing the ladies' tokens and possessions to relics.

Pilgrimage

As previously mentioned, another significant aspect of relics is their location. In the twelfth century, the three most important pilgrimage sites were those of Christ in Jerusalem,

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[363] Eleanor Vernon, 'Romanesque Churches of the Pilgrimage Routes,' *Gesta* Pre-Serial Issue, Annual of the International Center of Romanesque Art Inc. (1963), p. 12. For more on women in medieval image culture, see: Susan L. Smith, *The Power of Women: A* Topos *in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia, 1995). For the statue of St Foy, see: Beate Fricke, *Fallen idols, risen saints: Sainte Foy of Conques and the revival of monumental sculpture in medieval art* (Turnhout, 2015).

[364] Hahn, 'The Voices of the Saints,' p. 22.

[365] Snoek, p. 90, 97-8.

[366] Pierre-André Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale* (Paris, 1985), p. 42.

[367] Finucane, p. 27.

[368] R.W. Lightbown, *Mediaeval European Jewellery: with a catalogue of the collection in the Victoria & Albert Museum* (London, 1992), p. 78.

[369] Ibid., p. 75.

[370] Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 304.

St Peter in Rome, and St James in Compostela.[371] St James' shrine is perhaps the most relevant to a discussion of French pilgrims, as there were many routes to Santiago, which passed through important pilgrimage sites in France. For instance, the shrines of Mary Magdalen and St Foy, as well as churches dedicated to the Virgin, were stops along these routes. The *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* opens with this description of the routes:

> There are four roads which, leading to Santiago, converge to form a single road at Puente la Reina, in Spanish territory. One crosses Saint-Gilles, Montpellier, Toulouse, and the pass of Somport; another goes through Notre-Dame of Le Puy, Sainte-Foy of Conques and Saint-Pierre of Moissac; another traverses Sainte-Marie-Madeleine of Vézelay, Saint-Léonard in the Limousin as well as the city of Périgueux; still another cuts through Saint-Martin of Tours,[372] Saint-Hilaire of Poitiers, Saint-Jean-d'Angély, Saint-Eutrope of Saintes and the city of Bordeaux.[373]

After prayer, pilgrimage was probably the most popular way to beseech the aid of a specific saint in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Pilgrimages were made to the shrines of saints – where the believer could look, or possibly touch, the relics of the saints – either to request a favor or to give thanks for answered prayer. Pilgrimages were typically undertaken to demonstrate special reverence for a saint in order to gain a worldly or spiritual favor.[374] Miracles occurred on various parts of a pilgrimage, including on the journey to the site, at the shrine, and on the way back. The type of miracle and speed with which miracles occurred were typically related to the distance from the site itself.[375] However, distance was not the only factor that determined when a miracle would occur, as it sometimes depended on the

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[371] Ward, p. 110.

[372] Although not the pilgrimage site of a female saint, the shrine of St Martin is worth noting, as it was another significant stop for pilgrims. This saint was referenced by Chrétien in the *Knight of the Cart*, which will be mentioned briefly in Chapter 4 (see pp. 124).

[373] *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago*, Book V, Ch. 1, p. 85; Gerson, ed., p. 10 'Quatuor vie sunt que ad Sanctum Iacobum tendentes in unum ad Pontem Regine in horis Yspanie coadunantur. Alia per Sanctum Egidium et Montem Pessulanum et Tholosam et Portus Asperi tendit; alia per Sanctam Mariam Podii et Sanctum Fidem de Conquis et Sanctum Petrum de Moyssaco incedit; alia per Sanctam Mariam Magdalenam Viziliaci et Sanctum Leonardum Lemovicensem et urbem Petragoricensem pergit; alia per Sanctum Martinum Tvronensem et Sanctum Ylarium Pictauensem et Sanctum Iohannem Angeliacensem et Sanctum Eutropium Sanctonensem et urbem Burdegalensem uadit.'

[374] Finucane, pp. 45-6.

[375] Sigal, p. 63-4, 73.

patience of the devotee or the effort he or she put toward receiving the miracle.[376] Miracles performed with the aid of relics, or in close proximity to the shrine of the saint, were usually more effective than those performed in their absence.

The relationship between a devotee and a saint could be perceived as one of mutual obligation and reciprocity.[377] If a devotee fulfilled an oath to a saint, typically by leaving an offering at the shrine, and did not receive favor from the saint, then he or she could reproach that saint or seek aid from another.[378] There were, however, reasons why saints did not grant miracles to their devotees. For instance, if the latter did not fulfill their oath, if they entered or left the sanctuary without permission, or if they did not undertake or complete a pilgrimage.[379]

The overall goal of any pilgrim was to receive a miracle from the saint whose shrine he or she was visiting. Miracles related to health and healing were the most common and are estimated to account for ninety percent of all miracles, including those which both did and did not occur as a result of pilgrimage.[380] Healing was a miracle that transcended class, as it was the most sought by both peasants and the nobility. Monks differed from both groups, as they primarily sought or received miracles in the form of visions.[381]

In addition to sometimes being class and occupationally specific, it appears that miracles may have also been location specific. Local shrines were not believed to have the same power as some international shrines, but they were the most accessible and because of that, the most commonly visited. Local saints were more frequently beseeched for healing than international saints. For instance, St Peter was visited for penance and St James was visited for protection in battle and on pilgrimage.[382] These are the miracles that these two male saints were known for, but they were also beseeched for healing as well. The female saints, with the exception of Foy, were international saints, but they had a local presence, as attested by their relics and shrines in St-Etienne. With the spread of pilgrimage routes which connected international shrines, local shrines also gained exposure. The miracles of some of

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[376] Ibid., p. 71. See also: Sigal, *Les marcheurs de Dieu: pèlerinages et pèlerins au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1974).

[377] Sigal, *L'homme*, p. 78.

[378] Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 107, 109.

[379] Sigal, *L'homme*, p. 75.

[380] Finucane, p. 59.

[381] Sigal, *L'homme*, p. 305.

[382] Ward, p, 113.

the female saints will be discussed in the following section. The aid of these saints was beseeched through both pilgrimage and prayer.

Miracles

The miracles saints performed for men and women while living created a legacy for their powers, which continued to be valued by their devotees after their deaths. The miracles performed before and after death are often interrelated, as the deeds they accomplished while living would often be associated with their most common posthumous miracles. This section will examine some of the miracles of the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, and the virgin martyrs.

The miracles recorded in saints' lives were typically meant to amplify the virtues of the saints. For instance, while Margaret was being held prisoner before she was executed, she defeated a dragon that appeared in her cell, as well as a demon. She was able to defeat the dragon because she had promised her virginity to God.[383] Furthermore, the demon himself said, 'I marvel at this maiden, who is so comely and beautiful, and who has surpassed her family, both father and mother, in goodness. Adorned with fine virtues, God has rightly drawn her to him.'[384] Margaret's ability to miraculously overcome the dragon and demon is equated with her physical attributes and virtues. It should also be noted that it was the intention of the dragon and demon to rob Margaret of her virginity as well. It appears that resisting the temptation of her captor was admirable, but resisting the attack of the dragon and demon was miraculous.[385] Additionally, this is a message to devotees that if Margaret was capable of withstanding these extreme challenges, then they should be capable of resisting the temptation of the world.

In another example from the *Romance of Mary Magdalen*, Guillaume le Clerc provides what is perhaps a unique living miracle account. After the death of Christ, Mary journeys to Marseille where she preaches to individuals who are worshipping idols. She convinces the ruler to convert to Christianity by interceding on his behalf and allowing him

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[383] Wace, 'Margaret,' lines 395-396.

[384] Ibid, tr. Blacker, Burgess, Ogden, p. 209, lines 453-558. 'Merveille ai de ceste pucele/ Qui tant est avenant e bele,/ Qui a vencu sun parenté/ E pere e mere de bunté./ De bunes vertuz aornee/ L'a Deus a sei bien aturnee.'

[385] It may perhaps be significant that Yvain, on his journey to redemption, also defeats a dragon and two half-demon brothers. This is not to suggest that Chrétien is modelling the knight off of Margaret, but I do think that his extreme challenges are meant to demonstrate that he truly did penance after forgetting Laudine and going mad. This is not unlike the challenges that saints like Margaret undergo in order to prove their devotion to God.

and his wife to conceive a child. After this happens, the ruler and his pregnant wife leave on pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher, but on the journey his wife dies in childbirth and he leaves her body on an island with the baby. Mary, who is still living at this time, hears the ruler's prayers and miraculously keeps the child alive by having him nurse from his dead mother. The ruler continues his pilgrimage, meets St Peter and receives guidance from him for two years. He then returns to the island to discover that his child is still alive and is nursing from the perfectly preserved corpse of his wife. He prays to Mary again, confirming his faith in God and his wife comes back to life. The family returns to Marseille, tears down the temple, erects a church, and everyone is converted to Christianity.

The miracles performed by Mary Magdalen are important in their own right, as she, through God, is able to keep the child alive and later resurrect the mother. What is unusual is that she is able to do this from a distance, via the prayers of the ruler, even though she is still living. It is likely that Mary occupies the role of a living intercessor in this example because this highlights the significance of not only the ruler's pilgrimage, but also all future pilgrimages. Guillaume notes that Mary makes a cross for the ruler to wear and by doing so makes him the first pilgrim.[386] Mary protecting him, his son, and resurrecting his wife from a distance may be foreshadowing what all saints will do for their devotees in the future, even and especially after the saints are dead. Furthermore, it suggests that such intervention could occur while devotees are on pilgrimage.

Some of the miracles that would later be associated with the virgin martyr saints were recorded in their *vitae* and were promised to devotees in the text directly before or following the deaths of the saints. For instance, when Margaret is about to be executed, she prays to God:

> If a woman is in labor, and calls upon me in her hour of need, fair Lord God, give them help and preserve both their lives. Those who are brought to judgement and remember my name do likewise for them in my name, so that they do not suffer through false judgement. Those who pray to you for love of me and seek pardon for their sins, let them be pardoned in my name and come to confession.[387]

[386] Guillaume, lines 205-207.

[387] Wace, 'Margaret,' p. 217; lines 647-657. 'Se feme est en travail d'enfant/ E par besuing m'alt reclamant,/ Bels sire Deus, lor fai aïe/ E l'un e l'altre met a vie./ Qui en jugement mis sera/ E de mun num li membrera,/ Par mun num li fai ensement/ Que n'ait mal pur fals jugement/ Qui pur m'amur te prïerunt/ E de pechié pardun querrunt,/ En num de mei lur fai pardun/ E venir a confessïun.'

In her prayer to God right before her death, Margaret states some of the miracles that she will later perform as a saint. Similarly, when describing the tomb and church built for St Foy after her death, Simon of Walsingham states that because of the love Foy had for Christ, he showed mercy to her devotees by healing them and raising the dead.[388] Also, when St Catherine is beheaded, her blood flows white like milk and God transports her to Mount Sinai, where her body is then entombed. Clemence writes, 'From the tomb where she lies, oil flows even now. By this oil many are cured of their illness, to the praise of the creator for whom she suffered mortal pain.'[389] The *vitae* of these saints describe the miracles that some performed during life, as with Mary Magdalen, and briefly foreshadows those that they would perform after death, as with Margaret and Foy.

Collections of miracle tales provide the richest source for in depth descriptions of the miracles medieval devotees were said to have received from their saints. The posthumous miracles performed by various saints are typically similar to one another. The majority of the miracles are related to the health of the devotee or devotee's relatives. For instance, in the *Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*, among her many miracles, Mary cures a knight who has been run through with a lance.[390] She also restores the sanity of a mentally ill woman, who has failed to be cured by walking among the shrines of other saints.[391] Similarly, St Foy restores a man's sight after his eyes have been removed, heals a blind and lame man after another saint fails to do so, and even resurrects a mule.[392]

These saints are described not only as being able to heal their devotees, but also as being able to heal them when others could not. Foy heals the blind and lame man after he receives no aid from St Marius the Confessor. While the man is sleeping at Marius' shrine, a voice comes to him and tells him to go to Foy's shrine. Once he arrives at the entrance to the church at Conques he is immediately cured.[393] The author of the miracle tales is clearly conveying that Foy is more efficacious than Marius. Similarly, in the *Miracles de Notre Dame de Soissons*, Gautier de Coinci compares the Virgin to the greatest physician and

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[388] Walsingham, lines 895-914.

[389] Clemence of Barking, p. 42; Campsey MS Paris BnF fr. 23112, lines 2633-2638. 'Del saint sepulture ou ele gist,/ Encore a cest jor ole en ist./ Par icele ole sont sane/ Plusor de lor enfermeté,/ A loenge le Creatour,/ Por cui souffri mortel dolor.'

[390] *Roc-Amadour*, 1. 14, pp. 100-101.

[391] *Roc-Amadour*, 1.28, p. 120.

[392] *Liber Miraculorum*, 1.1, pp. 78-86; 1.29, pp.133-34; 1.3, pp. 91-92.

[393] *Liber Miraculorum*, 1.29, pp. 133-134.

surgeon of Montpellier and Salerno, explaining that she is better even than them at curing the infirm.[394] Describing these saints as efficacious healers is meant to draw pilgrims to their churches, as all of these miracles occur when devotees have visited their shrines.[395]

In addition to healing, protection is also a common miracle. In one account, a pilgrim on his way to St Foy's shrine at Conques is taken prisoner by his enemy. Despite being bound tightly, his restraints are miraculously broken and he completes his pilgrimage.[396] Foy also intervenes on behalf of a pilgrim who is taken prisoner by Saracens during a voyage to the Holy Sepulcher. He fears for his life and calls upon the aid of St Foy, who not only frees him, but prevents his sheepskin garment, which he wears as a symbol of his pilgrimage, from being burned.[397] By recording these kinds of interventions the author conveys to the pilgrim that if he is devoted to the saint, he will be protected on his journey to and from the shrine. In the case of the second pilgrim, he was protected even when he was not on a pilgrimage to Conques, demonstrating that Foy was powerful enough to intervene from a distance on behalf of her devotees.

Miracles of vengeance upon those who doubt the saint's efficacy or who do not follow through with a promise to a saint are also very common. In some cases, this is probably a form of propaganda to ensure that the saint's shrine continues to be visited.[398] In another example, Mary heals a knight who has promised to go on a pilgrimage to her church in return for a miracle. When he does not do so, she causes his illness to return until he devotes himself to prayer; he is then healed and goes on pilgrimage.[399] Saints are also known to punish those who either do not give them offerings or take their offerings away. For instance, a woman who journeys to St Foy's shrine leaves her ring behind at home, as she knows the saint commonly appears to pilgrims and asks them for their rings. When the woman returns home, Foy appears to her in a dream and makes the woman ill until she begins to make her journey back to Conques to offer the saint the ring.[400] These examples demonstrate the importance of reciprocity in the relationship between saint and devotee. If an

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[394] Gautier de Conci, *Les Miracles de Notre Dame de Soissons*, p. 120, lines 6-8.

[395] For a discussion of this within the context of monasticism, see: Giles Constable, 'Monachisme et pèlerinage au Moyen Age,' *Revue Historique* T. 258, Fasc. 1 (523) (1977), pp. 3-27.

[396] *Liber Miraculorum*, pp. 167-168, II. 6.

[397] *Liber Miraculorum*, pp. 208-209, III. 19.

[398] Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 512.

[399] *Roc-Amadour*, pp. 294-96, 3.14.

[400] *Liber Miraculorum*, p. 119, I.18.

offering is not made to the saint when it is promised, or if a devotee hides potential offerings from the saint, then he or she will be punished.

All of the miracles performed by the aforementioned female saints, both during life and after death, reveal the complex relationships that they had with devotees. They were capable of interceding in virtually every aspect of their devotees' lives. As long as the saint received devotion in the form of prayers, offerings, or pilgrimage, they would perform miracles for supplicants. The saints were capable of performing these miracles because, during their lifetimes, they had possessed the virtues and attributes necessary to cultivate special relationships with God.

Summary

There is no doubt that the saints were a vital component of popular piety in the High Middle Ages. The small selection of aforementioned female saints is but a glimpse into the complex nature of the cult of saints. Everyone including the poor, the nobility, clerics, and monks beseeched the aid of saints through prayer, pilgrimage, and offerings. As the *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* demonstrated, local and international shrines were revered by devotees. Furthermore, not everyone had to undertake a pilgrimage to come into contact with a saint, as there was likely a church near them that possessed relics; having access to St-Etienne suggests that this would have been the case for Chrétien.

The cult of saints, as a religious phenomenon that had the potential to impact the daily lives of individuals from all social classes and occupations, permeated medieval society and culture. The Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes were no exception. The ladies in these narratives are described similarly to the aforementioned female saints, as they share the attributes of beauty, chastity, wisdom, and asceticism. Furthermore, some of the ways in which the knights interact with their ladies are not unlike the way medieval believers interacted with the saints. The ladies are not typically said to perform miracles, but they do intercede on behalf of their knights, fulfilling their wishes, and receiving some type of offering or devotion in return. The next chapter will examine some of these similarities to reveal how the cult of saints influenced the depictions of Chrétien's ladies.

The reason why hagiographic sources in this chapter, and biblical exposition from the first chapter, were covered individually and in detail is because they are not simply case studies with which Chrétien's work may be compared. Instead, they are the types of sources and ideas that Chrétien would have been exposed to, and it is from these sources that his

perception of women and the feminine would have formed. This perception would have then become the symbols which may be found in his romances.

Chapter 4: Ladies and Their Tokens, Saints and Their Relics

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which ladies and their tokens bear similarities to saints and relics.[401] In some cases, Chrétien draws a direct comparison between the two. For instance, as previously mentioned in *The Knight of the Cart*, he compares Guinevere to a relic. In other cases, Chrétien alludes to this relationship. For example, he describes how Lancelot prized Guinevere's hair, from the comb, more than prayers to St Martin or St James, two saints known for their connection with pilgrimage. Both of these examples will be explored in greater detail below.

It should be noted that the female saints in the previous chapter were not typically said to perform miracles while living; most miracles were posthumous. The clear exception was in the *Romance of Mary Magdalen*, where Mary performed miracles for the ruler of Marseilles by keeping his child alive and resurrecting his wife.[402] Additionally, when she gives the ruler the cross to wear, this is an object that will later become one of Mary's secondary relics, but it is given to him while she is still alive. Even though this object is a religious symbol and a potential relic, it is not unlike a token given to a knight by his lady. Mary Magdalen is said to act as an intercessor between the ruler and God while still living, whereas similar miracles, recorded in miracle tales, are associated with the shrine of a dead saint. Comparing the romance ladies to saints and their tokens to relics warrants mentioning the caveat that the ladies are living, while the saints are not. Perhaps the example of Mary Magdalen adds greater validity to this comparison.

This chapter will first examine the qualities that the ladies share with saints, or qualities that appear to be saint-like. This will be followed by an examination of the similarities between parts of the ladies' bodies or their tokens and relics. As with biblical women, the argument is not that Chrétien was necessarily drawing directly from the inspiration of the cult of saints to depict his ladies, but rather that the cult of saints was such a vital component of his milieu that these models pervaded his culture and would have been available to him.

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[401] S.C. Aston briefly considers Chrétien's knights as saints in 'The Saint in Medieval Literature, *The Modern Language Review* vol. 65, no. 4, (1970), p. xxxvii, xxxix.

[402] See Chapter 3, pp. 115-116.

Guinevere as Relic, Saint, and Shrine

Perhaps one of the most significant comparisons between a lady and a saint, or at least the one that has been given the most attention by scholars,[403] is when Lancelot and Guinevere consummate their relationship and Chrétien compares the queen to a relic. This scene and the scene where Lancelot discovers the comb containing Guinevere's hair will be discussed in relation to the veneration of saints and relics, as a precursor to the discussion of the other ladies in Chrétien's romances.

After the lady with whom Lancelot lodges releases him from his promise to have sex with her, she accompanies him for part of his journey to find Guinevere. While Lancelot is searching for Guinevere, he encounters a gilded ivory comb sitting on a stone slab along the path and learns that it belongs to the queen. The lady accompanying him requests the comb, which he gives her, but not before removing the hair.[404] Chrétien writes, 'Never will the eye of man see anything receive such honor as the strands of hair when he began to adore them. He touched them a hundred thousand times to his eyes, to his mouth, to his forehead, and to his cheeks.'[405] After rubbing her hair all over his face, Lancelot places it under his tunic, against his skin, and by his heart.[406]

He is so entranced by the hair that he nearly falls from his horse and has to be supported by the lady.[407] This the second time that Lancelot nearly falls when he sees Guinevere, or at least a part of her. The first occasion was when he watched her from a window and wanted to throw himself from it when he could not see her anymore.[408] The same idea is at work in both scenes: Lancelot loses all control at the sight of Guinevere because he believes she is worthy of being placed above everything, including his safety.

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[403] See the discussion of these sources in the Introduction, pp. 6-7.

[404] For more on the significance of hair in the Middle Ages, see: Robert Bartlett, 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, vol. 4 (1994), pp. 43-60; Roberta Milliken, *Ambiguous Locks: An Iconography of Hair in Medieval Art and Literature* (Jefferson, North Carolina, 2012).

[405] *Lancelot* 1460-1465. 'Ja mes oel d'ome ne verront/ nule chose tant enorer,/ qu'il les comance a aorer,/ et bien .c^m. foiz les toche/ et a ses ialz, et a sa bouche,/ et a son front, et a sa face…'.

[406] *Lancelot* 1460-1469.

[407] *Lancelot* 1384-1495.

[408] *Lancelot* 535-582.

Although the encounter with the comb evokes a humorous image of a knight unhorsed by hair, there is more to this scene.[409] It is highly significant that Lancelot freely gives the comb to the lady accompanying him, but insists on keeping the hair, which, as some scholars have noted, he treats like a relic.[410] He prefers the hair over the comb because it is actually a part of Guinevere's body. Lancelot's reactions to the hair suggest that he believes it has the power to connect him with Guinevere. Since the hair is hers, it maintains the value and power of her person. Relics link humanity with the divine because saints are intercessors between God and man and their relics are the conduits through which humanity may receive this intercession. Similarly, a lady's objects, especially those that have touched her body, link her with her knight. Lancelot touching Guinevere's hair makes him feel as if the queen is touching him back. In the Middle Ages, hair was gifted as a love token, as it was easy to remove and give to another person.[411] Additionally, hair relics were originally one of the most common, as hair was easily removed from a saint, while preserving bodily integrity.[412] For Chrétien, the hair is a precursor to the time when he will refer to Guinevere as Lancelot's saint. Since Guinevere is living, the only bodily relic readily accessible is her hair.

Lancelot discovering Guinevere's hair on quest may be emphasizing his symbolic role as pilgrim, as suggested by Hoffsten.[413] This will be discussed further with reference to his night with the queen. Finding the hair on his pilgrimage-like quest may be compared to taking a souvenir from the journey to a shrine.[414] The argument for Lancelot as pilgrim is well-supported by Chrétien's description of the value the hair holds for Lancelot:

> A cart full of emeralds and rubies he would not accept in exchange for them. He did not believe ulcers or any other illness would ever afflict him. He had nothing but contempt for essence of pearl, medicine for pleurisy, and antidotes

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[409] Noble, *Love and Marriage*, p. 65-68.

[410] Hoffsten, p. 113; Jørgen Bruhn, *Lovely Violence: Chrétien de Troyes' Critical Romances* (Newcastle, 2010), pp. 85-87. Topsfield (pp. 71-72, 133-34) compares Lancelot's reaction to that of Alexander encountering Soredamors' hair, suggesting that both knights have a quasi-spiritual experience with their ladies' hair. For the argument that Lancelot is fetishizing the hair, see: Robert S. Sturges, 'La(ca)ncelot,' *Arthurian Interpretations* vol. 4, no. 2 (1990), p. 21.

[411] Kimberley Knight, 'Hair in the Middle Ages,' Internet Archaeology 42, 2016. See also: Margaret Sleeman, 'Medieval hair tokens,' *Forum for Modern Language Studies* vol. 17, no. 4 (1981), pp. 322-36.

[412] Arnold Angenendt, 'Relics and their veneration,' in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, eds. M. Bagnoli, H. A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and J. Robinson (London, 2011), pp. 22-23.

[413] Hoffsten, p. 113.

[414] For more on souvenirs and pilgrimage badges, see: Brian Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (London, 1998).

> for poison, even for prayers to Saint Martin and Saint James. Such faith was his in this hair that he needed no other aid.[415]

The value of the hair is also exemplified in its comparison with gold. Chrétien states, '…gold refined a hundred thousand times and melted down just as frequently, would be darker than the night is in comparison to the brightest summer day of the year, were you to see the gold and the hair placed side by side.'[416]

Chrétien's statements suggest many parallels between the hair and a relic. Guinevere's hair is ranked above any cure, including magic and prayers to the saints. More significantly, St James was the patron saint of pilgrims and St Martin's shrine was a popular stopping point in France for pilgrims journeying to Santiago de Compostela.[417] Lancelot is placed in the role of a pilgrim who has acquired a part of the body of the woman whom he considers to be his saint. The fact that Lancelot places the hair by his heart, against his skin, also bears mentioning. On the one hand, he would first and foremost be holding this part of the queen's body near his heart as a gesture of love. On the other hand, wearing the hair beneath his shirt and presumably beneath his armor is reminiscent of a penitent pilgrim or Crusader wearing a hairshirt. Although Guinevere's hair is unlikely to irritate the skin to the same extent, like a hairshirt reminding the penitent to persevere in his discomfort to attain God's mercy,[418] her hair is there to remind Lancelot that his goal is to rescue the queen despite any hardships he may encounter.

Something more should also be said about the comb which held Guinevere's hair. Even though Lancelot does not keep it, the comb redirects his attention to the queen. Comb relics are not unheard of, but they typically derive from the liturgical combs previously used by the saint when he was a priest or a bishop; the comb of Saint Cuthbert is perhaps the most

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[415] Staines, p. 188; *Lancelot* 1470-1478. 'N'en preïst pas chargié un char/ d'esmeraudes ne d'escharboncles;/ ne cuidoit mie que reoncles/ ne autres max ja més le praigne;/ dïamargareton desdaigne/ et pleüriche et tirïasque,/ neïs saint Martin et saint Jasque;/ car an ces chevox tant se fie/ qu'il n'a mestier de lor aïe…'.

[416] *Lancelot* 1488-1494. '…ors .c^m. foiz esmerez/ et puis autantes foiz recuiz/ fust plus oscurs que n'est la nuiz/ contre le plus bel jor d'esté/ qui ait an tot cest an esté,/ qui l'or et les chevols veïst,/ si que l'un lez l'autre meïst.'

[417] Hoffsten, p. 113.

[418] Katherine Allen Smith, 'Saints in Shining Armor: Martial Asceticism and Masculine Models of Sanctity, ca. 1050-1250,' *Speculum* vol. 83, no. 3 (2008), pp. 586-587.

well-known example.[419] Liturgical combs were typically fashioned from ivory, which is a material that a queen could also afford. The ivory material may also suggest a correlation between the comb and Guinevere's body. For instance, Michael Camille notes that, apart from being luxury items owned by noblewomen, combs were often given as gifts to either sex during courtship. Furthermore, he states, 'The medium of ivory is…a substance suggestive of flesh – creamy, undulating, and soft – and probably, after wax, the most flesh like of all artistic media.'[420] Perhaps, just like the hair, the relic-like comb foreshadows Lancelot's encounter with the flesh of his saint-like Guinevere.

The encounter with the comb shows that Lancelot's connection with Guinevere is maintained through thoughts of her and through her objects. When Lancelot finally has the opportunity to consummate his love with Guinevere, Chrétien writes, '[Lancelot] bowed before her and adored her, for in no holy relic (*cors saint*) did he place such faith.'[421] The use of *cors saint* instead of *relique* in this sentence may suggest an association with Guinevere as a saint; that is, the body of a saint. This may be distinguishing her as Lancelot's saint, rather than suggesting that she is as precious as the remains or possessions of a saint. Chrétien's use of this terminology is furthering the metaphor of Guinevere as the object of Lancelot's pilgrimage quest. This implies a focus on the entire body of Guinevere, further suggesting that the pilgrim Lancelot is physically in the presence of his saint, no longer needing the spiritual connection of her relic-like objects. This metaphor does not end with their encounter that night, as the next morning when Lancelot is leaving Chrétien says that he 'behaved like a suppliant in the room, acting as if he were before an altar.'[422]

Lancelot's departure from Guinevere is described metaphorically as martyrdom. Chrétien notes, 'So great was the pain of departing, that rising was a true martyrdom and he suffered like a martyr.'[423] The relationship between pilgrims and martyrs during the age of

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[419] James B. Tschen-Emmons, *Artifacts from Medieval Europe* (Santa Barbara, 2015), pp. 127-128. For more on the comb of St Cuthbert, see: Peter Lasko, 'The Comb of St Cuthbert' in *The Relics of St Cuthbert*, ed. C.F. Battiscombe (Oxford, 1956), pp. 336-355.

[420] Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York, 1998), p. 57.

[421] *Lancelot* 4652-4653. '…si l'aore et se li ancline/ car an nul cors saint ne croit tant.'

[422] Staines, p. 227; *Lancelot* 4716-4718. 'Au departir a soploié/ a la chanbre, et fet tot autel/ con s'il fust devant un autel.'

[423] *Lancelot* 4689-4691. 'Au lever fu il droiz martirs/ tant li fu griés li departirs/ car il i suefre grant martire.' Although not as literal, Staines' translation may be more realistic: 'Rising made him feel like a martyr, for he suffered the agony of martyrdom in the torture of departure.' Staines, p. 227.

the Crusades may be of some significance in the comparison between Lancelot and a martyr. Previously, Lancelot has been described as a pilgrim before the shrine of Guinevere, his saint. It was not uncommon for Crusaders to be referred to as pilgrims to the Holy Land. Furthermore, all of these pilgrim Crusaders had the potential to be martyred as well.[424] This may have little bearing on Lancelot, but it is worth mentioning because the meaning of the terms knight, pilgrim, and martyr were often used interchangeably during the Crusades.[425]

Lancelot as a suppliant experiencing the agony of martyrdom also raises the fact that a pilgrim rarely leaves a shrine with complete spiritual fulfillment. He may witness a miracle or have his prayers answered, but he will continue to suffer, at the very least in longing, for God. Lancelot's symbolic martyrdom may reflect pilgrim asceticism. The suffering that he endures is on behalf of the love he feels for Guinevere, especially when considering that Lancelot endures physical pain as well, wounding himself pulling apart the bars on the window to enter the queen's chamber, and earlier on the Sword Bridge and in combat with other knights. Lancelot's physical and emotional wounds may be symbolic of asceticism, demonstrating that he is rejecting comfort and safety to show devotion to the queen, as he also did on his quest to reach her.

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[424] The use of the term pilgrim, or the association with pilgrimage, in the place of Crusader is more common in the thirteenth century than in the twelfth. One example of this comes from Abbot Martin of Paris' sermon to the people of Basel in 1201, where he refers to the Crusade as 'this pilgrimage' and 'holy pilgrimage'. 'Gunther of Paris, *Historia Constantinopolitana*' in *The Capture of Constantinople*, tr. Alfred J. Andrea (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 69-72. The implication that Crusaders are all potential martyrs is evidenced by the fact that they are granted remission of sins for participating in the Crusades, but they do not appear to be directly compared to martyrs often. One example of this comes from the last third of the thirteenth century when Humbert of Romans writes against those who oppose the Crusades. In response to the criticism that Christian lives should be spared, Humbert replies, 'If those critics, moreover, consider it foolish for Christians to lose their lives in this way, arguing that through these actions Christendom may lose useful people, they should also consider stupid what the glorious martyrs of old did, as they hurried to martyrdom, because by these acts too Christendom was similarly emptied of such great and so many men.' 'Humbert of Romans answers critics of the crusades to the East, c. 1272-4' in *The Crusades: Idea and Reality 1095-1274*, eds. Louise and Jonathan Riley-Smith (London, 1981), pp. 103-117. Humbert does not explicitly compare Crusaders to martyrs, but this is strongly implied. For more on promoting the Crusades, especially within the context of late medieval court literature, see: Timothy Guard, 'Chivalry, Literature and Political Culture' in *Chivalry, Kingship and Crusade: The English Experience in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 159-181.

[425] For more on the relationship between knighthood and suffering, see: Richard Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 96-104; Stephen Lay, 'Miracles, Martyrs and the Cult of Henry the Crusader in Lisbon,' *Portuguese Studies* vol. 24, no. 1 (2008), pp. 7-31.

Lancelot has fulfilled his quest to be with Guinevere, but, like the pilgrim who continues to long for God, he will continue to long for the queen. Lancelot continues to suffer on her behalf, such as during the tournament when she orders him to do his worst. Even though he did not before nor again after that night have physical contact with Guinevere, he remains devoted to her and continues to be controlled by her.

Like Guinevere, many of the other ladies in Chrétien's romances are compared to saints or relics because of their attributes or the power of their possessions. The previous chapter examined some of the most significant attributes of saints. This section will focus on Chrétien's ladies and analyze their attributes, including beauty, wisdom, chastity, as well as asceticism and martyrdom, and the ability that the ladies have to both punish and forgive their knights. This will then be followed by a section examining relics, relic-like objects, and love tokens in the romances.

Beauty and Wisdom

Beauty, both exterior and interior, is a saintly virtue, typically linked with chastity in saints' lives. It is also a common attribute for the ladies in Chrétien's romances, which is typically related to all of their other attributes in some way, including wisdom and chastity. In the romances, beauty is sometimes the unit of measurement by which a lady's wisdom is explained. For instance, all of the ladies in the romances are beautiful, but some are considered wiser than they are beautiful. In both Chrétien's work and in the Old French saints' lives, wisdom is typically denoted by the use of *saige*, but may also refer to the possession of knowledge (*ses saviors*). Good sense is associated with reason and is typically denoted by the use of *senz*, but, as with the saints' lives, may also be associated with wisdom in the romances depending on the context.

Beauty and wisdom will be analyzed together, beginning with Enide whose wisdom or good sense is rated above her beauty. Part of Erec's error in the romance is that he rates her beauty higher, which suggests that Enide's wisdom plays a significant role in the narrative from the beginning. Enide is praised for her beauty by all who come into contact with her. In fact, Erec is only able to fight to win the sparrowhawk, and subsequently gain Enide's hand in marriage, because she is the most beautiful lady in her land. Her beauty, both exterior and interior, is amplified by the fact that she is dressed in rags and is still the most beautiful lady in Arthur's kingdom. Erec refuses to let Enide dress in anything but rags when he brings her before King Arthur. He desires that Guinevere alone will dress Enide in one of the queen's own garments. There are two likely reasons for this: one, because Erec believes

that only a queen's garments are suitable for someone as beautiful as Enide; and, two, because Enide's interior beauty will be more visible if she is dressed poorly.[426] Her poor garments give the impression of humility, as does her blushing when she meets King Arthur. Enide's beauty is pure. It is characterized by a combination of physical beauty, good sense, modest dress, and humility.

Furthermore, Enide emerges as a type of peacekeeper when her beauty prevents dispute in Arthur's court. Before Erec goes to find the knight who disrespected Guinevere's maiden,[427] Arthur invokes the tradition that whoever succeeds in killing a stag will be able to choose the most beautiful lady from the court to kiss. Arthur is the one who kills a stag, but Gawain warns him that the knights will dispute whichever lady he chooses, believing theirs to be the most beautiful, and that 'great peril' could come from his decision.[428] Before her arrival at Arthur's court Chrétien writes, 'Each knight desired to prove through chivalric combat that his lady was the most beautiful in the hall.'[429] When Enide appears at court, however, no one argues when Arthur chooses to bestow the kiss upon her.[430] Enide's beauty keeps the peace in Arthur's court. There are no direct saintly parallels with keeping peace in this way. However, the beauty of female saints does appear to soothe their captors, who appear reluctant to torture and kill the beautiful saints. Additionally, although more of a tangential comparison, the fact that the non-Christians in Marseilles listen to Mary Magdalen preach because she is beautiful may further suggest that beauty is a virtue of female peacekeepers.[431]

As beautiful as Enide is, her father tells Erec that 'her wisdom (*ses savoirs*) is worth more than her beauty' and, in fact, 'God never made a creature so wise nor one so noble of heart'.[432] This description of Enide is almost identical to the one given to St Foy in the *Chanson*, when her noble sense was praised above her corporal features.[433] This suggests that

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[426] Emmanuel Mickel, 'A Reconsideration of Chrétien's "Erec",' pp. 34-36.

[427] This knight is also the one whom Erec defeats in order to win the sparrowhawk and marry Enide. *Erec* 1009-1023.

[428] *Erec* 39-58.

[429] *Erec* 295-297. 'Chascuns vialt par chevalerie / desresnier que la soe amie / est la plus bele de la sale...'.

[430] *Erec* 1707-1732.

[431] See Chapter 3, pp. 102.

[432] *Erec* 537-570. 'Molt est bele, mes mialz asez/ vaut ses savoirs que sa biautez:/ onques Dex ne fist rien tant saige / ne qui tant soit de franc coraige.'

[433] *Chanson de Saint Foy*, p. 7, lines 76-77; 'Lo corps es belz, e paucs l'estaz;/ Lo sen[z] es gencer, qe dinz jaz.'

wisdom is a shared quality between some female saints and ladies. Additionally, Erec's initial error of prizing Enide's beauty above her wisdom is not entirely unlike the tormentors of the virgin martyrs who lust after their captives, ignoring their virtues. Erec loves Enide for her appearance and he only loves her in a physical way, which results in his lapse in chivalry and the need for quest, a need Erec only recognizes because of Enide.

When the couple go on quest, Chrétien narrates Enide's feelings and thought processes and the reader is able to see that she is indeed clever, and she is capable of using her good sense to support and defend him. Chrétien gives Enide a voice in the romance by allowing the reader to hear her thoughts, while little is known about how Erec thinks. Enide's thought processes illustrate her good sense because she carefully deliberates every decision, weighing the consequences before acting. For instance, when the couple are being approached by robbers, Enide deliberates with herself about whether or not to warn Erec:

> When Enide caught sight of them, all her blood stirred, and deep fear and terror took hold of her. 'Wretch that I am,' she said, 'what shall I do? My lord's threats are so severe I don't know what to say or do. He says he will punish me if I speak to him. But if my lord met his death, I would have no consolation. I would be tortured and killed. God! My lord doesn't see him. What a wretched fool I am. Then why am I waiting? Now I am too cautious in my speech since I have said nothing to him in some time. I am certain the men coming there intend harm. Alas, God, how shall I talk to him? He will kill me. Very well, let him kill me. I will not fail to speak to him.'[434]

The primary difference between Enide and a saint, and specifically the virgin martyrs is that Enide hedges when making her decision, while the saints do not have to think about their decision to sacrifice themselves. Enide does display saintly sense by acknowledging that she must warn Erec, even though it may bring harm to herself. She chooses to prioritize reason over fear, which she proves through her actions.

Enide's actions also play a role in demonstrating her good sense. Perhaps the best example of this is when she saves Erec by seducing Galoain, as she formulates a clearly thought out plan. One significant aspect of Enide seducing Galoain is that her plan is clever, but she does not deliberate with herself about whether or not it should be implemented. This

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[434] Staines, p. 38; *Erec* 2959-2978. 'Quant Enyde les ot veüz,/ tot li sans li est esmeüz;/ grant peor ot et grant esmai:/ <<Lasse, fete le, que ferai?/ Ne sai que die ne que face,/ que mes sires molt me menace/ et dit qu'il me fera enui,/ se je de rien paroil a lui./ Mes se mes sires ert ci morz,/ de moi ne seroit nus conforz:/ morte seroie et mal baillie./ Dex! mes sires ne le voit mie;/ qu'atant je dons, malveise fole?/ Trop ai or chiere ma parole,/ quant je ne li ai dit pieç'a./ Bien sai que cil qui vienent ça/ sont de mal faire ancoragié./ Ha! Dex, comant li dirai gié?/ Il m'ocirra. Asez m'ocie!/ ne lierai que je ne li die.>>'

stands in stark contrast to the earlier situation when she was afraid to warn Erec about the approaching robbers. Enide's confidence in her ability to use and express the good sense for which her father had earlier praised her, grows each time she ignores Erec's warnings not to speak to her.[435] Enide's wisdom is therefore also displayed by how it grows throughout the narrative. It should also be noted that in courtly love literature, the lady is often of higher or equal social standing with the knight who loves her. Being of higher standing would mean that she could control him by demanding his service, which is demonstrated in the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere. Being of the same standing would typically imply mutual respect from both knight and lady. Being of a lower status, however, as Enide is compared with Erec, would imply that he would have greater control over his lady, which is something that Enide overcomes over the course of the narrative, and this is why her wisdom and good sense are of great importance.[436]

Lunete and Laudine also demonstrate wisdom and good sense in the way that they accept Yvain after he murders Laudine's husband. Lunete is the wisest woman in this romance, but Laudine demonstrates wisdom by listening to her counsel. Lunete convinces Laudine to marry Yvain so that Laudine will have someone to protect her fountain and her land. Lunete reasons with Laudine, stating, '…when two armed knights come together in battle and one defeats the other, which knight do you think is greater? I would give the prize to the winner.'[437] At first, Laudine who has just lost her husband, is angry that Lunete is using a logical argument to convince her to marry his murderer, but the lady later agrees to marry Yvain.

Chrétien's descriptions of Lunete and Laudine during these discussions, also suggest that Lunete is a woman of superior intellect. For instance, Chrétien writes, 'The lady

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[435] Scholars also argue that the reason why Enide is being punished by Erec is not because she has told him that the knights of his kingdom are losing respect for him, but rather because she hesitated before telling him. The rest of the times that she hesitates and deliberates with herself are therefore consequences of the first transgression. This is possible, although I believe Chrétien is emphasizing her growing confidence. Writing her thoughts as if they were spoken reveals that she weighs and measures her decisions, exercising reason. For more on her punishment, see: Helen Laurie, 'The Testing of Enide', *Romanische Forschungen* 82. Bd., H. 3 (1970), pp. 353-364; E.S. Sheldon, 'Why Does Chrétien's Erec Treat Enide so Harshly?,' *Romanic Review* vol. 5 (Jan 1914), pp. 115-126. For an ethical study of the romance, see: Jerome Mandel, 'The Ethical Context of Erec's Character,' *The French Review* vol. 50, no. 2 (Feb. 1977), pp. 421-428.

[436] For more on the influence of feudal relationships on courtly love, see: Boase, p. 92.

[437] *Yvain* 1698-1703. '…quant dui chevalier sont ansanble/ venu a armes en bataille,/ li quex cuidiez vos qui mialz vaille,/ quant li uns a l'autre conquis?/ An droit de moi doing je le pris/ an veinqueor.'

understood and realized the sincerity of the advice, but she had a foolish quality common to other women; in fact, nearly all women have it. They recognize their folly yet refuse to relinquish their desire.'[438] Here he is referring to Laudine initially ignoring Lunete's advice. Chrétien follows this with a quote from Lunete who, after being shouted at to leave by Laudine, replies, 'It is very clear that you are a woman who becomes angry when anyone gives her good advice.'[439] Chrétien elevates Lunete above Laudine and perhaps also above all other women by having her give advice and criticize the behavior of Laudine. Chrétien appears to deliberately put his own words into Lunete's mouth, as the statement would be more appropriate coming from the mouth of a man, rather than another woman. Demonstrating that Lunete is not like other women is not unlike what hagiographers did with female saints. For example, Clemence of Barking does this with Catherine by demonstrating how the saint was able to outwit the emperor's wisest men. In the case of the romances and hagiography, the authors' purpose is to demonstrate that, through their eloquence, these important female characters are able to challenge societal or gender norms.[440]

This is not the only time that Lunete is ranked above all other women because of her wisdom. When she is to be put to death for convincing Laudine to marry Yvain, the other ladies say of Lunete, 'Now we shall be lost after losing so good a friend, who gave us such counsel and such aid, who was there for us at court.'[441] Lunete's good sense extends beyond the advice that she gives Laudine, as she also gives counsel to the other ladies at court. She also appears to act as an intermediary between these ladies and Laudine, not unlike a saint who acts as an intermediary between humanity and God.

While it is true that the wisdom or good sense exhibited by these ladies is not identical to that of the saints, they share many commonalities. Good sense is used in similar ways by both saints and ladies. For instance, they both use their good sense in defense of others and they use their wisdom as a way to negotiate with those in a position of power over them, often in an attempt to benefit those individuals. Furthermore, in regard to both saints and ladies, wisdom is painted as a desirable attribute that any virtuous woman would have. In this

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[438] Staines, p. 276; *Yvain* 1642-1648. 'La dame set molt bien et pansse/ que cele la consoille an foi;/ mes une folie a en soi/ que les autres fames i ont:/ trestotes, a bien pres, le font,/ que de lor folie s'ancusent/ et ce qu'eles voelent refusent.'

[439] *Yvain* 1654-1656. '…bien i pert que vos estes fame,/ qui se corroce quant ele ot/ nelui qui bien feire li lot.'

[440] Foehr-Janssens, *La jeune fille et l'amour*, p. 42.

[441] *Yvain* 4356-4359. '…con remenrons or esgarees/ qui perdromes si boene amie,/ et tel consoil, et tele aïe,/ qui a la cort por nos estoit!'

way, it is not unlike the other seemingly standard virtues like nobility, beauty, or chastity, which will be discussed next.

Chastity

None of the ladies remain chaste throughout their respective romance, with the possible exception of Blancheflor, although this will be debated. Some of them do remain chaste for specific reasons at certain points in the narrative. The chastity of Enide on quest, Fenice's chastity during her marriage, and the question of Blancheflor's chastity affect the development of their respective narratives.

Enide is not a virgin, but on quest she and Erec do not have sex. This is partly because he is angry with her, but most importantly because their quest is an ascetic pursuit. They are denying themselves comfort and pleasure. It is because he preferred having sex with Enide over chivalric pursuits that Erec's quest is even necessary, which is why being denied sex on quest, whether intentionally or resulting from the situation, represents the fact that the quest is penitential. Chastity was not typically a requirement for penitents unless they were guilty of adultery, murder, or apostasy.[442] It is possible that their abstinence may be a form of spiritual marriage, especially if their quest may be described as a pious pursuit. Spiritual marriage may be defined as 'a legally binding marriage in which sexual relations have been remitted by the consent of both parties for reasons of piety.'[443] The main issue with their chastity being considered spiritual marriage is that Enide had no choice but to go on quest with Erec. Furthermore, lust was more Erec's sin than Enide's, but Enide being chaste on quest also highlights her self-denial. She is arguably suffering more than Erec in general, as she continues to show love for him, while he denies her completely, even so far as ordering her not to speak with him. Erec and Enide do not have any physical contact until the end of the quest, and right after they resume a carnal relationship this is when Erec participates in the Joy of the Court. Although a case for ascetic abstinence may be made here, Enide's chastity perhaps has the greatest significance when applied to the argument that she was intentionally associated with the Virgin Mary, as discussed in Chapter 2.[444]

Fenice remains a virgin until she runs away with Cligés. Her chastity is her most saint-like attribute, but her motives for remaining chaste are ambiguous. It appears that

[442] Dyan Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, 1993), p. 199.

[443] Elliot, p. 3.

[444] See Chapter 2, pp. 75-79.

Fenice makes sacrifices to be with Cligés because she desires that their love be as pure as possible. She twice refers to the relationship between Tristan and Isolde,[445] stating that she will not do as Isolde did and share her body with two men. Fenice paints herself as an anti-Isolde and possibly an anti-Eve.[446] Fenice's desire to remain chaste appears to be an attempt for her to justify her actions that may suggest she is like Isolde or Eve. This is even more evident when she mentions St Paul, stating, 'Saint Paul teaches anyone who desires to remain chaste to behave properly so as not to be criticized, condemned, or reproached.'[447] This is clearly Fenice attempting to justify her actions because it is not even a correct interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:9, where Paul argues that marriage is only preferable to sexual incontinence. This appears to be a desperate attempt to explain her actions, rather than an accidental misinterpretation of scripture.

Additionally, despite the fact that Alis believes Fenice to be dead, the fact she is not actually dead means that they are still married. According to Gratian, adulterers could marry after the spouse died, providing they were not betrothed prior to the spouse's death and they performed penance for their adultery.[448] After Alis' death, the couple could marry, but whether or not their relationship beforehand constituted betrothal is difficult to determine. There is also the question of deception in the marriage of Fenice and Alis. The emperor is

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[445] *Cligés* 5199-5203, 5249-5253.

[446] See Chapter 2, pp. 79-83.

[447] *Cligés* 5266-5269. 'Qui chaste ne se vialt tenir,/ Sainz Pos a feire bien anseingne/ Si sagement que il n'an preingne/ Ne cri, ne blasme, ne reproche.' It should also be noted that there is likely a greater concern for appearance under these circumstances because Fenice is an empress. The way in which she demonstrates propriety of her body has the potential to directly reflect upon Alis as emperor and his ability to control both his wife and his kingdom. Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, 1998), p. 23. For more general information on the symbolism of the queen's body, see: Louise Olga Fradenburg, ed., *Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh, 1992); John Carmi Parsons, ed. *Medieval Queenship* (New York, 1993).

[448] James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 247-248. Unfortunately, I could find nothing in Brundage regarding the role that Alis' broken oath would have played in this scenario. Since Fenice consented to marrying Alis, it would appear that their marriage would be legally legitimate regardless of the oath he made to Alexander. Also, Chrétien does not refer back to this oath once the lovers have left the court. The fact that Alis and Fenice never consummated their marriage would be another issue. Technically, without consummation, the marriage could be annulled, but Alis has had vivid dreams of having sex with Fenice, which would suggest that he would not be easily convinced that it did not happen. The magic potion that he has taken makes it difficult to deconstruct their marriage according to twelfth-century marriage law.

unaware that he has taken the potion which makes him believe he is having sex with his wife. However, female saints, for example, are lauded for avoiding sexual relationships, even with their husbands.

Besides the fact that Fenice's marriage to Alis is not consummated, there are other factors, also related to deception, which make the morality and perhaps the legality of their marriage questionable. Her marriage to Alis is morally wrong because Alis promised his brother Alexander that he would never marry or conceive an heir, so that Cligés could become emperor after his death. Breaking this oath has no bearing on the legality of their marriage, but it does create sympathy for Cligés' role in the adultery and deception. It is because of the broken oath that King Arthur is willing to defend Cligés against Alis when the couple are being hunted by the emperor.[449] Furthermore, Fenice also gives her love to Cligés before marrying Alis. She never has sex with Alis; thus, one could argue that she already gives her consent and promise to Cligés before she marries the emperor. Fenice is betrothed to Alis by her father and, although she does not refuse to marry the emperor, her consent is therefore ambiguous. The broken oath, Fenice's begrudging consent, and especially her chastity, makes both the morality and legality of the marriage difficult to determine. It is likely that adulterous love in this and other narratives is not meant to defend adultery, but rather to comment against forced marriage.[450] Even if Chrétien is not intending to make a social statement regarding forced marriage, his depiction of Fenice as a reluctant adulteress does illicit sympathy for her character. What is certain is that Fenice remains a complex chaste adulteress, whose actions dictate the course of the narrative.

Blancheflor's chastity is debatable, but it is not necessarily as significant to the narrative as Enide and Fenice's chastity. It is difficult to conclude whether or not Perceval and Blancheflor consummate their relationship. Chrétien's description of the first night they spend together is convoluted. When Blancheflor leaves Perceval's room, Chrétien says that he has no pleasure from a maiden;[451] however, later in the night, Blancheflor reappears in his room, weeping by his bedside. This is the moment when he agrees to defend her land against Clamadeu. Chrétien then says that Perceval pulls her into the bed and provides her with

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[449] *Cligés* 6552-6561.

[450] Keith Nickolaus defines a forced marriage as one that is 'devoid of mutual consent and affection'. *Marriage Fictions in Old French Secular Narratives, 1170-1250* (New York, 2002), pp. 161-162. For the argument that court poets were a moralizing force, see: Gerald Morgan, 'Natural and Rational Love in Medieval Literature, *The Yearbook of English Studies* vol. 7 (1977), pp. 51-52.

[451] *Perceval* 1933-1942.

comfort (*solaz*). They hold and kiss each other and sleep laying 'in each other's arms, mouth to mouth'.[452] One reason to believe this does not mean they have sex is because Chrétien still refers to her as a maiden (*pucele*) in the morning.[453] When Enide has sex with Erec, for example, Chrétien notes, 'Before she arose, she had lost the title of maiden; in the morning she was newly a lady (*dame*).'[454] Enide, though already married to Erec, is not considered a lady until she has sex. This suggests the possibility that Blancheflor remained a virgin, as Chrétien would likely refer to her as *dame* rather than *pucele*.

After that night, Perceval agrees to defend Blancheflor's land in exchange for her affection (*druërie*).[455] Affection could mean many things in this case, including love, friendship, or sexual pleasure,[456] but Blancheflor pretends to be offended by this request, suggesting that Perceval is requesting sexual intimacy. After Perceval wins the battle, he and Blancheflor meet in private enjoying 'themselves with kisses, embraces, and gentle words'.[457] This could suggest sexual contact, but the same language is used to describe public mingling between knights and ladies during Yvain and Laudine's wedding. The only difference is that Blancheflor and Perceval were meeting privately in her room, while the knights and ladies were able to kiss (*beisier*) and to embrace (*acoler*) in public.[458] During the several days that Perceval spends with Blancheflor they are said to kiss and embrace and bring each other joy and delight. However, just before Perceval leaves to search for his mother, Chrétien notes that he has won the land and the *pucele*[459] by defeating Clamadeu. Furthermore, Chrétien refers to her as Perceval's beautiful love (*s'amie la bele*)[460] and not his lady. The language used and the circumstances surrounding the encounter between Perceval and Blancheflor

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[452] *Perceval* 2065-2067. 'Tant li fist la nuit de solaz/ que boche a boche, braz a braz,/ dormirent tant qu'il ajorna.'

[453] *Perceval* 2069.

[454] *Erec and Enide* 2052-2054. '…ençois qu'ele se relevast,/ ot perdu le non de pucele;/ au matin fu dame novele.'

[455] *Perceval* 2101-2104. 'Mes se je l'oci et conquier,/ vostre druërie requier/ an guerredon qu'ele soit moie,/ autres soldees n'an prandroie.'

[456] For the full range of meanings and uses in context, see: 'Druërie,' Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française, et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1881-1902), pp. 777.

[457] *Perceval* 2359-2360. '…joent et beisent et acolent/ et deboneremen parolent.'

[458] *Yvain* 2449-2453. 'si s'i porront molt solacier,/ et d'acoler, et de beisier,/ et de parler, et de veoir,/ et de delez eles seoir,/ itant en orent il au mains.'

[459] *Perceval* 2911.

[460] Ibid. 2912.

make an argument for her virginity ambiguous at best. It was worth debating, as just her name, 'white flower', carries with it many connotations of purity. The comparison between Blancheflor and saintly virginity remains tenuous, as female saints would not consent to such sensual physical contact, regardless of whether or not it resulted in sex. Since the narrative was incomplete and Blancheflor's character does not reappear in the flesh after Perceval leaves to find his mother, whether or not her chastity is relevant to the narrative remains unclear.

Asceticism and Martyrdom

As suggested in relation to her chastity, Enide frequently engages in ascetic self-denial, which, like her modest dress, interior beauty, and humility, is saint-like. First, she denies herself comfort, not sleeping so that Erec can sleep at night. Second, she bears his anger because she would rather see him safe. Third, she holds the horses, doing forms of physical labor that a lady would not typically perform. Fourth and, perhaps, most importantly she places herself in both physical and spiritual danger by seducing Count Galoain and resisting Count Oringle out of love for Erec.

After Enide has told Erec what the other knights in the kingdom are saying about him, he becomes angry. He orders Enide to dress in her finest garments even though he knows that he will be taking her on his quest. This may be because he wishes to humiliate her,[461] but there is likely more to it than this. While Enide is dressed in her finest clothing, she is forced to travel on horseback and eat and sleep outdoors. Chrétien does not give any indication that Enide changes into more comfortable clothing during the entirety of the quest. It would likely be uncomfortable for Enide to do all of the things she is required to do on quest, while wearing her finest clothing. Erec also orders Enide to hold the horses of the knights and thieves that he defeats. Picture Enide, the epitome of beauty, dressed in her finest clothing, holding eight horses.[462] There is no doubt that Erec is attempting to humiliate Enide by having her perform these tasks, but this scene may have some spiritual connotations.[463]

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[461] Payen, p. 370.

[462] *Erec* 3079.

[463] According to the *Allegoriae*, a horse may refer to a lustful person, which may be applicable in the situation of Erec and Enide, who have been engaging in a predominantly lust-driven relationship. *Allegories in All Holy Scripture: The Complete English Translation of Allegoriae in Universam Sacram Scripturam, formerly attributed to Hrabanus Maurus*, tr. Priscilla Throop (Charlotte, Vermont, 2012), p. 120. According to Origen in

Enide's asceticism is perhaps best demonstrated when she risks her life to protect Erec against Count Galoain and Oringle of Limors. She endures threats to her body and her life when she deceives the first man and resists the second. Galoain has a change of heart and calls off his attack against Erec, but it is likely, had he not done so and instead defeated Erec, that he would have at least beaten Enide for deceiving him and certainly for resisting him. Oringle threatens and hits Enide, but Enide defiantly tells him that she would not fear him even if he tore out her eyes and skinned her alive.[464] Oringle marries Enide because he is lusting after her, so he is not likely to kill her, especially not in such a gruesome way. However, Enide's statement demonstrates that she is willing to be blinded and flayed before giving her body to another. She would rather be a martyr for love of Erec.

In another example, when Erec and Enide have just killed Oringle and escaped from his land, Erec is very weak and is mistakenly confronted by Guivret, a knight loyal to him. Erec fights as much as possible, but is knocked to the ground. Enide has been hiding, but when she sees Erec defeated Chrétien writes, '…she expected to be mistreated and killed. She jumped out from behind the hedge and rushed to help her lord. If she had known grief before, it was never so great as now. When she came near Guivret, she seized the reigns of his horse. "Knight!" she shouted at him. "Damn you for attacking a man alone and powerless, a man in pain and almost dead from his wounds.'"[465] Guivret promises not to kill Erec, telling Enide, 'I see well that you loyally love your lord, and I praise you for this.'[466] Like Galoain who stopped pursuing Erec because he witnessed Enide's loyalty, Guivret also realizes that Erec must be a great knight if he has the loyalty of such a brave and noble woman. When Guivret learns that the knight he was battling is Erec, he apologizes and accompanies him throughout the rest of the narrative. These are two occasions where Erec would have been killed were it not for Enide's sacrifice and it is especially significant that it was out of love for him that she was willing to sacrifice her own safety.

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his commentary on Judges (p. 80), Sisera, meaning 'vision of the horse', represented the sinful animal nature in man, which needed to be overcome by the spiritual.

[464] *Erec* 4806-4814.

[465] Staines, p. 63; *Erec* 4983-4993. 'Enyde, qui a pié estoit,/ quant son seignor a terre voit,/ morte cuide estre et mal baillie:/ hors de la haie estoit saillie,/ et cort por aidier son seignor./ S'onques ot duel, lors l'ot graignor;/ vers Guivret vient, si le seisist/ par la resne, lors si li dist:/ <<Chevaliers, maudiz soies tu,/ c'un home seul et sanz vertu,/ dolant et pres navré a mort…'.

[466] *Erec* 5010-5011. 'Bien voi que lëaumant amez/ vostre seignor, si vos an lo…'.

There are a couple of scenes where Fenice practices ascetic self-denial and is compared to a martyr. When Cligés desires to go to Britain to be knighted by King Arthur, he asks Fenice for permission to leave. He falls before her in tears, as if he had done something to offend her, and tells her that he belongs entirely to her.[467] Chrétien writes that while Cligés is gone, Fenice holds in her memory 'how he came before her weeping, humbly and simply on his knees as if he were about to adore (*aorer*) her.'[468] Fenice thinks only of this image and of the fact that Cligés promised himself to her. Chrétien explains, 'This one phrase was her sustenance and nourishment and assuaged all her suffering. She desired no other food to eat, no other liquid to drink….'[469] There is no reason to think that Fenice is literally fasting, but the language here suggests that her devotion to Cligés is not unlike that of an ascetic saint to God. At the same time she is being revered like a saint by Cligés.

The influence of the cult of saints is apparent in another example when Chrétien writes:

> The emperor was distressed to hear her say that there was but one physician who could easily restore her health should it be his will. That physician would be the source of her life or her death, and in his hands she placed her health and her life. People thought that she was referring to God, but her meaning was misunderstood. She meant none but Cligés: he was her god, with power to cure her or to cause her death.[470]

The metaphor is clear: Fenice is martyring herself for her god, Cligés. Fenice's treatment by the doctors, who beat and burn her,[471] is a metaphor for martyrdom, as noted by Simon Gaunt,[472] but it is unclear as to what lengths this metaphor may be taken. For instance, she technically does not endure torture by the doctors voluntarily, as the potion renders her

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[467] *Cligés* 4246-4283.

[468] *Cligés* 4323-4325. '…com il vint devant li plorer,/ con s'il la deüst aorer,/ humbles, et sinples, a genolz.'

[469] *Cligés* 4336-4339. 'Cil sues moz la sostient et pest,/ et toz ses max li asoage./ D'autre mes ne d'autre bevrage/ Ne se quiert pestre n'abevrer…'. Fenice's behavior echoes that of a religious ascetic, who needs nothing but God for sustenance. For more on the significance of food in religious devotion, especially where women are concerned, see: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1986).

[470] Staines, p. 156; *Cligés* 5634-5646. 'Ce puet l'empereor peser/ Qu'ele dit que ja n'i avra/ Mire fors un qui li savra/ Legieremant doner santé,/ Quant lui vendra a volanté./ Cil la fera morir ou vivre,/ An celui se met a delivre/ Et de santé, et de sa vie/ De Deu cuident que ele die,/ Mes molt a male entancion,/ Qu'ele n'antant s'a Cligés non:/ C'est ses Dex qui la peut garir/ Et qui la puet feire morir.'

[471] *Cligés* 5874-5948.

[472] Simon Gaunt, *Love and Death*, pp. 133-134.

incapable of moving or speaking. On the other hand, it is her decision to take the potion and endure any consequences so that she may be with Cligés. Until she runs away with Cligés, Fenice remains chaste, but this changes once her husband believes her to be dead and they are together.

The situation under which Fenice endures her symbolic martyrdom differs greatly from virgin martyrs, but the descriptions of the torture are strikingly similar. Both feature the same pattern of 1) being offered a reprieve if they would recant their position, 2) being brutally tortured, typically described with sexual undertones,[473] 3) being murdered in a specific way, such as beheading or burning. Fenice is not killed, but the doctors did attempt to murder her. Chrétien describes the martyrdom of Fenice in graphic detail, beginning with the doctors ripping off her shirt and then trying to convince her to talk. When this does not work, they begin to torture her:

> They then lashed her back, leaving visible marks all the way down, and gave her tender skin such a thrashing that they made the blood spurt out. After their lashings succeeded in breaking the skin and sending the blood that came from the wounds streaming down her back, the physicians could still accomplish nothing.…They then declared that they had to fetch fire and lead, which they would melt and lay on her palms.…That was their method of abusing and torturing the lady, those dissolute wretches who took lead all boiling and hot from the fire and poured it into her palms. Still not satisfied with the lead passing through her very palms, the cowardly bastards declared that unless she spoke immediately they would place her at that very moment on the grill until she was entirely burned.[474]

The torture of Fenice is very similar to that of many virgin martyrs, but is perhaps especially comparable to Wace's description of St Margaret's torture:

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[473] For more of this and other forms of sexual violence in Chrétien's romances, see: Kathryn Gravdal, 'Chrétien de Troyes, Gratian, and the Medieval Romance of Sexual Violence,' *Signs* vol. 17, no. 3 (1992), pp. 558-585. Also see her related work on 'raptus' in literature more broadly: *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia, 1991).

[474] Staines, pp. 159-160; *Cligés* 5900-5909, 5912-5914, 5918-5929. 'Lors li donerent un assalt/ Par mi le dos de lor corroies;/ S'an perent contreval les roies,/ Et tant li batent sa char tendre/ Que il an font le sanc espendre./ Quant des corroies l'ont batue,/ Tant que la char li ont ronpue/ Et li sans contreval li cort/ Que par mi les plaies li sort,/ N'en porent il ancor rien faire….Lors dïent que il lor estuet/ Feu et plonc querre, qu'il fondront,/ Qu'es paumes gitier li voldront….Ensi afolent et confondent/ La dame li felon ribaut,/ Que le plonc tot boillant et chaut,/ Si com il l'ont del feu osté,/ Li ont anz es paumes colé./ N'encor ne lor est pas assez/ De ce que li plons est passez/ Par mi les paumes d'outre en outre,/ Einz dïent li cuivert avoutre/ Que, s'ele ne parole tost,/ Or endroit la metront an rost,/ Tant que ele iert tote greslie.'

> …she was surrounded by judges who beat her body so much, with rods applied directly to her naked body, that her blood ran down on to the ground from her sides and her ribs….The virgin was subjected to cruel torture; they damaged her flesh repeatedly, so that the entrails of her body were hanging out through her wounds. She was beaten for such a long time that her whole body was covered in blood….[Olybrius] had Margaret stripped and raised on to the wooden horse; then he had firebrands lit all around….Then Olybrius had her come down from the wooden horse and had her hands and feet bound; he had her head plunged into a vat filled with water.[475]

After enduring this torture, Margaret was beheaded. Although different methods are used, the descriptions of gratuitous, gory torture are very similar.[476] It is likely also significant that Fenice was to be burned on a grill, as this was how St Foy was martyred. It was previously noted that Foy was a popular saint at the time that Chrétien was writing. She is mentioned by name in the *Knight of the Cart* in the portion of the romance completed by Godefroy de Lagny, a contemporary of Chrétien.[477] Although Chrétien himself does not refer to St Foy, and she is not mentioned in *Cligés*, this is still evidence that she was on the minds of authors writing at the same time as Chrétien. The relationship between martyrdom and chastity, as outlined in the example of St Margaret, may also apply to Fenice. Fenice martyrs herself to be with Cligés so that she does not have to share her body with two men. For Margaret, she hears the stories of the martyrs and then devotes her chastity to God. Both perceive chastity to be a sacrifice, not knowing that this sacrifice portends the harsh torture that they will both endure on behalf of their beloveds.[478]

Adoration, Punishment, Penance, and Forgiveness

The final aspect of the ladies' saint-like qualities is how the knights react to or interact with these qualities. Over the course of the narrative, there is a pattern of

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[475] Wace, 'Margaret,' p. 196-213; lines 188-192, 273-278, 520-522, 541-545. '…Li juge erent tut envirun,/ Que li cors li unt tant batu/ O les verges tut nu a nu/ Qu'a la tere chaeit li sans/ Par les costes e par les flans….La virge fu en grief turment,/ Sa char nuirent espessement,/ Que l'entraille qui est el cors/ Par les plaies pendeit defors./ Tant fu batue lungement/ Que le cors ot trestut sanglent….Marguerite fist despuillier/ E puis al cheval fust lever/ E branduns entur alumer…Dunc la refist Olibrïus/ Del cheval fust descender jus/ E piez e mains li fist lïer,/ Le chief li fist avant plungier/ En une cuve d'eve pleine…'.

[476] Simon Gaunt, *Love and Death*, pp. 133-134.

[477] Lancelot 6752.

[478] Wace, 'Margaret,' 73-80. 'Quant oï Marguerite dire/ le turment e le martire/ Que cil pur amur Deu sufreient/ Qui tant l'ameient e creeient,/ Voa a nostre Creatur/ A estre chaste pur s'amur;/ E Deus ama sa chasteé,/ Si la maintint en grant bunté.'

development which begins with the knight's adoration of the lady, followed by the knight's trial on quest, or his penance if he has done something specifically against his lady, which then concludes with forgiveness from the lady, God, or society. In most cases, the lady is the facilitator of each stage or, at the very least she acts as a catalyst to the development of the knight. This section is specifically interested in the ladies who serve a corrective function in the narratives, punishing and then forgiving the transgressions of their knights. Analysis begins with a discussion of adoration because the knights and ladies are typically brought together or reconciled through the knight's adoration of his lady. As previously noted by scholars, the knight's actions in service of his lady, perhaps especially when he is seeking her forgiveness, are not unlike religious devotion.[479]

In *Erec and Enide*, Erec's quest is one of penance because he transgressed against the order of knighthood. He also transgressed against Enide because he did not truly love her, but only lusted for her. Erec's quest, as his penance, is necessary in order to prove that he is still capable of being a knight. Enide presence on quest serves as a test for him. By the end of the quest, his adoration is transformed from idolatry to respect. Chrétien also refers to the hardship they endure together, stating, 'They had experienced so much pain and suffering, he for her and she for him, that now they had done their penance.'[480] This gives the impression that both of them suffered equally, but he also writes, 'Now Enide suffered no longer as her lord embraced and kissed her, reassuring her of his love.'[481] The quest is Erec's penance, rather than Enide's because Erec is specifically undertaking the quest to correct his error of preferring sex over martial pursuits.

In *Yvain*, the reciprocity in the relationship between Yvain and Laudine is reminiscent of the relationship between a saint and a devotee. A saint is not expected to provide a miracle,

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[479] Marie-Luce Chênerie, *Le Chevalier Errant dans les Romans Arthuriens en Vers des XII et XIII Siècles* (Genève, 1986), p. 411. Joan Ferrante further argues that the knight's devotion to his lady implies that he sees her not only as the object of his carnal desires, but also as the embodiment of the individual he wishes to become. *Woman as Image*, pp. 66-67. For more on the counter-argument that courtly love is inherently hostile to medieval Christianity, see: Alexander Denomy, *The Heresy of Courtly Love*, pp, 53-55; Helen Laurie, 'Chrétien de Troyes and the Love Religion,' pp. 169-183; Jeffrey Russell, 'Courtly Love as Religious Dissent,' p. 43; R. J. Schoeck, 'Andreas Capellanus and St Bernard of Clairvaux,' *Modern Language Notes* vol. 66, no. 5 (1951), pp. 295-300. On the other side of the argument, Jean Frappier argues that the troubadours never claimed to be separate from nor compatible with theology. *Amour Courtois et Table Ronde* (Genève, 1973), p. 10.

[480] *Erec* 5203-5205. 'Tant ont eü mal et enui,/ il por li et ele por lui,/ c'or ont feite lor penitance.' For more on the quest as the couple's penance, see: Luttrell, pp. 62

[481] *Erec* 4895-4897. 'Or n'est pas Enyde a maleise,/ quant ses sires l'acole et beise,/ et de s'amor la raseüre.'

for example, without receiving offerings and devotion. A lady is not expected to give her love without receiving something from the knight in return. In certain cases, all the lady expects from her knight is the same level of love and devotion; this is true for Erec and Enide, Alexander and Soredamors, and Lancelot and Guinevere. In Yvain, however, the love between knight and lady is significantly altered. Chrétien appears to suggest that love in this romance is not typical of courtly love when he writes, 'People do not fall in love or love as they used to, nor do they want to hear or talk about love.'[482] The relationship between Yvain and Laudine was always a contractual one. At the start of the narrative, Laudine only marries Yvain because she is left without a knight to protect her land. For instance, Yvain eloquently tells Laudine how her beauty has caused his heart to fall in love with her, but she simply responds with a question, asking, 'And would you dare undertake the defense of my spring for me?' When Yvain agrees to do so, she states, 'Know then that we are in accord'.[483]

It should be noted that the reciprocity of love for defense is not unique to *Yvain* but is also present in *Perceval*. After Blancheflor tells Perceval of the lord who is trying to take her land, he agrees to defend her on the condition that she give him her love in exchange. However, Blancheflor appears to be romantically interested in Perceval and, unlike the relationship between Yvain and Laudine, this contract does not appear to play a significant role in the rest of the narrative because Perceval fulfills his promise. For Yvain and Laudine, his breaking of the contract has greater consequences, since he is disenfranchised by his lady, he goes mad, and he has to undertake a penitential quest to return to her. Laudine's role in the romance is not unlike that of a saint who punishes a devotee for not following through with his or her promises. It has already been suggested that Gawain's mention of the Virgin Mary provided a direct correlation between the roles of Laudine in the narrative and roles of Mary in miracle tales.[484] There are similarities between Laudine's actions toward Yvain and accounts of a wrathful Virgin Mary in miracle tales. According to miracle tales from pilgrimage destinations dedicated to the Virgin Mary, such as Rocamadour, the Virgin Mary would punish wayward devotees who did not follow through with a promise made to her.

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[482] *Yvain* 5388-5390. '…que la genz n'est mes amoronge/ ne n'ainment mes, si con il suelent,/ que nes oïr parler n'an veulent.'

[483] Staines, p. 281; *Yvain* 2035-2036, 2038. 'Et oserïez vos enprandre/ por moi ma fountainne a desfandre?'/ 'Sachiez donc, bien acordé somes.'

[484] See Chapter 2, p. 79.

Mary is not alone in such retaliation, as other saints, such as Foy, have been said to punish disobedient or ungrateful devotees.[485]

The coldness of the contractual agreement between the couple is echoed at the end of the narrative when Lunete tricks Laudine into swearing on holy relics that she will forgive Yvain. Laudine swears that she will do everything in her power to reconcile the Knight with the Lion with his lady, as long as this knight defends her fountain. Additionally, Lunete cleverly adds a clause that Laudine could not blame her for any negative repercussions of the oath in the future.[486] She requests this of Laudine in the form of a *don contraignant*. Laudine is angry that she has been deceived into taking Yvain back. When Yvain questions her as to whether or not he will be permitted to stay, Laudine responds, 'That is certainly my wish…otherwise I would perjure myself, unless I did all I could to make peace between you and me. If it be your pleasure, I shall grant your request.'[487] Laudine's tone here is quite similar to the one taken at the start of the narrative when she agrees to marry Yvain in exchange for his protection.

The way that Yvain seeks Laudine's forgiveness is also intertwined with the oath that she took. When Yvain approaches Laudine, just as the lady herself knelt before the relics, Yvain, fully armed, falls at her feet as the final act of his penance.[488] Yvain broke his oath, sworn by Laudine's ring earlier in the narrative and, therefore, he is forced to make a new oath to his lady. In this scenario, Laudine is depicted as the *domna*. As previously mentioned, it is not uncommon in courtly love literature for the lady to take on the role of liege lord over her knight.[489] However, Yvain's behavior perhaps suggests more than political supplication. The similarity between the actions of Laudine and Yvain, her bowing before the reliquary and him bowing before her, is without doubt intentional. In addition to being his *domna*, Laudine is also Yvain's relic or reliquary; he has no need to swear upon anything else but her and she is the only one who can grant him forgiveness at the end of his penitential quest.[490]

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[485] Bull, tr. *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*, p. 144-158.

[486] Yvain 6620-6639.

[487] Staines, p. 338; *Yvain* 6780-6784. 'Certes, fet ele, je voel bien,/ por ce que parjure seroie,/ se tot mon pooir n'en feisoie,/ la pes feire antre vos et moi;/ s'il vost plest je la vos otroi.'

[488] *Yvain* 6720-6721. 'A ses piez s'est lessiez cheoir/ mes sire Yvains, trestoz armez…'

[489] E. Jane Burns, pp. 27, 39-42. For the related Chivalric-Matriarchal theory on the origin of courtly love, see: Boase, pp. 75-77.

[490] For more on the argument that feudal relationships have religious roots, see: Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1992).

The association between Laudine and the Virgin Mary in the statement made by Gawain, mentioned in Chapter 2, also lends further credence to this comparison.[491]

Many of the qualities displayed by the ladies and praised by their knights appear saint-like. For the purpose of this discussion, qualities were considered saint-like if they served a function similar to those of the saints, such as providing guidance, protection, and even forgiveness, for the ladies' knights. Qualities, or the ladies who have them, were also considered saint-like if the knight was said to revere them in similar ways to a devotee revering a saint. The following section will continue this analysis, looking at the function of tokens in the narratives and the instances in which they may be considered relic-like.

Relics and Tokens

The ladies' tokens, objects, or parts of their bodies provide a symbolic physical link between themselves and the knights when they are apart from one another, not unlike that between a saint and a devotee. Like a relic, the object belonging to the lady is sometimes believed to contain her essence. Touching the object is similar to touching her. For example, Lancelot pressing Guinevere's hair to his chest made him feel as if she were touching him and vice versa. At other times, the object is believed to contain a power that was supplied from the lady, such as protection, healing, or comfort. Tokens and objects take many forms in Chrétien's romances, ranging from jewelry to oil to the lady's hair and body. All of these objects play a vital role, providing aid to the knight in the form of protection, encouragement, or comfort. In some cases, the objects are essential to the progression of the narrative.

It is first necessary to look at a few cases where actual holy relics appear in the narratives. There are some examples, which do not appear to have further implications in the romances, such as Gawain swearing over relics that he will find the bleeding lance in *Perceval*.[492] In other examples, relics have a greater presence in the romances, but do not directly affect how the romances are read. For instance, in *Erec and Enide* relics play a small role in the narrative, but they do frame the couple's marriage. Erec and Enide enter the kingdom as a married couple, donate relics on the altars, then fail to uphold the courtly standards of knighthood and love, separate themselves from society, and then do penance for these sins and are received back into the kingdom and society with the reception of relics from the monks. These relics may not serve a crucial symbolic function in the narratives, but

[491] See p. 79.

[492] *Perceval* 5977-5992.

they do provide evidence of the rich influence of the cult of saints on the world Chrétien was living in.

In some of the romances, relics do have an impact on the outcome of the narrative. For instance, in *Yvain*, after Yvain has earned his reputation as the Knight with the Lion and proven himself capable of defending women under various circumstances, Lunete is able to trick Laudine into taking him back. Lunete convinces her lady that no other man may defend her fountain. As previously mentioned, Lunete has Laudine swear over holy relics that she will reconcile the Knight with the Lion with his lady if he will protect her land.[493] Chrétien writes, 'Lunete, who was most courteous, instantly had a very precious reliquary brought to her, and the lady knelt down before it.'[494] Laudine finds out that the knight is Yvain only after swearing the oath. The story ends with her begrudgingly keeping her promise. Laudine says to Lunete, 'God save me, you have caught me well in your trap!'[495]

Using relics to trick or deceive is not unique to *Yvain*. Recall that Lancelot makes a deceptive oath over relics when he swears that Guinevere has not had sex with Kay. Although not a lie, Lancelot is defending the queen's honor and fidelity, despite being the one to commit adultery with her.[496] Using relics for deception is not unique to Chrétien either. The incident with Lancelot has parallels with the oath in Beroul's *Tristan*.[497] In this narrative, Isolde is forced to swear over relics that she has not had sex with Tristan. The kings who have gathered to witness the oath say that Isolde shall 'swear to the Heavenly King, holding her right hand over the holy relics, that there was never love between her and your nephew which was in any way shameful, and that she has never loved anyone wrongly.'[498] However, this is not what Isolde swears. Before making this oath, she has Tristan, disguised as a leper, carry her across a stream on his back. She then swears that no man has been between her legs

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[493] *Yvain* 6629-6639.

[494] *Yvain* 6620-6623. 'Lunete qui molt fu cortoise/ li fist isnelemant fors traire/ un molt precïeus saintuaire/ et la dame a genolz s'est mise.'

[495] *Yvain* 6750-6751. '…Se Damedex me saut,/ bien m'as or au hoquerel prise!'

[496] See Chapter 2, p. 70-71.

[497] For a detailed examination of this scene and the oath over relics in *Lancelot*, see: Hoffsten, pp. 79-114.

[498] Beroul, *The Romance of Tristan*, tr. Alan S. Fedrick (London, 1970), pg. 141; *Le Roman de Tristan*, ed. Ernest Muret (Paris, 1922), 4161-4166; '...Et si jurra o sa main destre,/ Sor les corsainz, au roi celestre/ Qu'el'onques n'ot amor conmune/ A ton nevo, ne deus ne une,/ Que l'en tornast a vilanie,/ N'amor ne prist par puterie.'

except for her husband and the leper who just carried her.[499] Neither Lancelot nor Isolde actually lie. They offer deceptive oaths by swearing a literal truth to the saint or saints whose relics they are swearing over, to ensure that they are not lying to divine powers; furthermore, this literal oath, whether deceptive or not, cannot be refuted by any witnesses.[500] The only explanation as to why such oaths are acceptable is that the unspoken lie behind the oath is technically a different sin entirely and thus has no bearing on the oath itself.

The importance of these holy relics used in oath-taking is clear: they either alter the course of the narrative or they symbolize a change in the narrative, such as the development of the characters. In addition to these relics, Chrétien also mentions many powerful objects, which have an impact on the relationship between the knight and lady, the development of the knight, or the events in the narrative. This section will look at objects which may have relic-like qualities due to their powers, purposes, descriptions, and origins. Their most important quality is that they originate with the ladies and may be either a token given by the lady, as in Yvain's rings, or a part of the lady herself, as in Soredamors' hair.

Soredamors' Hair, Fenice's Body

In *Cligés*, Alexander and Soredamors, the parents of the eponymous protagonist, conduct a subtle courtship, which Chrétien describes through their thoughts rather than their actions. The first physical contact that Alexander has with Soredamors is through her hair. Soredamors weaves her hair into a tunic that is later gifted to Alexander by Guinevere, but he is not told that his lady's hair is woven into the fabric.[501] Chrétien states, '…had [Alexander] known the rest, he would have loved it even more, he would not have traded it for the whole world, but rather would have made a shrine (*Saintüeire*) of it, I believe, so he could have adored it (*Si l'aorast*) day and night.'[502] In fact, this is precisely what he does when this

[499] Beroul, 4196-4208. '<<Seignors,>> fait et, <<por Deu merci,/ Saintes reliques voi ici./ Or escoutez que je ci jure,/ De quoi le roi ci aseüre;/ Si m'aït Dex et saint Ylaire,/ Ces reliques, cist saintuaire,/ Totes celes qui ci ne sont/ Et tuit icil de par le mont,/ Q'entre mes cuises n'entra home,/ Fors le ladre qui fist soi some,/ Qui me porta outre le guez,/ Et li rois Marc mes esposez.>>'

[500] Hexter, p. 3.

[501] Lightbown (p. 74) argues that this is the first occasion where hair appears woven into clothing in the Middle Ages.

[502] Wendelin Foerster, ed., *Cligés von Christian von Troyes* (Halle, 1884), 1191-1196. Note, this is the only occasion where the Foerster edition is used, all other references pertain to the Micha edition. 'Meis s'il seüst le foreplus,/ Ancor l'amast il assez plus,/ Car an eschange n'an priest/ Tot le monde, einçois an feïst/ Saintüeire, si

knowledge is revealed to him during a long battle against barons who have betrayed King Arthur. Alexander became so joyful 'that he scarcely held himself from bowing and adoring *(l'aore et ancline*) the small strand of hair he beheld.'[503] It should be noted that the verb *aorer* can also mean 'to worship', but within the context of building a shrine and bowing down it should be taken to mean 'to adore' or perhaps even 'to venerate'.[504] The term is also used in the *Life of St Catherine*, for example, when speaking of worshipping God (*Dieu aorer*), demonstrating the religious connotations of this term.[505] *Aorer* in relation to the cult of saints may more aptly translated as 'to venerate' because worshipping a saint or a lady, unlike worshipping God, may suggest idolatry.

Alexander's behavior too is relevant to the comparison of the hair with a relic,[506] as he also touches and kisses the tunic. Chrétien states that Alexander is annoyed with his companions because their presence prevents him from touching the tunic to his eyes and

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con je cuit,/ Si l'aorast et jor et nuit.' This sentence does not appear in B.N. fr. 794, the copy by Guiot, but it is included in Foerster's edition of *Cligés*, appearing in a later manuscript. This discrepancy may be a result of scribal error on the part of Guiot, or the lines may have been added later. There is enough material to suggest that Alexander's treatment of the tunic recalls the reaction of a devotee to a relic in the Guiot copy alone, but these lines add greater detail to this relationship. Even if these lines did not appear in Chrétien's original version, they are evidence that later scribes observed Alexander's behavior and believed it mirrored the relationship between a saint and devotee. Topsfield (pp. 71-72) translates *Saintüeire* as holy relic, rather than shrine, but argues similarly that Alexander's treatment of the hair is evocative of a spiritual experience and therefore a higher form of love than pure physical attraction. For all definitions of *Saintüeire*, see: Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 7, pp. 292.

[503] Staines, p. 106-107; *Cligés* 1595-1599. '…Quant cele li conte et devise/ la feiture de la chemise/ que a grant poinne se retarde/ la ou le chevolet regarde/ que il ne l'aore et ancline.'

[504] For the many uses of 'aorer' in context, see: 'Aorer,' Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 1, pp. 308-309. There does not appear to be an Old French word that specifically means 'to venerate'. 'Aorer' should not be confused with our modern understanding of the word 'adore'. The term, coupled with Alexander's treatment of the tunic, suggests there is more going on in this scene than a simple expression of carnal love.

[505] Clemence of Barking, 'St Catherine,' line 203.

[506] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has also compared the tunic to a relic, but she compares this with the lovers' desire for one another. She explains that he treats the shirt like a relic 'while love becomes warmed for her to the boiling bath literally endured by many virgin martyrs'. *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture, c. 1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford, 2001), p. 324. I see no reason to draw a comparison between Soredamors and a martyr. She endures some suffering before she is united with Alexander, but the comparison ends there.

mouth.[507] Once alone, Alexander 'kissed the shirt more than a hundred thousand times.'[508] The actions of kissing and touching the tunic with Soredamors' hair creates a symbolic, yet physical, connection between her and Alexander. Alexander desiring to bow before his lady's hair, rub it on his face, and kiss it evokes imagery of relic veneration. Similar to the function Guinevere's hair in the comb serves for Lancelot, Soredamors' hair is a link between Alexander and her person, so much so that he adores his tunic to enhance this link.

The reason why the hair is initially unnoticed in the tunic is because the material also contains strands of real gold and silver. Alexander only sees the hair after he has been battling. Chrétien explains that in one area of the tunic, 'The strand of hair became more radiant while the gold thread grew dull.'[509] This is not unlike Guinevere's hair, which is considered brighter than gold.[510] There is no reason for the gold to have lost its luster beyond the fact that this amplifies the appearance of the hair. This suggests that the hair has some form of incorruptibility, not unlike the hair or body parts of a saint.

In the second part of this romance, when Fenice is believed dead, Alis approaches Cligés' serf, John, about constructing a tomb for her. He replies that he has already prepared one meant for a saint, adding, 'Instead of a holy relic, let the empress now be placed within it, for I believe she is a saintly woman.' There is little doubt that Chrétien intended this statement to be taken in part ironically, as Fenice has just deceived her husband in order to run away with her lover. However, Fenice's other qualities, suggest that there is another dimension to John's statement. Fenice is chaste at the time of faking her death and she is also martyring herself in order to be with Cligés.[511] In a purely religious context, Fenice would never be considered saintly, but by the standards set within Chrétien's metaphor, she is the perfect saint.

Yvain's Objects

Objects which serve vital purposes are more common in *Yvain* than in the other romances. Yvain receives from ladies three objects, two rings and a container of oil, which have a significant impact on his life. The former protect him and the latter restores his sanity.

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[507] *Cligés* 1600-1604. 'Si conpaignon et la reïne,/ qui leanz erent avoec lui,/ li font grant mal et grant enui:/ car por aus let que il n'en toche/ et a ses ialz et a sa bouche…'.

[508] *Cligés* 1612. '…plus de .c^m. foiz la beise.'

[509] Staines, p. 106; *Cligés* 1549-1550. '…Et li chevox anbloïssoit,/ que que li filz d'or palissoit.'

[510] Previously discussed in this chapter, p. 124.

[511] Gaunt, *Love and Death*, p. 134.

Yvain receives two rings, one from Lunete and one from Laudine, both intended to protect him. After killing Laudine's husband, while Yvain is being hunted throughout the castle, Lunete gives him an invisibility ring. The ring allows him to remain hidden until she is able to convince Laudine to marry him.[512] When Yvain leaves to go on tournament with Arthur's knights, Laudine gives him another ring. The stone in the ring protects the wearer from harm. She tells him, 'Now slip this ring of mine on your finger. I lend it to you. I want to be very clear in my remarks about the stone. No true and loyal lover suffers imprisonment or loss of blood, nor can any misfortunes befall him provided he wears and cherishes the ring and remembers his beloved.'[513] Yvain's permission to possess the ring is revoked when he forgets to return to Laudine. She sends a maiden who tells him, 'Yvain, my lady no longer cares for you, and through me she demands that you never return to her and keep her ring no longer.'[514] His transgression results in his wife taking back the object that made him impermeable, thus exposing him to harm. The power of the ring is perhaps more supernatural than spiritual, but reaping the benefits of the ring, much like those of a relic, depends upon an exchange between a benefactor and a faithful devotee.[515] Also, as in depictions of saintly wrath, Yvain is punished because he fails to keep his oath and hold up his end of the reciprocal relationship.

There are no occasions where the ring from Laudine actually protects Yvain from physical harm. However, when the ring is taken away from him, he goes mad and lives like a wild animal in the forest. The ring serves a symbolic function within the relationship between Yvain and Laudine. It signifies the oath made between them, and its absence signifies not

[512] Lunete protects Yvain because when she had visited Arthur's court in the past, Yvain was the only knight who had acknowledged her. *Yvain* 1001-1015.

[513] Staines, p. 288; *Yvain* 2602-2610. 'Mes or metroiz an vostre doi/ cest mien anel, que je vos prest/ et de la pierre quex ele est/ vos voel dire tot en apert:/ prison ne tient ne sanc ne pert/ nus amanz verais et leax/ ne avenir ne li puet max/ mes qui le porte, et chier le tient/ de s'amie li resovient…'.

[514] *Yvain* 2769-2772. 'Yvain, n'a mes cure de toi/ ma dame, ainz te mande par moi/ que ja mes vers li ne reveignes/ ne son anel plus ne reteignes.'

[515] Edina Bozoky, 'Prolégomènes à etude des offrandes de reliquaries par les princes' in *Reliques et Sainteté dans l'Espace Médiévale*, ed. Jean-Luc Deuffic (Saint-Denis, 2006), p. 93. Chênerie (p. 601) also notes that the ring emphasizes the importance of fidelity.

only the breaking of the oath, but also the consequences of forgetting the duty he owes to his wife.[516]

The scene where Yvain is healed by the damsel with the oil does not relate directly to his relationship with either Laudine or Lunete, but the potential relic-like qualities of the oil cannot go unmentioned. After Yvain has gone mad, a lady discovers him sleeping in the forest. Her maiden recognizes him and urges her to heal him so that he can repay her by protecting her land. The lady sends her maiden back to Yvain with a container of oil, which she acquired from Morgan Le Fay. Additionally, Morgan is credited with creating the ointment which is used to heal Erec. This ointment is said to be so powerful that it could heal any type of wound within a week.[517] Robert Cook has associated the oil in *Yvain* with the oil of the Three Marys brought to anoint Christ after his crucifixion.[518] However, Chrétien does not state this is the oil of the Three Marys, whereas he does refer to that oil in the *Knight of the Cart*,[519] when King Bademagus offers Lancelot the oil of the Three Marys to heal the wounds he received on the Sword Bridge.[520] While Lancelot's oil is very clearly a relic, it is impossible to label Yvain's oil, which has supernatural properties having been created by Morgan; however the manner in which it is administered and the function it serves suggest

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[516] I was unable to find examples where saints inflicted madness upon their devotees as punishment for not fulfilling their oaths. There are examples where they inflict, or re-inflict, physical ailments upon misbehaving devotees; some examples were provided in Chapter 3.

[517] *Erec* 4193-4202.

[518] Robert Cook, 'The Ointment in Chrétien's *Yvain*,' pp. 338-342.

[519] It is also interesting to note that Chrétien says the old man who treats Lancelot is a good Christian who is better than the doctors trained at Montpellier (*Lancelot*, 3481-3485). He may be emphasizing the religious efficacy of the oil by placing the 'boens crestïens' in the position of doctor.

[520] Lancelot also has a magic ring. It has the power to alert him to the use of enchantment. He uses the ring twice: first, when he encounters the land where the subjects of Logres are being held captive; and second, when he crosses the Sword Bridge. On the first occasion, a gate closes behind him, trapping him and the ring reveals that there is no enchantment. He is able to negotiate his way out knowing that he only has to contend with his enemies' physical strength. On the second occasion, the ring reveals that the two lions, which Lancelot sees at the other end of the Sword Bridge, are enchantments and there is nothing there to harm him after crossing (*Lancelot* 3118-3129). Unlike Yvain's rings, Lancelot's does not directly protect him from harm, but it does give him warning. For a discussion of the Celtic origins of the Sword Bridge, see: Laura Hibbard, 'The Sword Bridge of Chrétien de Troyes and its Celtic Original,' *Romanic Review* vol. 4 (1913), p. 166-190. For a study of Chrétien's potential Celtic influences, see: Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (New Haven, 2001); especially Chapter 5: 'Celtic Myth, Folklore, and Historical Tradition,' pp. 183-271.

religious connotations. These connotations were discussed in the comparison between the damsel with the oil and Mary Magdalen in Chapter 2.[521]

The Blood on the Snow

The Story of the Grail presents one of the most unusual and elusive interactions between a knight and his lady. The scene begins when a falcon wounds a goose, leaving three drops of blood on the snow.[522] Chrétien writes:

> Seeing the trampled snow where the goose had lain and the still visible blood, Perceval leaned on his lance to gaze on the image. The blood and the snow together reminded him of the fresh hue on his beloved's face, and he mused until he forgot himself. He thought that the rosy hue stood out against the white of her face like the drops of blood on the white snow.[523]

The blood may hold multiple meanings, but is arguably symbolic of Perceval's impending salvific experience.[524] This argument will be supported by examining the significance of the blood appearing as drops, the miraculous nature of the snow, and Blancheflor's overall role in the scene.[525]

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[521] See Chapter 2, pp. 85-86.

[522] The involvement of the birds in this scene may be significant. For instance, in Hugh de Fouilloy's *De avibus* he notes the symbolism of wild geese and falcons. Wild geese are sinful, but they fly away to escape worldly affairs; while falcons, as one of the elect, have much virtue and little sin, which allows them to fly faster than most birds. Hugh de Fouilloy, *De avibus*, ed. Willene B. Clark (Binghamton, 1992), Chapter 51, p. 225; Ch. 42, p. 191. When the falcon wounds the goose, it may be argued that this is symbolic of the virtuous correcting the errors of the worldly. The wounded goose, in this case, represents the damaged state of Perceval's soul (Holmes and Klenke, p. 133). See also, Klenke, 'Chrétien de Troyes and Twelfth-Century Tradition,' *Studies in Philology*, vol. 62, no. 5 (1965), p. 637. The falcon may represent divine intervention, as it wounds the goose, providing the blood on the snow.

[523] Staines, p. 391; *Perceval* 4173-4184. '…et Percevax vit defolee/ le noif qui soz la gente jut,/ et le sanc qui ancor parut./ Si s'apoia desor sa lance/ por esgarder cele sanblance,/ que li sans et la nois ansanble/ la fresche color li resanble/ qui est en la face s'amie,/ et panse tant que il s'oblie./ Ausins estoit, an son avis,/ li vermauz sor le blanc asis/ come les goutes de sanc furent/ qui desor le blanc aparurent.'

[524] For a study of Chrétien's *Perceval* that examines the potential influence of Christianity and Greco-Roman myths on the romance, see: Karl D. Utti with Michelle A. Freeman, 'Myth and Spirituality: *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*)' in *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited* (New York, 1995).

[525] For other arguments, see: Grace Armstrong, 'The Scene of the Blood Drops on the Snow: A Crucial Narrative Moment in the *Conte du Graal*,' *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* vol. 19, no. 2 (1972), pp. 127-147; Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff, 2006), p. 44; Pierre Gallais, 'Le sang sur la neige (le conte et le rêve),' *Cahiers de civilisation medieval*, 21e année, n°81 (1978), pp. 37-42; Peggy McCracken, 'The Poetics of

After being attacked by the falcon, the goose fell onto the snow and Chrétien writes that when it flew away, it had disturbed the snow.[526] Since the snow is disturbed by the goose's movement, there is no logical way that three distinguishable *drops* of blood would be left. It appears that Chrétien desires his audience to focus on the fact that the blood is manifested as drops. Chrétien is the first to tie the Grail with the Eucharist, as the Grail King is sustained by eating only the host from the Grail; Chrétien also relates the bleeding lance with the Grail. The white host in the Grail procession, the white snow, and the whiteness of Blancheflor's name also hint toward a correlation between her image and salvation.

The snow itself may also be a miracle. Scholars have struggled with the snow happening at an inappropriate time because it occurs around Pentecost,[527] far too late for snow.[528] The knight Clamadeu arrives at Arthur's court on Pentecost and it is a few days later that Perceval discovers Arthur's camp.[529] Placing this event at this time suggests that Chrétien is implying that it was a miracle, thus priming the audience for the miraculous nature of the entire scene. This scene may be interpreted as Perceval's spiritual awakening[530] because, after seeing the blood on the snow and interacting with Arthur's knights, the next scene involving Perceval is his encounter with the hermit, who listens to his confession and makes his

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Sacrifice: Allegory and Myth in the Grail Quest,' *Yale French Studies*, vol. 95 (1999), pp. 152-168; Daniel Poirion, 'Du Sang sur la Neige,' in *Voices of Conscience*, ed. Cormier (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), pp. 143-165. For more on the theological views of blood, see: Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007).

[526] *Perceval* 4174-4176.

[527] Pentecost is a common day for Arthurian knights to set out on adventure. Chrétien does not suggest why this is the case. In a similar vein, in a letter from Pope Urban II about the First Crusade he calls for men to set out on the Feast of the Assumption of Virgin. Riley-Smith, p. 38. Perhaps feast days are believed to add strength to the purpose of the knights and Crusaders. For an architectural interpretation of Pentecost and the body of Christ, see: Michael D. Taylor, 'The Pentecost at Vézelay', *Gesta* vol. 19, no. 1 (1980), p. 9-15.

[528] David Fowler, *Prowess and Charity in the Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes* (Seattle, 1959), p. 44; Peter Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien* (Paris, 1968), p. 44. For an analysis of these works together, see Armstrong, pp. 128-130. In *Parzival*, when Wolfram von Eschenbach retells this event, he actually states, 'A heavy fall of snow had descended on him during the night. Yet according to what I heard it was not the time for snow.' *Parzival*, tr. A.T. Hatto (London, 1980), p. 147.

[529] Armstrong, p. 130. Fowler (p. 44) argues that the season the snow occurs during is irrelevant because Chrétien is suggesting that psychologically it is mid-winter for Perceval. Haidu (p. 193) corroborates Armstrong's view calling the event a 'summer snow'.

[530] McCracken, 'Poetics of Sacrifice,' p. 155.

absolution complete.[531] Though Perceval's conversion happens five years later, Chrétien places it consecutively with the blood on the snow scene. There is also a connection between Pentecost and Easter, as Pentecost is the end of Eastertide.[532] Perceval meets the hermit on Good Friday and receives the Eucharist on Easter. Chrétien appears to be using the blood on the snow as a symbol of the power of the Holy Spirit, to highlight Perceval's impending conversion.[533]

Although admittedly speculative, the blood on the snow may also be a symbol of the Eucharist, as Perceval receives the Eucharist from the hermit to complete his conversion. Pentecost represents the birth of the Church when the Holy Spirit descended. The Church is the physical embodiment of the mystical body of Christ, and the body of Christ is represented by the Eucharist. There may be a connection between the blood on the snow and the blood of Christ. Blancheflor's body as depicted in the blood on the snow, may be serving as a kind of symbol for the body of Christ. This may be suggesting that the love that Perceval found with a woman will be made complete when that carnal love is replaced with spiritual love for God when he receives absolution from the hermit.

Although there is no way to prove this connection definitively, what may be proven is that Perceval treats the blood on the snow as a powerful object. It is a symbol of the lady whom he loves, which he believes allows him to have an experience with her. Furthermore, this experience leads to his conversion. Blancheflor's image acts as a type of conduit to his salvation.[534]

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[531] Armstrong, p. 128.

[532] For more on the symbolism associated with Spring and Eastertide, as they pertain to the Virgin Mary, see: David J. Rothenberg, 'The Marian Symbolism of Spring, ca. 1200-1500: Two Case Studies,' *Journal of the American Musicology Society* vol. 59, no. 2 (2006), pp. 319-398.

[533] Eucharistic miracles, like accounts of bleeding or incorrupt relics, were typically seen as divine intervention to cure an unbeliever of doubt. Snoek, p. 6, 310, 315-19. For Christ's blood as relic, see: Wilfrid Bonser, 'The Cult of Relics in the Middle Ages,' *Folklore* vol. 73, no. 4 (1962), p. 238.

[534] Some scholars have argued that the blood on the snow scene harkens back to the bleeding lance in the Grail procession; for more on this see: Jean Frappier, *Le Roman Breton* (Paris, 1958-1961), p. 69; Klenke, 'Chrétien's Symbolism and Cathedral Art,' *Modern Language Association* vol. 70, no. 1 (1955), p. 242; Klenke, 'Chrétien de Troyes,' p. 635-646. For more on the Grail in the romance tradition, see: *Les romans du Graal dans la littérature des XII et XIII siècles*, ed. Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Paris, 1956). For a thorough discussion of the procession, see: Jeff Rider, 'The Perpetual Enigma of Chrétien's Grail Episode,' *Arthuriana*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1998), p. 19.

Summary

This chapter demonstrated that there are many similarities between Chrétien's ladies and female saints. These similarities were identified in comparisons between the romances and hagiography and the material culture of the cult of saints. In hagiography, there are specific virtues espoused by female saints, which allow them to withstand temptation, express their devotion to God, accept their fate, and gain devotees after death. The attributes that were examined included beauty, wisdom, chastity, asceticism and martyrdom. Additionally, aspects of the relationship between lady and knight were examined through the lens of adoration, punishment, and penance in the relationship between saint and devotee as recorded in miracle tales. Finally, objects belonging to the ladies were compared with relics in relation to their form and function. Overall, this chapter revealed that the relationship between the lady and knight shared many similarities with the relationship between a saint and devotee.

Conclusion: Twelfth Century and Beyond

Despite differing contexts, attributes of the ideal woman are very similar whether this woman is from a romance, the Bible, or a saint's life. Virtuous women espouse qualities such as nobility, beauty, chastity, devotion, mental fortitude, and sometimes even physical strength. Another significant aspect shared by ladies, biblical women, and saints, is the relationships that these women had with others. The relationship between the lady and her knight was the dominant one in the romances; the relationship between biblical women and God was the most significant in biblical exposition; and, within the context of the cult of saints, the relationship between the saint and God was the most dominant in hagiography, while in miracle tales specifically, the relationship between the saint and devotee was the most significant. Other relationships that surfaced and were also important were those between the women and those who persecuted or threatened them.

All writers are influenced by their context, and perhaps especially by their cultural and intellectual surroundings. Although affecting people to different degrees, medieval Christianity permeated every aspect of society. Religious texts of the twelfth century, specifically biblical exposition, would have remained primarily within the realm of monks and clerics, but the relationship between God and humanity, initially described in these texts, would have been circulated in other ways. For instance, hagiography and miracle tales in the vernacular would have been more widely available, not only transmitted textually but also orally. Additionally, shrines and relics would have further perpetuated the influence of the cult of saints in the everyday lives of medieval individuals.

In Chrétien's romances, not all religious symbols are clearly explained, nor do they perfectly reflect the context in which they were created. In other words, some of these symbols are subtle; however, that does not make them a less valuable object of study. A single exclamation to Mary or the saints, which may be the product of a subconscious thought, results from a conscious experience with medieval Christianity. Furthermore, if there are other symbols in the narrative associated with Mary or the saints, these exclamations may be pointing toward this connection. This is also true of attributes shared between ladies, biblical women, and saints. Even if Chrétien described his ladies without any specific model in mind, the similar attributes still point toward the context in which he was writing.
The relationship between lady and knight, present in Chrétien's work, is reflective of the religious context of the twelfth century as well. At this time, a broader emphasis on love and affectivity is evidenced in the works of authors of biblical exposition. In the words of Fulton,

argument and education 'forced medieval Christians to forge new tools with which to think'; devotion and prayer, however, 'forced medieval Christians to forge new tools with which to feel.'[535] Fulton is speaking specifically about the Virgin Mary and how her relationship with Christ provided medieval Christians with the ability to experience this relationship. However, this is true in Chrétien's work as well because the relationship between knight and lady, imbued with religious connotations, also enabled his audience to both think and feel.

Chrétien's ladies occupy the liminal space that separates the secular and the sacred. Even though Chrétien's texts are written for a court audience, that clearly does not preclude them from having religious elements. There is an interplay between the secular and the sacred throughout medieval Christianity. This interplay is perhaps especially evident in the relationship between the Bride and Bridegroom in the Song of Songs. Although the Song is a biblical text, it describes a carnal relationship.[536]

To take one example, in his *Sermons* Bernard interprets Song 2:8, 'See how he comes leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills' stating:

> Whether our reading be in the psalms or in the present song, shall we imagine for ourselves a powerful man of great stature, captivated by the love of an absent girl-friend and hastening to her desired embraces by bounding over those mountains and hills whose massive bulk we see towering to such heights above the plain that the peaks of some seem to penetrate the clouds? Surely it will not do to fabricate physical images of this kind, especially when treating of this spiritual Song; and it is certainly not legitimate for us who recall reading in the Gospel that 'God is a spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit'.[537]

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[535] Fulton, *Judgement*, p. 197.

[536] There are many similarities between how love relationships are described in Bernard's *Sermons* and Chrétien's romances. For instance, the steps the knights have to undergo to be with their beloveds may be compared with the steps Christians undergo to be with God. The knight appears similar to the various types of souls that Bernard describes seeking God. Perhaps the closest equivalent to the soul's path described by Bernard is the knightly quest in Chrétien. Ann Astell (*The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1995), p. 76-77.) argues this point as well, comparing a monk's journey to God to a romance. Jaeger argues along similar lines in *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 118. For more on the similarities between stages in monastic and courtly literature, see: G.R. Evans, *The Mind of St Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford, 1983), p. 121; R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London, 1953), p. 245.

[537] Walsh and Edmonds, Vol. 3, p. 61; S. 53.3. 'Pingemus nobis, sive in Psalmis ista legentes, sive in praesenti Cantico, virum gigantem procerae staturae, absentis cuiuspiam mulierculae amore captum, et dum properat ad cupitos amplexus, transilientem montes collesque hos, quos videmus mole corporea super plana terrae tanta altitudine eminentes, ut et supra nubes aliqui illorum verticem extulisse cernantur? Verum non decet istiusmodi

This quotation is perhaps especially relevant to a comparison between biblical texts and secular literature because in the Arthurian romances there typically is 'a powerful man of great stature, captivated by the love of an absent girl-friend'. Furthermore, their love relationship, like that of the Bride and Bridegroom, also should not be taken at face value. The influence of the Song of Songs, and its exegetical tradition, on medieval romance must not be overlooked.

Minor Female Characters

There are many other female characters in the romances who have not yet been discussed. These women are not associated with biblical women or saints to the same extent as the female protagonists, nor do they have the same vital role in the narratives, but they should not go unmentioned. Many appear at crucial times during the knights' quests, typically providing the knights with valuable information or aid. Additionally, sometimes the ladies provide the knights with opportunities to demonstrate their prowess in battle by defending these ladies. Other times, the ladies tempt the knights, allowing the knights to prove that they can resist temptation because they have already promised their hearts to other ladies. The latter purpose of these ladies was previously examined in the cases of Lancelot and Yvain.[538] Also mentioned in conjunction with Yvain was the damsel with the oil, who serves as an example of a secondary female character providing aid to a knight.[539]

It is worth looking at some additional examples in relation to providing knights with information and the opportunity to demonstrate their prowess. In *Perceval*, for example, two minor characters provide him with information pertaining to the Grail and lance. The first woman is his cousin, whom he encounters soon after leaving Blancheflor to find his mother. Perceval's cousin informs him that his mother died when he left her, and that he carries the burden of this sin, which prevented him from asking about the lance and Grail while in the company of the Fisher King. Although this is vital information for Perceval, he does not yet have a way to rectify this problem. However, a little later in the narrative, after the blood on the snow scene, when Perceval is in the company of Arthur's knights in the forest, he meets the Hideous Damsel. She berates him for not inquiring about the Grail and lance, telling

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corporeas phantasias imaginari, praesertim tractantes hoc Canticum spirituale; sed nec licet omnino nobis, qui meminimus legisse nos in Evangelio, quia *spiritus est Deus, et os qui adorant eum oportet in spiritu adorare*.'

[538] See Chapter 2, pp. 87-88.

[539] See Chapter 2, pp. 85-86.

Perceval about the many terrible things that will befall everyone because of his actions. She states, 'And do you know what will befall the [Fisher King] if he is not cured of his wounds, and does not hold his land? Ladies will lose their husbands; hapless maidens will be orphans; many knights will die; and lands will be laid to waste. All these ills will result because of you.'[540] It is after this encounter that Perceval realizes he must seek the Grail and lance to ensure everything is put right.

Even more than providing knights with information, ladies provide them with the opportunity to fight other knights. One example of this, which is perhaps unique, may be found in *The Knight with the Lion*, when Yvain and Gawain unknowingly fight one another at the behest of two sisters. In this situation, the father of the ladies has died and the older sister refuses to give the younger her share of the inheritance. The younger sister chooses Gawain as her champion, the older chooses Yvain. Perhaps most relevant to the narrative as a whole is that the fight occurs right before the deceptive reconciliation between Yvain and Laudine. Before the true identities of the knights are revealed, Chrétien makes a statement that is applicable not only to the fight between friends, but also to the impending reconciliation:

> I swear it is a proven wonder that Love and mortal Hate are found together. God, how can two such contraries inhabit the same house? It seems to me they cannot live together in one house a single night, for once each knew the other was there, they could remain only with dispute and discord….Now hate is ready for the forward attack, spurring and pricking against Love whenever he can, and Love does not even stir. Ah, Love, where are you hiding? Come out, and you will see what forces the enemies of your friends have brought out and set against you. The enemies are the very men who love each other with a sacred love, for a love that is not false or feigned is a rare and sacred thing. If Love recognized the men, he would have to prevent them from attacking and injuring each other. Therefore Love is blind, deceived, and defeated, for though he sees them, he does not recognize the men who are his rightful subject.[541]

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[540] Staines, p. 396-397; *Perceval* 4651-4659. 'Et sez tu qu'il an avandra/ del roi qui terre ne tandra,/ qui n'est de ses plaies gariz?/ Dames an perdront lor mariz,/ terres an seront essilliees/ et puceles desconselliees,/ qui orfelines remandront,/ et maint chevalier an morront,/ et tuit avront le mal par toi.'

[541] Staines, p. 329; *Yvain* 6015-6026, 6035-6056. 'Par foi, c'est mervoille provee/ que l'en a ensanble trovee/ Amor et Haïne mortel./ Dex! meïsmes en un ostel/ comant puet estre li repaires/ a choses qui tant sont contraires?/ En une hostel, si con moi sanble,/ ne pueent eles estre ansanble,/ que ne porroit pas remenoir/ l'une avoeques l'autre un seul soir/ que noise et tançon n'i eüst,/ puis que l'une l'autre i seüst….Or est Haïne molt an coche,/ qu'ele esperone, et point, et broche/ sor Amors quan que ele puet,/ et Amors onques ne se muet./ Ha! Amors, ou es tu reposte?/ Car t'an is, si verras quel oste/ sont sor toi amené et mis;/ li anemi sont cil meïsme/ qui s'antr'ement d'amor saintime;/ qu'amors qui n'est fause ne fainte/ est precieuse chose, et sainte./ Si est Amors asez trop glote,/ et Haïne n'i revoit gote;/ qu'Amors deffandre lor deüst,/ se ele les reconeüst,/ que li uns

After the two knights reveal their identities, the hate they felt toward one another turned to love once again. In addition to the fact that the reconciliation between Laudine and Yvain occurs right after the fight,[542] and subsequent reunion with Gawain, there are other reasons to suggest that Chrétien means for these words to apply to the lovers' reconciliation. Chrétien does not describe the reconciliation in great detail. Laudine swears over the relics, begrudgingly forgives Yvain, and then Chrétien ends the romance saying they cherished one another. The reconciliation appears abrupt and Laudine's promise to love Yvain seems hollow. However, if the reader recalls the earlier statement regarding love and hate, then the reconciliation is justified. The hatred that Laudine feels toward Yvain because he abandoned her is capable of coexisting with the love that he feels for her. Furthermore, the hatred Laudine feels toward Yvain may be because of the love she once felt for him before she was betrayed. Chrétien provides the complex emotions that would have likely been a part of the couple's reconciliation through Yvain's battle with Gawain. The fight between the two knights and the potential symbolism it bears for the reconciliation of Laudine and Yvain was facilitated by the feud between the two sisters.

Similarly, in *The Story of the Grail*, Gawain fights on behalf of a young woman, who has been insulted by her sister. In addition to bolstering Gawain's prowess, this example also provides a comparison between the female protagonists and the minor female characters in relation to the tokens they give their knights. When Gawain agrees to fight on the young girl's behalf, she provides him with one of her sleeves as a token to wear during the combat. She requests that he wear it as a token of her love.[543] Unlike some of the tokens or objects belonging to the female protagonists, the sleeve is a typical love token. It does not have any special powers which aid Gawain, unlike Yvain's ring for example, nor does he revere it in such a way that suggests it is more than a representation of the one for whom he is fighting, unlike Alexander's tunic.[544]

Although minor female characters are typically not associated with religious symbolism, they do play an important role in bolstering the symbolism associated with the

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l'autre n'adesast/ ne feïst rien qui li grevast./ Por ce est Amors avuglee/ et desconfite et desjuglee/ que cez qui tuit sont suen par droit/ ne reconuist, et si les voit.'

[542] Foehr-Janssens, p. 162.

[543] *Perceval* 5436-5437. 'Mes portez por la moie amor/ ceste manche que je tieng ci.' Also, it is perhaps significant that the young girl's father is the one to fashion the sleeve for Gawain because he does not like the way the older sister is treating her.

[544] For Yvain's ring, see Chapter 4, pp. 149-150; for Alexander's tunic, see Chapter 4, pp. 146-148.

female protagonists. The minor characters also fulfil roles for the knights that the other ladies cannot, especially in *Lancelot*, *Yvain*, and *Perceval*, where these knights are not always with their ladies. For instance, the importance of the roles of these minor characters is diminished in *Cligés* and *Erec and Enide* because the female protagonists are with their knights throughout the entire narrative. These minor female characters highlight that the ladies are the focal point and therefore the ladies are meant to be viewed differently.

Looking Beyond Chrétien

In the twelfth century, with the exception of the Tristan legends, Arthurian texts tend to place a greater emphasis on the male characters. One reason for this is that many of these works were written to record the history of Arthur and his knights; Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* and Wace's *Brut*, are examples of this. Women play a limited role in these texts where they are present only to add to the male characters' identities or images.[545] For instance, in *Brut* when Arthur returns to England, Wace writes:

> Men and women could be seen celebrating his return: the ladies kissed their husbands and the mothers their sons, sons and daughters kissed their fathers and mothers wept for joy, cousins and neighbors embraced, as did sweethearts who, when opportunity allowed, indulged themselves rather more. Aunts kissed their nephews – for everyone, joy was widespread.[546]

In this quotation, the emphasis is on women as mothers, aunts, wives, and lovers. Although men here are reciprocally depicted as sons, nephews, husbands, and lovers, individual men are given significant roles in the narrative, whereas women are typically mentioned generically, as in the quotation. While there are similar descriptions of women in Chrétien, they are alongside detailed accounts of the actions of female protagonists. In *Brut*, this is one of the few appearances of women. Guinevere and Hengist's daughter Rowena are

[545] For more about the relationship between epic and romance literature during the twelfth century, see: Southern, 'From Epic to Romance' in *The Making of the Middle Ages*, pp. 209-244. See also: Eugene Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford, 1971). For an argument that the relationship between epic and romance is more complicated than this, especially when it comes to the *chansons de geste*, see: Sarah Kay, 'Contesting "Romance Influence": The Poetics of the Gift,' *Comparative Literature Studies* vol. 32, no. 2 (1995), pp. 320-341.

[546] Wace, *Roman de Brut*, edited and translated by Judith Weiss (Exeter, 2003), 10175-10186. 'Mult veïssiez a sun repaire/ Humes e femes joie faire;/ Baisent les dames lur mariz/ E les meres baisent lur fiz/ Filz e filles baisent lur peres/ E de joie plurent les meres;/ Cusines baisent lur cusins/ E les veisines lur veisins./ Les amis lur amies baisent/ E, quant leus est, de plus s'aaisent;/ Les antes baisent lur nevus;/ Mult aveit grant joie entre tuz.'

described in greater detail than most women, but they do not play a major role in the narrative. Guinevere marrying Mordred while Arthur is off battling the Romans is perhaps the only occasion where her actions could have public ramifications, but this action is precipitated by Mordred.[547]

Even in Beroul's *Tristan*, which evenly features both Isolde and Tristan, biblical and saintly symbolism is not as prominent. The moment where Isolde cheats during her oath over relics has already been discussed and compared to Lancelot's deceptive oath.[548] Isolde is in no way associated with a saint in this scene, but it is a moment where relics are given a prominent role. In fact, Beroul writes, 'Not one holy relic was left anywhere in Cornwall in a treasure-chest, in a casket or a phylactery, in reliquaries or boxes or shrines, not even those that were set in gold or silver crosses or amulets, for they had all been placed on the cloth and arranged in their order.'[549] Despite the multitude of relics, Isolde does not behave like a saint. The extraordinary number of relics is meant to highlight her deceptive oath. It is possible, however, that Isolde's behavior may be considered Eve-like. It is likely that Chrétien viewed Isolde in this way, as he employed the comparison between Fenice and Isolde, which also included the reference to Adam's wife.[550]

There are other Old French texts, not part of the Arthurian tradition, which give women prominent roles. However, unlike in Chrétien's texts, these women do not appear to have as much association with Christian religious symbolism. For some, like the *Roman d'Enéas*, this may be due to subject matter. Instead of being a text about battle, like *Brut*, *Roman d'Enéas* is a text that focuses on love relationships, with fighting interspersed.[551] There are detailed descriptions of the effects of love on women, which is a theme shared with Chrétien. Dido, not unlike Enide or Fenice, is given a voice and describes how love causes her to suffer.[552] Love relationships in some of the lais of Marie de France also have potential

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[547] Wace, *Roman de Brut* 13025-13030. 'Emprés ceste grant felunie/ Fist Modred altre vilainie,/ Kar cuntre cristïene lei/ Prist a sun li femme lu rei,/ Femme sun uncle e sun seignur/ Prist a guise de traïtur.'

[548] See Chapter 4, pp. 145-146.

[549] Fedrick, p. 140; Beroul 4130-4136. 'En Cornoualle n'ot reliques/ En tresor ne en filatieres,/ En aumaires n'en autres bieres,/ En fiertres n'en escrinz n'en chases,/ En croiz d'or ne d'argent n'en mases,/ Sor le paile les orent mises,/ Arengies, par ordre asises.'

[550] See Chapter 2, pp. 79-83.

[551] Mary Paschal, 'The Structure of the Roman d'Enéas,' *The French Review* vol. 54, no. 1 (1980), p. 48.

[552] There are very detailed descriptions of love and desire, related to the female characters. For instance, detailed descriptions of Dido's desire for Eneas mentions the torments of the god of Love, crying over the beloved, and

parallels with Chrétien. For instance, in *Guigemar*, the protagonist incurs a thigh injury during a hunting accident, when he shoots a deer and the arrow rebounds and hits him. The deer places a curse on Guigemar, telling him that he will have the thigh wound 'until you are cured by a woman who will suffer for your love more pain and anguish than any other woman has ever known, and you will suffer likewise for her…'.[553] He and a lady fall in love, she heals him, but he is forced to leave her. She ties a knot in his shirt, while he ties a knot in a belt around her loins. They both agree that they may only love another person if that person is able to untie those knots by hand.[554] No one is ever able to untie these knots, and so the knight and lady find each other again at the end of the narrative. The belt around the lady's loins certainly suggests a type of chastity belt. The belt and the miraculous healing suggest religious connotations, but there is not enough material in the short lai to construct a detailed argument for religious symbolism.

The preceding discussion is not intended to be a comprehensive comparison between Chrétien's romances and twelfth-century Old French or Anglo-Norman texts. However, this selection does help to demonstrate that Chrétien's use of women as agents of religious symbolism in his romances appears to have been somewhat unique. The reason why this appears unique to Chrétien is not because other romances were devoid of religious symbolism, but rather because, as some scholars have noted,[555] women played a much more active role in Chrétien's romances than they did in many other Arthurian or courtly love texts in the twelfth century. In the thirteenth century this began to change, at least in the Arthurian tradition where more and more authors were incorporating religious symbols in their texts. In the introduction, it was noted that the relationship between ladies and saints was identified

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not being able to sleep. At times, love is described as a type of torture or an illness. Lines 1220-1240 provide a very clear example of this: '…dame Dido pas ne oblie/ celui por cui li deus d'amor/ l'avoit ja mise an grant freor;/ de lui comance a penser,/ en son corage a recorder/ son vis, sun cors et sa faiture,/ ses diz, ses faiz, sa parleüre,/ les batailles que il li dist./ Ne fust por rien qu'ele dormist;/ tornot et retornot sovant,/ ele se pasme et s'estant,/ sofle, sospire et baaille,/ molt se demeine et travaille,/ tranble, fremist et si tressalt,/ li cuers li mant et se li falt./ Molt est la dame mal baillie,/ et quant ce est qu'ele s'oblie,/ ansanble lui quide gesir,/ antre ses braz tot nu tenir,/ antre ses braz lo quide estraindre./ Ne set s'amor covrir ne foindre…'. J.J. Salverda de Grave, ed., *Roman d'Enéas*, Tome 1 (Paris, 1925).

[553] 'Guigemar,' in *The Lais of Marie de France*, tr. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (London, 1999), p. 44; *Les lais de Marie de France*, ed. Jeanne Lods (Paris, 1959), lines 114-118. '…De si ke cele te guarisse/ Ki suffera pur tu amur/ Issi grant peine e tel dolur/ K'unkes femme taunt ne suffri,/ E tu referas taunt pur li.'

[554] *Guigemar*, lines 535-576.

[555] See footnote 8.

within literature of the thirteenth century and beyond. In addition to the influence of the cult of saints on literature in this period, the influence of biblical motifs is also more prevalent. It is during the late Middle Ages that religious symbols become more and more commonplace in Arthurian literature.

The *Quest of the Holy Grail*, from the Arthurian Vulgate Cycle, is a primary example of this development. Whereas in Chrétien's *The Story of the Grail* the religious symbolism is, perhaps intentionally, opaque, in the *Quest* there are direct references to the Bible, the Eucharist, and other religious symbols.[556] To take one example, some of the knights who are searching for the Grail find a bed that is made of naturally colored white, green, and red wood. The bed itself dates back to the time of the biblical King Solomon, but the wood is much older. The author then relates a story of how the wood originated with Adam and Eve. He explains that when Eve pulled the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, a branch came with it, which Eve took with her when God expelled her and Adam from Eden. They planted the branch and it grew into a white tree, symbolizing Eve's virginity. God spoke to Adam and Eve, telling them that they should have children. When Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel, the tree turned from white to green, signifying the fertility and fruit of Adam and Eve. However, when Cain killed Abel, the tree turned from green to red. During each of the three stages, smaller saplings grew from this tree, which is where King Solomon got the multicolored wood to make the bed.

It is no doubt significant that the symbols of purity, fertility, and sacrifice emerge from a branch that was taken out of Eden. The wood represents the hope that mankind would be able to return to Eden or Paradise through the sacrifice of Christ. Furthermore, the bed is skillfully set along the journey to find the salvific Grail. The author explains:

> As for him who might ask of the book why it was not the man rather than the woman who carried the branch out of Paradise, since he is her superior, the book makes the answer that the bearing of the branch pertained not to the man but to the woman. For in that the woman bore it, it signified that through a woman life was lost, and through a woman life would be regained, meaning that through the Virgin Mary the inheritance that had just then been lost should one day be recovered.[557]

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[556] Duncan Robertson refers to this work as a 'hybrid' between romance and hagiography in 'The Inimitable Saints,' *Romance Philology* vol. 42, no. 4 (1989), p. 436.

[557] P.M. Matarasso, tr., *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 224; *L'estoire del Saint Graal*, Tome 1, ed. Jean-Paul Ponceau (Paris, 1997), p. 270. 'Et qui vauroit demander au contre par quel raison li hom ne porta che rainsiel hors de paradis mieus ke la feme, car plus est home haute chose ke feme n'est, a che respont li contes ke li porters de che raim n'apartenoit de noient a home se a le feme non, car, la ou la feme le

The bed, its origins, and its symbolism thus are clearly described by the author, whereas Chrétien's symbols, though not all subtle, are not explained to the audience. For instance, Erec and Enide with the sinful couple in the garden, King Arthur sitting beneath the tree planted during the time of Abel, and the tree in the walled garden of Cligés and Fenice are all potentially loaded with biblical symbolism, but must be interpreted because Chrétien does not explain them.[558]

In the German tradition, a similar scene to the girl with the sleeve in *Perceval* occurs in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*. A lady gives Gawain her sleeve which he puts on his shield before battling. The difference between this scene and the one in Perceval is that instead of simply fashioning a sleeve, an entire dress is made for the lady and the sleeve is cut off. She wears the dress without the sleeve, while Gawain bears it on his shield. After the battle, when the sleeve is full of rips and puncture marks, he returns it to the lady and she sews it back onto her dress. Wolfram does not identify any specific religious connotations but a couple of things suggest that the sleeve has spiritual properties. First, the sleeve is actually a bodily extension of the lady because she is wearing the dress with the missing sleeve while Gawain is battling. Second, unlike most tokens which remain with the knights, she wears the torn sleeve on her dress to display that Gawain fought for her. These two factors suggest that the sleeve may have relic-like qualities, as the object connects the two individuals together.[559] The relic-like quality is represented by the transfer of power between the two individuals. The sleeve, as the bodily extension of the lady and a representation of her love, provides Gawain with, at the very least, enthusiasm during the fight. When the lady receives the torn sleeve back from him, she is receiving a symbol of his victory in battle which attests that he fought on her behalf.

It should also be noted that Eve is invoked in *Parzival*. This does not have an impact on the overall interpretation of the romance, but it is worth mentioning as comparison

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portoit, la senefioit il ke par feme estoit la vie perdue et ke par feme seroit restoree; et che fu senefianche ke par la Virgene Marie seroit recouvrés li glorieus iretages qui pierdus estoit.'

[558] For an argument that the author was a Cistercian monk, see: Martin B. Shichtman, 'Politicizing the Ineffable: The *Queste del Saint Graal* and Malory's "Tale of the Sankgreal",' in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend: Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Lagorio*, eds. Shichtman and Carley (Albany, 1994), pp. 163-79. For the argument that the author was aware of Cistercian practices, but not a monk himself, see: Karen Pratt, 'The Cistercians and the *Quest del Saint Graal*,' *Reading Medieval Studies* vol. 21 (1995), pp. 69-96.

[559] Hatto, pp. 193-4, 200-201.

between a biblical woman and a lady. A deformed damsel and her deformed brother appear to Parzival and Wolfram explains why some people are deformed by referring to Adam and Eve. The author writes about how Adam, responsible for naming all of the plants and animals, told his daughters about certain plants and herbs that should not be eaten because they would cause children to be born with deformities. Speaking of Adam's daughters as all women collectively, Wolfram writes, 'Those women – do you wonder? – did according to their nature. Some were prompted by their frailty to do the deed on which their hearts were set, with the result that to Adam's bitter sorry Mankind was corrupted. Yet Adam never despaired in his purpose.'[560] The implication is that because of the sin of Eve, taking and eating the forbidden fruit, all women were weakened and predisposed to the deformities of sin. However, Adam and men are described as being stronger and trying to right these wrongs, not unlike Parzival who is later to become Lord of the Grail.

Wolfram also draws a much closer connection between the Parzival's wife Condwiramurs and his salvation, than Chrétien did with Perceval and Blancheflor. The Grail itself is also more closely connected with salvation in *Parzival* as well. To take just one example, at the end of the narrative when Parzival's infidel half-brother Feirefiz was to be baptized, the empty baptismal font is tilted toward the Grail and miraculously fills with water.[561] Before this happens, Parzival is battling with Feirefiz, whom he does not know to be his brother, and Parzival is losing. Wolfram then writes, 'And now from four or more kingdoms away and just in the nick of time Condwiramurs came to his aid with the power of her love…'.[562] Parzival then wins the battle and is reconciled with his brother. Not long after, Parzival completes his quest to find the Grail and becomes the Lord of the Grail. Wolfram implies that Condwiramurs and the Grail could come to his aid, suggesting a direct correlation between the power of both a lady and a holy object, as both are described as being equally capable of aiding Parzival.

Continuing in a similar vein, later, in the fourteenth-century English text *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain makes his devotion to the Virgin Mary explicit by bearing her image on his shield. The author writes, 'Through all other things he thought on this/ that his prowess all depended on the five pure Joys/ that the holy Queen of Heaven had of her child/ Accordingly the courteous knight had that queen's image etched on the inside of his armored

[560] Hatto, p. 263.

[561] Hatto, p. 405.

[562] Hatto, p. 370.

shield.'[563] The pentangle design of Gawain's shield represents the five wounds of Christ, five knightly virtues, the five skillful fingers on his sword hand, and the five Joys of Mary: Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, and Assumption. Gawain had the Virgin's image on his shield 'so that when he beheld her, his heart did not fail.'[564] The Virgin works through her image to provide Gawain with strength and courage, acting in her capacity as saint.

This selection of high and late medieval texts is not meant to suggest that all Arthurian narratives after Chrétien became intentional vehicles for religious symbolism. Some, like the *Quest of the Holy Grail* did, but others just have stronger religious connotations. The themes that are found budding in Chrétien are blossoming in some of these later texts.

Secular Meets Sacred

So far, what has been examined is the appearance of religious themes in secular literature. It is also useful to consider the appearance of secular motifs in religious literature. Comparing a thirteenth-century female saint's life with twelfth-century biblical exposition and Arthurian literature will reveal that the relationship between religious texts and secular literature is too complex to conclude which-influenced-which; however, it will reveal that there is a mutual interaction.

> A young lad saw her, and was moved./ All of his senses were captured by her beauty/ And he longed greatly to satisfy his desire./ Through his close friends, he made his request./ Asking for her love in exchange,/ He had them promise her gold and silver./ But she had no interest in this kind of love./ When his friends failed to persuade her,/ He presented himself at her house./ 'Fair lass,' he said, 'I am your prisoner,/ And suffer a great deal because of you./ Your beauty has moved me most deeply,/ And the sight of you made me change color./ You will see me die of suffering/ If I do not become yours./ If you so desire, I will take you as my wife,/ And I will give you whatever you wish.'[565]

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[563] Brian Stone, tr., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Middlesex, 1980), p. 45.

[564] Ibid.

[565] 'The Life of Saint Agnes, Version A' in Cazelles, p. 91, lines 54-70; Alexander Joseph Denomy, ed. *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1938), lines 53-70. 'Au repairier de l'escole le vit/ uns damoisiaus, volenters le presist./ De se biaute tous li sens amarit,/ mais bien en cuide aemplir son delit./ Premiers l'asaie par ses prives amis./ De ses amors li a le don requis,/ or et argent li a asses proumis,/ mais pour nient est de tel amour espris./ Par ses amis quant ni trouva raison/ par soi meïsme li requist en maison./ "Biele," dist il, "je sui en vo prison,/ pour vous sui jou en grant affliction./ Vostre biaute m'a mis en grant error,/ vos dous regars m'a f[ai]t muer coulor./ Or me verre[s] [m]orir a grant doulor/ se ne sui fis,

This is an excerpt from the *Life of St Agnes* (c. 1250) in which some influences of courtly motifs may be observed, as Cazelles has argued is true of thirteenth-century saints' lives. These lives would share an audience with courtly love literature, including Chrétien's romances, which is predominantly why the shared similarities occur at this time. While it is not unusual for the female saints in the earlier traditions to encounter bribery and challenges to their chastity, what is perhaps different about this thirteenth-century life is the love language associated with this bribery. The lad describes his desire for her as suffering and being imprisoned. Similar language is used in *Yvain*, for example, when he is describing how much he loves Laudine stating, '…I long to be in her prison.'[566] Chrétien compares desire for love with suffering on various occasions. For instance, in *Cligés*, Fenice explains to Thessala, '…if I desire him, he in turn desires me, and if I suffer, he in turn suffers for my sorrow and my anguish.'[567] Also, in the same narrative, but in reference to Soredamors, Chretien writes that 'love would make her miserable'.[568] Additionally, even though the bribery aspect of this quote is part of an earlier tradition, it also has parallels in the romances. For instance, in *Erec and Enide*, she is twice bribed by counts. Galoain promises to make her lady over all his domain if she chose him over Erec, while Oringle promises her wealth and honor. Just as Enide refuses both of the counts, so too does St Agnes refuse the lad who propositions here, stating:

> My friend is of such nobility/ That no description could ever account for it./ I have spent all my life with Him,/ And will not abandon His love./ He generously gave me a mantle,/ Whose clasps are made of chastity./ He has given me His ring,/ And has entrusted me with his seal./ Flee from me! You are only a fool./ Leave me alone, and address your request elsewhere./ For my friend has done me so much good/ That for nothing in the world will I ever renounce His love./ He gave me as ornaments/ Pearls, gems, and riches/ Whose beauty does not shine forth/ But whose sweetness is felt inside./ In His mouth, words taste like honey,/ And His speech is so soft/ That, on His command, all evil disappeared./ I am all His, and I care for nothing else.[569]

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biele, de vostre amour./ Se vous vol[es, pren]drai vous a moillie[r],/ donrai vous donques de quamqu'aves plus chier.'

[566] *Yvain* 1929. '…qu'an sa prison voel je molt estre.'

[567] Staines, p. 153; *Cligés* 5365-5367. '…Car se jel vuel, il me revialt;/ se je me duel, il se redialt/ de ma dolor et de m'angoisse.'

[568] *Cligés* 450. 'Or la fera Amors dolante…'.

[569] Cazelles, p. 91, lines 93-112; Denomy, p. 68. 'Chius miens amis il est de tel linage,/ nus hom ne set aconter son parage./ Tout ai vers lui emploie mon eage;/ ja par s'amour ne carrai en folage./ De carite m'a tramis un mantiel,/ de caste en sont fait li tassiel./ Par connissanche m'a donne son aniel,/ et de se foit m'a laissie son saiel./ Fuite de moi, trop ies de fol contien;/ laisse me ester, cest plait [ailleurs] maintien;/ car mes amis il m'a

Agnes implies that she is married to God and therefore has no need for a worldly lover. Her response appears to be heavily influenced by the Song of Songs, beginning with the fact that she places herself in a bride-like role with God as bridegroom. Additionally, her descriptions of the jewels given to her by God, which do not have temporal value are similar to the virtues of the Bride. Bernard in his Sermons suggests that 'those who wear jewelry have no beauty of their own, and must go to another source to beg its outward show that they might make it deceptively their own.'[570] He goes on to explain that the Bride who has spiritual knowledge has no need of ornamentation because she is already as precious as any jewel. The comparison between ornaments and virtues is not unique to texts on the Song and is found in other biblical exposition,[571] but within the context of describing God as a lover, this is a fitting comparison.

The life of St Agnes provides one example of the interplay between a saint's life, courtly love literature, and biblical exposition. The lad's proposition and Agnes' response to it, clearly differ. However, the lad's proposition differs greatly from earlier saint's lives in that he courteously requests Agnes' love in a similar fashion to how a knight would proposition a lady in an Arthurian romance. For example, this is very different from the way that Olybrius approaches Margaret in Wace's life of the saint; Wace writes, '[Olybrius] saw Margaret and fell in love with her. Through his knights he sent her word that he would make her his wife, if she were born of free birth, and if she were someone else's handmaiden, then, because she was both gracious and beautiful, he would keep her as his concubine; she would

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fait tant de bien/ que ne lairai s'amour pour nule rien./ Atorne m'a moult gentement mon cors/ de margerites, de gemmes, et d'anors/ don't ne luist pas li biautes par defors,/ mais ens el cuer en gist tous li depors./ En sa parole saveur de miel gousta,/ si grant douchour illuecques aconta/ qu'a sen comant toute mal endonna,/ Toute sui siue, autre chose [t]ensa.'

[570] Walsh, Vol. 2, p. 204; S. 41.1. 'Sed hoc illae faciant, quibus, quia de proprio non inest decor, aliunde necesse est ut mendicent, unde se speciosas mentiantur.'

[571] This was mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis (see p. 42), when Rabanus and Origen were using depictions of biblical women to describe the beauty and ornamentation of the Church. In the *Allegoriae* (Throop, p. 169) the definition of a pearl, specifically, is as follows: 'A "pearl" is heavenly desire, as in the Gospel (Mt 13.46) "Having found one pearl of great price," that is, having conceived heavenly desire in the mind. "Pearls" mean spiritual sacraments, as in the Gospel (Mt 7:6) "Do not cast your pearls before swine," that is, do not entrust inner mysteries to those who are unclean. "Pearls" mean righteous people, as in the Apocalypse (Rv. 21.21) "The twelve gates are twelve pearls," because holy people have an entry into the heavenly kingdom, through the faith of the apostles. "Pearls" mean earthly delights, as in the Apocalypse (Rv. 17.4) the woman was adorned with pearls, because the deceit of those world shines with earthly delights.'

have an abundance of his wealth.'[572] Olybrius then discovers that Margaret is a Christian, threatens to torture and kill her, but then states, 'If you abandon your god and your faith, you will remain with me in splendor; I shall make a wealthy woman of you and place you in my bed.'[573] The differences between Olybrius and Agnes' lad are quite striking. There is nothing courtly about Olybrius' request. Unlike the lad who poetically describes his love for Agnes, Olybrius does not attempt to mask his lust.

These differences are likely owing to the influences of courtly love literature on hagiography, which would further develop in the fifty years between Wace and the author of the *Life of St Agnes*. There is also a great distinction between the lad's proposition of Agnes and her response to him. His declaration of love, mimicking those of fictional knights, starkly contrasts with her religious response, evoking Song of Songs comparisons. This is no doubt done intentionally in order to provide a contrast between the temporal world of the court and the spiritual world that would lead to Heaven. The appropriation of courtly love motifs allows the author not only to capture the attention of his courtly audience, but also to warn them against sin associated with the court. However, while attempting to demonstrate how the spiritual and temporal worlds are separate, using courtly love motifs in hagiography proves that the secular and sacred were indivisible.

Similar depictions of ladies in all of the different genres included in this thesis suggest that the intellectual atmosphere of the twelfth century transcended the boundaries of religion and art, as Marie Dominique Chenu eloquently suggests:

> The same men read the Grail story and the homilies of St Bernard, carved the capitals of Chartres and composed the bestiaries, allegorized Ovid and scrutinized the typological senses of the Bible, or enriched their Christological analyses of the sacraments with naturalistic symbols of water, light, eating, marriage...they benefited by the common recourse and the subtle play of analogies drawn from the mysterious kinship between the physical world and the realm of the sacred.[574]

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[572] Wace, 'Margaret,' p. 192-93, lines 97-104. 'Marguerite vit, si l'ama./ Per ses chevaliers li manda/ Que sa muillier de li fereit/ Se ele franche feme esteit;/ E se ele ert altrui ancele,/ Pur ço qu'ele ert e gente e bele/ En soignantage la tendreit;/ Del sien a grant plenté avreit.'

[573] Ibid., p. 194-95, lines 159-162. 'Se tun deu geurpis e ta lei,/ Richement remandras o mei,/ Riche feme de tei ferai,/ Dendenz mun lit te cucherai.'

[574] Chenu, p. 101. On this note, for a comparison between architecture at Vézelay and Chrétien's *Yvain*, see: Judith S. Neaman, 'Romanticizing the Past: Statis and Motion in "Yuain" and Vézelay,' *Arthuriana* 4:3 (Fall 1994), pp. 250-270.

The foregoing examples demonstrate that although they had different purposes and, in some cases, different audiences, the line between secular and sacred texts is a blurry one when it comes to the symbolism that they both utilize. The influence of Chrétien's milieu on his work is revealed more clearly when looking beyond Guinevere to the other ladies in the romances. The attributes and roles shared among Chrétien's ladies, biblical women, and female saints reveals one aspect of the interrelationship between the secular and the sacred. The sources examined in Chapters 1 and 3 revealed that authors from different social and intellectual spheres, writing different genres of literature, were describing women in similar ways. In some cases, these authors, or at least their texts, crossed paths with one another. In other cases, they had no contact, but their ideas are similar because they were influenced by the same intellectual and cultural developments. The rise of affective piety and literature, the growth of the cults of the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, and other female saints, biblical women being used to depict the relationship between humanity and God, and ladies playing crucial roles in Chrétien's romances all coexisted in the twelfth century.

My contribution to scholarship on religious symbolism in Chrétien de Troyes' romances was made by departing from the already substantial work on literary theory. I have instead provided a cultural-historical reading that situates his romances within their cultural and intellectual milieu. This was done by examining female figures and religious symbols across different genres, and analyzing how they fit within the wider context of learning and creativity in the twelfth century. Although scholars continue to identify religious symbolism in Chrétien's romances, detailed studies of religious influence on Chrétien's work has declined since the 1970s and 1980s. My work picked up where these scholars left off, bringing together the different approaches, examining the influence of biblical exposition and the cult of saints, into one study of all five Arthurian romances. Comparing Chrétien's ladies to biblical women and saints revealed that similar ideas and symbols could be found in seemingly disparate texts in the twelfth century. Even if there is no way of knowing for certain which texts Chrétien or his readers had access to, we can see that they had access to a wide range of similar ideas circulating at the time. Chrétien's work also provides a greater understanding of the cultural and intellectual relationship between courts, monasteries, and cathedral schools. Overall, this has not simply been a study of the influence of religious texts and ideas on Chrétien's work; it has been a study of the mutual interactions between various cultural and intellectual spheres in the twelfth century, focussed specifically on religious symbolism in Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romances.

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