Lords of Retinue:
Middle English Romance and
Noblemen in Need

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ABSTRACT

This study shows how medieval poets adapted the romance genre to address contemporary concerns about the regulation and exercise of noble power. Analyzing romances alongside chivalric chronicles, medieval didactic texts, and modern historical studies of the English nobility, this dissertation explores the ideals and practices of chivalry in medieval England from the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) through the deposition of Richard II (1399). Chapters on *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1300), *Ywain and Gawain* (mid-fourteenth century), and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (c. 1388) argue that Middle English poets promote ideals of both prowess and lordship in their narratives of chivalric heroism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One – Noblemen's Needs in the Medieval and Modern Imagination 1
Chapter Two – The Knights Set Forth: Chivalry and Cooperation in the Couplet Romance *Guy of Warwick* 22
Governance, Heroism, and Worldly Renown 25
Collective Effort and Shared Victory 30
Counsel and Cooperation as Chivalric Duties 34
The Hero in Need, Before and During Battle 42
A Lord Cultivating Prowess in His Supporters 46
Chapter Three – "With Hym Dwels the Lyoun": Interdependent Heroism in *Ywain and Gawain* 51
Loyal Retainers in Images of Lordship 55
The Dangers of Isolation 65
Distortions of Lordship 70
Reciprocation and the Retainer 74
Chapter Four – "They Weren No Thyng Ydel": Noblemen and Their Supporters in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* 81
Chivalric Knighthood and Voluntary Cooperation 84
The Lordship of the Theban Cousins 94
Service Bought with Many a Florin 102
The Language of Lordship and Failures of Chivalric Governance 108
Chapter Five – Conclusion: All this Fair Company 113
List of References 121
Primary Sources 122
Secondary Sources 123
Vita 132

CHAPTER ONE
NOBLEMEN'S NEEDS IN THE MEDIEVAL AND MODERN IMAGINATION

The stories that we tell about people of high social status—which vary in their illustrations of heroic and deplorable conduct—in turn influence how we view the exercise of power. In medieval romances, when poets wanted to signal a character's social standing, those characters might appear amid lavish decorations or in parades through public places, but an aristocrat's high social status was also demonstrated at each performance of loyal service by followers and companions, referred to in Middle English as the *meine*.[1] The trappings of grandeur, which have been read as indicators of a highly individualistic mindset, belie the fact that the grand estates and pageants of the medieval nobility were maintained by servants and decorated by artisans. Likewise, the image of the lone knight-errant prevents readers from seeing that in practice, and even in romances, knights often fought surrounded by armed companies of men. Medieval romances, as literary portrayals of nobility, navigate between two competing discourses about noble power: one describing a nobleman as an exceptional figure of surpassing prowess; the other allowing prowess a prominent place while also emphasizing a nobleman's interdependent relationships with his companions and followers. To issue a command is one thing; to acknowledge the role of those who carry out the command is another. Enjoying the

[1] *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *meinē* (1a, 1c, and 2a).

privileges of high status could make a nobleman feel exceptional, but those privileges arose from the nobleman's ability to draw on the loyal support of those around him.

Ramón Llull famously insists, in his *Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria*, that knighthood should be given only to one who is "moost loyal most stronge and of most noble courage & better enseygned and manerd than al the other."[2] Knights are "the moost noble persones" who have been granted "the moost noble beeste"—the horse—and "the most noble armures and the beste only" so that they might dutifully defend the realm.[3] And because providence has bestowed such excellent qualities on the knight more than on any other man, it is most fitting for a knight to "reste hym and be at seiourne after his noblesse & deporte hym vpon his hors for to hunte or in other manere after that it shal plese hym."[4] A knight, it appears, is the worthiest, strongest, and most highly decorated of men. When disposing himself in his accustomed pastimes, he seems a man set apart from the rest, satisfied and self-sufficient.

However, our understanding of knighthood must extend beyond the leisure, prestige, and ornaments of noble pageantry so that we comprehend as well the social context of chivalry in the Middle Ages. Although S.H. Rigby cites the *Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria* as emblematic of the nobility's classist attitudes, Llull also emphasizes lordship as an essential aspect of a knight's status when he remarks that a knight must "be made lord of many men for in seygnorye is moche noblesse & in seruitude as moche of subiections."[5] Llull here seems to promote the exceptionalism of the nobility, but a closer examination yields a more nuanced image of

[2] Ramón Llull, *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, trans. William Caxton, ed. Alfred T.P. Byles, EETS o.s. 168 (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 15; S.H. Rigby discusses this passage in an analysis of the "three orders" model of medieval society, "English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Deference, Ambition, Conflict," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c. 1350–1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 25–39.
[3] Llull, *Ordre of Chyualry*, 18.
[4] Llull, *Ordre of Chyualry*, 19.
[5] Llull, *Ordre of Chyualry*, 19; he elaborates on this point at 27, 29, and 41-42.

chivalric prestige as the product of a group effort. Rather than independent individuals of high status, Llull encourages his readers to understand knights as men who serve their lords at court and in councils, standing between the king and his people as a shield stands between a knight and his enemy.[6] In Llull's discussion of chivalry, squires and servants receive special mention for their service at a knight's side as they "take hede to his horse" and "goo with hym to tournoyes and bataylles" where the knight displays his prowess in arms.[7] Llull even reminds his readers that a knight's leisure is facilitated by the work of peasants in his household and on his estate:

> And hit behoueth also that the comyn peple laboure the londes for to brynge fruytes and goodes whereof the knyght and his beestes haue theyr lyuyng . . . & that he ease hym & delyte in thynges of whiche his men haue payne & trauayl.[8]

Far from a self-made man, the medieval knight lived in a state of interdependence with those above and below him socially, and he was surrounded by people who supported him in his undertakings. His lordship over men, his ability to demand loyal service from others, was an important facet of his high social status. Our understanding of medieval chivalry should comprise both the knight's exceptional individual character and his embeddedness within the political community. A knight channeled his power not only through his sword and spear but also through his command of followers, and thus didactic writers like Llull wrote extensively about the performance of prowess and the practices of good lordship.

Drawing from a body of texts comprising chronicles, didactic manuals, and narrative poems, my dissertation argues that three Middle English poets with an interest in the exercise

[6] Llull, *Ordre of Chyualry*, 81-82; he elaborates on this point at 115-17.
[7] Llull, *Ordre of Chyualry*, 19, 22.
[8] Llull, *Ordre of Chyualry*, 19-20.

and regulation of noble power characterize chivalry as a combination of prowess and lordship in response to the changing social and political roles of the English nobility. My examples come primarily from English and French texts written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, when a series of administrative and political changes altered knights' duties and English poets turned their attention to adapting older models of chivalry to fit the needs of their contemporaries. During this time, significant changes in noblemen's roles in their localities and in royal administration elevated tensions between competing ways of thinking about noble power. At the end of the thirteenth century, Edward I revolutionized the legal landscape of England and brought a larger number of noblemen into contact with royal administration. After this period of increasing cooperation, Edward II's mismanagement of the realm led to an uprising that deposed the monarch and brought up questions, which continued to be asked well into the reign of Edward III, about the proper roles of counselors. Medieval writers acknowledge the importance of good counsel in exercising power, but they differ on exactly what constitutes good service to a lord. Some writers favored autocratic rule wherein a nobleman could exercise his will independently. Others, however, promoted an interdependent notion of lordship by reminding their aristocratic readers that a nobleman's power and majesty relied on the willing cooperation of a network of other men—among them, servants, squires, and companions in arms. These texts praise noblemen who perform and receive service, encouraging them to be mindful of the great effort expended by a great number of people in a successful exercise of noble power.

I do not intend to mitigate or remediate the essentially classist ideals promoted in medieval romance; rather, my interest lies in how late medieval English poets expressed ideals of prowess and lordship, both of which pertain to knighthood, through their heroes and through the characters who surround and support those heroes. I contend that receiving service need not

diminish a hero's prestige in a romance, for a companion's demonstration of loyalty signifies that the hero is a lord worthy of being served. The discourse surrounding noble status allowed that a nobleman could be both exceptionally capable and singularly deserving of service. These ideas did not appear equally in every narrative of noble deeds, but writers sometimes conceived of ideal nobility as performing and receiving good service. By paying attention to how secondary figures in romances facilitate a nobleman's actions and support his prestige, we can gain a greater appreciation of how medieval thinkers developed their own conceptions of chivalry in response to contemporary concerns and in relation to their poetic predecessors.

Much research on the medieval concept of nobility, and indeed on the structure of medieval society more generally, stems from the work of Marc Bloch and Georges Duby. Bloch dates the birth of medieval nobility to the twelfth century, saying that the Latin term *nobilis* referred to a general kind of prominence from the ninth through the eleventh centuries, but that it had no consistent legal definition until later.[9] According to Bloch, the idea of noble status necessarily bore with it the idea of lordship: if noble status was marked by "the possession of manors, along with treasure in money or jewels . . . this was due in the first place to the authority over other men which it implied."[10] This observation reverberates through the following decades of research by historians who largely concur that medieval noblemen derived their power not from their personal prowess but rather from the personal control of men.[11] However, Duby

[9] Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society, Vol. 2: Social Classes and Political Organization*, trans. L.A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 286.
[10] Bloch, *Feudal Society, Vol. 2*, 289.
[11] See, for example, Georges Duby, *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 35-36, 220; Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (New York: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1987), 1; David Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 281; R.R. Davies, *Lords and Lordship in the British Isles in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Brendan Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7; Andrew M. Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship in Medieval England: The Earls and Edward I, 1271-1307* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 29.

argues that chivalry and lordship were distinct notions when he asks whether "the self-awareness of the aristocracy relate[d] to the notion of nobility or to that of knighthood."[12] Duby's research led him to conclude that the idea of knighthood, as the right to bear arms in service of a lord, was born around the year 1000 CE, and the thirteenth century marks the point when "the ideology of the three orders became one of the foundations of monarchical power."[13] Despite its practical shortcomings, the tripartite model—which comprises the *bellatores*, the *oratores*, and the *laboratores*—has long stood as the theoretical standard by which scholars presume that medieval society understood itself.[14] Duby also draws attention to changes that resulted from a set of upheavals and calamities from the late thirteenth century through the fourteenth, including the Black Death which tore through Europe from 1348-9 and popular revolts in both France and England, which brought to the foreground some of the tensions between different conceptions of lordship.[15] This shift forms the subject of a large body of historical scholarship dedicated to describing just how the English and European gentry operated during this later period.

Over the last four decades, historians have revisited many of these foundational studies, often revising older historical claims that informed some highly influential literary analyses. Most significantly for this study, Michael Prestwich advises scholars to conceive not of a single monolithic notion of chivalry but rather of a plurality of chivalries, for the word "chivalry" encompasses a large and changing body of ideas throughout the Middle Ages.[16] In light of the

[12] Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1977), 75.
[13] Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 282; see also Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*; Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
[14] Rigby argues that although the tripartite model was not an accurate representation of society, medieval writers used it justify inequality and to encourage the peasantry to accept the authority of the nobility, "English Society in the Later Middle Ages," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture*, ed. Brown.
[15] Duby, *Rural Economy and Country Life*, 298.
[16] Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 219-220.

malleability of this term, we should look to practices of the nobility in order to determine how different people theorized it even as we examine theoretical texts like Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* in the context of writers who may well have dissented from Giles' views on lordship. Nonetheless, from the great variety of ways to imagine chivalry, some common ideas do recur in different studies, among them a focus on the practices of good lordship. In a book-length critique of Duby's work on the eleventh-century European nobility, Dominique Barthélemy suggests that knighthood has always been shot through with ideas of dependence and lordship, and he makes a strong case that historians have been mistaken to construe knights and lords as separate strata of society. He encourages readers to see a knight neither as a lone adventurer nor as a fountainhead of political power but rather as a "*miles alicuius* (the *miles* 'of someone')" who fights for a lord who is himself the vassal of someone else.[17] In Barthélemy's view, lordship was sustained by networks of men bound together in interdependent relationships involving a degree of reciprocal service.[18]

A wealth of scholarship reveals a similar pattern of interdependence in records of the English nobility from the reign of Edward I onward. Historians such as Nigel Saul, Christine Carpenter, and Caroline Barron have written detailed studies examining the management of noble estates during this period of shifting administrative and military practices.[19] Their findings

[17] Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 148; Nigel Saul links good lordship with the ability to assemble an affinity, as well as to forge alliances between neighbors, in *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex, 1280-1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 38.
[18] Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*, 123; Saul links good lordship with the ability to assemble an affinity, as well as to forge alliances between neighbors, in *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 38.
[19] See, for example, Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*; Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of the Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); J.M.W. Bean, *The Decline of English Feudalism, 1215-1540* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1968); Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987); Bean, *From Lord to Patron: Lordship in Late Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Alastair Dunn, *The Politics of Magnate Power in England and*

consistently suggest that cooperating with other aristocrats, and indeed demanding loyal service from followers, did not diminish a nobleman's prestige but rather strengthened his ability to exercise his will. If interdependent relationships were so important to the effective use of noble power in medieval Europe, then it would be surprising not to see medieval writers exhorting noblemen to foster interdependence by both giving and receiving loyal service.

My efforts to historicize medieval English chivalric heroism go against a prominent school of critical thought that interprets chivalry and knighthood as relative constants during the Middle Ages. The current scholarly conversation about chivalry owes much to the work of Richard Kaeuper. Drawing on Duby's argument that knights understood themselves primarily through their right to bear arms in combat, Kaeuper evocatively describes chivalric heroism as a knight's ability to do violence: "Chivalry was not simply a species of officership more distanced from the bloody work with swords and spears. . . . chivalric literature emphasizes personal might, courage, and skill in hand-to-hand fighting."[20] Kaeuper's research into chivalric literature, which marshals an impressive variety of historical and literary examples, suggests to him that knights "defined their status and place in the world by their right to bear and use arms."[21] While there is evidence that some writers encouraged noblemen to think about chivalry in this way, Kaeuper's analysis presents chivalry as a monolithic idea that manifested with a great deal of uniformity for several centuries throughout Europe. Nonetheless, as much as chivalric literature insists on its own enduring sameness, the trappings of chivalric heroes are always those of the writers' present

Wales, 1389-1413 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); J.S. Bothwell, *Falling from Grace: Reversal of Fortune and the English Nobility 1075-1455* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2008); Peter Coss, *The Foundations of Gentry Life: The Multons of Frampton and their World, 1270-1370* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship in Medieval England*.

[20] Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 146.

[21] Kaeuper, "Literature as Essential Evidence for Understanding Chivalry," *The Journal of Medieval Military History* 5 (2007): 1-15, at 8.

moments—as the heroes of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* ride through the streets of ancient Athens, their horses wear armor developed after the Battle of Bannockburn.[22] If we take chivalric writers at their word when they purport to echo chivalry's timeless values, then we risk muting the details that give romances their individual character. An analysis of a writer's chivalric ideals should therefore situate a text within contexts of other chivalric literature and within the writer's historical moment.

As a dominant masculine ideology among members of the ruling order during the later Middle Ages, chivalry may give scholars only a vague glimpse at the actual shape of medieval society, but it can provide a vivid picture of how medieval men and women imagined their world and their place within it. Previous scholarship has overemphasized the independent and violent bent of chivalric literature. We have thus been led to believe that medieval noblemen understood their status mainly through the violence they were able to inflict personally on the bodies of other men. My study revises previous discussions of chivalric literature by drawing greater attention to knights' reliance on their supporters and attendants. In the chapters that follow, I argue that chivalric ideology encouraged noblemen to think beyond the power of their own arms and to take note of the resources afforded them by their relationships with social equals and their lordship over humbler men. An analysis of chivalric literature that incorporates portrayals of attendants, in the context of changes to English noblemen's military and administrative roles, reveals that chivalric repute relied on mutual loyalty and reciprocal service, on interdependent relationships between noblemen and the men who surrounded and supported them.

The importance of a knight's social connections was not lost on writers of didactic manuals for noblemen throughout the Middle Ages who, like Llull, set out to anatomize the

[22] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Larry Benson (Boston, 1987), I 2499.

responsibilities and honors of lordship. The *De re militari* of Flavius Vegetius Renatus, written in the late fourth or early fifth century, formed the basis for an entire genre of pedagogical literature intended for men in positions of power.[23] Book one of the *De re militari* devotes eleven chapters to explaining that a good soldier must be able to fight with many different types of weapons. Nonetheless, through the remainder of the text, administration becomes a prominent theme. Vegetius wants his readers both to fight well themselves and also to surround themselves with reliable followers who can serve them well. In chapters describing how to build and defend camps and how to prepare towns for a siege, Vegetius says that the entire military force and supply chains must work well together if they hope to achieve victory. And in six chapters on the responsibilities of various officers, Vegetius makes explicit the importance of loyal service in military endeavors. This influential author spent considerable time professing that the way to secure victory is to ensure that everyone under a leader's command works together towards a common goal. Later writers followed suit, extolling the virtues of both prowess and cooperation, as Geoffroi de Charny does in his *Livre de chevalerie*, which offers advice on how, when, and where to perform deeds of arms but which also admonishes lords to "love, honor, and hold dear the good and the wise and the men of worth, to pay heed to their words, to associate closely with

[23] For discussions of Vegetius' influence on later writers, see Christopher Allmand, "The *De re militari* of Vegetius in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," in *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed. Corinne Saunders, Françoise Le Saux, and Neil Thomas (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004):15-28; Françoise Le Saux, "War and Knighthood in Christine de Pizan's *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*," in *Writing War*, ed. Saunders, Le Saux, and Thomas: 93-105; Wendryll José Bento Tavares and Ana Teresa Marques Gonçalves, "Formation of a Soldier in the Fourth Century A.D. and the Foundation of a Military Paideia: Rethinking the Vegetius *Epitoma rei militaris*," *Acta Scientiarum* 37 (2015): 15-26; A.T.P. Byles, "Introduction," *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye* EETS o.s. 189 (London 1971); R. Dyboski and Z.M. Arend, "Introduction," *Knyghthode and Bataile: A XVth Century Verse Paraphrase of Flavius Vegetius Renatus' Treatise "De re militari"* EETS o.s. 201 (London 1935); Katie L. Walter, "Peril, Flight and the Sad Man: Medieval Theories of the Body in Battle," *Essays and Studies* 67 (2014): 21-40; William Sayers, "Chaucer's Description of the Battle of Actium in the *Legend of Cleopatra* and the Medieval Tradition of Vegetius's *De re militari*," *The Chaucer Review* 42 (2007): 76-90; Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, esp. 186.

them and enjoy their company."[24] For medieval theoretical writers and modern historians alike, knighthood means both the determined exercise of prowess and the careful management of companions and supporters.

Aside from historians' attention to records of estate management and legislation, literary scholars have also mined representations of medieval society in order to excavate ideas of class and interdependence. While the sources are far from univocal, evidence abounds that considerations of social order occupied the minds of medieval writers. Supplementing the historical evidence of interdependence in noblemen's practices cited above, research into writing about nobility reveals that authors were deeply concerned to remind aristocrats that their status was supported by a network of their social equals and inferiors, and that relationships should involve mutual loyalty and service. According to Paul Freedman, discourse on the mutual obligations of the three medieval social estates can be traced back at least to the dawn of the eleventh century, when Aelfric and Wulfstan of York wrote about society's dependence on peasant workmen and plowmen who nourish everyone through their labor.[25] Centuries of writing portrayed peasants' suffering as spiritually ennobling or as justly deserved, but another parallel discussion among medieval writers sought instead to describe how the social estates existed symbiotically by underscoring the value of peasants' labor. Nicola Masciandaro's recent research on the vocabulary of work in Middle English literature uses new evidence to affirm the long-held claim that the English nobility acknowledged and even celebrated how their status was supported by the work of their social inferiors: "The social meaning of the conspicuous consumption and leisure proper to aristocratic life lies in their being signs of someone else's work. Leisure is

[24] Geoffroi de Charny, *The Book of Chivalry*, trans. Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 143. The original Old French reads as follows: "Dont furent il faiz pour amer, honorer et tenir chier et croire les bons et les sages et preudommes et amer leur compagnie et tenir pres de eulz" (142).
[25] Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 17.

honorific because it testifies to another's toil."[26] Concordantly, the ability to command others, and to receive loyal service, is a testament to an aristocrat's prestige. The king and his barons prized knights and lower noblemen in part for their performance of loyal service but also significantly for their ability to be served, to wield personal control over other men, which demonstrated their authority and high social status. Romances, as the leading secular literary genre of the Middle Ages, and as works deeply concerned with the iconography of nobility, took up ideas of service that were current in other medieval writing and debated its importance, with some poets choosing to represent heroes who drew beneficially on their followers for support.

Whatever else romance is—and that question will not be resolved in the pages that follow—scholars have long agreed that romances are significant sources in the study of courtly attitudes towards chivalry. Erich Auerbach sounded a keynote in medieval literary studies with his claim that romances aim to produce a "self-portrayal of feudal knighthood with its mores and ideals."[27] A substantial body of scholarship has built on Auerbach's work and elucidated what various romances have to say to aristocrats about proper conduct.[28] However, some influential literary scholars have also limited our understanding of medieval chivalry by ignoring or

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[26] Nicola Masciandaro, *The Voice of the Hammer: The Meaning of Work in Middle English Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 31; see also Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility*, 19; Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1; Joan Ferrante, "The Court in Medieval Literature – The Center of the Problem," in *The Medieval Court in Europe*, ed. Edward R. Hymes (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1986), 1-25, at 19; Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy*, 281.

[27] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957), 114.

[28] Noting the consistent popularity of *Guy of Warwick* throughout the later Middle Ages, Velma Bourgeois Richmond affirms romance's ability to articulate "the role of chivalry as a social force," *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 50; Melissa Furrow also suggests that romances may have had an exemplary function, illustrating ideals of chivalry through characters' actions, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009); Louise M. Sylvester asserts that romances teach men and women (but especially women) how to perform heterosexuality, *Medieval Romance and the Construction of Heterosexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); see also Ann Dobyns, "Exemplars of Chivalry: Rhetoric and Ethics in Middle English Romance," in *Romance and Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Dhira B. Mahoney*, ed. Georgiana Donavin and Anita Obermeier (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 17-32; Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 229.

minimizing the ways in which romance poets use their idealized narratives to react to contemporary concerns. Even while Auerbach finds illustrations of courtly ideals in romances, he also asserts that romances pass over "the functional, the historically real aspects of class" and supplant those real aspects with repetitive escapist fantasy.[29] By characterizing romance as "extrahistorical," Auerbach forecloses any question of a romance poet's engagement with contemporary concerns over the exercise of noble power.[30] Building on Auerbach's understanding of the timelessness of romance values, Carol Fewster describes the genre of romance as distinctly invested in the values of the past.[31] And Richard Barber, despite noting the wide variety of translations and adaptations of romances, likewise sees a marked consistency in the ideals of chivalry they promote from the twelfth through the fourteenth century.[32] These scholars agree that romances cast light onto medieval notions of nobility, but that light brings with it the glare of timelessness that has distracted critics from how poets might adapt a stylized narrative to address contemporary issues of governance. To deny the question of romances' engagement with their contexts is to diminish our understanding of medieval thought about nobility and to flatten an art form into a formula.

More recent work demonstrates how late medieval English poets used romance to illustrate their own versions of chivalric ideals, sometimes in response to contemporary tensions over how noble power should be exercised and regulated. The lone, independent knight-errant—so long seen as the archetypal literary knight—can be understood as one among many conceptions of knighthood promoted in romances. Research by Geraldine Heng on how romances respond to crises and pressures at particular historical moments, by Nicole D. Smith on

[29] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 119.
[30] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 120.
[31] Carol Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 30.
[32] Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry, Revised Edition* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995), 130.

how romances engaged with didactic clerical texts, and by Raluca L. Radulescu on how Malory's *Morte Darthur* responds to the political attitudes of the fifteenth-century gentry all encourage critical consideration of romance with attention to its historical context.[33] While majestic displays of prowess and finery may characterize romances throughout the Middle Ages, chivalric literary heroes exercise their power and illustrate ideals of knighthood in a variety of ways that merit scholarly attention. Rather than distractions from the realities of class and politics, as Auerbach would have them, romances might instead be read as comments on issues present in the minds of a poet's noble audience, such as issues of governance. The genre of medieval romance, although it may appear repetitive, comprises a rich debate about how noblemen should behave at home, at court, and in battle, and to understand how any one romance intervenes in this debate, scholars must examine the historical and cultural elements that make up the context of that romance's composition and circulation.

Literary critics are by no means agreed that romances say anything at all about lordship. Auerbach's assertion that romances distract from social and historical realities has meant to scholars that romances are mainly about knights' displays of courtly behavior and, perhaps most importantly, personal prowess. In a study filled with scathing comments on medieval romance, Johan Huizinga declares that narratives about the nobility idealize individual heroism and

[33] Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Nicole D. Smith, *Sartorial Strategies: Outfitting Aristocrats and Fashioning Conduct in Late Medieval Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012); Raluca L. Radulescu, *The Gentry Context for Malory's* Morte Darthur, Arthurian Studies 55 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003); analyzing the strategies available to romance poets for commenting on their own world, A.C. Spearing describes the classical world in Chaucer's romances "a screen upon which he could project alternatives to medieval social reality," "Classical Antiquity in Chaucer's Chivalric Romances," in *Chivalry, Knighthood, and War in the Middle Ages*, ed. Susan J. Ridyard (Sewanee: University of the South Press, 1999), 53-73, at 68. As a counterpoint to this, Simon Meecham-Jones contends that in fact Chaucer uses the antique setting of *The Knight's Tale* "to limit any freedom to read the tale as holding up a mirror to fourteenth-century England," "The Invisible Siege – The Depiction of Warfare in the Poetry of Chaucer," in *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed. Corrine Saunders, Françoise Le Saux, and Neil Thomas (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 147-167, at 154.

foreground not simply a nobleman's desire to attain wealth and status but moreover his desire to be individually famous.[34] Even when they look beyond heroic combats, critics have generally agreed that, apart from the physical force of arms and man, romances foreground individual achievement and conduct as signs of a knight's value. W.T.H. Jackson concedes that writers might create their own unique chivalric ideals in romances, but ultimately those ideals are "a starting point for the examination of individual conduct" and not an articulation of how noble power should function socially.[35] And arguing that chivalry has at best an ambivalent social worth, Helen Cooper notes that the quest in romance "places the focus of a story squarely on a knight as an individual" with exceptional qualities and unique experiences that set him apart from his community.[36] According to these critics, chivalry may encourage a hero to do good deeds, but the main function of his actions is to show how far he surpasses those around him.

Indeed, the display of exceptional prowess can symbolize a hero's fitness for rule specifically by showing that the hero is better and more capable than any other characters contending for power. Sheila Delany's exemplary analysis of *Havelok the Dane* demonstrates how the romance fascination with prowess might be read as an argument for a strong, centralized royal administration. Delany argues that *Havelok* expresses a "concern with the nature of kingship that dominated English public life in the thirteenth century" when the Middle English version was written.[37] While the poem punishes the autocratic tendencies of Godrich and

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[34] Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, 74-84.
[35] W.T.H. Jackson, "The Court of the Poet and the Court of the King," in *The Medieval Court in Europe*, ed. Hymes, 26-40: 32; in the same volume, Roberta L. Kruger disagrees, saying that "reciprocity of affection and chivalrous service governs courtly behavior" in romances, "Contracts and Constraints: Courtly Performance in *Yvain* and the *Charette*," in *The Medieval Court in Europe*, ed. Hymes, 92-104, at 92; see also Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 175
[36] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50-53; see also William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).
[37] Sheila Delany, *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 63.

Godard, a villainous pair of usurpers, it also defines good kingship as the king's personal ability to create and enforce good laws. The king receives the approval of all inhabitants of the realm, but he personally carries out justice: at the poem's outset, Athelwold is honored for punishing thieves himself; and later in the romance, Havelok single-handedly defeats a whole throng of would-be robbers in Denmark. In Delany's reading, the poem speaks to bourgeois concerns about social advancement and royal power during the reign of Edward I (1272-1307), when the rights and obligations of kingship were being redefined: "the constant claims of barons and burgesses to participate in government, the baronial crisis of 1298 and the subsequent Confirmation of Charters, [and] the development of Parliament as a legislative organ" all put pressure on older ideas and practices of noble power.[38] The poem addresses these concerns by saying that a good king builds consensus among his subjects even as he exercises power and rewards his followers through his own personal actions. *Havelok* thus presents prowess as the defining trait of a good ruler, and if romance foregrounds only a hero's prowess, then the entire genre would seem to advocate only forceful individualistic lordship. Nonetheless, the chapters that follow will argue that romance poets could adapt the formulaic genre in order to advocate different forms of lordship, including some that encourage noblemen to draw on the help available to them from their followers and companions.

A recent trend in medieval literary studies has renewed scholarly interest in romances and the historical and cultural contexts of their composition and transmission as critics make connections between the medieval nobility and the texts intended to educate them in proper governance. Richard Firth Green drew much attention to the importance of loyalty to the image of late medieval English nobility in his seminal study, *A Crisis of Truth*. His detailed analysis of

[38] Delany, *Medieval Literary Politics*, 62.

literary and historical sources explores the various meanings of "truth" in medieval England, noting particularly that the word described relationships like those noted by Dominique Barthélemy, in which there was "a mutual commitment."[39] Expanding on the idea of mutuality in noblemen's relationships, Rosalind Field and Geraldine Barnes approach romances specifically as didactic texts that aim to teach a noble audience about interdependence. Field stresses the social interconnectedness of chivalric heroes in exile-and-return romances, writing that "[t]he importance of friends in exile and allies on return emphasizes the interdependence of lord and follower."[40] This interdependence, according to Barnes, can actually facilitate the hero's displays of prowess as he fights tyranny and resolves conflicts.[41] Barnes specifically views counsellors and advisors as figures who shape a romance's ethical lessons, and she interprets a hero's "willingness to accept or simply to express a need for wholesome counsel" as a sign of chivalric excellence and maturity.[42] For these scholars, interdependence signifies not a failing of the hero's prowess but rather a socially constructive aspect of his chivalric perfection. Further, sometimes counsellors can offer armed support to a hero in need, enabling him to show his excellence in arms even as he develops interdependent relationships with other lords, companions, and followers. The present study expands on the work of Green and Barnes, viewing three romances as writers' interventions in debates on the regulation of noble power

[39] Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 17.
[40] Rosalind Field, "The King Over the Water: Exile-and-Return Revisited," in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. Corrine Saunders (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 41-53, at 47; noting a similar emphasis on a hero's social connections, Michael Cichon views romance heroism through the context of feudal law and custom in order to highlight "the pattern of action and reciprocation" that, in *Ywain and Gawain*, elevates the social function of ideal chivalry above the focus on personal prowess, *Violence and Vengeance in Middle Welsh and Middle English Narrative:* Owein *and* Ywain and Gawain (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 1-2; Corinne Saunders, Françoise Le Saux, and Neil Thomas also argue that although chivalry generally focuses on individual prowess, the exercise of prowess in a tournament "allowed for the practice of group warfare and skilled use of weapons," melding the individual and cooperative aspects of chivalry together, "Introduction," in *Writing War*, ed. Saunders, Le Saux, and Thomas, 1-13, at 7.
[41] Geraldine Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 13-14.
[42] Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, 13-15.

throughout the fourteenth century. By positioning romance heroism over a backdrop of the history of English nobility, I hope to show how these poems might inspire noblemen to an awareness of their own interdependent relationships with their attendants and peers during a period of dramatic changes in the structure of society and government.

We need not equate romances with chronicles or mirrors for princes in order to see the connection between several genres of writing about noble power. Recent scholarship has noted the similar aims of didactic writers who wish to educate their readers in matters of conduct. In particular, Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark remark on the "easy circulation among kinds of writing *within* the didactic category" such as *exempla* that appeared in preaching materials and mirrors for princes.[43] The mobility of didactic materials suggests that writings which we place in different genres may, for a medieval audience, have contributed to the same discussions from different angles. Chronicles ostensibly relate factual accounts of battles and political events with occasional praise or censure from the author, and mirrors for princes narrate historical events explicitly for didactic purposes, but these genres share with romance an interest in the regulation and exercise of noble authority. This study brings together these different kinds of writing about nobility in order to create a fuller image of romance's contribution to debates about power that took place throughout the Middle Ages.

Despite their status as translations of texts from other places and times, the romances analyzed here can extend our understanding of the late medieval English nobility if we consider how the medieval process of translation could also incorporate what we call adaptation. In a

[43] Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark, "Introduction," in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), ix-xx, at x; see also Georges Le Brusque, "Chronicling the Hundred Years War in Burgundy and France," in *Writing War*, ed. Saunders, Le Saux, and Thomas, 77-92, at 79; John Taylor suggests that chroniclers fashioned their stories in accordance with their political leanings, praising people they considered good lords and censuring those whose practices disagreed with the writers' ideals, "Richard II and the Chronicles," in *Richard II: The Art of Kingship*, ed. Anthony Goodman and John Gillespie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 15-35, at 23-24.

sense, all three Middle English romances considered here reproduce other works: the Auchinleck *Guy of Warwick* retells the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*; *Ywain and Gawain* draws heavily on Chrétien de Troyes' Old French *Yvain*; and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* reshapes Boccaccio's Italian *Teseida*. Despite the efforts of Middle English poets to bring their sources to a new audience with new concerns, these and many other romances have been censured by modern scholars for resembling older romances too closely in some ways and not closely enough in others.[44] If we understand translation differently, though, then we might see that Middle English romances can be more than mere helpmeets meant to bring sophisticated continental poems to an unsophisticated English audience. The three poems considered here do not present themselves as translations, nor do they refer to their sources explicitly. There is little cause, then, to think that they might have been intended as aides for readers to access a text in its original form. Rather, I proceed from the premise that we can understand these poems in the same way that Rita Copeland understands vernacular translations of academic texts, "not [as] a supplement to the original, but [as] a vernacular substitute for the original."[45] The English poets who wrote these romances employed the various processes of adaptation—of reduction, amplification, and more literal translation—to compose new poems for their own times and circumstances; if some parts of the poems resemble the originals, then we should consider those moments of close translation as no less deliberate than moments of compression or expansion of the exemplar in repurposing old material to tell a new story.[46] Even if some critics find them aesthetically lacking, romances

[44] Keith Busby, "Chrétien de Troyes English'd," *Neophilologus* 71.4 (1987): 596-613; Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Popularity of Middle English Romance* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1975); John Frankis, "Taste and Patronage in Late Medieval England as Reflected in Versions of *Guy of Warwick*," *Medium Aevum* 66.1 (1997): 80-93; John Finlayson, "*Ywain and Gawain* and the Meaning of Adventure," *Anglia* 87 (1969), 312-37

[45] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 179.

[46] Melissa Furrow notes similarities between English and French romances, but she also notes the differences brought on by the decision to write in English, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009); Ivana Djordjević suggests that a familiar-looking motif might not

represent a rich corpus of thought about nobility and conduct in the Middle Ages, and that thought is informed by poets' observations and opinions of their historical and cultural circumstances.

This study seeks to explore the historical and cultural contexts of Middle English romances and, by doing so, to show how medieval poets could use a formulaic literary genre to address contemporary concerns about the regulation and use of noble power. Specifically, the romances considered here define chivalry, and therefore proper nobility, as an amalgam of prowess and lordship during periods of legislative and political change. Chapter 2 positions the couplet *Guy of Warwick* beside John of Salisbury's influential *Policraticus* and the events of Edward I's reign in order to argue that, as he embarks on adventures and achieves worldly renown, the romance's titular hero embodies ideals of noble cooperation that characterized good governance at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The third chapter analyzes *Ywain and Gawain*, in which a retinue is essential to the image of nobility and also to the hero's success, in the context of the reign and military campaigns of Edward III. When Ywain's initial efforts to achieve chivalric excellence alone leads to a fall from social status, the poet critiques the idea of self-reliant knighthood and offers an alternative that emphasizes lordship as the hero recuperates his losses by accepting the aid of his companion. Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, the subject of the fourth chapter, presents successful noblemen as those who can coordinate with other men and who foster a network of interdependent relationships. The three male protagonists display their noble power, both on and off the battlefield, after showing that they can effectively manage the

actually be familiar at all in a translated romance due to cultural differences between the source culture and the target culture, "Original and Translation:Bevis's Mother in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Romance," in *Cultural Encounters*, ed. Saunders, 11-26; see also Joanne Findon, "The Other Story: Female Friendship in the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*," *Parergon* 22.1 (January 2005), 71-94; John K. Bollard, "*Hende Wordes*: The Theme of Courtesy in *Ywain and Gawain*," *Neophilologus* 78 (1994), 655-70.

social processes that support their efforts. Chaucer does not equate cooperation with the productive exercise of authority, but his romance consistently depicts the exercise of prowess alongside the preparations that make that exercise possible. In all of these texts, poets urge their audience towards an understanding of nobility that brings together a lord's personal exercise of prowess and his willingness to call upon support in times of need. Attention to historical and cultural contexts of the poems' compositions illuminates the ways in which these literary works enter into an ongoing medieval debate about how to exercise lordship properly.

CHAPTER TWO
THE KNIGHTS SET FORTH: CHIVALRY AND COOPERATION IN THE COUPLET ROMANCE *GUY OF WARWICK*

The year 1297 was a difficult one for King Edward I. In January, the clergy demurred at the king's request for a grant of a tax to support his military campaigns on the continent. Pushing forward despite clerical resistance, on 24 February Edward summoned his earls to a parliament at Salisbury, where he asked the magnates to join the fight overseas.[1] According to the chronicle of Walter of Guisborough, he also threatened to take the lands of those who would not go and to give them to those who would.[2] When Earl Roger Bigod declined to go, the king angrily shouted at him, "By God, O earl, either you will go or you will hang!" to which the earl replied, "By the same oath, O king, I will neither go nor hang."[3] And in July of the same year, the king called on his men to undertake a military expedition to Flanders, but the summons fell flat: Michael Prestwich finds evidence that "only sixty-three men responded to this appeal of Edward's."[4]

[1] Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London: Methuen, 1988), 414-16.
[2] Walter of Guisborough, *The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, ed. Harry Rothwell (London: Camden Society, 1957), 289-290. The original Latin reads, "Indignatusque rex comminabatur quibusdam eorum vel quod irent vel terras eorum daret aliis qui ire vellent." Prestwich finds Guisborough's account less than trustworthy; he asserts that Guisborough attests to the presence of an earl who was not at the Salisbury parliament of 1297.
[3] Walter of Guisborough, *The Chronicle*, 290. The original Latin reads, "Et iratus rex prorupit in hec verba, vt dicitur, 'Per deum, O comes, aut ibis aut pendebis.' Et ille, 'Per idem iuramentum, O rex, nec ibo nec pendebo.'" The translation is my own. Marc Morris explains that Bigod refused on the grounds that he held the ancient title of "marshal of England," and as such he was obligated to fight only with the king, and he denied that he could be bound to march without the king's presence, *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 2008), 295-296. Bigod departed from the court without leave at that time in the company of other recalcitrant earls, but he later repaired his relationship with the king by naming King Edward as his heir in 1302 in return for an annuity.
[4] Prestwich, *Edward I*, p. 424. See also Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 55, 77.

These snapshots of the reign show a king deeply at odds with his subjects, a king unable to work his will because of a lack of support, and episodes like these towards the end of the reign led early historians to characterize Edward I as an ineffective ruler.

Conversely, modern historians argue that throughout most of his reign Edward I skillfully encouraged the English nobility to cooperate with royal authority. As the Crown brought more and more members of the knightly class into administrative roles, England's knights began to participate in what Nigel Saul calls "self-government at the king's command."[5] This arrangement also increased contact the knights had on one hand with their social superiors and, on the other hand, with their equals and inferiors as they worked to maintain peace and carry out justice in their localities. Alongside this shift in the practices of knights, literary knighthood underwent a similar transformation in England. The knights-errant of earlier romances no longer held sole ownership of chivalric heroism. During a time of administrative revolution, one chivalric writer in particular reworked his source in order to emphasize the honor a nobleman could gain by cooperating with companions.

The Middle English romance *Guy of Warwick*, preserved in the Auchinleck Manuscript (National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 19.2.1, c. 1331), depicts a knight achieving glory through victory in armed conflicts, but the poem also devotes many lines to the hero's interdependent relationships with other knights. The Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* (c. 1220) was translated into Middle English couplets and tail-rhyme stanzas around the turn of the fourteenth century. The poem clearly valorizes its titular hero as he embarks on quest after quest at his beloved's behest in order to distinguish himself as the best knight in the world. For around one thousand lines, Guy tries to woo Felice with the help of his guardian and advisor, Herhaud.

[5] Nigel Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 71.

He then sets out for faraway lands to win even greater repute alongside a small company of retainers. On the continent, he meets the sly and treacherous Duke Otoun, whose presence is a perennial plague on the hero. Guy and his friends defeat a company of knights who were commanded by Otoun to capture Guy, but Guy's retainers also fall in the fight. Herhaud, who was presumed dead, recovers and reconnects with Guy, but just as the two are preparing to return to England, they receive a message from a distressed lord and divert their course to Lorraine. In the fight to liberate the besieged duke of Arascoun, they once again encounter Otoun among a host of other opponents fighting on behalf of Emperor Reyner. Emerging victorious from the battle, Guy rides to Constantinople, where an emperor is under siege. After several days of fighting, the emperor is liberated, but his wicked steward, Morgadour, hatches an abortive plot to slander Guy. Follwing this, Guy engages a sultan's army in battle, reunites with a former foe who now allies himself with Guy, and finds himself embroiled in yet another of Otoun's machinations. Many harsh combats ensue, and Guy and his friends rush to aid each other as their fortunes shift in the fight. Finally, after subduing his foes and assisting his friends, Guy returns to England where he slays a dragon. As the romance closes, the hero has achieved something near chivalric perfection—and earned his lady's love.

However, in spite of all his conventional prowess and determination, Guy does not complete his quests alone. His trusted companion and advisor, Herhaud, remains with him throughout most of his journeys, assisting him in times of distress; Guy and another knight, Tirri, pledge to be brothers in arms so that each will share in the other's triumphs and travails; a man who took up arms from Guy, Amis of Mounteyn, offers to send the hero five hundred knights to help him fight the forces of a treacherous opponent; and in battles throughout the poem, large companies of unnamed knights fight alongside Guy, helping him to victory. By concluding the

hero's last adventure on the continent with a crowded procession of Guy and his companions, the poet calls the audience's attention to the collective effort required to achieve victory in arms:

> Þerl Aubri & Tirri his sone
>
> Gij, Herhaud & Amis þider come.
>
> Mani was þe gentil kniȝt
>
> Þat wiþ hem went þo riȝt.[6]

Guy, Herhaud, Amis, Tirri, and Tirri's father ride toward the episode's resolution together with a company of knights, signaling their unity of purpose and their willingness to cooperate in their chivalric efforts. The representation of heroism in *Guy of Warwick* involves not only a knight's exercise of physical prowess but also his ability to summon others to support him in his efforts, a quality essential to the concept of nobility during the reign of Edward I.

Governance, Heroism, and Worldly Renown

Cooperation between a lord and his subjects is an essential element of good governance according to John of Salisbury, whose *Policraticus* (c. 1159) provides a useful model for thinking about lordship in medieval England.[7] This treatise on governance circulated widely in western Europe and exerted a far-reaching influence on thought about lordship for centuries after its composition. John writes from a decidedly clerical perspective—much of his advice appeals to divine law rather than the laws of a secular ruler—but many of his *exempla* and much of his commentary are aimed at guiding secular lords in administrative and military leadership.[8] He

[6] Anonymous, *Guy of Warwick (couplets)*, in *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, eds. David Burnley and Allison Wiggins, The National Library of Scotland, 5 July 2003, http://auchinleck.nls.uk/, accessed 11 September 2015, lines 6309-12. Further quotations from this text will be cited parenthetically as line references.
[7] John D. Hosler, *John of Salisbury: Military Authority of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 175.
[8] John Dickinson, "Introduction," in *The Statesman's Book of John of Salisbury* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), xxvii-xxxix.

recommends that, to avoid disorder, noblemen should take counsel from wise advisors and train soldiers who will serve loyally. An ideal nobleman should maintain interdependent relationships with those who surround and support him, relying not only on his own personal physical and mental prowess but also on the skill of others. Such a view of nobility almost certainly obtained as well at Edward's court. Despite the desperate picture painted above, modern historians agree that, for the most part, Edward I valued the opinions, and enjoyed the cooperation, of the English nobility during his reign (1272-1307).[9] In matters both military and administrative, Edward's tenure on the throne demonstrates the nobility's commitment to work together in order to achieve compatible goals. As Caroline Burt argues, "by the time Edward I acceded to the throne, the fates of the king and the men of the localities were more closely bound than had ever previously been the case."[10] The close links between a lord and his attendants, both in theory and in practice, during Edward's reign may have weighed on the minds of members of the English nobility as they considered ideals of conduct. After all, as Prestwich has noted, "there can be no doubt that for most of the medieval period the upper echelons of English society were thoroughly militarised. The knights and gentry expected to fight, and the great majority of them must have done so at some point in their careers."[11] If, as seems likely, noble ideals were founded on a nobleman's ability to manage interdependent relationships with members of his retinue, then readers might expect medieval romances, which illustrate chivalric ideals with energetic narratives, to depict noblemen working together in pursuit of knightly perfection.

[9] See, for example, Prestwich, *Edward I*, 447; Andrew M. Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship in Medieval England: The Earls and Edward I, 1272-1307* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 55-56. In contrast, L.F. Salzman sees a substantial rift between Edward I's goals and those of his barons, which Edward tried to close by curtailing abuses of baronial power and by linking his most powerful earls to the royal family through marriage, *Edward I* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publishers, 1968), 196.
[10] Caroline Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England, 1272-1307* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 34.
[11] Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 55.

Scholars have filled many volumes narrating the Beauchamp family's use of the Guy legend as a part of their heritage, but literary critics have also devoted some attention to the poem's treatment of ideal chivalric comportment.[12] Unsurprisingly, the titular knight has received the most attention of any character in the poem, with Maldwyn Mills ascribing to him "almost every important characteristic of a romance hero."[13] In Susan Crane's analysis, Guy's adventures allow him to define "his effectiveness as conqueror, father, defender of land and nation, defender of faith, and so on."[14] Other recent critics have followed suit. Rosalind Field calls Guy meritocratic, affirming his worthiness as a hero, and in an introduction to the Anglo-Norman version of the poem, Judith Weiss points out that, when he meets with rulers, the protagonist acts as an "ideal vassal, supplying both . . . help and advice" to his superiors.[15] David N. Klausner praises Guy's "piety and humility" in his long pilgrimage to the Holy Land.[16] And Elaine M. Treharne says that the poem's final episode portrays a weak English king and nobility "simply as a narrative vehicle for Guy's remarkable courage and piety in facing the most difficult foes alone."[17] Whether Guy's perfection arises from his prowess, his judgment, or his piety, critics have agreed that the legend is about Guy's personal expression of perfect chivalry.

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[12] See for example Carol Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), esp. 104-28; Tricia Kelly George, "The Auchinleck Manuscript: A Study in Manuscript Production, Scribal Innovation, and Literary Value in the Early 14th Century," PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2014, esp. 198-216; Alexandra Sinclair, *The Beauchamp Pageant* (Donington: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 2003); John Frankis, "Taste and Patronage in Late Medieval England as Reflected in Versions of *Guy of Warwick*," *Medium Aevum* 66.1 (1997): 80-93; Yin Liu, "Romances of Continuity in the English Rous Roll," in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 149-59.
[13] Maldwyn Mills, "Structure and Meaning in *Guy of Warwick*," in *From Medieval to Medievalism*, ed. John Simons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 54-68, at 54.
[14] Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 82.
[15] Rosalind Field, "From *Gui* to *Guy*: The Fashioning of a Popular Romance," in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 44-60, at 55; Judith Weiss, "Introduction," in Boeve de Haumtone *and* Gui de Warewic*: Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, trans. Judith Weiss (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 1-24, at 16.
[16] David N. Klausner, "Didacticism and Drama in *Guy of Warwick*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 6 (1975): 103-19, at 117.
[17] Elaine M. Treharne, "Romanticizing the Past in the Middle English *Athelston*," *The Review of English Studies* n.s. 50, 197 (1999): 1-21, at 8-9.

Guy is certainly the central character in the Middle English romance, and his actions drive much of the narrative, from his quests undertaken to earn the love of Felice, to his battles fought on the continent to uphold justice. But the Middle English poet frequently reminds his audience that Guy does not act alone in his chivalric exploits. In fact, Guy and his companions are named together in no fewer than seventy couplets, or an average of about once every hundred lines.[18] A further thirty-nine lines refer to the unnamed companions traveling and fighting alongside Guy as his *ferred*, *meyne*, or *compeynie*—Middle English words that, in various instances, may refer to household servants, a body of retainers, or an army.[19] Although companion characters appear with considerable frequency in the poem, scholars have overlooked the role these characters play in the romance's figuration of chivalric ideals. For the medieval English poet translating the legend of Guy from Anglo-Norman, military heroism is a cooperative venture. The various lords, kings, and sultans in the poem all recognize Guy's prowess in battle, but the narrator's accounts of battles showcase crowds of characters on the field fighting alongside the hero. An understanding of medieval heroism and chivalry must grow from an understanding of how texts portray heroes achieving chivalric victories. And in *Guy of Warwick*, a knight's victory is achieved through cooperation with other knights.

[18] Guy's name occurs within the same couplet as the names of Herhaud, Tirri, or Amis at the following points: 889, 1245, 1419-20, 1551, 1561-62, 1563-64, 1573, 1583, 1715, 1789-90, 2246, 2278-79, 3154-55, 3272-73, 3702-03, 3714, 3869, 4111-12, 4123-24, 4441, 4445, 4526, 4529, 4533-34, 4609-10, 4613-14, 4645-46, 4664, 4681, 4729-30, 4759-60, 4771, 4775, 4797, 4815-16, 4969, 4991, 4996, 5061-62, 5091, 5121, 5131, 5146, 5168, 5183, 5205-06, 5293, 5307, 5323, 5542, 5705, 5719-20, 5829-30, 5833, 5953, 5979-80, 6137, 6161-62, 6204, 6209, 6213-14, 6220, 6239-40, 6266, 6267, 6289-90, 6305-06, 6309-10, 6657, and 6737-38. This list does not account for those couplets in which a pronoun stands in for any of the characters' names, nor does it account for those places in which characters' names occur at the end of one couplet and the beginning of the next couplet.

[19] *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *fere*, *compaignie*, *meinē*. The following lines contain the words *ferred* (and its various forms), *meyne*, or *compeynie* with reference to those fighting for Guy: 671, 915, 1013, 1112, 1158, 1404, 1442, 1486, 1730, 1772, 1795, 1843, 2059, 2335, 2676, 2835, 3125, 3424, 3662, 3714, 3925, 4086, 4103, 4131, 4383, 4426, 4666, 4682, 4706, 4718, 4727, 4772, 4798, 6212, 6248, 6268, 6334, 6733, and 6915. This list does not account for those lines in which these words appear with reference to Guy's foes.

I have chosen to focus on the couplet *Guy of Warwick* primarily because it has received less attention from scholars than the stanzaic tail-rhyme romance that follows it in the Auchinleck manuscript. Although Laura Hibbard Loomis thought the two parts were conceived as a single long poem in the compilation of the Auchinleck manuscript, Maldwyn Mills has argued convincingly that the couplet and stanzaic portions of the hero's life are separate Middle English translations.[20] Velma Bourgeois Richmond also contends that, even if the couplet and stanzaic poems are part of a continuous narrative, there is a substantial thematic shift at the end of the couplet portion that renders it distinct from the stanzaic portion.[21] Noting the change in subject matter, Robert Rouse describes the couplet romance as the story of Guy's "chivalric maturation" that stands in opposition to his later "desire for penitential pilgrimage" in the stanzaic romance.[22] The apparent consensus is that the couplet poem, which comprises some 6,922 lines in the Auchinleck manuscript, differs from the stanzaic poem enough to justify treating them as separate pieces, each with its peculiar concerns and priorities. Whereas the stanzaic poem foregrounds Guy as a pious knight on pilgrimage (as has been noted above), the

[20] Laura Hibbard Loomis, "Chaucer and the Auchinleck MS: *Thopas* and *Guy of Warwick*," in *Essays and Studies in Honor of Carleton Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 1940), 111-128, reprinted in *Adventures in the Middle Ages: A Memorial Collection of Essays and Studies* Selected Papers in Literature and Criticism 1 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1962), 137; Maldwyn Mills, "Techniques of Translation in the Middle English Versions of *Guy of Warwick*," in *The Medieval Translator II*, ed. Roger Ellis (London: Center for Medieval Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1991), 209-29, at 209.

[21] Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 56-57; Rebecca Wilcox agrees that the poem is divided into two parallel cycles, "Romancing the East: Greeks and Saracens in *Guy of Warwick*," in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nicola McDonald (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 217-40, at 218; Mills makes a similar argument in "Structure and Meaning in *Guy of Warwick*," 59-60; K.S. Whetter also argues that, by closing on the scene of men marveling at the head of the defeated dragon, the couplet portion of the romance deliberately places attention on "Guy's *earthly* deeds and glory," "Subverting, Containing, and Upholding Christianity in Medieval Romance," in *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Rosalind Field, Phillipa Hardman, and Michelle Sweeney (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 102-18, at 106; Julie Burton argues that the metrical shift indicates not that the two parts are separate poems in the Auchinleck MS, but rather that the scribe changes the meter to reflect a change in narrative pattern within a continuous romance, "Narrative Patterning and *Guy of Warwick*," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 105-16.

[22] Robert Rouse, "Walking (between) the Lines: Romance as Itinerary/Map," in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. Purdie and Cichon, 135-47, at 141.

couplet *Guy of Warwick* portrays a knight fighting against and alongside other knights as part of a community of noblemen. At the turn of the fourteenth century, when the concept of nobility was shot through with the notion of interdependence, this poem teaches its audience that a knight can gain renown not only by undertaking solitary quests but also by working together with his companions. Our reading of the poem's treatment of chivalry must account for the hero's supporters if we hope to understand the valences of medieval discourse about ideals of noble behavior.

Collective Effort and Shared Victory

The hero's participation in a chivalric community has not entirely escaped the attention of scholars studying the couplet portion of *Guy of Warwick*. Other scholars have also noted the poem's interest in chivalry and cooperation. Richmond reminds readers that the story of Guy and Tirri in particular was placed in the *Gesta Romanorum* "to illustrate mental constancy and friendship," and she comments that the poem's focus on "the role of chivalry as a social force" likely contributed to its lasting popularity.[23] To be sure, the hero meets some challenges without aid, but Richmond's analysis rightly points out that the poem devotes many lines to demonstrations of loyalty both in arms and at court. In an important episode at the end of the couplet romance, Guy faces an Irish dragon in Northumberland alone. For K.S. Whetter, this fight indicates "Guy's self-reliance, even arrogance, as well as his desire for fame."[24] As such, the passage provides an unfavorable contrast with the hero's earlier cooperation with Herhaud, Tirri, Amis, and other companies of knights. Both Richmond and Whetter read chivalry in *Guy*

[23] Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick*, 49-50. Diane Speed also comments on the Guy legend in the *Gesta Romanorum*, noting that the hero's mutually exclusive loves of his lady and his Lord are also a central theme, "Middle English Romance and the *Gesta Romanorum*," in *Tradition and Transformation in Middle English Romance*, ed. Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 45-56.
[24] Whetter, "Subverting, Containing, and Upholding Christianity," 105.

of Warwick as a source of friendship rather than isolation or errantry. And while I agree that chivalry in this poem helps the hero form beneficial bonds with other noblemen, critics have not paid sufficient attention to how cooperation with other knights facilitates the hero's victories and helps him gain the "pris & los" that he seeks in his adventures on the continent (1027). By focusing too closely on Guy's own reputation for chivalric perfection, literary scholars have overlooked the role played by Guy's companions, in his endeavors both on the battlefield and at court. A knight's own prowess may sometimes bring him victory in the couplet *Guy of Warwick*, but more often victory is accomplished by a company of noblemen setting forth to achieve a common goal, as they would have done in the late thirteenth century.

Medieval chroniclers and modern historians agree that knights and lords during Edward I's reign saw, and took advantage of, the community-building potential of chivalric spectacle. Thomas Gray's Anglo-Norman *Scalacronica* (1363) depicts the majestic spectacle of Edward I's coronation on 15 August 1274 through the lavish decorations that marked the prestigious people who attended the event. Gold and silver coins and elegant tapestries decorated the path along Chepe Street taken by Edward as he rode towards his coronation. And at Westminster, Alexander, King of Scots, the Duke of Brittany, their wives, the Queen-mother, and "all of the other earls of England . . . with great bands of knights" awaited Edward's arrival.[25] When the assembled lords and retainers—six hundred in all—released their horses into the streets as gifts to the public, they demonstrated "the camaraderie and sense of new beginnings that a coronation would naturally engender and for which Edward must fervently have wished."[26] The coronation

[25] Thomas Gray, *Scalacronica*, ed. and trans. Andy King (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 9. The Anglo-Norman reads as follows: "Le Roy Alexander Descoce et le Duke de Bretaigne, qestoit le primer duk apres lez countis qe y estoint, et touz dieus lour femmes, lez sores le dit Edward, y furount, et la royne la mere. Lez queux seignours, od tout plain dez autres countis Dengleter, furount apparez en aparementz dore et soy, od grauntz routes dez cheualers . . ." (8).
[26] Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship*, 38.

was orchestrated to uphold the hierarchical relationship between king and subject. And it is Guy's personal performance of loyal service to various lords that has dominated the critical understanding of chivalry in the poem. I, however, want to focus on the service that other characters perform with and for Guy in order to argue that chivalry in *Guy of Warwick* requires knights to ply their arms together so that, even in scenes of brutal combat, knighthood links noblemen with bonds of mutual loyalty. The poem is thus less about embodying chivalry in one perfect knight and more about characterizing chivalry as a principle that produces an ordered world when men practice it together.

The poem does not necessarily rebuke chivalric ideals as they existed in medieval England but rather prioritizes the value of cooperation that was current in medieval chivalric thought. Beyond affirming the properly ordered and vertically oriented interdependence of lords and retainers, knighthood also served as a means of binding men non-hierarchically to their social equals. Peter Coss has observed that it was not uncommon for young men to be knighted in large groups, as when Edward I offered to knight three-hundred young noblemen with his son, the soon-to-be Edward II, on 22 May 1306: "Chivalric knighthood drew much of its mystique from the principle of association."[27] At the turn of the fourteenth century, to be a knight in the company of other knights was to form mutually beneficial bonds with other honorable men. Understanding chivalry in these terms, as linking noblemen to each other with bonds of reciprocal service, can enrich an analysis of *Guy of Warwick*, in which a knight journeys with companions throughout Europe to establish a reputation for chivalric excellence. While traveling and fighting alongside groups of other knights, Guy shows that relying on a retinue can actually help a knight win greater renown than he could gain through solitary adventure.

[27] Peter Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 144.

The most visible of Guy's supporters are his named companions—Herhaud, Tirri, and Amis—who render faithful service to Guy throughout the romance. These characters highlight the sense of brotherhood already noted by Richmond and Whetter because they share in the hero's victories and express sorrow at his misfortunes. Furthermore, Guy's named companions appear beside him on the battlefield. They contribute more than emotional or spiritual backing as they raise their swords together with the hero. And when they take to the field of battle against an antagonist's forces, Guy, Tirri, and Herhaud all perform feats of arms on the battlefield so exemplary that the narrator cannot determine which knight among them is most valorous:

> Who þat seye þan þerl Tirri
> Wiþ his felawe sir Gi
> & Herhaud of Arderne þe gode
> Þat wele to smite was in his mode.
> So mani þai nomen & feld þat day,
> Is non þe best chese may
> Of þre kniȝtes so wele doinde. (4759-65)

This passage, with its energetic depiction of fellowship in arms, specifies that Guy fights alongside Herhaud and Tirri in order to subdue their enemies. As long-time companions, Guy and Herhaud face conflicts together and demonstrate mutual service, while Guy and Tirri share the perils of battle as sworn brothers in arms (4527-46); these relationships are based on reciprocal aid. In this way, Guy and his companions resemble the *commilites* [brothers in arms] of Edward's household, who entered into "formalised partnerships . . . agree[ing] to share profits

and losses, to be of mutual support and aid to each other."[28] Although only one such brotherhood agreement from 1298 survives, Prestwich is certain that "the document is scarce, but the practice was common."[29] This common practice of knights can help us understand Guy's cooperation with his companions in a new light, as a non-hierarchical arrangement that epitomizes the bonds fostered by chivalry.

Rouse dismisses this episode, and others, as the many "squabblings of European princes" early in the romance that again and again allow Guy to make his prowess known.[30] These other displays of valor, according to Rouse, help to establish a comparative model that highlights Guy's chivalric excellence in battle. However, the narrator here insists that Guy is not the only one exercising his prowess on the battlefield. Guy performs admirably; Herhaud performs admirably; and Tirri performs admirably. All three knights capture and kill their opponents. Of course, the inclusion of companion characters may elevate the prestige of a central character, but the poet does not praise Guy at the expense of the other knights in this scene. In this passage, the poet praises the prowess of the trio. There is not a comparative model by which to evaluate Guy's performance, for it is impossible to choose which knight of the three is the best. Rather, the presence of companions tells readers that Guy is part of an idealized chivalric brotherhood, and thus the poem characterizes military heroism as a group effort.

Counsel and Cooperation as Chivalric Duties

Impressive feats of arms are not the only vehicles that convey ideals of cooperation between noblemen; *Guy of Warwick* also locates honor in a nobleman's ability to perform well in

[28] Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 45; for more on historical examples of sworn chivalric brotherhood, see also Maurice Keen, *Nobles, Knights, and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages* (Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1996), especially 43-62.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Robert Allen Rouse, "An Exemplary Life: Guy of Warwick as Medieval Culture-Hero," in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 94-109, at 98.

counsel and administration. Literary critics have long understood knighthood in romance as a hero's exercise of exceptional prowess, but such a limited idea of nobility ignores the social circumstances of noblemen that could have played a part in romance poets' idealized worlds. Beyond their military callings, knights in late medieval England often worked as counselors or administrative officials helping to work the king's will in their localities. Expanding an analysis of nobility beyond the battlefield can help to clarify how cooperation fits into chivalric ideals of prowess and conduct. An English nobleman during the reign of Edward I had many responsibilities off the battlefield—responsibilities that required him to work with other noblemen in different levels of administration—so it makes sense that romance poets, who busied themselves illustrating ideals of noble conduct, could imagine and portray a knight working with other knights as warriors and lords.[31]

The late thirteenth century saw a significant shift in the way the king engaged with the English nobility. These years were a time of great reform, when "a more participatory governmental system—the Edwardian polity—was beginning to take shape."[32] And this upheaval led to substantial changes in the king's behavior towards his subjects. Summarizing over a century of historiography, Andrew M. Spencer points out that "[t]he need for Edward I to establish a good rapport with his earls was particularly acute following a period of civil war and the reign of a king [Henry III] who, with his ineptitude in war and dislike of the aristocratic

[31] For discussions of noblemen's responsibilities in administration during the reign of Edward I, see especially Prestwich, *Edward I*, 153-54; Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry*, 149; Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England*, 32.

[32] Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry*, 136; Prestwich called the late thirteenth century "one of the most important periods in the development of English law," *Edward I*, 267; Marc Morris likewise notes that "Edward's reign, especially during its first half, had witnessed an unprecedented volume of legislation. . . . the king was anxious that justice should be maintained," *A Great and Terrible King*, 366.

pursuit of tourneying, had little in common with his nobility."[33] And in Spencer's interpretation, Edward I addressed that need well: unlike his father, Edward I never faced an armed rebellion from his English subjects.[34] One of Edward's apparent strengths lay in his ability to manage the higher ranks of the nobility while maintaining royal power. Examining the governance of England under Edward I, Burt posits that Edward's "overall relationship with his magnates was, from the outset, far better than his father's had ever been, his charter witness lists showing a king normally surrounded by members of his nobility."[35] From these recent historical studies, there emerges an image of lordship linked indelibly to cooperation. During Edward I's reign, and after the discontents of Henry III's, a nobleman's ability to work with others, to create consensus, was a key concern. The Middle English poet adapting *Guy of Warwick* at the turn of the fourteenth century addresses this concern by portraying a hero who surrounds himself with companions and undertakes challenges as part of a group. If we read the victories in the poem as belonging to Guy alone, then we miss an essential element of his heroism: Guy can summon support for his causes, an ability any good nobleman would hope to have during the reign of Edward I.

Literary scholarship has taken some note of the responsibilities of noblemen off the battlefield in analyses of romances. Mindful of the importance of social connections and cooperation in Middle English romances, Geraldine Barnes argues that a romance hero's "most important bonds are not with wives and lovers but with sworn brothers and tutor-counsellors who serve both as mentors and guardians."[36] Moments of cooperation between knights would have had particular impact on an audience concerned with regulating and exercising power in the late

[33] Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship*, 37. Coss agrees that the years following Henry III's reign "were also the years when a more participatory governmental system—the Edwardian polity—was beginning to take shape," *The Origins of the English Gentry*, 136.
[34] Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship*, 94. Rebellions by the Welsh and Scots plagued Edward's reign, but his English subjects did not rise up against him in arms.
[35] Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England*, 87.
[36] Geraldine Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 17.

thirteenth or early fourteenth century, when *Guy of Warwick* was translated. The broad cross-section of men who read or listened to romances in medieval England held power in royal and local arenas, and in their various conciliar roles, "this socially diverse group was commonly engaged, at different levels of the body politic, in an occupation which actively engaged the interest of the composers of Middle English romance: the exercise and regulation of power and authority."[37] Barnes' evocation of the "body politic" recalls John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, a text that makes frequent use of the "organic analogy" of the body politic as a way to present "the interdependence of individuals in society."[38] According to John's treatise, the conciliar role of noblemen is no less honorable or necessary than their military service:

> For the soldiers of the republic are not only those who, protected by helmets and breastplates, turn loose their swords or spears or whatever other weapons against the enemy, but also advocates of cases who invigorate the weary and, relying upon the fortification of an illustrious voice, lift up the fallen; and no less do they provide for mankind than if, working with the armor of life, hope and posterity, they provided protection from the enemy.[39]

For John, the two facets of nobility are highly compatible because both soldiers and counselors protect those in need. In a study of knights' effigies, Peter Coss supports John's claim by suggesting that, by the fourteenth century, there was not a great tension between knights' roles in

[37] Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance*, 27-28. Rouse also notes that, while the audience of the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* was likely baronial, the Middle English versions had more mixed audiences, and the poem's later audiences were "increasingly popular," "Walking (between) the Lines," 146.
[38] Dickinson, "Introduction," xxi.
[39] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. Cary J. Nederman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 104. The original Latin reads: "Neque enim rei publicae militant soli illi qui galeis toracibusque muniti in hostes exercent gladius aut tela quaelibet, sed et patroni causarum qui gloriosae uocis confisi munimine lapsa erigunt, fatigata reparant; nec minus prouident humano generi quam si laborantium uitam, spem posterosque armorum praesidio ab hostibus tuerentur," *Policraticvs*, vol. 2, ed. Clemens C.I. Webb (Frankfurt: Unveränderter Nachdruck, 1965), 2.

the military and at court. Rather, images of late medieval knights depict "the military calling in combination with the celebration of social status," showing a "truly symbiotic" relationship between the two aspects of nobility.[40] If the military and the courtly components of knighthood were held to be congruous, as medieval and modern writers suggest, then a romance hero's actions, through which a poet represents models of noble behavior, might easily symbolize praiseworthy traits besides physical prowess and steadfast courage. Guy's named companions appear beside him in battle as figures of chivalric community, but elsewhere companion characters also point to a larger concern with the social responsibilities of lords in medieval England. The poet praises Guy not for his single-minded pursuit of glory but rather for his ability to summon support and to cooperate with a variety of characters, to engage with other members of the body politic, at a time when lords were taking on greater responsibilities in networks of royal and local administration.

Counsel appears throughout *Guy of Warwick* as an essential tool for supporting a nobleman's power. Commenting on the importance of counsel in the romance, Barnes suggests that although Guy ignores advice from his elders early in the romance, he later shows "a growing willingness to seek sage counsel and the capacity to impart it."[41] She maintains that an ethical concern with regulating and using political and chivalric power stretches throughout the Auchinleck manuscript, which contains four items relating to Guy. The same concern motivates John of Salisbury when he insists, "it is impossible that he should dispose rulership advantageously who does not act upon the counsel of the wise."[42] The organs of the body politic,

[40] Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry*, 139.
[41] Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance*, 69.
[42] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. Nederman, 70. The Latin reads: "Impossibile enim est ut salubriter disponat principatum qui non agitur consilio sapientum," *Policraticvs*, vol. 1, ed. Clemens C.I. Webb (Frankfurt: Unveränderter Nachdruck, 1965), 300. Later in the text, John offers an *exemplum* of several pages illustrating the faults of English lords, including Henry II, who showed bad faith or lacked good counsel and support.

and particularly the head (the lord) and the hands (counselors and military personnel), must cooperate if the body is to remain sound.[43] The hero of *Guy of Warwick* is neither a king nor a prince, but according to Spencer, the members of Edward's nobility held power of the same nature but exercised it to different degrees based on the number of men they could call upon to bolster their causes.[44] Edward's practices as a lord indicate that he actively sought out counsel and support from his subjects. Historians of Edward I's reign have noted that earls and counts were seen as a king's natural companions, and that Edward I frequently held parliaments—normally at least once a year and sometimes twice—in order to take counsel and establish consensus on a public stage.[45] Furthermore, as Edward was expanding his authority early in his reign, members of the upper nobility also had to "make close connections with lesser landowners if they were to re-assert their control over local rule."[46] The entire spectrum of noblemen, then, was involved in a network of interdependent relationships in which the higher needed the cooperation of the lower to exert authority effectively.

Guy's chivalric maturation is figured in part through the development of his ability to recognize and receive good counsel.[47] The poem provides a contrast to Guy's maturation with episodes in which bad counselors place a lord's authority and safety at risk. A steward's lies almost bring disaster to Constantinople, where Guy and his men arrive to fight against a sultan's army besieging the Emperor Ernis. The emperor's steward, Morgadour, attempts to persuade his lord to cast Guy into prison as punishment for a fictitious sexual indiscretion with the emperor's

[43] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. Nederman, 125-126.
[44] Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship*, 10, 29; see also Dickinson, Introduction, xxvi.; K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England: The Ford Lectures for 1953 and Related Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 47; Georges Duby, *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 35-36, 220.
[45] Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship*, 36-39, 55-56; see also Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England*, 152.
[46] Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England*, 32.
[47] Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance*, 18, 72-73.

daughter (2902-03). Rebecca Wilcox identifies Morgadour with the stereotype of the "treacherous Greek" that pervaded crusading armies from the West; while Emperor Ernis contradicts this stereotype by showing constant faith in Guy, the steward's lies almost lead Guy and his men to redirect their swords against the walls of Constantinople in support of the sultan besieging the city (ll. 2959-2962).[48] To be sure, this wicked steward may be informed by Western prejudice against the East, but he also fits into a pattern of other bad advisors in the poem. The figure of the wicked counselor appears three times in the romance: the steward of Emperor Reyner, who lays siege to Arascoun (1659-1800); Morgadour, the steward who calumniates Guy in Constantinople (2818-4018); and the treacherous Duke Otoun of Pavia (counselor to Duke Loyer of Lombardy), who antagonizes Guy's company throughout their journeys on the continent. All three of these men set themselves against Guy's interests, and in so doing, they also imperil their lords by setting them at odds with the poem's hero, the focal point of constructive chivalric community. These stewards present a counterpoint to the good counsel and service shown by Guy and his companions, further highlighting the importance of cooperation in the poem's idealized form of nobility.

Like the wicked steward in Constantinople, Duke Otoun gives bad counsel to his lord, Duke Loyer; like Emperor Ernis, Duke Loyer refuses to act on Otoun's plan to attack Guy and his companions. Otoun's scheme to undercut Guy ultimately fails, but the poet uses this episode to illustrate how a bad servant might pervert proper relations between a lord and his men, as described by John of Salisbury. A good vassal, according to John, "would neither injure the security of his [lord's] body nor withdraw the provisions on the basis of which he is safe nor

[48] Wilcox, "Romancing the East," 224.

presume to undertake anything which would diminish his honour or usefulness."[49] According to John's reasoning, it is an advisor's duty to protect his lord from any loss, whether of material goods, political power, or bodily health. And by framing his appeals in terms reminiscent of this model of noble service, Otoun sets himself up as a good counselor while actually acting in his own interest. Concealing his true intentions to capture Guy and his companions, Otoun begins his final scheme by cautioning his lord, "Bot þou gode conseyl chese / Al þi lond þou schalt forlese" (5143-44). He thus presents himself as a vassal concerned with his lord's holdings, and he closes his advice by warning Loyer that if he does not act on his advice to imprison the hero's company, then Guy, Herhaud, and Tirri will become his "dedliche fon" (5172). But when Loyer orders Otoun to keep Tirri as a noble guest, Otoun defies the order and casts him into prison without Loyer's knowledge. He thus reveals himself to be well versed in the ideals of stewardship while he is simultaneously unconcerned with keeping his word to his lord. This corrupt official's actions, when read alongside the other wicked stewards in the poem, emphasize the beneficial cooperation and service shown by the members of Guy's company.

More than mere fictions of chivalric romance, unfaithful servants and officials caused real concern at the court of Edward I. The king showed a keen awareness of his own dependence on the higher and lower nobility in the first twenty years of his reign. In August of 1273, sheriffs were called to preserve the peace against county court officials who were failing to maintain order, and in 1289, Edward ordered an inquiry into "the misdeeds of officers acting in his name" because of the damage they could do to his authority.[50] This investigation proved unfortunately

[49] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. Nederman, 139. The Latin reads: "Ne cui fidelitate tenemur astricti, incolumitatem ledamus corporis, aut munitions quibus tutus est detrahamus, aut praesumamus committere unde honor aut illius utilitas minuatur," *Policraticvs*, vol. 2, ed. Clemens C.I. Webb (Frankfurt: Unveränderter Nachdruck, 1965), 76.
[50] Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England*, 84, 152; see also Prestwich, *Edward I*, 258.

fruitful: Edward lost eleven justices due to corruption charges in 1290, which led him to suspect corruption more broadly.[51] Nonetheless, Marc Morris maintains that one of Edward's strengths as a king was "his ability to choose good military and administrative men to serve him," calling his lordship "emphatically good."[52] Despite the earls' refusals to serve the king at the Salisbury parliament in 1297, Edward frequently found loyal support among his nobility, according to Morris.[53] Indeed, Prestwich argues that although the events of 1297 may make Edward I seem autocratic, "his reign taken as a whole saw developments of great importance in the royal council and above all in parliament."[54] If Edward's practices brought him closer to his administrators than his predecessors had been, then at the same time he may have been preoccupied with how to keep those administrators' actions in line with the royal will. *Guy of Warwick* does not allay concerns about faithless service by suppressing figures of disloyalty. Nonetheless, by depicting wicked stewards, the poem also calls attention to Guy's superior lordship and valorizes the support shown to the hero by his company.

The Hero in Need, Before and During Battle

In the context of the strong connections a medieval audience likely saw between the military and administrative work of the nobility, the crowded battles throughout the romance can serve as sites for staging ideal cooperation between a lord and his followers. Certainly, an audience including knights and men-at-arms could appreciate the significance of group efforts, as they would be expected to cooperate in both courtly and military matters. Far from living versions of heroic knights-errant, English knights also served as leaders of their own retinues. Coss has observed that English knights normally fought under a lord's command alongside

[51] Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England*, 152-55.
[52] Marc Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, 365.
[53] Marc Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, 294-96.
[54] Prestwich, *Edward I*, 436.

bannerets, and also that they led companies of mounted men-at-arms and men on the margins of chivalry.[55] A large number of comparatively small companies, according to David Simpkin, made up the large military forces that fought for Edward I.[56] The leaders of retinues could act with some independence within a larger military force, as Guy and his named companions do, but they also needed to be able to command a company of retainers if they hoped to achieve victory. The fact that medieval knights commonly rode into battle surrounded by their own retinues may help explain why, as he prepares to fight a group of knights in Lorraine early in his adventures on the continent, Guy avails himself of fifty unnamed companions:

> Gij him graiþed & made him ȝare
> Into Loreynie for to fare
> & wiþ him oþer fifti kniȝt
> In feld þe best þat miȝt fiȝt. (1719-22)

Guy prepares himself personally to undertake the journey to Lorraine, but the entire company—Guy and his fifty knights—are the subjects of the narrator's compliment. All of these men are the best that might fight in a battlefield, not the hero alone. Like the knights in studies of the medieval military, the knights in Guy's company operate together. *Guy of Warwick* is, of course, no more realistic than other romances in portraying knights fighting together in war; rather, the poem's idealized chivalry incorporates a common practice of English knights: working together in groups to achieve military goals.

[55] Coss, "Knighthood, Heraldry, and Social Exclusion in Edwardian England," in *Heraldry, Pageantry, and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 39–68, at 67.
[56] David Simpkin, *The English Aristocracy at War from the Welsh Wars of Edward I to the Battle of Bannockburn* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 55-67; see also Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 48-49.

Simply having a retinue was not a guarantee of success in medieval England, however. A company had to be of sufficient size and skill to win the praise of chroniclers like Thomas Gray. Early in Edward's reign, the Welsh Prince Llewelyn and his brother, David, rebelled against the king. Gray's account of the rebellion illustrates the dangers of waging war with a small or unprepared company. On 6 November 1283, the English army marched across a bridge into a Welsh ambush, where several English commanders drowned, and Edward's force suffered further losses while trying to flee to safety. According to Gray, though, the tide of fortune quickly turned as an English force ravaged Wales, causing David to flee. Llewelyn "was so dismayed [by his brother's flight] that he set off with just a few men. He unexpectedly encountered John Giffard and Edmund de Mortimer with their companies, who had moved away from the army of the king in search of adventure, and he was killed along with his men."[57] Although historians agree that these events were separated by more than a month, Gray's account places them in near proximity, highlighting the fact that a lord's success in battle depended in large part on his ability to summon a well prepared and sizeable retinue.[58] If a lord found himself surprised, as the English leaders did at the bridge and as Llewelyn did when his brother deserted him, then the results could be catastrophic to both lord and attendants. On the other hand, if a company was prepared, like Giffard and Mortimer were when they found Llewelyn, then accounts like Gray's assure them of victory. Guy's company of knights in Lorraine offers him ample assistance and thus contributes to the poem's notion of cooperative heroism by showing the audience that the hero can summon support like other successful leaders.

[57] Gray, *Scalacronica*, trans. King, 11. The Anglo-Norman reads, "le prince soun frier se taunt affraya, qil se mist a descoumfiture sen ala od poi de gentz, qi sodeinement encountra Johan Giffard, et Edmound de Mortimer od lour coumpaignyes, qi hors del ost le roy estoient mouez pur auenture quere, qi ly tuerent et les soenes . . ." (10).
[58] For a fuller account of the events at the boat bridge and of Llewelyn's death, see John E. Morris, *The Welsh Wars of Edward I* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1969), 179-84; Marc Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, 182-86; Prestwich, *Edward I*, 191-94.

As Guy and his company rush into battle with the wicked steward's force, the narrator further emphasizes the cooperation entailed in chivalry by showing the hero receiving help on the battlefield. The narrator spends fifty-two lines describing the fight between Guy's and the steward's armies: in sixteen lines, Guy unhorses, defeats, and captures the steward in single combat (1749-64); the remaining thirty-six lines are devoted to the entire group fighting together to help Guy against the remaining hundred knights outside Arascoun. They ready their arms quickly and rush into battle to help their leader:

> Gij wel gode socour hij doþ
> & seþþen þai went forþ ariȝt
> & Gij socourd ful wele apliȝt.
> Swiche strokes men miȝt þer se
> Togider smiten þo kniȝtes fre; (1778-82)

Essential to this moment is the image of a company of men giving *socour*, or aid, to one of their own.[59] After Guy's victory over the steward in single combat, a new conflict emerges—a conflict whose terms are different from those of a single combat. In order to complete this fight, Guy must work together with the knights in his company, and the same is true of large-scale conflicts throughout the poem. The audience sees chivalry as a cooperative endeavor throughout the romance as the hero both delivers and receives aid: Guy is part of a group giving *helpe* or *socour* no fewer than twenty-five times; he receives *helpe* or *socour* from others at least seventeen times.[60] If the hero so frequently needs assistance in his adventures, then the poem cannot equate

[59] *MED*, s.v. *socŏur* (1, 2).
[60] Guy is the subject of *helpe* (and its forms) in the following lines: 1711, 1712, 1825, 1843, 1904, 2499, 2524, 2891, 2962, 4311, 4616, and 4617. He does *socour* in the following lines: 1706, 2665, 2670, 2766, 2770, 3958, 4280, 4686, 4733, 5082, 5096, 5105, and 5674. He is the object of *helpe* (and its forms) in the following lines: 1374, 1840, 1844, 3125, 3463, 3664, 3665, 4746, 5372, 5394, and 5596. He receives *socour* in the following lines: 1778, 1780, 3673, 3695, 3703, and 4961.

his prowess with individual chivalric perfection. Instead, the poet specifies that a victorious knight knows how to work with other knights and how to accept aid from them, for companions can facilitate the hero's feats of prowess even as they perform their own. Guy's success as a leader in battle owes something to his personal prowess in arms, but like a nobleman during the reign of Edward I, Guy derives a portion of his prestige from the devoted work of those who serve under his command in his military company.

A Lord Cultivating Prowess in His Supporters

The constant loyalty of Herhaud, Tirri, and Amis symbolizes the help a nobleman could expect from his immediate followers and household; the large number of unnamed knights stands for another kind of support on which lords depended in their military and administrative careers, the support of local officials and lower-level soldiers. Although a nobleman would depend on his family and tenantry for regular service, Prestwich notes a "strikingly rapid turnover of membership" in military retinues, even those of prestigious lords, around the turn of the fourteenth century.[61] This turnover is the result of local musters to arms, which were delegated to a nobleman by a higher lord whom he served. And in the administrative arena, Burt finds a similar tendency in Edward's selections of lower officials. After 1278, Edward began appointing a greater number of knights as sheriffs to administer justice in their localities, which Burt sees as both "a positive political gesture" that showed trust in the lower nobility and, more significantly, "a potentially vital tool in enabling the government to become more fully apprised of the local situations" due to knights' familiarity with the localities where they served.[62] Spencer echoes Burt's observation, characterizing the government of Edward's reign as a

[61] Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 42-44; see also Prestwich, *Edward I*, 152; Simpkin, *The English Aristocracy at War*, 55-67, 116.
[62] Burt, *Edward I and the Governance of England*, 123-24.

tenuous partnership in which the crown, nobility, and gentry all played a part at different levels.[63] Rather than concentrate legal and military power within a small coterie, it seemed preferable to allow people to exercise some degree of authority within their localities in support of common goals.

Thinking of noble power in this way, as a system of cooperation between men at higher and lower degrees, can help explain why Guy fights alongside men who are not his constant retainers or companions. In the context of military and legal reforms under Edward I, the Middle English poet portrays a lord who learns to rely on soldiers without holding direct coercive power over them. Guy's habit of summoning knights to fight alongside him might be understood as a similarly effective demonstration of his quality as a nobleman, showing his trust in the local nobility while he also keeps a retinue of close companions on whom he can call more consistently. The poet, then, praises Guy for partaking in a practice that helped Edward and his noblemen to keep order around the turn of the fourteenth century. He maintains good relations with his constant companions and his extended retinue by forming interdependent relationships with them based on mutual support and aid, a habit that served noblemen well during Edward's reign.

More important than the narrator's attention to group effort, which was discussed above, is the hero's own recognition that his fights are not his alone. When he willingly embraces his role as a leader, then he unequivocally associates himself with a cooperative mode of heroism. During his adventures on the continent, Guy receives assistance from other knights, but he also learns how to mobilize and motivate his supporters by reminding them of the role they can play in heroic acts. At the siege of Constantinople, Guy shows that he has internalized the importance

[63] Spencer, *Nobility and Kingship*, 172-73.

of other warriors' efforts on the battlefield in a speech of twenty-four lines delivered to the twenty-thousand armed Greek soldiers assembled before him (3080-3103). Guy has faced danger personally in conflict with the Saracen host at the city gates, yet he also makes note of the hardships faced by the other soldiers present as he delivers his motivational monologue:

> Þat ous is don þenke we þeron
> & baldeliche aseyl we our fon
> For Sarraȝins ous aseyle wille
> Alle for soþe y ȝou telle.
> We wil hem mete wiþ spere & scheld
> At þe narwe paþe bitven þe held.
> Now biþenkeþ ȝou wele to don
> & awreke ȝour lond of ȝour fon.
> Of ȝour londes & ȝour citeȝ
> Þat destrud & wasted beþ,
> ȝou to awreke biþenkeþ ȝou
> & strongliche aseyleþ hem now. (3084-95)

The use of *we*, *ous*, and *our* highlights Guy's participation in a group much larger than himself, and his direct reference to the soldiers' lost land and property calls attention to the stakes of the battle, which are far greater than the stakes of a single combat. And only in the last two lines of his speech does Guy use a first-person singular pronoun: "& ich meself wil wiþ ȝou go / Y nil ȝou feyle neuer mo" (3102-03). A focus on fame and honor, which drove Guy at the outset of his journey on the continent, has given way to a more socially constructive way of thinking about

chivalric heroism, a kind of heroism in which a knight accepts aid and moreover encourages other knights to fight at the same time, on the same field, and for the same cause.

What might this literary trope reveal about chivalric practice? Prestwich is doubtless correct to note that a leader's grand speech before battle is a common literary device in fictions and chronicles of war, but in a romance that has been understood by so many as a narration of one knight's superlative qualities, the hero's speech to a crowd of warriors should not be dismissed as a mere generic convention.[64] Rather, in the context of other moments of chivalric cooperation in the poem, and over a backdrop of changes in English practices of lordship at the turn of the fourteenth century, this moment should stand out as a declaration that nobility need not be performed by a single-minded man alone, that honorable victory should instead be sought by garnering support and banding together with others.

Although literary scholars have preferred to view Guy as an exemplary knight for his prowess or his devotion, *Guy of Warwick* presents a more complex view of heroism than has previously been noted. By drawing attention to the hero's companions and his habit of forming interdependent relationships with other knights around him, the poem employs chivalry as a force for creating socially beneficial bonds, and at the same time it valorizes a nobleman who is able to rely on support from others. Indeed, accepting help in the romance is not unheroic but is rather a sign that a character is worthy to receive faithful service from those around him. The poem's use of companions casts ideal nobility in much the same light as John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*: as giving and receiving aid generously. As the poem portrays a hero who engages in interdependent relationships with his companions, it pushes its audience to understand chivalry as it appears in medieval and modern writings about nobility. Guy is a hero who often

[64] Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 312.

finds himself in harmony with the members of his retinue, a hero who can work his will with their support.

CHAPTER THREE
"WITH HYM DWELS THE LYOUN": INTERDEPENDENT HEROISM IN *YWAIN AND GAWAIN*

During the reign of Edward III (1327-1377), an English knight had many opportunities to win renown. He might have fought against the French in the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). He might have waged battle (except during a few brief periods of peace) against the Scots. He might have jousted in one of the many tournaments held in this period. He might even have defended the crown against traitors like Roger Mortimer in 1330 or John Minsterworth in 1377.[1] But the medieval English writer who adapted Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain, ou le Chevalier au Lion* (c. 1170) imagined a different way for a knight to earn a reputation for heroism. The Middle English poet revises and updates the Old French romance for a new audience in the second or third quarter of the fourteenth century, when Edward III tried to maintain peace in his realm in the shadow of his father's deposition. Over the course of the English romance's plot, the hero Ywain achieves his chivalric reputation by adventuring with an unusual companion—a lion. The lion is so central to the knight's fame that, by the poem's midpoint, the two figures are nearly inseparable: the narrator reports that Ywain is "of grete renowne / For with hym dwels the

[1] During Edward III's minority, Roger Mortimer exerted a "baleful influence over the king's family and the public interest," so on 29 November 1330, Edward had Mortimer executed, W. Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 93. Minsterworth was executed for treason in 1377 on accusations that he conspired with Charles V of France to form an armada that would attack England's southern coast and bring troops into Wales, Ormrod, *Edward III*, 574.

lyoun."[2] Moreover, the hero and his companion are surrounded by other examples of nobles and attendants that all contribute to the poet's overarching concern with ideals of lordship and cooperation as facets of chivalry. Indeed, lords throughout the poem are recognizable because of their retinues, and they earn the poet's praise or censure at least in part through their dealings with their attendants. The cultural backdrop of Edward III's reign, as narrated both by modern historians and medieval chroniclers, helps to highlight what the Middle English poet saw as an essential characteristic of nobility: a good lord accepts aid from his attendants in times of need. Chivalric heroism in *Ywain and Gawain* is demonstrated by a nobleman's displays of strength and his followers' devotion to his wellbeing, and knights are encouraged to seek honor by leading a group of retainers called a *menye*.

The plot of *Ywain and Gawain* begins when Ywain, after dinner at Arthur's court, hears another knight tell a story about his wonderful adventure in the forest. Inspired to test his own might on the same adventure, Ywain rides out alone. He jousts with—and mortally wounds—another knight in the forest, proving his own exceptional prowess. However, the inhabitants of the fallen knight's castle quickly band together to find their lord's slayer, Ywain, who has hidden himself in the castle with the help of a maidservant, Lunet. Through Lunet's sly machinations, the lady of the castle, Alundyne, agrees to marry Ywain and grant him lordship over the castle. Gawain, fearing that Ywain will grow soft in domestic life, asks Ywain to journey and tourney with him for a year in order to secure a reputation for chivalric excellence. Before Ywain leaves, Alundyne gives him a ring that will protect him from harm as long as he remembers to return to her after one year's time; he forgets. Alundyne sends a messenger to Arthur's court to castigate

[2] Anonymous, *Ywain and Gawain*, in Sir Percyvell of Galles *and* Ywain and Gawain, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 2339-40. Further quotations from this text will be cited parenthetically as line references.

her husband for forgetting his promise, and he descends into madness and wanders alone in the wilderness, where he meets a lion that has fallen prey to a dragon. When Ywain saves the lion, it decides to follow the hero on his quest to regain his reputation and reunite with his wife. The two travelers, Ywain and the lion, defeat many foes in battle together—among them a wicked steward, two demon-spawned knights, and a malicious giant—before returning to Arthur's court under the pseudonym "the Knight with the Lion." Ywain, under his assumed name, finally gains such a great reputation for chivalric excellence that Alundyne is convinced to accept him once more as her husband, and the two live out their days with the lion and Lunet in tow.

Scholarship on *Ywain and Gawain* has found some inspiration in discussions of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, the most likely source for the Middle English poem.[3] There is a general consensus among critics that Chrétien's romance depicts its hero's education in the ideals of chivalry, ideals he does not embody at the poem's beginning.[4] But despite their agreement that Yvain's lion is instrumental to Ywain's progress towards ideal chivalry, there is substantial disagreement over what specific values are embodied in the lion and imparted to the hero. Armel H. Diverres sees the lion as a symbol of fidelity, linking Yvain's lion to a lion in stories of Androcles and St. Jerome.[5] Anne Wilson connects the lion in Chrétien's poem with generosity and humility because it serves the hero after he saves the lion from being killed by a dragon.[6]

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[3] J.L. Weston, "*Ywain and Gawain* and *Le Chevalier au Lion*," *The Modern Quarterly of Language and Literature* 1.2 (1898): 98-107; David Matthews, "Translation and Ideology: The Case of *Ywain and Gawain*," *Neophilologus* 76.3 (1992): 452-63.

[4] Armel H. Diverres, "Yvain's Quest for Chivalric Perfection," in *An Arthurian Tapestry: Essays in Memory of Lewis Thorpe*, ed. Kenneth Varty (Glasgow: International Arthurian Society, 1981), 214-28; Tony Hunt, "Le Chevalier au Lion: *Yvain Lionheart*," in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 156-68; Stephen Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1983), 94-98.

[5] Diverres, "Yvain's Quest," 218.

[6] Anne Wilson, *The Magical Quest: The Use of Magic in Arthurian Romance* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 76-77. See also Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society*, who argues that the lion represents the fidelity, force, and generosity of a knight with true prowess, 98-99.

Against this strand of criticism, Tony Hunt points out that adaptations of Chrétien's poem present the lion in widely differing ways, which suggests to him that "there is no evidence to support the identification of the lion with a moral principle or spiritual power which has special claim on the hero's conscience."[7] Although scholars struggle to come to a consensus regarding the lion's significance, some criticism connects the lion to the virtue of *trewth*, which comprises generosity and fidelity. Juliette de Caluwé-Dor sees the lion as a "perfect vassal" in the French romance, even if later versions of the poem make the lion into more of a pet for the hero.[8] Hunt agrees that the lion is an ideal servant to Yvain, especially in light of the fact that the lion supports Yvain's decisions, becoming a "representation of strength and humility through the notion of reciprocity."[9] Among the variety of interpretations of Chrétien's lion, scholars seem to agree that it represents qualities appropriate to a vassal engaging in reciprocal service with a lord.

Despite its thematic significance in *Yvain*, the lion occupies much less space in analyses of the Middle English version. Much of the scholarly discussion of *Ywain and Gawain* stems in some part from John Finlayson's 1969 article, "*Ywain and Gawain* and the Meaning of Adventure," in which the author argues that there are "narrow grounds upon which to rest a claim for the consideration of *Ywain and Gawain* as an independent work of art" because the apparent abbreviation and simplification of the poem directs it to a less sophisticated audience than that of Chrétien's original.[10] Critical analyses since Finlayson's article have tended to paint the romance in a more flattering light, finding that the English poet repurposes Chrétien's Old

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[7] Tony Hunt, "The Lion in *Yvain*," in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages*, ed. P.B. Grout, R.A. Lodge, C.E. Pickford, and E.K.C. Varty (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1983), 86-98, at 89.
[8] Juliette de Caluwé-Dor, "Yvain's Lion Again: A Comparative Analysis of its Personality and Function in the Welsh, French, and Middle English Versions," in *An Arthurian Tapestry: Essays in Memory of Lewis Thorpe*, ed. Kenneth Varty (Glasgow: International Arthurian Society, 1981), 229-38: 231.
[9] Hunt, "The Lion in *Yvain*," 91-98.
[10] John Finlayson, "*Ywain and Gawain* and the Meaning of Adventure," *Anglia* 87 (1969): 312-37, at 313-14; see also Keith Busby, "Chrétien de Troyes English'd," *Neophilologus* 71.4 (1987): 596-613; Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Popularity of Middle English Romance* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1975).

French poem to present a nuanced view of service and companionship to a late medieval English audience. For instance, John K. Bollard builds from the idea that *Ywain and Gawain* is addressed to an audience with preconceptions and preoccupations different from those of Chrétien's audience, and that attention to the poet's consistent use of approving terms like *hende* lends insight into the English poet's ideals.[11] According to Bollard, the English poem focuses on courteous behavior as fundamental to chivalric ideals to a greater degree than the Old French version. While Ywain's courtesy may indeed be one of the poem's central themes, other chivalric ideals also deserve attention if we hope to understand how the English poet reworks Chrétien's poem for a later English audience. Specifically, much of the poem is devoted to ideals of chivalric service. After the hero forgets his vow to return to his wife, he spends roughly the second half of the poem on a series of quests in service of others with the lion at his side. Furthermore, at several points in the poem, characters in positions of power command the loyalty of retinues and attendants. The examples of proper and improper service scattered throughout the romance point to a desire to encourage thought about ideal cooperation between lords and their retinues. And, as I will argue, the English poet uses the lion as a crucial illustration of proper service to a lord in order to teach Ywain and the poem's audience that a network of interdependent relationships exists between noblemen and those who surround and support them.

Loyal Retainers in Images of Lordship

My focus on romance heroism and service in *Ywain and Gawain* is not without precedent; other scholars have noted that, like its Old French predecessor, the Middle English romance is about teaching a hero to participate in complex social relationships. In an analysis of *Ywain and Gawain* alongside other insular romances, Susan Crane notes that the poem ends with

[11] John K. Bollard, "*Hende Wordes*: The Theme of Courtesy in *Ywain and Gawain*," *Neophilologus* 78 (1994), 655-70.

joy shared by the hero, his wife, his lion, and the maidservant Lunet, arguing that love in this romance "does not exclude lovers from any other relationships, but rather facilitates complete engagement in life."[12] According to Crane, love and chivalry are compatible and indeed complementary parts of romance heroism. Expanding on the idea of the hero's "complete engagement in life," Michael Cichon writes that through his quests, Ywain "comes to a vital understanding of the responsibilities of a true knight and the real essence" of English chivalry, which Cichon describes as "a pattern of action and reciprocation" that he likens to feuds in Great Britain.[13] I agree with Crane and Cichon that the Middle English poem portrays its hero's education in a socially constructive mode of chivalry, but in addition to love and the feud, interdependent relationships are key to understanding the chivalric ethos of the poem. The form of heroism advanced in *Ywain and Gawain* involves reciprocal service on the battlefield and at home, especially service between a lord and his *menye*.

Cichon's argument expands on the work of Richard Firth Green, who insists that an understanding of *trewth* is vital to an understanding of late medieval culture more generally. *Trewth* may be glossed simply as fidelity, whether to a vow, a person, or an ethical ideal.[14] However, Green's more nuanced analysis of the word points up the legal, ethical, theological, and intellectual senses that sometimes overlap in the medieval English imagination. On the one

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[12] Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 194. Joanne Findon finds that elsewhere in the poem Lunet and Alundyne function as an emblem of *trewth* and *luf*, qualities that are essential to characters' relationships throughout the poem. Critics' attention to the broad similarities between the Old French and Middle English versions has "tend[ed] to obscure the particular shadings that the Middle English adapter brings to his version of the romance," "The Other Story: Female Friendship in the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*," *Parergon* 22.1 (January 2005): 71-94, at 74.

[13] Michael Cichon, *Violence and Vengeance in Middle Welsh and Middle English Narrative:* Owein *and* Ywain and Gawain (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 1-2.

[14] Cichon, *Violence and Vengeance*, 163; Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 9. Gayle K. Hamilton also highlights the theme of fidelity in the romance in her article, "The Breaking of Troth in *Ywain and Gawain*," *Mediaevalia* 11 (1976): 111-35.

hand, *trewth* was a matter of a nobleman's personal public image: "only by being seen to uphold one's own side of an agreement, a 'troth,' would one preserve one's reputation for honesty, one's 'trouthe.'"[15] To be sure, Ywain learns to uphold his word and to preserve his reputation after Alundyne's messenger spurns him for abandoning his wife, so the hero's *trewth* appears central to the poem's chivalric ethos.

On the other hand, Green also holds that *trewth* can mean more than mere loyalty to a social superior, for he finds that relationships between superiors and inferiors were "felt to imply a mutual commitment."[16] And it is this very sense of reciprocity that characterizes the *trewth* of chivalric heroism in *Ywain and Gawain*. The only surviving manuscript of the poem, the fifteenth-century manuscript Cotton Galba E.ix, suggests that the story will narrate more than just one knight's deeds in arms: a rubric reads "Her bigyns Ywaine and Gawain," specifying that the poem would concern the actions of at least two famous heroes in Arthur's court. The poem's narrator expands the idea that mutuality is an essential characteristic of *trewth* at the tale's outset, where he says that the Knights of the Round Table "tald of more trewth tham bitwene / Than now omang men here es sene" [they accounted for more *trewth* between them than is now seen among men] (33-34). The prepositions *bitwene* and *omang* highlight the reciprocal quality of *trewth* in the poem—rather than conceive of loyalty as something shown to another person, the poet specifies that *trewth* is shared. And, as later examples in the poem suggest, *trewth* is shared in relationships between those of equal and unequal social status.

Of course, fictions are informed by writers' ideas about, and observations of, the real world, and the version of *trewth* in *Ywain and Gawain* resembles the practices of the nobility in late medieval England. Historians agree that noblemen needed attendants and companions in

[15] Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 15.
[16] Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, 16-17.

order to maintain the image of their high social status.[17] Chris Given-Wilson reminds us that, because they needed an array of attendants and companions, noblemen in medieval England rarely worked alone.[18] Furthermore, he argues that the retinue was integral to a nobleman's prestige in medieval England: "to some extent, a lord's 'worship' was judged by the size and stature of his entourage."[19] In *Ywain and Gawain*, this body of retainers is often called the *menye,* a Middle English word defined variously as "household servants and officers," "an accompanying group, retinue; a body of retainers," and a "body of troops, an army."[20] Although this range of meanings could seem unwieldy since it yokes together those serving in domestic and military capacities, it is important to note that the same word describes different kinds of groups bound together by loyalty to a central figure. The English poet uses *menye,* along with other words denoting groups, to highlight the importance of companions to an ideal form of nobility. In fact, the word *menye* occurs ten times in the poem along with *cumpany*, *fere*, and *assemblé,* Middle English words which can also denote a group of companions or retainers. Attendants and companions appear beside their lords throughout *Ywain and Gawain*, which points to the poem's interest in illustrating ideals of loyal service. The lion that accompanies the hero is but one example (though an especially illustrative one) of a character who demonstrates the *trewth* a medieval nobleman could expect from his followers. By incorporating the practical cooperation of medieval noblemen into ideals of chivalry, the poet imagines heroism as an effort carried out by a group rather than by a lone knight-errant. The prevalence and prominence of

[17] Sheila Delany, *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 52; J.S. Bothwell, *Falling from Grace: Reversal of Fortune and the English Nobility 1075-1455* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), 129; Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England 1327-1377* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 72; R.R. Davies, *Lords and Lordship in the British Isles in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Brendan Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.
[18] Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 87.
[19] Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility*, 93.
[20] *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *meinē* (1a, 1c, and 2a).

lordship as a theme in *Ywain and Gawain* gives the lie to the notion that romance heroism is a solitary activity.

Not all retainers in the poem participate in acts of heroism, but they are still essential to the poet's idealization of nobility throughout the romance. A *menye* frequently appears alongside other accoutrements of majesty in the poem, affirming Given-Wilson's argument that having retainers supported a medieval nobleman's social prestige. A crowd of retainers forms a backdrop before which a lord appears all the more majestic as he distributes gifts, receives guests, or hears the pleas of his subjects. A knight summons his *menye* to serve Colgrevance during his adventure in the forest (190-93); Ywain offers hospitality to Arthur and his *menye* when they arrive at Alundyne's castle (1365-70); Alundyne takes leave of Arthur and his *menye* before Ywain leaves for his year of questing (1555-60); Ywain advises a lord to seek help from Arthur, whose *menye* comprises many knights who are glad to undertake challenges (2278-84); a young maiden greets Arthur and his *menye* before a climactic joust (3469-72); Arthur and his *menye* observe the noble display of Ywain and Gawain's combat (3711-14). In all of these instances, the *menye* does not actively support a lord, but it makes up part of the visual vocabulary of noble status. At the very least, this poet views the *menye* as a useful way to indicate a character's high social position. Substantiating Given-Wilson's observations on noble status and worship, the poet consistently includes retinues as key elements in scenes of aristocratic pageantry.

More remarkable, however, are episodes in which a *menye* takes on an active role in support of a lord's wishes, as good retainers would have done under their lords' direction in late medieval England. Two retinues in the first half of the poem set up a focus on good lordship and service that will follow through the rest of the romance. Early in the poem, Ywain rides alone

from Arthur's court at Cardiff to find adventure. In the forest, he fights and mortally wounds a knight named Salados, who is the lord of a castle nearby. The wounded knight rushes back to his castle with Ywain in pursuit. When Ywain enters the castle, he is trapped, and a maidservant named Lunet comes to meet him and warn him that, despite his success in the fight, he has not escaped danger. After hiding Ywain in a chamber and rendering him invisible with a magical ring, Lunet warns the hero that Salados' loyal retainers who still live in the castle are angrily pursuing their lord's slayer:

> My lady makes sorow ynogh
> And al his menye everilkane.
> Here has thou famen many ane
> To be thi bane er thai ful balde.
> Thou brekes noght out of this halde.
> And, for thai wate thai may noght fayl,
> Thai wil the sla in playn batayl. (706-12)

Although Ywain has bested Salados in single combat, Lunet reminds the hero that his victory has gained him more enemies than friends, for the members of the *menye* now want to avenge their late lord. Lunet's words emphasize two important aspects of the medieval feud. First, as Cichon has noted, this passage evokes the impulse to avenge a perceived injury—in this case, the *menye* feels that Ywain has wrongfully killed their lord. Equally important, however, is the loyalty shown by the *menye* even after the death of Salados. While the *menye* shares the grief of Salados' wife, Alundyne, the men motivate themselves to hunt for their lord's killer. The *menye* was unable to protect Salados' life in combat, but the retainers try to resolve a crisis that threatened their lord.

Modern histories of medieval nobility prove helpful in illuminating the ways in which cooperation in *Ywain and Gawain* is informed by real customs of the medieval English peerage. Geraldine Heng and Sheila Delany have shown that romances use knighthood and chivalric activity as stand-ins for the complex social hierarchy of the entire nobility; exemplary behaviors in romances, like prowess or *trewth*, can therefore represent a poet's thoughts on more complicated forms of leadership and lordship in the context of the court.[21] An examination of medieval English administrative practices, which romances represent as chivalric action, can help us understand the political significance of *trewth* during the reign of Edward III, the period when *Ywain and Gawain* was likely composed.

Effective exercises of lordship in fourteenth-century England entailed cooperation with a variety of administrators and supporters. After Edward II was stripped of his crown on grounds that his poor management and favoritism were impoverishing the English crown, his successor's practices demonstrated an awareness that rulers need supporters in order to maintain their power. Edward III sometimes rewarded the loyalty of his nobles through gifts and grants, but he also used patronage to encourage future loyal behavior from noblemen of many different degrees of authority. In a study of patronage under Edward III, historian J.S. Bothwell finds that the king gave promotions and showed favor to men from a wide variety of backgrounds: "established men, parvenus, county and court knights, first and younger sons, warriors, guardians, and administrators."[22] Bothwell argues that by distributing his patronage across such a broad group of nobles, Edward provided himself with "the raw materials to prepare his kingdom for a number

[21] Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 129-132; Delany, 66-70.

[22] J.S. Bothwell, *Edward III and the English Peerage: Royal Patronage, Social Mobility, and Political Control in Fourteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 27. Geraldine Barnes also states that Edward's parliaments drew from a wider spectrum of noblemen than earlier parliaments did, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993).

of contingencies—from peace and domestic harmony to parliamentary crises and war on a number of fronts."[23] Historians of the reign tend to agree that this strategy was successful. Despite a few episodes of strife, Richard Barber sees Edward's reign as "an era of exceptional loyalty to the sovereign."[24] If a medieval lord intended to shore up his authority, then he would do well to follow the example of Edward III in securing supporters at various levels of power.

Even when his plans ran against the rocks of opposition, Edward showed a capacity for prudent lordship by restoring the commons' faith in his decisions. A parliamentary crisis in 1340-1341, which Mark Ormrod calls "the greatest political crisis of the reign," showed the king struggling to align his subjects' will with his own.[25] Edward's military campaigns against Philip VI of France drained the royal coffers at the outset of the Hundred Years War. Mounting financial demands to support the war effort tried the patience of the commons and the king alike, particularly when a tax intended to raise between £80,000 and £100,000 actually returned only about a fifth of that amount. The apparent mismanagement of repeated taxes made the commons suspicious of the higher nobility, which, according to Ormrod, meant that the baronage had "little chance of political support from below," leaving the magnates "relatively weak and isolated" politically.[26] The political power of the higher noblemen, then, stemmed not only from their personal prestige or wealth but also from their ability to command the devotion of those who surrounded and supported them.[27] Edward was able to restore the commons' confidence in

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[23] Bothwell, *Edward III and the English Peerage*, 27.
[24] Richard Barber, *The Triumph of Edward III: The Battle of Crécy and the Company of the Garter* (New York: Allen Lane, 2013), 4. See also Ormrod, *Edward III*, 600; Ian Mortimer, *The Perfect King: The Life of Edward III, Father of the English Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 395-401; in contrast to this prevailing view, James MacKinnon argues that parliamentary rolls show evidence of "a deeply rooted if not always outspoken antagonism between king and people" in matters of taxation and expenditure, *The History of Edward the Third (1327-1377)* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), 618-19.
[25] Ormrod, *Edward III*, 221.
[26] Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III*, 102.
[27] Richard Partington writes that "while the king's authority rendered the sergeants powerful, in turn their practical action on the ground gave him power: in short, they ensured that his business in the counties was properly done,"

the military campaign only after purging his administrative apparatus of the royal and local officials accused of mismanaging the tax. Ormrod suggests that Edward accomplished this reconciliation by convincing the commons to reaffirm their "sense of obligation to the war undertaken on their behalf and their commitment, for better or worse, to the fiscal policies that sustained it."[28] When support was thin on the ground, Edward showed an admirable ability to reaffirm the loyalty of his subjects. It is this ability to create consensus among supporters, to align the will of retainers with that of the lord, that characterizes the successful exercise of noble power in *Ywain and Gawain*. The poet, mindful of noblemen's reliance on supporters, creates a world in which noblemen show their power through their prowess and their command over loyal retainers. This poem thus asks scholars to reinterpret chivalric excellence as a combination of personal strength and a willingness to call upon the aid of those who surround and support a lord.

Shortly after Ywain's arrival at Alundyne's castle, Alundyne's steward cautions her about the approach of Arthur and his company in terms that again show a link between authority and the presence of a *menye*. The threat of Arthur's approach is amplified by his prodigious *menye*, which works like Salados' retinue to uphold a nobleman's prestige. Arthur's proximity worries the steward, but the threat of conquest is linked to the power lent by the *menye*:

> The king Arthure es redy dight
>
> To be here byn this fowretenyght.
>
> He and his menye ha thoght
>
> To win this land if thai moght. (1213-16)

"Edward III's Enforcers: The King's Sergeants-at-Arms in the Localities," in *The Age of Edward III*, ed. J.S. Bothwell (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), 89-106, at 106; see also Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III*, 110; Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility*, 1.

[28] Ormrod, *Edward III*, 241.

As in Lunet's earlier caution to Ywain, the most prominent characteristic of the *menye* is that it acts in the interests of its lord. The attendants give force to Arthur's intent.

However, while it may seem that the *menye*'s desires are congruent with the lord's ambitions, we must remember that Arthur does not command his *menye* to accompany him on this journey. Rather, he decides that he must see the wonder he has heard of in Colgrevance's story, and he invites the rest of his court to accompany him if they so desire:

> "Swith," he sayd, "wendes with me,
> Who so wil that wonder se."
> The kynges word might noght be hid,
> Over al the cowrt sone was it kyd;
> And thare was none so litel page
> That he ne was fayn of that vayage;
> And knyghtes and swiers war ful fayne . . . (527-33)

Arthur does not control the volition of the *menye* here. The pages, squires, and knights who accompany Arthur do so because they are *fayn*, meaning delighted, willing, or eager, to join their lord.[29] The reward offered in this passage—seeing a wonderful sight—is decidedly less material than the financial and political patronage shown to the peerage by Edward III, but the sense remains that the men of Arthur's *menye* accompany the king at their own volition. Likewise, Salados' retainers hunt Ywain out of their own desire for vengeance, not out of obedience to a command from Salados or Alundyne. Based on these passages, the romance portrays a form of lordship not based on the lord's absolute control over his retainers but rather based on the retainers' devotion to their lord's wellbeing and advancement, which would in turn benefit the

[29] *MED*, s.v. *fain (adj.)* (2a, 3, 4a).

retainers themselves. According to this romance, a nobleman's ability to accomplish his goals depends at least in part on the voluntary service of his *menye*.

The Dangers of Isolation

Conversely, for this poet the lack of a retinue signals weakness and vulnerability. Near the end of the romance, Lunet warns Alundyne that an approaching knight (actually Ywain in disguise) will meet no resistance from her retainers, and Alundyne begs her to "Speke namore of my menye; / For wele I wate . . . I have na knight me mai defend" (3878-80). Because Alundyne has forsaken her husband for his failure to uphold his oath, she now finds herself unable to mobilize a force like the *menye* of Arthur or Salados. By equating solitude with vulnerability, the poet urges the audience to understand the retinue as a crucial component of secure lordship. Consonant with contemporary views of the patronage by which members of the nobility maintained their power, the poet figures Alundyne's solitude as an indicator of her inability to command the loyalty of her supporters. Through her admission that no knight will come to her aid, Alundyne affirms that a noble's status cannot be defended without accepting the loyal service of a *menye*.

Beyond the military role of the retinue during the Middle Ages, medieval leaders needed their attendants and companions to demonstrate *trewth* in order to pursue their political goals. The concern with ideal nobility expressed in romances finds a counterpart in chronicles, which comprise records of battles, parliamentary proceedings, and noble pageantry. Fourteenth-century chroniclers Ranulf Higden and Jean le Bel devote their attention to noblemen's interactions in order to instruct their audience in proper conduct.[30] This didactic aim, shared by chronicles and romances, makes the two genres complementary in a study of nobility. Higden and le Bel portray

[30] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 2-3.

retinues in much the same light as the poet of *Ywain and Gawain*, as a necessary part of a lord's ability to maintain order and support his status. Just as Alundyne feels powerless to protect her realm without a *menye* under her command, so too did Edward II suffer from a lack of parliamentary support at the end of his reign. Higden describes the poor kingship of Edward II in terms that set the king's actions at odds with the wellbeing of the realm, and specifically at odds with the desires of the peerage. His patronage of the Despensers caused particular friction, for he favored them with gifts "ageyne the commune desire of the noble men of þe realme."[31] The English noblemen eventually succeeded in exiling the Despensers in an effort to protect Edward II from their deleterious influence, "but soone after the kynge callede theyme from exile withowte cownsaile of the noble men of the realme, whiche causede grete stryfes and debate."[32] Conflict between the will of the king and the will of those around him is, for Higden, indicative of the king's failing power. Le Bel's account coincides with Higden's: Hugh Despenser's bad advice "brought shame upon the king and disaster to his kingdom; he was responsible for the beheading of the greatest lords of England, who should have been the kingdom's support and defence."[33] While this may at first seem like a bitter accusation that the English noblemen failed to uphold and defend the kingdom, in fact le Bel condemns not Edward's peerage but rather the mistreatment of the nobility by Hugh Despenser and Edward II. By alienating himself from his

[31] Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Maonachi Cestrensis, Together with the English Translation of John Trevisa and an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Churchill Babington and J. Rawson Lumby (London: Longman and Company, 1865-86; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2006), vol. 8, 311, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=cme;idno=AHB1341.0001.001.
[32] Higden, *Polychronicon*, vol. 8, 311.
[33] Jean le Bel, *The True Chronicles of Jean le Bel: 1290-1360*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 31. The original text in Old French reads as follows: "par traitre conseil et enhort, le roy avoit honny et gasté son royaume, et mis à mischief, et fait decoler les plus haults barons d'Angleterre par lesquelz le royaume devoit estre soustenu et deffendu," Jean le Bel, *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, ed. Jules Viard and Eugène Déprez (Paris: Libraire Renouard, 1904), 28.

most powerful subjects—by failing to show *trewth* to his would-be supporters—Edward II lost his power to govern his realm.

If a noble leader could fail to carry through on his *trewth* to his retainers, so too could a nobleman's supporters refuse to obey their lord, thereby reducing his power. Higden notes that lords shore up their authority most effectively when they accept the aid of good supporters in their retinues. Chronicle accounts of Edward II's deposition emphasize the king's profound lack of support and contrast his ineffective rule with the construction of a noble community around Edward III at his accession. In the hearing that stripped Edward II of his crown, Sir William Trussell declared to Edward II that parliament resolved to "depose the of thy regalle dignite, and never to obbey the as kynge hereafter."[34] By revoking their obedience—their *trewth*—to the king, the members of parliament also rejected the king's status as the highest member of the English nobility. Trussell's words served as a reminder that the king's royal dignity depended in large part on his personal control of men. Having lost the devotion of the parliamentary lords, Edward II found himself defenseless and ultimately powerless. The English aristocracy soon gathered around the king's successor, though, and assured the young Edward III that he would have their support. Le Bel reports that after deposing Edward II, a council of noblemen agreed that the eldest son of the former king "should be crowned forthwith in his father's place, and should appoint around him good counsellors, wise and trustworthy men, so that the country might thenceforth be better governed than it had been thitherto."[35] Along with his title, the new king is invested with a retinue of wise and loyal men who will show him the *trewth* necessary to

[34] Higden, *Polychronicon*, vol. 8, 323.
[35] Le Bel, *The True Chronicles*, 33. The original Old French text reads as follows: "maiz ilz s'acordoient tous que son aisné filz, qui là estoit present son droit hoir, fut couronné, et tantost, ou lieu de son pere, maiz qu'il preist entour luy bon conseil et sages et feable gens, par quoy le pays fut dès doncq en avant mielx gouverné que gouverné n'avoit esté par devant," le Bel, *Chronique*, 32.

uphold his rank. Good rulers, so the English nobility asserted, should accept the devotion and loyalty of those around them, forming networks of interdependent relationships.

A nobleman's interdependence becomes an even more prominent theme in the romance once the hero is deserted by his wife and community. Although Ywain begins his quest determined to set out alone, his solitude is a burden in the second half of the romance. When he meets Lunet in a chapel in the woods, he laments his fall from high social status with special attention to his lost lordship:

> I was a man, now am I nane;
> Whilom I was a nobil knyght
> And a man of mekyl myght;
> I had knyghtes of my menye
> And of reches grete plenté;
> I had a ful fayre seignory,
> And al I lost for my foly.
> Mi maste sorow als sal thou here:
> I lost a lady that was me dere. (2116-24)

Ywain's sense of his own decline is grounded partially in the loss of his great might, which could mean his personal prowess, but he has also lost his lordship over people and property. He recalls his former high status in terms parallel to the observations of modern historians, who say that fourteenth-century noblemen demonstrated their status through personal control of men and property.[36] At this point in the romance, Ywain has begun to realize that heroism is not simply about solitary chivalric exploits, for a hero derives his status from both prowess and lordship. If

[36] Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility*, 93; Cichon, *Violence and Vengeance*, 141, 159-60.

he spends the first half of the poem assuming that he must earn honor alone, then in the second half, he learns to adopt a more interdependent form of heroism.

The sense of loss concomitant with isolation is part of a larger medieval understanding of service as an essential element of noble life. A particularly illustrative example from le Bel's chronicle highlights the travails of noblemen waging war without their attendants near at hand. On the evening of 20 July 1327, during a military campaign against the Scots, the young Edward III and his men pursued their foes past Durham through a landscape of heaths and hills. Because there was no road through the countryside, the mounted soldiers outpaced their attendants and the carts carrying their supplies, which could not travel quickly through the rough northern terrain. The king's army forded the Tyne and tried to encamp for the night, but having lost touch with their foot-soldiers and companions, the armored knights spent a hard night on the riverbank. They slept in their armor, holding their horses' bridles, and their only provisions were a few sips of river water and some loaves of bread, packed behind their saddles, that had become "soaked with [their] horses' sweat."[37] Key to le Bel's account of martial hardship is the idea that a nobleman derives ease from the work of those around him. The absence of servants and foot-soldiers does not render these noblemen more valiant but rather makes them appear less majestic and impressive. Far from a heroic adventurer, a nobleman without his attendants is a picture of misery. The anonymous poet echoes the connection between solitude and vulnerability, encouraging his hero and his audience to learn that chivalry is most honorably performed in the company of supporters.

[37] Le Bel, *The True Chronicles*, 42. The original Old French text reads as follows: "et nous mesmes ne goustasmes d'aultre viande, tout le jour, ne tout la nuit, que chascun son pain qu'il avoit derriere luy troussé, ainsy que dit vous ay, qui estoit de la sueur de cheval tout enordi, ne ne busmes d'aultre bruvage que de la riviere courant," le Bel, *Chronique*, 57-58.

Distortions of Lordship

Interdependence is not necessarily beneficial, though, for lords might mistreat their followers or subjects as Edward II did due to his inordinate shows of favor to the Despensers. Flawed leadership appears in *Ywain and Gawain* as a foil to the good lordship represented by the hero and his lion, further emphasizing the poet's thematic focus on *trewth* as an element of noble status. The two giants in *Ywain and Gawain* call attention to ideas of service and lordship, although their dealings with their subjects are far from the ideals illustrated in the proper courts of Arthur and Salados. In these episodes, the poet characterizes some practices of lordship as blameworthy by using non-human characters—giants, dwarves, and beasts—to represent human lords, retainers, and subjects that pervert ideals of service and loyalty. While Ywain and the lion epitomize the relationship between lord and vassal for this poet, as will be discussed below, the giants' interactions with their retinues grate against the ideals of lordship praised elsewhere in the poem.

The first giant, the hideous herdsman met by Colgrevance during his adventure in the forest, immediately stands out due to his malicious treatment of the beasts that live in the forest. To be sure, the herdsman has an imposing presence, for he tells Colgrevance that the beasts of the forest are "at my comandment; / To me thai cum when I tham call, / And I am maister of tham all" (310-12). At first glance, this assertion makes the herdsman resemble other lords in the poem who possess the authority to call upon the devotion of their attendants. The beasts' obedience does not, however, demonstrate lordship in the same way as the devotion of Arthur's knights or Salados' retainers. Whereas Alundyne's steward recognizes Arthur's majesty because of the presence of his *menye*, the herdsman must explain to Colgrevance who he is and what power he possesses in the forest because it is not readily apparent. Furthermore, the herdsman's mastery of his subjects comes not from a sense of obedience or devotion but rather from fear of

the herdsman's terrible strength. He tells Colgrevance how he is able to induce the beasts to submit to his will in terms that depart substantially from Arthur's promises of adventure and honor:

> In al this faire foreste
> Es thare none so wilde beste,
> That remu dar, bot stil stand,
> When I am to him cumand.
> Any ay, when that I wil him fang
> With mi fingers that er strang,
> I ger him cri on swilk manere,
> That al the bestes when thai him here,
> Obout me than cum thai all,
> And to mi fete fast thai fall,
> On thaire manere merci to cry. (295-305)

The herdsman in the forest rules his bestial subjects by force and feels no *trewth* towards the animals as he squeezes them in his forceful grasp. Only when the other animals cry for mercy does he release his victim. The mutual devotion of *trewth* shown by Salados' retainers is conspicuously absent in this distortion of a court in the forest. Rather than come to their lord's aid in his time of need, the animals cry in opposition to the herdsman's actions.

In a study of madness and reason in medieval literature, Penelope Doob argues that the giant herdsman tames the beasts with his strength, so he symbolizes the proper exercise of control. Doob juxtaposes the herdsman's mastery of the beasts with Ywain's madness after Alundyne forsakes him. She notes that the giant herdsman "controls dangerous beasts

absolutely," highlighting his rationality in contrast to Ywain's irrationality, and she argues that Ywain's "friendship with the lion eventually signifies, among other things, his growing self-mastery."[38] In her reading, the giant herdsman's dominance in the forest represents a beneficial form of control that teaches the poem's audience about the importance of self-mastery and gratitude. While it is true that the giant herdsman exercises a powerful influence over the wild beasts, his highly physical and threatening tyranny in the forest illustrates a perversion of the ideals of lordship that appear elsewhere in the poem. The herdsman's mastery depends on inspiring not devotion but rather trepidation in his subjects, departing substantially from the idea of *trewth* that characterizes proper lordship throughout the romance.

A second giant later in the poem further distorts lordship as a counterpoint to examples of good lordship presented at Arthur's court and elsewhere. After recovering from a lapse into madness, Ywain arrives at a castle where he meets a lord who is oppressed by a giant named Harpyns of Mowntain. The giant has sworn that he will take the lord's daughter by force, and that after he has possession of the lady, "the laddes of his kychyn / And also that his werst fote-knave / His wil of that woman sal have" (2266-68). Harpyns' tremendous strength is an essential element of his threat, but so too is the fact that the lady will be raped by Harpyns' lowest household servants.[39] If Arthur's *menye* earlier intimidated Alundyne's steward by amplifying Arthur's military might, then Harpyns' servants disgust and terrify the lord of the castle because of the harm they can work at Harpyns' behest.

[38] Penelope B.R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 147-48; Randy P. Schiff also sees the herdsman as a paragon of rationality, dignity, and patience, "Reterritorialized Ritual: Classist Violence in *Yvain* and *Ywain and Gawain*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 56.3 (2014): 227-58, at 232-37.

[39] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues that the same giant in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* might represent the "growing wealth and power of the boorish bourgeoisie," and is therefore a threat to feudal structure, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 77-78.

On first reading, this *menye* seems to fulfill the normal function of amplifying a leader's power; however, like the giant herdsman's coercive domination of his subjects, Harpyns perverts proper lordship in his practices of rewarding his retinue. Arthur inspires his men to show their *trewth* to him by offering them a chance to see a wonderful sight. Harpyns instead rewards even his lowliest followers with a chance to rape the maiden of the castle. When Harpyns approaches the castle, the giant repeats his threat in terms that again call attention to his household servants:

> If thou wil have thi sons in hele,
> Deliver me that damysele.
> I sal hir gif to warisowne
> Ane of the foulest quisteroun,
> That ever yit ete any brede.
> He sal have hir maydenhede.
> Thar sal none other lig hir by
> Bot naked herlotes and lowsy. (2398-404)

In this threat, Harpyns commits a twofold sin against lordship. First, he attempts to coerce loyalty from the lord of the castle and to force the damsel into the beds of his servants. Moreover, he offers an inordinate reward (*warisowne*) to his foulest scullion (*quisteroun*). Harpyns' perverted largesse debases the worthy and uplifts the undesirable in a move reminiscent of the undue favor shown to the Despensers by Edward II. These characters provide a foil against which examples of good lordship shine more brightly. The giants' travesty of lordship complicates the poem's portrayal of the *menye* and thus points up the poet's sophisticated engagement with the theme of service and *trewth* in the chivalric culture of medieval England.

Reciprocation and the Retainer

Although the *menye* thus far appears to be an extension of a lord's power or majesty, the English poet uses the lion to refigure the retinue in a way that affects how we should understand the history of service under noblemen. Scholarship on the English poem has tended to see the lion as an embodiment of specific chivalric virtues or even a symbol of "aristocratic exceptionalism that . . . enforces feudal law by defying it" through the hero's spectacular fights.[40] In other words, critics have tended to agree that the lion in the Middle English poem is a part of the hero's character and therefore does not represent something external to the hero. But a retinue is not a part of a lord in the English poet's imagination. Attendants and servants are not embodiments of a lord's personal prowess or generosity. Retinues comprise individuals who show *trewth* to a lord, and those individuals are valued for their service to their lord and his interests. When a medieval nobleman wanted someone to carry his provisions, or when he wanted someone to administer justice on his lands in his absence, he sought out his loyal retainers. This is the crucial difference between noble heroism as conceived by medieval poets and modern historians—this anonymous poet, and other writers of the Middle Ages, do not necessarily punish heroic figures for relying on support offered by their companions. Even as he revised Chrétien's Old French romance to amplify the theme of *trewth,* the English poet imported the lion as it appeared in his source, as a figure of an ideal vassal or servant.[41] In *Ywain and Gawain*, the hero needs to demonstrate his own prowess and *trewth,* especially when he meets another person in need of his aid, but lordship—receiving the *trewth* and service of others—is another significant facet of ideal nobility, and the hero's interdependence is shown

[40] Schiff, "Reterritorialized Ritual," 244; see also Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children*, 150-51; De Caluwé-Dor, "Yvain's Lion Again," 233-34.
[41] De Caluwé-Dor, "Yvain's Lion Again," 231; Hunt, "The Lion in *Yvain*," 91-98; Hunt, "The Medieval Adaptations of Chrétien's *Yvain*," in *An Arthurian Tapestry: Essays in Memory of Lewis Thorpe*, ed. Kenneth Varty (Glasgow: International Arthurian Society, 1981), 203-213, at 207.

primarily through his relationship with the lion, which serves as a figure of an ideal *menye* for Ywain.

Having established the significance of the *menye* both in the poem and in fourteenth-century English political culture, I turn now to the titular knight who spends much of his time struggling against the idea of interdependent heroism. When Ywain hears that Arthur wants to go on Colgrevance's adventure, he laments inwardly, "For he wald have went allane" (535-36). In Ywain's mind at the poem's beginning, the path to advancement and honor is one best traveled alone as a knight-errant. His desire to meet challenges alone follows him into the poem's second half, when he offers to fight three men single-handedly, saying that he desires no help from his companion, the lion, nor does he have any other attendant who might aid him in the battle: "Of my lioun no help I crave, / Ne have I none other fote-knave" (2575-76). Although Ywain will eventually reach a new understanding of chivalry, the audience sees him repeatedly reverting to the idea that heroism is the exercise of personal prowess. However, through Ywain's repeated reliance on assistance from others—especially from the lion—the poet asks the audience to reinterpret the service of a *menye* as a beneficial and essential component of noble success, as it was understood by the English nobility after the deposition of Edward II.

With an awareness of the poet's attention to interdependence elsewhere in the romance, it should come as no surprise that as the hero is re-educated in chivalric heroism, the poet assigns him a new name that highlights his interdependence. The lion—a figure of a perfectly loyal retainer—is the poet's primary tool for teaching the hero to accept aid during his heroic exploits. Moreover, it concretizes for the audience an image of chivalric heroism as a group endeavor. Just as solitude illustrates the depths of Ywain's fall from nobility, so accompaniment is an integral part of his reformed chivalric identity. Ywain is referred to as the Knight with the Lion no fewer

than eleven times in the second half of the poem, and Ywain even adopts the moniker himself as he tries to re-establish his identity as a hero.[42] Moreover, near the poem's end when Ywain returns to Alundyne, Lunet sees a knight nearing the castle and recognizes Ywain by the presence of his lion: "Sho knew him wele by his lioun" (3929). In the same way that Alundyne's steward links Arthur's chivalric identity to his approaching *menye* earlier in the poem, here the audience sees Ywain's chivalric identity connected indelibly to his traveling companion. The hero learns to live within a network of other interdependent relationships as well (with Gawain, with various lords and ladies, with Lunet, and with Alundyne), but his association with the lion, who serves him, takes prominence both visually and verbally as a way to identify Ywain as a knight and as a lord.

Because the poet describes Ywain as the lion's *mayster* and *lorde* in the second half of the romance, their relationship can be understood as representing the interdependence between a lord and a servant. Although the lion does not speak in the poem, the lion's thoughts, narrated for the audience by the poet, consistently figure the hero not as an owner but as a lord or master, which associates this pair of characters with other groups of lords and retinues seen elsewhere in the poem. Shortly after meeting Ywain, the lion sets himself to the task of getting food for the pair starving in the forest. Before venturing into the forest to kill a doe to share with his lord, the lion takes leave of Ywain in a gesture indicative of Ywain's burgeoning lordship: "For his lorde sold him noght greve, / He wald noght go withowten leve" (2023-24). In one of his first actions in the poem, the lion demonstrates two key qualities of a good retainer: he acts in his lord's interest without being ordered or coerced, and he shows his *trewth* by seeking not to aggrieve

[42] Ywain is called a/the Knight with a/the Lion at lines 2662, 2775, 2783, 2804, 2830, 2863, 2886, 3799, 3818, 3917, and 4020.

Ywain. His service upholds the knight's honor even as it also demonstrates the lion's valuable devotion to his lord.

The poet further affirms the lion's excellence in service by showing the many facets of the lion's role as a companion. In particular, the lion exhibits extraordinary initiative in his service to Ywain at times of danger. As a guard, the lion watches over Ywain while he sleeps: "Al nyght the lyon about gede / To kepe his mayster and his stede" (2055-56). As Ywain rides out to fight Harpyns of Mowntain, the lion rushes out by his lord's side: "And forth he rides with his lioun" (2424). When the lion sees the two devils at the Castle of Heavy Sorrow, he understands that these fearsome foes intend to attack his lord, and the lion resolves to offer whatever help he can: "ful wele he wist / That thai sold with his mayster fight. / He thoght to help him at his myght" (3164-66). Even after Ywain orders the lion to wait while he fights three attackers, the lion disobeys Ywain's orders and acts in his lord's interest the moment Ywain's fortunes begin to sour: "No lenger wald he than lig thare. / To help his mayster he went onane" (2606-07). Two important points emerge from these examples. First, the repeated use of *mayster* and *lorde* solidify the lion's role as an ideal servant for a noble lord. Second, the lion's desire to help Ywain in times of crisis is reminiscent both of Salados' *menye* earlier in the poem, which sought to avenge a fallen lord, and of the retinue Edward III established for himself in order to ensure his ability to govern effectively. Cichon notes a "pattern of action and reciprocation" in the hero's service to lords and ladies in the second half of the poem. A similar and equally significant pattern of reciprocity appears in the lion's desire to help his master in times of need.[43] In accordance with ideas of service present elsewhere in the poem and in medieval England more

[43] Cichon, *Violence and Vengeance*, 2.

generally, the poet affords his noble hero a companion that will serve him even as the hero himself serves others.

The details of the lion's service to Ywain conflict with scholars' assertions that the lion is a sign of supernatural protection or extraordinary reserves of prowess. The lion guards Ywain as he sleeps in the forest, not as a divine extension of Ywain's strength but as a dutiful servant defending his lord at a time of vulnerability. Furthermore, at two points, the lion intercedes in battles when the hero is unable to prevail alone. Ywain fights valiantly against Harpyns with his spear and sword, but he exhausts himself and rests briefly against his saddlebow. Thinking his slumped lord is hurt, the lion enters the fray and tears the skin from Harpyns' back, dodging the giant's blows all the while, until Ywain revives himself and finishes the giant by cutting through his cheek, his shoulder, and eventually his heart (ll. 2457-2485). And later, at the Castle of Heavy Sorrow, Ywain fights two devils who take the upper hand in the battle until the lion breaks free from its restraints, pins one devil to the ground, and devours his arm, allowing Ywain to slay his opponents, emerging victorious and unhurt (3227-75). Randy P. Schiff interprets the lion's interventions as indicators of the primacy of "force, not right" in chivalric success, but the poet does not censure the hero for accepting aid in these fights, suggesting that a chivalrous man in this poem can in fact receive aid honorably.[44] Like earlier examples of the lion's service to Ywain, these passages point to the lion's willingness to show *trewth* to the hero. But these moments are also distinguished by the sense that Ywain's personal prowess is not sufficient to overcome the challenges he faces. Rather than censor the hero as weak, though, the poet instead points out that a noble hero need not always depend solely on his own strength because a lord can honorably receive service from his companions.

[44] Schiff, "Reterritorialized Ritual," 244.

With the lion as a figure of an ideal companion, the poet teaches Ywain to participate in interdependent heroism. Even the hero of the romance begins to understand that it is appropriate for a nobleman to accept assistance when the odds are against him. Ywain, acting as Lunet's champion in a trial for treason, considers that he is not in fact outnumbered by his three armed foes because of the additional force that comes from his attendants:

> Yf thai be many and mekil of pryse,
> I sal let for no kouwardise;
> For with me es bath God and right,
> And thai sal help me forto fight.
> And my lyon sal help me—
> Than er we foure ogayns tham thre. (2517-22)

Beyond God and justice—two forces almost always on the side of a romance hero—Ywain draws courage from the fact that his companion will assist him in the fight, as a nobleman could expect his retinue to do. He resists despair before this challenge not by trusting in his own strength but by trusting in the assistance he can receive from outside himself. In this way, the poet makes Ywain resemble a fourteenth-century English lord, taking comfort because of the work of those who surround and support him. Like the retinues elsewhere in the poem that mark out majestic characters, here the lion signals to the audience that Ywain is a good and powerful nobleman who can marshal not only his own strength but also the strength of followers bound to him by reciprocal *trewth*.

While it is true that the poem educates its hero in a socially aware form of heroism by teaching him to use his prowess in the service of others, that scholarly commonplace captures only half of the poem's comment on proper chivalry. Ywain's heroism, as well as lordship

throughout the romance, is inextricably bound to interactions in which a nobleman serves and is served. The abundance of interdependent relationships—both military and administrative—between noblemen during the reign of Edward III suggests that the romance's audience in fourteenth-century England would have been familiar with the idea that a nobleman both gives and receives *trewth*. The medieval English poet, then, adapted Chrétien's romance for an English audience for whom cooperation was an integral part of noble life, and his repurposed romance comments on how exactly a lord and a servant should interact at a time when proper service was of great concern to the English nobility.

CHAPTER FOUR
"THEY WEREN NO THYNG YDEL": NOBLEMEN AND THEIR SUPPORTERS IN CHAUCER'S *KNIGHT'S TALE*

The tournament that opens the fourth part of *The Knight's Tale* has figured into many critics' discussions of Chaucerian notions of chivalry and lordship. For some, the combat exemplifies the civilizing influence of chivalry over disordered violence.[1] For others, the tournament's outcome signals the limits of Theseus' ability to control an unpredictable world.[2] But literary scholars have tended to overlook an important moment at the start of the tournament, or rather before its start, that turns a spotlight on the poem's chivalric community and its support structures. On the day when two-hundred-two knights and their attendants gather to determine which champion will marry Emelye, a clamor resounds in the morning air, and the streets around Theseus' palace are thick with men rushing to prepare for the day's events:

> Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge

[1] For example, Elizabeth B. Edwards argues that Theseus "works to recapture and recuperate the rogue energies of rivalrous males in ceremonial and ritual form" in order to restore order to their disordered conflict, "Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and the Work of Mourning," *Exemplaria* 20.4 (2008): 361-384, at 367; according to Patricia Clare Ingham, Theseus' chivalry exerts a civilizing influence on violence by redirecting the conflict between the Theban knights so that "[t]heir fighting becomes a testimony to his masculine power, as conqueror and as governor," "Homosociality and Creative Masculinity in the *Knight's Tale*," in *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the* Canterbury Tales *and* Troilus and Criseyde, ed. Peter J. Beidler (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 23-35, at 28.

[2] Ilan Mitchell-Smith sees the Theban knights as consistently excessive, and he argues that the tournament presents "moments of extreme and injurious violence going against [Theseus'] wishes and disrupting his control," "'As Olde Stories Tellen Us': Chivalry, Violence, and Geoffrey Chaucer's Critical Perspective in 'The Knight's Tale,'" *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 32 (2007): 83-99, at 90; Jane Chance argues that although Theseus attributes absolute governing power to Jupiter and affirms the orderliness of the world in his speech at Arcite's funeral, Chaucer "was not necessarily identifying his own position as author with that of Duc Theseus," "Representing Rebellion: The Ending of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and the Castration of Saturn," *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 38 (2002): 75-92, at 82-85.

Ther was in hostelryes al aboute,
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes upon steedes and palfreys.
Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys
So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel
Of goldsmythrye, of browdynge, and of steel;
The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures,
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,
Knyghtes of retenue, and eek squieres
Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge;
Giggynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacynge—
There as nede is they weren no thyng ydel . . .[3]

Although less spectacular than the clashes and crashes of swords and shields on the tournament grounds, the clicks and clanks of fastening equipment are no less essential to the display of prowess that follows. Indeed, the proliferation of materials in these lines—the harnesses, the gold-work, the embroidery, the steel, the various pieces of equipment—makes evident the extent to which a knight's magnificent appearance on the field is really a production made possible by the work of many other people, among them metalsmiths, cloth-workers, squires, and horse-grooms. Companies of lords, knights, and squires appear together in this moment decorated with the lavish trappings of late-medieval chivalric pageantry while they also set their hands to the business of buckling helms, nailing spearheads, and fastening shields for each other. Beyond a

[3] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), I 2492-505. Further quotations from this text will be cited parenthetically as line references.

simple description of the combatants' remarkable possessions, this brief digression from the central plot of *The Knight's Tale* sheds light on the service, both freely offered and obtained by payment, by which noble status in the poem is displayed and sustained. A reputation for chivalric excellence, then, depends on the efforts of a group with a knight as lord at its center.

Displays of prowess in *The Knight's Tale* are consistently preceded by depictions of loyal service performed by well-ordered companies of servants, attendants, companions-in-arms, craftsmen, and even other noblemen. And although chivalric spectacles sometimes produce horrific violence in the *Tale*, noble status also binds together groups of men in interdependent relationships based on the principle of honor. Jeffrey Cohen asserts that chivalric writers imagine chivalry embodied in a perfect knight, but "the trajectory of chivalric identification tended to scatter knightly identity across a proliferating array of objects, events, and fleshly forms."[4] Cohen's analysis focuses specifically on the coordination of man and horse that enables a knight to perform feats of arms, but his argument can also illuminate the connection between chivalric achievement and lordship. Networks of interdependent relationships between lords and supporters appear throughout *The Knight's Tale* as the three male protagonists attempt to manage the processes that help them create and maintain their reputations for chivalric excellence. In an analysis of stasis and flux in the *Knight's Tale*, Sachi Shimomura argues that the unsteady progress of the romance's plot reflects the instability of chivalric ideals in the fourteenth century, when a reputation for chivalry required that one knight's actions be considered in isolation from the historical facts that preceded those actions.[5] On the contrary, as I will show, the *Knight's*

[4] Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 47; Susan Crane similarly argues that knightly identity incorporates bodies besides a knight's own, also with specific reference to the combination of knight and horse: "The ideological celebration of mounted shock combat is a first sign that the knight's interpenetrated self does not participate in modernity's privileging of a self free from all material constraints and dependencies," "Chivalry and the Pre/Post-modern," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 2.1 (2011): 69-87, at 84.
[5] Sachi Shimomura, "The Walking Dead in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 48.1 (2013): 1-37, at 4-5.

Tale does not try to hide the events that bring renown to the three male protagonists; rather, the actions of Theseus, Palamon, and Arcite demonstrate the characters' thoughtful engagement in the interdependent relationships that linked fourteenth-century noblemen to their supporters and lords with ties of mutual loyalty. Theseus' military campaigns, Palamon's prospective war against Theseus, Arcite's re-entry into Athens, and the grand tournament that closes the *Tale* all make evident the extent to which chivalric achievement arises in part from one man's determined exercise of strength in arms and also from his ability to coordinate the "objects, events, and fleshly forms" noted by Cohen on which knightly identity depends. Through the protagonists' interactions with craftsmen, attendants, soldiers, and other lords, *The Knight's Tale* guides its audience to understand chivalry as both an armed man's brave deeds and simultaneously as a principle that links men with bonds of mutual loyalty.

Chivalric Knighthood and Voluntary Cooperation

Recent scholarship on chivalry has tended to locate knighthood's basis in displays of excessive violence depicted in chivalric literature. Richard W. Kaeuper, a prominent voice in current discussions of knighthood, describes a typical romance narrative as a string of a hero's "stunning deeds of prowess [that] exalt knightly bodies performing hard and meritorious labor, suffering, and achievement."[6] He equates literary chivalry—as portrayed in romances and chronicles—to the exercise of personal prowess in arms, the ability to unhorse and wound an opponent in single combat. In the fourteenth century, Geoffroi de Charny's *Livre de chevalerie* affirms that stories of violent victory delight listeners even as they serve a didactic purpose: "We therefore learn from the good knights and men-at-arms whose great achievements and honorable

[6] Richard W. Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 103; elsewhere, Kaeuper insists that "prowess is the central element in the complex compound that formed chivalry," "Literature as Essential Evidence for Understanding Chivalry," *The Journal of Medieval Military History* 5 (2007): 1-14, at 4.

deeds of prowess and of valor have been related . . . which they have accomplished through suffering great hardship."[7] This understanding of chivalry, as an action performed by one heavily armed man, has dominated criticism on the *Knight's Tale* in recent years.[8] Perhaps because scenes of violence are so graphic, particularly in romance, less emphasis has been laid on the giving of counsel, the arming of soldiers, and the paid and voluntary work that frequently precede a bloody combat.

A knight's spectacular feats of prowess certainly help him to demonstrate his excellence as a warrior, but another strain of thought on chivalry contends that a knight, as a nobleman, can honorably receive service from his attendants and companions. Craig Taylor, in a study of chivalric ideals during the Hundred Years' War, reminds readers that beyond encouraging individual violence, chivalric honor "was also the very foundation of more socially cooperative values such as trust and reciprocity. Nobles and peasants alike depended upon networks of family and friends, and constantly interacted with their social superiors and inferiors."[9] The significance of these interactions was not lost on writers of didactic manuals who chose to describe knighthood as a combination of prowess and lordship. In addition to protracted discussions of chivalric symbolism and prowess, Ramon Llull's thirteenth-century *Llibre de*

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[7] Geoffroi de Charny, *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context, and Translation*, ed. and trans. Richard W. Kaeuper and Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 111.
[8] For instance, Shimomura asserts that the philosophies of chivalry held by Chaucer's Knight resemble those of Charny, "The Walking Dead," 4; Gerald Morgan also likens the chivalry practiced by Chaucer's Knight to that advocated by Charny, and he associates knighthood with the ability to win victory in violent confrontation, "The Worthiness of Chaucer's Worthy Knight," *Chaucer Review* 44.2 (2009): 115-58, at 146.
[9] Craig Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 74-75; Corinne Saunders, Françoise Le Saux and Neil Thomas likewise argue that knights fighting together under a lord's command "would forge bonds of brotherhood, eventually inspiring their own literature of romance, and their own values of *chevalerie*, which bound together the great feudal lords and the knights who served them," "Introduction," *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004): 1-13, at 3; noting the role of crowds in demonstrations of authority, David Crouch contends that magnates showed their power in the Middle Ages "in no way more expressively than by acting the great man amongst a band of inferiors. . . . It was followers that most truly marked the great man," *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 281.

l'Orde de Cavalleria explicitly links knighthood with lordship, so that chivalry begins to stand in for noble status more generally, when he recommends that knights should "be made lords of the people" because "seigneury has so much nobility, and servitude so much subjection."[10] This didactic text about nobility and chivalry advances an understanding of noble status as the coordinated exercise of prowess and lordship. The notion that lordship increases a man's chivalric standing can explain why the narrator of the *Knight's Tale* spends so much time describing the preparations for the tournament in Athens: the clattering of horses and equipment, the methodical assembly of armor and weapons, and the proliferation of bodies working together all amplify the chivalric prestige of Palamon, Arcite, and Theseus by making visible the scale of their seigneury. Even before the show of skill in armed combat, the *Tale* links their knighthood with lordship by showing how much support they can summon to their cause.

Chaucer's Knight promotes a conception of chivalry that resembles principles found in Llull's tract on knighthood. On one hand, the portrait of the Knight in the *General Prologue* describes his excellent personal conduct, painting him as a paragon of courtliness and prowess. He has slain three opponents in duels and proven his personal worth both in court and in "mortal batailles" (I 61), which helps him to establish a reputation for excellence. On the other hand, the Knight's itinerary brings him into the service of various lords, and illustrates the ties of loyalty and reciprocity that Taylor highlights notes in his analysis of fourteenth-century chivalric culture. He has joined "many a noble armee" (I 60), or group expedition, in the Mediterranean; has been present at a siege in Grenada (I 56); and has "reysed" (I 54), or embarked on military

[10] Ramon Llull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, ed. and trans. Noel Fallows (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 41; the original Catalan reads as follows: "ans convenc que hom faés senyors de les gents aquells hòmens qui són en l'orde de cavalleria. E car senyoria ha tanta de nobilitat, e servitud ha tant de sotsmetiment, si tu qui prens l'orde de cavalleria est vil ni malvat, pensar pots qual injúria fas a tos sotsmeses e a tos companyons qui són bons, est indigne que sies apellat cavaller," Llull, *Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria*, ed. Marina Gustà (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1980), 43.

exploits, in Lithuania and Russia.[11] The Knight took part in a battle at Alexandria "whan it was wonne" (I 51), and in Ayash and Atalia "[w]han they were wonne" (I 59). References to the Knight's worthiness may dominate his portrait, but the passive narration in these lines—the battles were won—leaves a grammatical lacuna to be filled by an absent actor, namely an assembly of combatants who secure victory through cooperation.[12] As the story of one man's performance of prowess and endurance of hardship, these lines lack the detail that would, according to Charny, please and inspire other knights. The Knight appears here rather more like one of the "[k]nyghtes of retenue" who accompany the Theban champions to the tournament in Athens. The narrative frame of the *Knight's Tale*, then, asks the audience to understand the narrator's chivalry not as something he performs alone but as a group effort in which he participates. The Knight's portrait sounds a key note that reverberates through his *Tale* by linking prowess and interdependence together as components of chivalry.

The same combination of individual and collective achievement also characterizes chivalric conduct in the *Knight's Tale*. From the poem's outset, Theseus is determined to maintain his reputation for excellence through the personal exercise of violent force, but Chaucer is at pains to explain how that force is supported by the men around the Duke of Athens. When the Argive widows interrupt the wedding procession in Athens, Chaucer specifies that Theseus' status as a conqueror rests in part on his ability to summon an army of supporters who accompany him on his expeditions. Once the widows explain their suffering at the noxious hands of Creon, Theseus promises to help them in terms that link his social status with his own *myght*.

[11] See *MED*, s.v. *armee*, a., and *reisen (v.(2))*.
[12] Sarah Stanbury notes the pervasive use of the passive voice in the works of the *Gawain*-poet, which in her analysis calls attention to actors who are grammatically concealed: "Even though the text's descriptions serially invite Gawain, and the reader, to interpret what they see, through their lush visual rhetoric they conceal a larger picture," *Seeing the* Gawain-*Poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 104.

Nonetheless, the narrator interjects a reference to the soldiers assembled under Theseus' banner to remind the audience that a reputation for chivalric excellence arises from more than one man's strength:

> [Theseus] swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,
> He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght
> Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke
> That al the peple of Grece sholde speke
> How Creon was of Theseus yserved
> As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
> And right anoon, withouten moore abood,
> His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
> To Thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside. (I 959-67)

The Duke pledges to do his utmost personally to avenge the Argive widows as a "trewe knyght," that is, as a knight known for his dependability and loyalty in order to broadcast his personal commitment to the widows' cause.[13] Further, the rhyme in the first couplet of his oath links the concepts of knighthood and *myght*, which could be understood as his personal prowess. Both of these qualities seem to conceal Theseus' lordship over Athens and its army. He speaks to the widows as if he were a lone knight fulfilling an oath by undertaking a quest.[14] But before he can defeat Creon in open battle, he must raise an army and display his banner.

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[13] Richard Firth Green's research does much to emphasize the importance of *trewth*, with its many valences of meaning, to the ethos of chivalry in Ricardian England, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 8-31; S.H. Rigby also sees the fight with Creon as a chance for Theseus to display his valuable characteristics on the field before an audience of onlookers, "Worthy but Wise?: Virtuous and Non-Virtuous Forms of Courage in the Later Middle Ages," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 35 (2013): 329-71, at 364.

[14] Shimomura has ably argued that, at this point in the *Tale*, Theseus cares more about stories of his fame than about the history of events that will lead to his renown, and that this vow is one of many examples of Theseus' attempts to create a lasting, ahistorical stasis, "The Walking Dead," 6.

If *myght* is a physical force contained in one knight's body, then the process of assembling an army to wage war risks undercutting Theseus' reputation for personal knightly excellence. However, the Duke's *myght* elsewhere in the *Tale* carries the sense of political or legal authority: when he finds Palamon and Arcite fighting in the grove, he says that "hir deth lith in my myght" (I 1795), and the ban against lethal combat in the tournament arrives through "the myghty dukes wille" (I 2536). Theseus' status as a knight therefore enables him to summon support in what Aranye Fradenburg calls "an image of community as sublime military body."[15] The army marching against Creon appears perfectly unified under Theseus' leadership, a resounding testament to his effectiveness as a chivalric lord who can, through the *myght* appropriate to his social status, inspire his companions-in-arms to support his endeavors. More than a demonstration of sheer potency in arms, the assault on Thebes allows the audience to see a combined exercise of Theseus' prowess and his lordship which together enable him to earn renown as the knight who served justice to Creon.

Military historian Robert W. Jones explains that banners and other displays of arms served as a "visual record of the familial and social ties between the knights" assembled on a battlefield or in a procession.[16] In an analysis consonant with Cohen's argument about the dispersal of chivalric identity across objects and bodies, Jones interprets a nobleman's banner as "an extension of its owner, advertising his location and reassuring his men of his continued presence on the battlefield."[17] Beyond the practical purpose of providing a rallying point in the confusion of battle, objects of display and identification served to broadcast the bearers' status

[15] L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 165. Fradenburg specifically references line 874, which describes Theseus' return to Athens after his conquest of Femenye, but the image is nearly identical in line 967.
[16] Robert W. Jones, *Bloodied Banners: Martial Display on the Medieval Battlefield* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 20.
[17] Robert W. Joners, *Bloodied Banners*, 43.

and make evident their authority over other men. Chaucer unites the assembly of troops under Theseus' banner in a way that draws on the imagery of homage in late medieval England. These companies of attendants make evident the extent of Theseus' influence over the Athenian people. Moreover, beside Theseus stands a company of soldiers with a direct affiliation to a single lord, amplifying his power with their own prowess in arms and establishing his lordship as a component of his reputation for chivalric excellence.

This narrative of chivalric achievement simplifies the chaos of a medieval battlefield, but it resembles the imagery of a royal procession in Ricardian London. Thomas Walsingham writes that, on the day before Richard II's coronation, the highest noblemen in the realm marched through the streets of London "with their knights and esquires in apparel similar to that of the king."[18] Rather than their own livery, the peers of the realm and their men wear the colors of their king in order to show their devotion to him as their lord. The image of supporters united around a lord resonates with several points in the *Knight's Tale* when a crowd of supporters magnifies the image of Theseus' noble status: he returns to Athens after conquering Femenye with "al his hoost in armes hym bisyde" (I 874); the war against Creon commences and closes with an image of Theseus riding with "his hoost" (I 982, 1026); he amuses himself in venery "[w]ith hunte and horn and houndes hym bisyde" (I 1678); after the tournament, he marches back to Athens "with al hys compaignye" (I 2700). By surrounding Theseus with loyal crowds, Chaucer connects his social status, as a knight and a lord, to imagery of noble pageantry in late-medieval England. These processions, like the one held for Richard at his coronation, function as visual testaments to a lord's worthiness to rule.

[18] Thomas Walsingham, *The St. Albans Chronicle: The* Cronica maiora *of Thomas Walsingham*, ed. and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (Oxford: The Boydell Press, 2003), 139. The Latin reads as follows: "Hos sequebantur comites et barones regni, cum suis militibus et armigeris in amictu similes regi suo" (138).

If noblemen projected the image of their status through spectacular pageants and processions, then chivalry, as a set of ideals pertaining to noblemen, likewise involves processes that produce those spectacles—processes that too often go overlooked in literary analysis. Fourteenth-century romance poets may have connected their heroes' individual prominence to their reputations for prowess, but writers also drew attention to their heroes' social position by illustrating their personal control over men. The late fourteenth century afforded many opportunities to witness the majesty of a crowd assembled around a lord at a tournament or celebration, as well as the disaster that might befall prominent men who lacked sufficient support during periods of strife. Furthermore, as the later Middle Ages saw more armigerous men drawn into administrative positions, the ties of mutual loyalty binding noblemen together played a more important part in knights' service to their lords both in battle and at home. Chaucer's various positions in royal service would have given him personal experience of the sort of interdependent relationships that characterize chivalric conduct in the *Knight's Tale*. The medieval awareness of the work that undergirds chivalric achievement is central to my interpretation of chivalry in the *Knight's Tale* as an amalgam of prowess and lordship.

Though a mode of chivalric conduct may involve demonstrations of mutual loyalty, this does not mean that it is more stable than a set of chivalric ideals that emphasizes prowess alone. High social status, and its concomitant control over men, bore its own discontents in material and economic practices of retaining followers. Chaucer's fourteenth-century audience would have likely been familiar with the practice of retaining via the distribution of livery and, increasingly, badges to supporters. Lee Patterson argues that in Chaucer's age, visual markers like badges and livery "absorbed the individual into a collectivity by making fully visible the bonds of

affiliation."[19] When this system worked as it should, lords could count on the armed support of their liveried retainers, and retainers could count on the legal and administrative support of their lords. On the battlefield as well as in town, badges could encourage a sense of common purpose and unity, binding together the wearers in a community of mutual support.[20] However, the badge system in particular led to such abuses of power throughout the kingdom that in 1388, parliament moved to abolish all liveries introduced after 1327 in an effort to stop lords' private armies of retainers from threatening the security of minor landholders.[21] Despite its theoretical use as an inducement to good service, the badge was fraught in practice by men affiliated with a lord who might exploit his authority and reputation for their own gain. Chaucer's treatment of Theseus' banner, though, assuages this anxiety because it unifies the entire military force of Athens and renders the soldiers as an extension of Theseus' strength in arms.

Beyond the ability to call upon loyal aid in arms, a nobleman's social status also pressed on him the responsibility to take counsel from his supporters. It would be hard to overstate the importance of counsel to writers like John of Salisbury, whose twelfth-century treatise, *Policraticus*, describes medieval society through the metaphor of a body. The lord functions as the head, the military and administrative personnel as the hands, and counselors as the heart, all working together towards the common good. In John's view, it is natural that the organs of the body politic should cooperate, so the head should render judgment only after receiving input from the heart: "it is impossible that he should dispose rulership advantageously who does not act upon the counsel of the wise."[22] Counsel tempers Theseus' rash decision to execute Palamon

[19] Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 192-93.
[20] See Robert W. Jones, *Bloodied Banners*, 64-65.
[21] Richard H. Jones, *The Royal Policy of Richard II: Absolutism in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), 58.
[22] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 70. The Latin reads: "Impossibile enim est ut salubriter disponat principatum qui non agitur consilio sapientum," John of Salisbury, *Policraticvs*, vol. 1., ed.

and Arcite in the grove where they are discovered fighting, but he disposes his rulership less advantageously when he independently orders that the cousins should be kept in jail "perpetuelly," where the narrator says they will languish "[f]or everemoore" (I 1024, 1032). Theseus' friend, Perotheus, eventually convinces the Duke to liberate one captive knight. Meanwhile, Palamon recognizes that he cannot induce Theseus to release him from prison, so he undermines the Duke's authority by recruiting a friend to help him drug the jailer (I 1468-75). The narrator is careful not to criticize the jailer, who loyally serves his lord by keeping Palamon in prison for seven years (I 1452, 1462). Palamon escapes, and Theseus' will is subverted, not because a wicked servant fails him, but rather because Theseus flouts the support he is owed as lord of Athens and renders a harsh sentence without the benefit of counsel.

The duty of a lord to hear counsel and accept aid arises perennially in didactic literature from the late Middle Ages. In an analysis of counsel in medieval English romance, Geraldine Barnes notes a tension between a lord's impulse towards independent action on one hand, and on the other hand his subjects' desire to participate in the exercise and regulation of noble power by delivering advice.[23] Romances entice their audience to take counsel by portraying advice as a path to chivalric renown:

> A willingness to accept or simply to express a need for wholesome counsel is often a sign that the hero is on the road to success, and his demonstrated ability to recognize bad counsel, or to give good counsel himself, is a further indication of maturity. To disregard good advice . . . is to court disaster.[24]

Clemens C.I. Webb (Frankfurt: Unveränderter Nachdruck, 1965), 300. Later in the text, John offers an *exemplum* of several pages illustrating the faults of English lords, including Henry II, who showed bad faith or lacked good counsel and support (118-22).

[23] Geraldine Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 2.

[24] Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, 14-15.

Barnes argues that in chivalric romances, counsel stimulates constructive displays of prowess that serve order as a corrective to tyranny. This understanding of counsel can help to explain why Chaucer allows Palamon to escape Theseus' prison. Theseus' victories on the battlefield, as well as his processions through Athens, present a lord surrounded by supporters as he should be; by acting too hastily on his own judgment, Theseus isolates himself from the support he is due as a lord and knight.[25] Palamon, on the other hand, perceives the limits of his own ability to act and draws appropriately on the resources available to him in the form of a friend's loyal service. In this episode, Chaucer contrasts an autocratic exercise of power with a cooperative endeavor undertaken by two loyal friends. While the narrator credits "aventure or destynee" with securing Palamon's escape, the *Tale* here posits that noblemen in cooperation can overcome the will of a lord who acts with too little concern for his natural companions (I 1465). Thus *The Knight's Tale* upholds the value of counsel and loyal cooperation as bolsters to a nobleman's reputation for chivalric excellence.

The Lordship of the Theban Cousins

Like members of the noble community of medieval England, noblemen in the *Knight's Tale* exercise the same kind of power at different scales.[26] As knights—and therefore as noblemen—Palamon and Arcite participate in the *Tale*'s chivalric community at several points, most obviously through the oath of brotherhood that, when broken, sets the two men at odds.

[25] In Theseus' actions, David Wallace sees evidence of a troubling "perennial tendency to stand alone" and reject the fellowship of his supporters, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 109; David Aers also finds that Theseus most strenuously exerts his authority when other men "threaten his lordship, his own monopoly over the means and deployment of violence," *Chaucer* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), 27.

[26] Chris Given-Wilson has shown that noblemen at different levels of social status exercised the same kind of power and that "the differences [between higher and lower noblemen] were in degree rather than in kind," *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 14; R.R. Davies likewise asserts that "the powers of lordship exercised by lords, great and small, were broadly similar in character," *Lords and Lordship in the British Isles in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Brendan Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 10.

Claiming that the *Knight's Tale* criticizes chivalry's power to encourage loyalty between men, Tison Pugh argues that, when Palamon and Arcite arm each other for battle, they "remind the reader of the brotherhood oath while highlighting their inability to adhere to its basic tenets."[27] Certainly, the chivalric brotherhood of the Theban knights sours in the face of heterosexual desire, but Palamon and Arcite also demonstrate ideals of cooperative lordship and thereby supplement Chaucer's portrayal of a chivalric knight's reliance on voluntary support from other men. Just as Theseus amasses an army to march against Creon, Palamon imagines that noble status specifically grants a man the privilege of calling on allies to help him win Emelye. Further, the supporters assembled by the two knights play important roles in both the preliminary pageantry and the resolution of combat in the tournament, involving them in the *Tale*'s portrayal of voluntary service offered by noblemen's companions.

The romance introduces the Theban knights stripped of their freedom as well as the signs of their noble status when Theseus places them both in his prison tower. After Perotheus secures Arcite's release from prison, Palamon bemoans the fact that he remains a powerless captive while Arcite is free to pursue *aventure* as a romance knight should be. Arcite's renewed status, and the potential afforded to him by that status to exercise lordship, distresses the solitary Palamon, who cannot exercise the same privileges. In his lament, Palamon attributes to Arcite three important qualities—wisdom, *manhede*, and lordship—that he may set to his advantage in order to win Emelye as his wife:

> Thou mayst, syn thou hast wisdom and manhede,
>
> Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,

[27] Tison Pugh, "'For to Be Sworne Bretheren Til They Deye': Satirizing Queer Brotherhood in the Chaucerian Corpus," *Chaucer Review* 43.3 (2009): 282-310, at 295; Robert Stretter argues that Chaucer uses the broken oath between men to highlight the greater force of love between the sexes, "Rewriting Perfect Friendship in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and Lydgate's *Fabula duorum mercatorum*," *Chaucer Review* 37.3 (2003): 234-52, at 239.

And make a werre so sharp on this cite

That by som aventure or some tretee

Thow mayst have hire to lady and to wyf

For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.

For, as by wey of possibilitee,

Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,

And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage

Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage. (I 1285-94)

Arcite holds less political power than Theseus does, but his connections can facilitate his exercises of prowess in the same way that Theseus' *hoost* participates in the fight against Creon. It is reasonable, then, for Palamon to emphasize Arcite's ability to call on support from those bound to him by interdependent relationships. Furthermore, Arcite is a lord with both wisdom and *manhede*. Christopher Fletcher's study of "manhood" in Ricardian England reveals that the word connoted strength, honor, and discernment.[28] In conjunction with wisdom, this quality suggests that in Palamon's opinion assembling friends and companions for support is the most reasonable and viable way for a nobleman to achieve his ends.

This reference to Arcite's familial connections carries additional weight because it represents a significant reworking of Boccaccio's *Teseida*. Chaucer's alterations to this scene emphasize the familial network, the *kynrede*, on which Arcite could, and should, rely as a wise lord seeking to prevail over another nobleman's authority. Boccaccio's Palaemon, seeing Arcites leave prison, makes no mention of gathering an army to wage war on Theseus. Rather, he tearfully exclaims,

[28] Christopher Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25-59.

> But you, if you are as wise as you usually are, you should hope far more from fortune, and mitigate your sufferings thinking that you can accomplish much free, as you are, and do what you desire while I am forced to remain idle here. And as you go, you will see many things that will relieve your amorous pains.[29]

Unlike the wisdom, manhood, and lordship of Chaucer's Arcite, Boccaccio's Arcites is described only as wise [*savio*] enough to trust in fortune and to seek out sights that will mollify his suffering. Chaucer's emendation of his source at this point calls greater attention than the Italian original to the familial resources at Arcite's disposal due to his social status as a nobleman of Thebes. Chaucer's decision to rework the Theban cousins in the *Knight's Tale* thus amplifies the poem's thematic focus on the exercise of noble power through networks of relationships based on reciprocal loyalty. The cousins in Chaucer's romance, then, merit a place alongside Theseus in discussions of noble power in the poem.

Palamon further invokes the ties of mutual service pertaining to noble status when he considers how he might achieve union with Emelye, envisaging himself as the leader of a military force bound under a common purpose. After he escapes from prison, Palamon plans to travel "To Thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye / On Theseus to helpe him to werreye" (I 1483-84). At this moment and in his earlier lament in prison, Palamon speaks of armed conflict as a process of gathering loyal supporters before setting out on a military venture. To Palamon's mind, as to medieval didactic writers, the contribution of companions is essential for the achievement of success as a nobleman and as a knight. In passages that resonate with Theseus'

[29] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Theseid of the Nuptials of Emilia (Teseida delle Nozze di Emilia)*, ed. and trans. Vincenzo Traversa (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 436. The Italian reads as follows: "Matu se savio sichome tu suoli / dei fortuna assai bene sperare / ealchuanto manchare delli tuo duoli / pensando che assai puoi hoperare / libero se sichome diquel che vuoli / la dove conviene hotioso stare / tu vederai andando molte chose / challeggierranno tuo pene amorose" (III.78.1-8), 127-28.

raising of his banner and assembling of his *hoost*, Palamon expresses awareness that his prowess in arms is not enough to defeat the force commanded by a lord like Theseus. He acknowledges that both he and Arcite might increase their strength in arms by exercising another aspect of their status as noblemen, their lordship, to amass a group of armed companions to assist them. His words and actions evince an understanding of knighthood as noble social status, figuring chivalry as a knight's exercise of both lordship and prowess in the pursuit of his goals.

Before even the construction of the arena, Chaucer describes the tournament—the most eye-catching display of chivalry in the poem—as a process in which the contestants must first demonstrate their lordship by recruiting and fighting alongside supporters. From its earliest conception in Theseus' mind, the tournament in Athens is imagined not as a contest between the prowess of two knights but as a huge spectacle of assembled soldiers. As Theseus dictates the terms of the contest for Emelye's hand, he openly refers to each knights' hundred companions who will offer support during the tournament:

> And this bihote I yow withouten faille,
> Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,
> That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght—
> This is to seyn, that wheither he or thow
> May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
> Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,
> Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve
> To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace. (I 1854-61)

Theseus here repeats the rhyme between *knyght* and *myght* that occurred in his oath to the Argive widows, as well as the association between his own chivalric ethos and his *trewth* in line 1855,

linking knighthood again to both prowess and authority. Furthermore, the exercise of *myght* is clarified in the next couplet to be both a personal quality of strength and the concerted effort of a man "with his hundred" supporters. The tournament is thus a contest as much of prowess as of lordship. [30] Success in the tournament, like success in a late-medieval mêlée, requires a nobleman to draw on his personal virtues even as he relies on other men to assist him.

When the combatants and their retinues arrive at the tournament grounds, the crowd with its equipment and ornament serves as a model of chivalric cooperation, coordination, and interdependence. A great number of distinct individuals are drawn by the tournament into two forces united behind the Theban knights. The combatants assembled around the two heroes are depicted much more vividly than the *hoost* that accompanies Theseus in the march to Thebes or the unnumbered huntsmen who ride with Theseus in pursuit of a hart (I 967, 1678). In a discussion of the literary inspirations for late medieval tournament pageantry, Juliet Barker notes that combatants in English tournaments often assumed the emblems and colors of different knights, including Arthurian figures, in order to battle incognito.[31] These hastiludes *à plaisance* offered noblemen the chance to prove their prowess in arms without the animosity of war. Although Theseus attempts to make this tournament a friendly contest, the procession in Athens is of decidedly different character than the stylized Arthurian jousts held in fourteenth-century England. Chaucer says at some length that the two-hundred knights are not in livery or disguise but are instead dressed "[e]verych after his opinioun" (I 2127). Different styles of armor abound in Palamon's company, and different types of shields, and different weaponry (I 2119-24). The

[30] Shimomura suggests that the tournament and the possession of Emelye "can best be understood in a political light, in view of how Theseus declares combat not individually, but between the knights and their hundred supporters, as though to imply that the more politically powerful should be victor," "The Walking Dead," 23.
[31] Juliet R.V. Barker, *The Tournament in England, 1100-1400* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1986), 86; for more on chivalric display at earlier tournaments, see also David Crouch, *Tournament* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2005), esp. 75.

magnificent lords who accompany the Theban knights stand as emblems of the individuality of the assembled noblemen: the narrator spends twenty-three lines describing Lygurge and a further twenty-two on Emetreus (I 2130-52, 2157-78).[32] The vivid descriptions of their clothing, equipment, bodies, and animal-companions render Lygurge and Emetreus distinct from Palamon and Arcite. And before the tournament commences, heralds read out the names of every warrior so that there might be no deception during the fight (I 2595-96). Rather than false or literary identities, each of the men gathered for combat is presented in his own arms under his own name. The knights gathered for the tournament in Athens differ in detail from the image of Theseus' army marching unified under his banner, but they serve a similar purpose—to signify that Palamon and Arcite can call on loyal companions in arms who support noble status. The Theban knights will display their prowess in arms during the tournament, but like Theseus' preparations for war in Thebes, they also participate in the poem's presentation of chivalry as a combination of prowess and lordship.

Even in the rush of combat, Chaucer frustrates readers' efforts to equate chivalric excellence with prowess alone. Since Arcite's release from prison, the efforts of Palamon and Arcite have been figured in terms of amassing loyal companions to fight against opposition. It is fitting, then, that the tournament's resolution entails the concerted effort of a nobleman alongside his supporters, here represented by the "force of twenty" under Emetreus' command that captures Palamon (I 2641). Significantly, this group of warriors takes the place of Arcites at the end of Boccaccio's tournament episode, further highlighting the Middle English poem's interest in chivalry's reliance on group effort. Boccaccio's Palaemon is distressed when a horse clenches

[32] Reading their descriptions as indicative of their humoral complexions, Ilan Mitchell-Smith interprets Lygurge and Emetreus as symbols of the excessive influence of Venus and Mars on Palamon and Arcite, "Chivalry, Violence, and 'The Knight's Tale,'" 92.

its teeth on his arm, but the victory is truly decided when he is "dragged out of the cruel struggle and disarmed without delay by Arcites" personally.[33] Chaucer's Arcite fights fiercely against Palamon, but the work of Arcite's companions facilitates his victory in the tournament. If, at its outset, the tournament is meant to be a display of the champions' chivalric *myght*, then the ability to amass loyal and capable supporters should be understood as a component of chivalric excellence in the *Knight's Tale*.

In presenting a group effort that leads to victory on the battlefield, Chaucer's poem rebuffs notions of chivalry that prioritize prowess alone. Geoffroi de Charny's individualistic refrain—"he who does more is of greater worth"—is here complicated as a knight of great prowess is brought low by an opponent working in concert with his companions.[34] Rather than foreground personal strength in arms, the tournament in Athens draws on ideals of cooperation that brought success on the medieval battlefield. Military historian Michael Prestwich insists that, although individual knights' skills were important to their performance, "for effective use in battle the men had to be organised into groups."[35] Prestwich's observation is supported by this narrative of combat, in which an organized company overcomes a single knight of great prowess. Palamon's defeat, at the hands of Arcite's supporters, resonates with his earlier escape from Theseus' harsh prison sentence. Both episodes present a nobleman whose will is subverted by another man with the help of companions. By contrasting an isolated nobleman with a cooperative group, the *Tale* goes against the grain of Charny's conception of chivalry as personal deeds in arms. Dragging Palamon to the stake, the twenty warriors signal the primacy of a mode

[33] Boccaccio, *Theseid*, ed. and trans. Traversa, 527; the Italian reads as follows: "achui dibocha appena fu tirato / etratto fuor dela crudel mislea / essenzza alchuno indugio disarmato / perarccita" (VIII.122.3-6), 273-74.
[34] Charny, *Book of Chivalry*, ed. and trans. Kaeuper and Kennedy, 87; the Old French reads as follows: "qui plus fait, miex vault" (86). The phrase is repeated throughout the text.
[35] Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 48.

of chivalry that fosters interdependent relationships between noblemen based on loyalty and reciprocal service.

Service Bought with Many a Florin

The combatants who assemble before the tournament in Athens represent the cooperation shown between lords and their companions based on mutual loyalty. But the chivalric displays on the battlefield also rely on the work of many other hands: servants busy themselves with "devisynge of harneys," while squires set about the business of "Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge" and "Giggynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacynge" (I 2496, 2503-04). These professional attendants—along with the artisans who produced the rich and marvelous coats of arms, the gold, the steel, the helms, and the other ornaments of chivalric display—perform work that contributes to the image of chivalry. The weapons and armor will later allow their owners to prove their prowess, but before the tournament they instead appear in the hands of workers, demonstrating a lord's ability to call on the labor of his inferiors to support his reputation for chivalric excellence. In the context of these preparations, chivalry in the *Knight's Tale* involves an array of people working together to produce a knightly spectacle.

Elaborate pageantry has been understood both by modern scholars and medieval writers as a means for noblemen to broadcast their authority. In conjunction with assembling a host of honorable and loyal companions, noblemen also showed their worth to the world by parading in finery. The image of a knight receiving service from his inferiors seems only right to Ramón Llull: "it behoves him to be given a squire and groom to take care of the beasts. . . . and to govern and derive prosperity from those things for which his men endure hardships and privations."[36] The leisure appertaining to high social status in the Middle Ages becomes, in

[36] Llull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, ed. and trans. Fallows, 42; the Catalan reads as follows: "ans cové que hom li dó escuder e troter qui el servesquen e qui pensen de les bèsties. E cové que les gents aren e caven e traguen

Llull's assessment, a testament to a knight's lordship, contrasted with and sustained by the servitude of his men. Nicola Masciandaro's research on the Middle English vocabulary of work finds that medieval noblemen were aware, and possibly even proud, that their status relied on the labor of attendants: "The social meaning of the conspicuous consumption and leisure proper to aristocratic life lies in their being signs of someone else's work. Leisure is honorific because it testifies to another's toil."[37] Chaucer's interest in the work that supports noblemen's prestigious images, likely energized by his own work in royal administration, has not gone unnoticed by literary scholars. In an analysis of lordship in the *Knight's Tale*, Stephen Rigby credits Theseus with a "prudent magnificence" that enables him to manage the production of noble displays throughout the poem.[38] If pageantry is a significant testament to a nobleman's chivalric excellence, then the labor that produces pageantry—as well as a nobleman's power to direct that labor—likewise demonstrates the lordship appropriate to knighthood in Chaucer's romance.

The most obvious and protracted production of a display in the *Knight's Tale* precedes the tournament in Athens. Robert Epstein has pointed out that the tournament grounds, with their elaborate temples, symbolize Theseus' role "overseeing, organizing, resolving, commanding all else."[39] Certainly, the references to Theseus' command—the narrator says Theseus has "[d]oon

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mal, per ço que la terra lleu los fruits on viva cavaller e ses bèsties, e que cavaller cavalc e senyoreig e haja benanança d'aquelles coses on los hòmens han maltreat e malanançca," Llull, *Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria*, ed. Gustà, 43.

[37] Nicola Masciandaro, *The Voice of the Hammer: The Meaning of Work in Middle English Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 31; in a study of aristocratic imagery in medieval Britain, Crouch argues that followers offered substantial support to noblemen, but also notes the presence of "other followers, retainers, men who sought places in the household and offered their skills and hands to the lord, rather than their own modicum of power, as their side of the bargain," *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain*, 281; analyzing social commentary in late-medieval English literature, Paul Strohm finds that writers could revise strictly hierarchical discourses, and that some writers "found value in the social activities of other, sometimes unlanded, social groupings" based on the metaphor of the body politic, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3.

[38] S.H. Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry: Chaucer's* Knight's Tale *and Medieval Political Theory* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 163.

[39] Robert Epstein, "'With many a floryn he the hewes boghte': Ekphrasis and Symbolic Violence in the *Knight's Tale*," *Philological Quarterly* 85 (2006): 49-68, at 59.

make" (ordered to be made) the altar of Venus, "maked hath" (has made) the temple of Mars, and "doon wroght" (ordered to be made) the oratory of Diana—position him as the principal actor in the construction, just as he was earlier the principal figure in the march on Thebes (I 1905, 1907, 1913). However, even as the poem valorizes Theseus as an overseer, Epstein argues that in the narration of the temples' construction and decoration, Chaucer calls attention to the process of artistic production, in this case the painting and carving of images within the temples performed by artisans in Theseus' employ.[40] Every "crafty man" educated in geometry and design, as well as every artisan of images, receives wages and board as payment for his work on the tremendous structure (I 1897-1901). And as the narrator proceeds through the temples, Chaucer piles on references to the work put into their production: the images are *wroght* (made) (I 1919, 1983) and *(de)peynted* (painted, portrayed) (I 1934, 1970, 1975, 2027, 2031, 2060, 2069), among other passive participles referring to artisanal production, and a mural in Diana's temple inspires the narrator to comment, "Wel koude he peynten lifly that it wroghte; / With many a floryn he the hewes boghte" (I 2087-88). The majesty of the arena is described as a product of Theseus' decisive direction combined with the skilled work of craftsmen whose work is evident in every facet of the building and its decorations. The artistic work, as a product of paid artisanal labor, provides Theseus with a monument to his lordship and therefore supports his noble status in a way that prowess alone does not. The *Tale* implicitly links the majesty of the arena with Theseus' ability to command the artisans, his power to summon support from skilled men who can magnify his status as a knight and lord.

Beyond the temporary enlistment of artisans and laborers, Theseus' household also employs supporters on a long-term basis that resembles the model of patronage described by

[40] Epstein, "Ekphrasis and Symbolic Violence," 55.

Geoffroi de Charny. According to the *Book of Chivalry*, a great lord invigorates his followers when he "loves and values men of worth all the more for the knowledge he has of the great deeds he has seen them perform."[41] When a nobleman has achieved great renown, Charny explains, it becomes his responsibility to foster the development of younger knights who have yet to gain recognition. Arcite's work in Theseus' household exemplifies this sort of patronage as the disguised knight works well and earns promotions for his service. Arcite infiltrates Theseus' household under the name Philostrate and works for a year or two as a page of Emelye's chamber before advancing to a position as Theseus' squire (I 1402-41). His labor allows him to show his physical strength, to be sure—he appears "yong and myghty for the nones / And therto he was long and big of bones"—but more significantly it also grants him the opportunity for advancement in noble service (I 1423-24). The noblemen of Athens advise Theseus that he should advance the page to a more elevated position where he can exercise his virtues more fully:

> They seyden that it were a charitee
> That Theseus wolde enhauncen his degree,
> And putten hym in worshipful servyse,
> Ther as he myghte his vertu excercise. (I 1433-36)

More than a mere fantasy of social advancement addressed to an ambitious gentry class, Arcite's rise through service can be understood within the context of fourteenth-century practices of lordship in England. Strohm observes that men in royal service during Chaucer's lifetime enjoyed "greatly expanded opportunities to enter the upper ranks of the social hierarchy, not on

[41] Charny, *The Book of Chivalry*, ed. and trans. Kaeuper and Kennedy, 107; the Old French reads as follows: "Maiz la raison si est tele que quant uns grans sires et qui est sires de païs est bons en telle maniere come dessus est dit, il en aime miex et prise plus les bons pour la cognoissance qu'il a des biens qu'il a veuz qu'il ont faiz (106).

the traditional bases of military service and land tenure, but through the skilled and specialized services they were able to provide."[42] Arcite's exceptional capability as a worker, attested by his physical appearance and by his reputation throughout the court, means to the other characters that he deserves to be elevated to "worshipful servyse" and higher status.

Besides bringing Arcite greater prestige than he had as a page, his service would have been understood as advantageous to the Duke's reputation as well. Performing loyal service for a good lord enlarged a supporter's honor; receiving loyal service from a virtuous supporter increased a lord's prestige. In 1385 when Richard created the Earl of Suffolk and Dukes of York and Gloucester, his patents of creation suggest to Fletcher that when the king promotes honorable men to high office, "the lustre of the crown is increased" by the service of men possessed of their individual virtues.[43] Moreover, the king's interest in chivalric pageantry, noted by James L. Gillespie, was fueled by a desire to project a magnificent persona. By dubbing large numbers of knights, and by "associating knightly loyalty with loyalty to the prince-patron," Richard aimed to use chivalry to enlarge his own power and prestige.[44] Chaucer's various positions in royal administration would have afforded him ample opportunity to witness this principle in action. Mindful that a lord's honor increases when he is served by virtuous men, the noblemen of Athens advise Theseus that promoting Arcite would be mutually beneficial because Arcite's demonstrations of his own skill would testify to Theseus' power as a lord.

Arcite's work illustrates how noblemen cooperated off the battlefield even as it also illuminates the sources of the wealth required to sustain the image of noble status. Arcite

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[42] Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, 1.
[43] Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics*, 139; Anthony Tuck describes the same episode but sees Richard as more self-interested, arguing that "[t]he aristocracy, in Richard's view, existed to shed lustre on the crown," *Richard II and the English Nobility* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), 84.
[44] James L. Gillespie, "Richard II: Chivalry and Kingship," in *The Age of Richard II*, ed. James L. Gillespie (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997): 115-138, at 133.

receives "his rente" from his countrymen in Thebes as well as his wages from Theseus "to mayntene his degree" (I 1441-43). Chaucer makes open reference to a nobleman's income, albeit a passing reference, only when Arcite receives these two payments. Moreover, Theseus' "pilours," who glean valuable armor and clothing from the fields of the fallen, receive only a single mention after the siege of Thebes, despite the fact that war was often a source of great profit for noblemen (I 1007).[45] The Knight's own career, fighting for various lords throughout the world, would also earn him financial rewards in addition to the "sovereyn prys" he enjoys (I 67). The desire for wealth obtained through conquest was a particularly sticky point for chivalric writers like Charny, who railed against knights who valued material wealth over honor.[46] By distancing his characters' wealth from their motivations, Chaucer preserves the division between honorable chivalric conduct and profit. The Knight rides out for love of chivalry, Theseus conquers Thebes out of a sense of duty, and Arcite does his best to serve Theseus as a squire. None explicitly strives toward financial gain. Although the examples are brief, they take on additional weight in a poem so concerned with the professional and voluntary support that noblemen receive as they attempt to maintain their reputations for chivalric excellence. These subtle references to the sources of money suggest that, for Chaucer, the expenditure that keeps up the image of noble status in Athens cannot be separated from the income that enables a lord to spend so lavishly. Even if money is not the primary motivating factor in a nobleman's mind, his

[45] Many analyses of the *Knight's Tale* have noted that Theseus likely derives his income from warfare. See for example Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 172-173; Shimomura, "The Walking Dead," 8-9.
[46] Charny inveighs against those who use their arms unworthily to "attack anyone, taking booty, prisoners, and other valuables, if they find them, and without any justification," *The Book of Chivalry*, ed. and trans. Kaeuper and Kennedy, 179 ("Si vont encores courre sur es uns et es autres en prenant proies, prisons et autres biens, s'il les treuvent, et sanz nulle bonne cause," [178]); Llull likewise castigates envious knights for "speak[ing] badly of those things that he would love to take from those who possess them; and envy will make him think about how he can commit frauds and misdeeds," *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, ed. and trans. Fallows, 76 ("e per açò diu mal d'aquelles coses que volria haver d'aquelles qui les posseeixen, on per açò enveja li fa cogitar con pusca fer engans e falliments," Llull, *Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria*, ed. Gustà, 80).

reputation for chivalric excellence depends on his ability to employ professional servants and to associate their labor with his prestigious image.

The Language of Lordship and Failures of Chivalric Governance

And yet, even a powerful lord with loyal supporters can see his will subverted. Palamon is captured in the tournament, Arcite ultimately loses Emelye, and Theseus' mightiest decree cannot stay the hands of the Olympian gods. The machinations of Saturn—in service to Mars and Venus, and ratified by Jupiter—determine the outcome of the tournament and the marriage of Emelye, overwhelming the efforts of human chivalric governance. If Theseus is the highest lord in Athens, then even he recognizes that divine authority surpasses his own. Two particular failures in the execution of Theseus' will in the romance grant Chaucer an opportunity to comment on the limits of earthly lordship. The vicious fight in the forest grove and the tragic outcome of the tournament upset Theseus' control over his world even as these episodes further highlight the interdependent relationships between lords and supporters that appear throughout the *Knight's Tale*. Chivalry in the *Tale* does not necessarily prevent outbreaks of violence, but by skillfully manipulating the language of lordship, a nobleman can contain these eruptions and preserve the image of order.

No knight's lordship was absolute, nor would a knight have reason to believe that his was. Dominique Barthélemy, in a study of the origins and development of knighthood in Europe, notes that in practice every nobleman was another nobleman's vassal, so that all lords had their own superiors and subordinates.[47] Llull describes lordship in similar, but decidedly more religious, terms: "in order to signify that one God is Lord of all things the emperor must be a knight and lord of all the knights"; below the emperor are stationed "kings who are knights . . .

[47] Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 190.

[a]nd under them the kings must have counts, viscounts, vavasours, and the rest of the chivalric ranks."[48] In Llull's conception of chivalric governance, every lord is a knight, and every knight is subject to divine authority. Thinking of lordship in relative terms, as Llull and Barthélemy encourage us to do, can grant greater insight into apparent collapses of chivalric governance in the *Knight's Tale*. Theseus, aware that all earthly lords are subject to higher authority, rhetorically transforms disorder into order using the language of lordship.

All things, even apparently excessive conflicts, can be attributed to a ruler's will in Chaucer's Athens. The *Tale* sets noblemen at violent odds with each other, yet it resolves these conflicts by reinscribing their actions within a framework of lordship and loyal service. When Theseus and his entourage stumble upon the gruesome combat between Palamon and Arcite, the Duke first perceives their conflict as unlawful ambition, asking who would dare to fight "Withouten juge or oother officere, / As it were in a lystes roially" (I 1712-13). The absence of a judge or officer appointed by Theseus points up the disruption of his authority; Theseus objects most stridently to the combatants' insubordination in fighting as if they were in a royally sanctioned tournament. Through this reference to his judges and officers, delegates who could administer justice in his place, Theseus acknowledges his own interconnectedness and calls to mind the social structures that support his authority. The poem highlights the fact that those officials are absent, that Theseus' administration lacks the requisite machinery to prevent Palamon and Arcite from violating the peace in Athens. Once his temper has cooled, though, he

[48] Llull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, ed. and trans. Fallows, 45; the Catalan reads as follows: "E a significar que un Déu és senyor de totes coses, emperador deu ésser cavaller e senyor de tots los cavallers; mas, car emperador no poria per si matiex réger tots los cavallers, cové que haja dessots si reis que sien cavallers, per tal que li ajuden a mantenir l'orde de cavalleria. E los reis deuen haver dejús si comtes, comdors, varvassors, e així des alters graus de cavalleria," Llull, *Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria*, ed. Gustà, 48.

describes their aggression as service to the god of Love, overwriting their violation of his lordship with loyalty to a different and more powerful lord whom he once served as well:

> How myghty and how greet a lord is he!
>
> Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles. . . .
>
> Se how they blede! Be they noght wel arrayed?
>
> Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, ypayed
>
> Hir wages and hir fees for his servyse! (I 1786-1803)

The cousins' reckless disregard for legal authority becomes, in this moment, a kind of subservience. Their metaphorical wages and their array, rendered in the livery of blood and wounds, resonate with the literal payment rendered to Arcite by Theseus for his work as a squire, positioning the two knights as members of a lord's household; to onlookers, these signs mark them out as retainers in *myghty* Love's service. Disobedience is thus sublimated into loyalty through reference to the interdependent relationships, described elsewhere in the poem, that support noble status.

The poem reiterates the futility of struggling against a divine lord in Theseus' speech at Arcite's funeral, which has caused much disagreement among literary scholars. Because of its resemblance to the construction of the arena, the funeral at first appears to affirm Theseus' excellence as a lord: the trees for the pyre are cut, the officers rush off, the bier is brought and decorated, all at Theseus' command, and much labor and preparation go into building the fire (I 2853-72, 2913-14). Even the wedding between Emelye and Palamon is ordered and performed on the advice of the Athenian nobility, suggesting that Theseus has learned to take counsel readily (I 2970, 3076, 3096). However Theseus undercuts his own control over events by positioning himself as subject to Jupiter, the "kyng / That is prince and cause of alle thing" (I

3035-36), who has established the ends of all things through his "wise purveiaunce" and "his ordinaunce" (I 3011-12). As Marc S. Guidry notes, Jupiter merely approves the scheme orchestrated by Saturn.[49] Despite this misattribution of authority, though, Theseus' speech reflects an awareness of his own subordination when he characterizes his governance as a performance of perfectly loyal service to a lord. The language of lordship is certainly present in the source for this speech, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. Chaucer's *Boece* shows a clear interest in governance; words derived from the Middle English *governen* appear no fewer than twenty-seven times in Book I alone.[50] And Philosophie recommends obedience to divine rule when she cautions, "he that forleteth certein ordenaunce of doynge by overthrowynge wey, he hath no glad issue or ende of his werkes."[51] The *Knight's Tale* reworks her injunction, though, in terms that play up the proper devotion shown to a lord by his subordinates. Theseus counsels obedience to divine ordinance above all things:

> And heer-agayns no creature on lyve,
>
> Of no degree, availleth for to stryve. . . .
>
> And whoso gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,
>
> And rebel is to hym that al may gye. (I 3039-46)

[49] Marc S. Guidry emphasizes the dramatic irony of Theseus' use of official discourse "to project an image of perfect rational control concealing the sectarian violence at the heart of chivalry," "The Parliaments of Gods and Men in the *Knight's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 43.2 (2008): 140-70, at 162; Brooke Hunter also notes that the speech problematizes notions of chivalric remembrance by calling attention away from the graphic death scene and emphasizing instead Arcite's great feats, "*Remenants* of Things Past: Memory and the *Knight's Tale*," *Exemplaria* 23.2 (2011): 126-146, at 126-127; Epstein argues that "Theseus' claims to derive his authority from a beneficent, universal order are false, and the reality is that his rule is rooted ultimately in power and the potential to exercise it through raw violence," "Ekphrasis and Symbolic Violence," 60.

[50] *Governour*, *governe*, and *governement* (and forms thereof) appear at the following points in Chaucer, *Boece*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 395-469: I.m.4.69; I.pr.4.30, 31, 35, 36; I.m.5.31 (twice), 33, 55, 58; I.pr.5.17, 18, 24, 66, 67; I.pr.6.8, 10, 14, 22, 27, 28, 29, 80 (twice), 82, 88, 89. This list accounts only for those occurrences in Book I.

[51] Chaucer, *Boece*, I.m.6.21-24.

In a romance so concerned with the performance of loyal service, Theseus uses the language of lordship—of order, rule, degree, and rebellion—to place himself in the service of a higher lord. If Theseus' authority has apparently failed to preserve order, it is only because another order came from a more powerful source. Through reference to his own lord, Theseus reaffirms the idea that every knight is embedded in a universal order wherein a lord is owed loyal service from those who surround and support him.

Chivalry in the *Knight's Tale* connects noblemen with ties of interdependence. The poem's consistent attention to the social structures that support noblemen's status—especially their relationships with their attendants and companions—invites readers to understand chivalry as more than the exercise of arms. The characters, setting out to achieve or preserve chivalric renown, use the resources available to them as noblemen when they assemble supporters, arrange productions, and govern their estates. Chaucer's attention to chivalric interdependence refigures the independent heroes of his source as men who participate in a chivalric community bonded by mutual loyalty. Even when they fail in their endeavors, the noblemen in the *Knight's Tale* demonstrate an awareness of their interdependent relationships with the people who surround and support them. In this romance, knighthood requires a nobleman to work alongside his loyal followers, and where chivalry is performed, no one is at all idle.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION: ALL THIS FAIR COMPANY

I conclude this study with a brief example of how two writers might narrate the same historical battle to promote very different understandings of chivalry. In August of 1388, Sir Henry Percy and his brother, Ralph, led an English force to meet the Scots army commanded by William Douglas. In the course of the battle, Henry was captured, only to be ransomed shortly afterwards. Despite the fact of Henry's defeat, Thomas Walsingham records the battle almost as if it were a joust between Henry and William: "It was a fine spectacle to behold, two illustrious young men joining in battle and fighting for glory. Though neither of them lacked manly courage, yet fortune gave Henry the victory, and he slew the Scot, the greatest of the Scots, with his own hands."[1] By Walsingham's account, this seems a contest of skill between two honorable noblemen, equally matched in prowess if not in luck.

While Walsingham plays up the spectacle of the two highborn leaders deciding the battle through the exercise of prowess in arms, the Westminster chronicler, like the three Middle English poets studied here, suggests that lordship plays a crucial role in achieving victory—a victory that actually eluded Henry Percy. In the Westminster chronicle, the battle is described as a "calamity" that befalls the English due to "the heady spirit and excessive boldness of Sir Henry Percy, which caused our troops to go into battle in the disorder induced by haste," and the writer

[1] Thomas Walsingham, *The St Albans Chronicle: The* Chronica maiora *of Thomas Walsingham*, ed. and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 857. The Latin reads as follows: "Erat ibidem cernere pulchrum spectaculum, duos tam preclaros iuuenes manus conserere et pro gloria decertare, et quamuis neutri uirilis deesset animus, tamen sors contulit Henrico uictoriam, qui Scotum, Scotorum maximum, suis minibus interfecit," 856.

laments that the English forces "were disappointed of the help and support arranged between them and the bishop of Durham."[2] The slaughter of the English soldiers—the chronicler insists they lost at least 550 men—and the capture of Henry Percy by the Scots come about because a leader fails to secure support for his cause and relies too heavily on his own prowess in arms. These two narrators, ostensibly describing the same event, demonstrate that chivalry in the medieval imagination was not just one idea. For some, knighthood meant proving excellence on horseback with weapons. For others, chivalry entailed the ability to perform feats of arms and to coordinate a host of supporters in pursuit of a common goal. To argue, as some scholars have, for an ahistorical or monolithic conception of chivalry is to ignore examples that illustrate chivalric ideals using the language of service and lordship.

Just as companions fighting alongside a nobleman could help him achieve a prestigious victory, so might literary representations of retinues amplify a hero's chivalric excellence. Relying on supporters was not a guarantee of success for a nobleman. Although victory on the romance battlefield is often achieved through the concerted effort of a nobleman and his companions, a chivalric figure exposes his status to risk when he delegates too much of his authority to incapable servants like the wicked stewards who pervade romance courts. Noblemen's interdependent relationships with their supporters thus become focal points in debates about the exercise and regulation of noble power. This study has sought to illuminate how three Middle English writers interested in ideals of noble conduct incorporated both a knight's personal prowess and his lordship into their narratives of excellent chivalric behavior.

[2] *The Westminster Chronicle, 1381-1394*, ed. and trans. L.C. Hector and Barbara F. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 349. The Latin reads as follows: "Istud infortunium contigit Anglicis nostris protunc apud Otrebourne primo propter impetuosum animum et excessivam audaciam domini Henrici de Percy, que causabant nostros propter festinanciam prodire ad bellum sine ordinacione . . . Tercio defuit illis auxilium et juvamen secundum quod inter eos et episcopum Dunelm fuerat concordatum," 348.

My chapters have treated the intertextual discussion of proper nobility in medieval romances, didactic works, and chronicles as a nexus where we can examine various conceptions of chivalry that render reliance on supporters and companions as a key element of good lordship. Chivalric writers use the abundance of counselors, brothers-in-arms, and retainers in their works as a means to explore ideals of lordship in different historical contexts. At the dawn of the fourteenth century, the Middle English couplet romance *Guy of Warwick* demonstrates how a company of supporters on the battlefield might help a noble hero accomplish feats of arms and gain renown. As the central figure of the romance, Guy exercises his arms and his leadership to illustrate ideals of chivalry and consequently to encourage noblemen to emulate his behavior. To read Guy as an independent knight-errant is to miss the poet's consistent focus on the hero's named companions—Herhaud, Tirri, and Amis—as well as the crowds of innumerable knights who fight alongside Guy against his foes. Echoing discussions of counselors, stewards, and supporters in didactic works such as John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (c. 1159), *Guy of Warwick* teaches its audience about chivalric ideals that conceive of companions' assistance as a key element of a noble hero's prestige both at court and on the battlefield.

Although *Guy of Warwick* shows a hero on a quest to increase his honor by undertaking adventure in the company of supporters, *Ywain and Gawain* cautions noblemen against exercising their prowess for the sake of honor alone. Instead, the anonymous poet employs the retinue, so important to medieval images of noble status, to highlight principles of lordship that lead the hero to exercise his power as a nobleman in a socially constructive way. Ywain's education in proper chivalry entails the abandonment of solitary quests and feats of arms, through which other writers might signify a romance hero's excellence, in favor of accepting aid from his extraordinary companion, a lion. The lion assists Ywain in battle and encourages him to

learn about cooperation in the context of Edward III's efforts to align his supporters' interests with his own, at a time when questions of loyalty and service to a lord were at the forefront of noblemen's thoughts.

Similarly, Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* represents noble spectacles of combat and pageantry as productions made possible by the leadership of a lord at the head of a group of supporters, in contrast to autocratic ideas of nobility circulating at the court of Richard II. Theseus at first appears to affirm autocratic views of noble power when he declares that he will serve justice to the tyrant, Creon, and that he will keep the Theban cousins in jail perpetually. The narrator, however, complicates the narrative of independent power by directing the audience's attention to the soldiers, servants, and artisans who support Theseus' reputation for excellence. Like the anonymous poets of *Guy of Warwick* and *Ywain and Gawain*, Chaucer portrays a set of chivalric ideals that do not punish but rather reward noblemen for exercising effective lordship over other men. That supporters are essential to a nobleman's prestige is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the *Tale*'s final tournament, where artisans, armorers, squires, horse-grooms, knights, and lords all appear together in a scene epitomizing ideals of lordship and cooperation as key elements of chivalry.

In order to understand how the texts in this study represent chivalric ideals, modern readers must set aside preconceptions of strongly independent knighthood that have characterized the study of chivalric literature thus far. Georges Duby famously described a knight's mission as a single-minded pursuit: "to wield his sword to defend the weak and to perpetrate justice."[3] Yet the texts I have examined here do not predicate chivalric excellence on

[3] Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1977), 181. Duby here is summarizing the *Livre des Manières* by Stephen Fourges (c. 1175) as evidence that the French aristocracy was becoming a cohesive nobility.

the knight's sword alone. While each text presents heroic knights who display their prowess throughout their adventures, my analysis has highlighted the contributions of ancillary characters to the medieval notion of knighthood: as a combination of strength and lordship. My chapters argue that chivalry designates not only the exercise of arms but also the personal control of men that was implied in medieval conceptions of nobility, contrary to a predominant strain of modern literary scholarship that understands chivalry as, first and foremost, a knight's exercise of his personal prowess. The chapters are unified by the tendency of the Middle English poets to reward heroes who are able to cooperate with other noblemen and coordinate the efforts of their supporters in a way that revises modern understandings of medieval romance heroism.

In the preceding chapters, I have not set out to trace the origins of interdependent heroism in western literature. Beowulf has his Wiglaf, and Roland his Oliver. Even Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and *Erec and Enide* concern chivalric heroes who must learn to accept aid in order to earn renown, and all of these stories have their sources somewhere. Without positing that the adaptation of romance into Middle English was a watershed moment in medieval literature, I have argued that some medieval English poets imagined chivalry as an expression of noble social status upheld by a knight's personal prowess and by his interdependent relationships with the men who surround and support him.

Nor have I sought to locate the historical origin of a nobleman's reliance on his supporters. The reign of Edward I (1272-1307), in my view, initiates a period of interesting transition in the practices of the English nobility, a transition that reverberates in contemporary thought on chivalry. As Edward drew more noblemen into royal administration, and as service based on feudal obligation withered, writers asked, perhaps more fervently than before, what constituted loyal service to a lord, and how noble power should be exercised and regulated.

Taking up debates that had been active for centuries, and mindful of the circumstances of the nobility during their own times, the Middle English poets considered here set out to illustrate ideals of chivalry involving good practices of lordship. They encouraged their audiences to understand knighthood as more than bloody work with swords and spears. Knighthood could also involve noble social status, and the lordship over men that implied, and chivalric narratives could illustrate ideals of both performing service in arms and also commanding loyal servants and companions.

Of course, the three poems considered here do not advance identical notions of chivalric heroism. Guy successfully coordinates his military companions, whereas Ywain's lion disobeys commands in order to teach Ywain that he can achieve more by relying on a retinue. Yet both anonymous poets conceive of chivalric victory as a cooperative venture undertaken by a knight and his supporters. They thus participate in a similar project, teaching the audience that a knight need not be independent to be honorable. Noble power is best exercised in concert with other noblemen and with the help of supporters who stand ready to serve a strong central figure. Although these heroic adventures might be read as figurations of noblemen's activities both on the battlefield and at court, neither poem devotes as much attention explicitly to administration as does Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. With its protracted descriptions of arming, erecting, and adorning, the *Tale* portrays noble spectacles as productions made possible by the work of many men under the command of a lord. Nonetheless, the processions and combats of Chaucer's romance echo Guy's battles on the continent and Ywain's adventures with his lion: all three romances portray chivalry as a combination of a knight's abilities in prowess and in lordship. They differ in detail but not in substance, and as such they contribute to a new understanding of

chivalric ideology not as monolithic and ahistoric, but as a writer's negotiation between the form of traditional discourse or narrative and the content of current concerns about noble power.

Further work remains to be done on women's contributions to noblemen's status in Middle English chivalric literature. Women take on various roles in romance—wives, paramours, sisters, daughters, mothers, in-laws, regents, servants, artisans, and even heroines in their own right. The present study focuses on intermasculine relationships within three Middle English romances with the hope that future research can use a similar methodology to interpret chivalry's reliance on women. In the future, I plan to examine women's role in supporting a nobleman's status through analysis of the Middle English Breton lay *Sir Cleges*, a poem about a spendthrift knight whose wife, Dame Clarys, consoles him and contributes to the administration of their estate. Scholars have remarked Clarys' role as counselor and comforter, but her significance in the household more generally has been overlooked.[4] Such a project could proceed from the foundations laid by Tara Williams and Amy Vines in their recent studies of women and womanhood in medieval English literature.[5] *Sir Percyvell of Gales*, with its portrayal of a young knight and his mother, could also form an interesting test case for learning about how a poet addresses noblemen's reliance on women as tutors and nurturers. Percyvell performs prowess alone and disdains the fripperies of Arthur's courtiers, associating this hero with a model of knighthood that involves a much smaller and more tightly knit set of relationships. These further

[4] For discussions of *Sir Cleges* and Clarys' advice to her husband, see for example Edward E. Foster, "Simplicity, Complexity, and Morality in Four Medieval Romances," *The Chaucer Review* 31.4 (1997): 401-419; George Shuffleton, "Is There a Minstrel in the House?: Domestic Entertainment in Late Medieval England," *Philological Quarterly* 87.1-2 (2008): 51-76; Mary Housum Ellzey, "The Advice of Wives in Three Middle English Romances: *The King of Tars*, *Sir Cleges*, and *Athelston*," *Medieval Perspectives* 7 (1992): 44-52.
[5] Tara Williams, *Inventing Womanhood: Gender and Language in Later Middle English Writing* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011); Amy N. Vines, *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011).

analyses would enrich a project on the interactions between medieval noblemen and the people who contribute in different ways to sustaining their social status.

Walsingham portrays battle as a contest between two illustrious men; like some other medieval writers, he conceives of chivalry as a nobleman's skillful use of arms in combat. But numerous voices in the medieval discussion on noble conduct and chivalry presented in this study find that the equation between prowess and chivalry might not be so simple. Indeed, noblemen's companions appear in didactic and narrative texts in surprisingly complex ways. Principles of lordship appear in the works of writers who consider loyal service as something both shown to and received by members of the medieval nobility. These writers presume that the synonymy of chivalry and prowess can be questioned and revised through attention to those who surround and support a nobleman.

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