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THE DEPICTION OF GRIEF  
IN SELECTED WORKS OF MEDIEVAL FRENCH VERSE NARRATIVE  
FROM LA VIE DE SAINT ALEXIS TO LE CONTE DU GRAAL,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ROMANCES OF CHRETIEN DE TROYES

by

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A thesis submitted  
in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of

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## DECLARATION

The research and writing for this thesis were undertaken entirely by me. To the best of my knowledge all sources have been fully acknowledged. Part of Chapter 5 has previously appeared as an article in Forum for Modern Language Studies and is used here by kind permission of the editors of that journal.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ArR</u>	<u>Archivum Romanicum</u>
<u>CCM</u>	<u>Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale</u>
CFMA	Classiques Français du Moyen Age
<u>CN</u>	<u>Cultura Neolatina</u>
<u>FMLS</u>	<u>Forum for Modern Language Studies</u>
<u>FS</u>	<u>French Studies</u>
<u>KRQ</u>	<u>Kentucky Romance Quarterly</u>
<u>MA</u>	<u>Le Moyen Age</u>
<u>Med. Aev.</u>	<u>Medium Aevum</u>
<u>MLR</u>	<u>Modern Language Review</u>
<u>MP</u>	<u>Modern Philology</u>
<u>NM</u>	<u>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</u>
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>
<u>RF</u>	<u>Romanische Forschungen</u>
<u>RMS</u>	<u>Reading Medieval Studies</u>
<u>RPh</u>	<u>Romance Philology</u>
<u>RR</u>	<u>Romanic Review</u>
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français
<u>SF</u>	<u>Studi Francesi</u>
TLF	Textes Littéraires Français
<u>ZrPh</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie</u>

## SUMMARY

This thesis sets out to explore the ways in which grief is depicted, and the uses to which such depictions are put, in selected works of early French verse narrative from La Vie de Saint Alexis to Le Conte du Graal, with the purpose of highlighting Chrétien de Troyes' practice in that area. The Introduction outlines the limits of the study, explains the grounds for selecting the works studied and briefly justifies the organisation of each chapter.

The first three chapters are intended to build up a picture of the conventions of grief-depiction in the works of Chrétien de Troyes' predecessors. Chapter One is a stylistic analysis of the two episodes in La Vie de Saint Alexis in which the grief of Alexis' family is depicted, firstly the episode in which they grieve at his flight, and secondly the episode in which they lament his death. The discussion of the first episode is followed by an extended comparison with relevant sections of the twelfth-century interpolated version S. (S incorporates the second grief-episode in its original form so there is no scope for further comparison). Some reference is made throughout the chapter to the influence of the Latin Vita on which the Vie is based.

Chapter Two considers some aspects of grief in epic: the causes of grief, the manifestations of grief and the range of characters to whom grief is attributed. Formulaic conventions and recurrent motifs are noted throughout. The chapter is based on material gathered from fourteen epics: Aliscans, La Chanson de Guillaume, La Chanson de Roland, Le Charroi de Nîmes, La Chevalerie Vivien, Le Couronnement de Louis, Garin le Loheren, Gormont et Isembart, Guibert d'Andrenas, Le Mariage Guillaume, La Prise de Cordres et de Seville, La Prise d'Orange, Raoul de Cambrai, and Le Voyage de Charlemagne.

The use of the planctus motif as a focus of interest in scenes of mourning for fallen warriors is discussed, along with other forms of grief, and the conclusion is reached that, with the notable exception of a limited number of elaborated scenes of mourning, depictions of grief, though frequent, are not accorded a privileged place in epic.

Chapter Three deals with grief in the romans antiques. The topic is approached under two wide headings, the grief (individual and collective) of women in Le roman de Thèbes and Le roman de Troie, and the mourning of warriors, in particular in Le roman de Thèbes and Eneas. Discussion of Thèbes and Eneas includes comparisons with their Latin antecedents. Depictions of grief are seen to be rich sources of affectivity in the romans antiques, but for the most part functioning as rhetorical embellishment.

Chapters Four to Eight are devoted in turn to each of the five romances of Chrétien de Troyes, Erec et Enide, Cligés, Le Chevalier de la charrete, Le Chevalier au lion and Le Conte du Graal. Episodes in which grief plays an important role in the individual romances are isolated and analysed, and themes involving the depiction of grief are traced. Particular attention is paid to Chrétien's handling of conventional motifs. The role of irony emerges as an important factor. Grief depictions are seen to have a functional rôle in the plot of each romance and, with the possible exception of Le Chevalier de la charette, to be connected with the central issues in each case.

The Conclusion is a brief summing-up, bringing together references to those features of grief depiction which are most recurrent in Chrétien's romances, and presenting a final assessment of the way in which he differs from his predecessors in his handling of the topic of grief.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis sets out to explore the ways in which grief is depicted, and the uses to which such depictions are put, in selected works of French verse narrative of the twelfth century. Jean Frappier drew attention to the possibilities in such an area of study in his article "La douleur et la mort dans la littérature française des XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles",<sup>1</sup> a brief general survey based on eleven works beginning with La Vie de Saint Alexis and ending with La Mort le Roi Artu and the Congés of Jean Bodel. In that article, while arguing for the universality and inherent human and literary interest of the topic of grief and death, the author rightly suggests that it is a topic

bien vaste et peu commode à cerner, même s'il est restreint à un domaine déterminé.<sup>2</sup>

Within the much greater scope of a full-length study, it has seemed useful to restrict Frappier's terms of reference as far as the period studied is concerned, and therefore I have not ventured beyond works of the early courtly period. In any such study, La Vie de Saint Alexis marks a natural starting-point, both chronologically and on grounds of relevance, and it is therefore the subject of the opening chapter, notwithstanding the fact that it is traditionally thought to date from the middle of the eleventh century.<sup>3</sup> While its religious character too sets it apart somewhat from the texts dealt with in the rest of this study, an attempt is made in the first chapter to show the extent to which many of the commonplaces of grief depiction in twelfth-century narrative are already present in Alexis; and a comparison with a twelfth-century rhymed version (S) provides a further link between this early text and the period on which the rest of the study concentrates.

There follows a chapter on grief in the epic genre as represented by fourteen chansons de geste. Here the strongly formulaic and conventional nature of much of the material seems to justify a cross-textual approach. Jean Rychner opened a new era in the study of the Old French epic in its classic period with his work La Chanson de geste: essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs,<sup>4</sup> which he based on nine epics, and I include these nine in my second chapter. They are, in alphabetical order, La Chanson de Guillaume, La Chanson de Roland, Le Charroi de Nîmes, Le Couronnement de Louis, Gormont et Isembart, Le Mariage Guillaume, La Prise d'Orange, Raoul de Cambrai and Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople. I have widened the base somewhat by adding to these nine Aliscans, La Chevalerie Vivien, Garin le Loheren, Guibert d'Andrenas and La Prise de Cordres et de Seville. The dating of individual epics is in most, if not all, cases notoriously difficult, and there is no doubt that some of these works in the form we have them postdate the earliest works of courtly inspiration as represented by the romans imités d'antiquité and the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. For example, Meyer and Longnon, in the introduction to their edition of Raoul de Cambrai, suggest 1190 as the date of composition of that epic, though the first two hundred and forty-nine laissez, which are rhymed, doubtless reflect an earlier assonanced version.<sup>5</sup> McMillan, in his edition of La Chanson de Guillaume, suggests that that work dates from the last third of the twelfth century 'au plus tôt',<sup>6</sup> and there is every indication that Aliscans and La Chevalerie Vivien were composed after La Chanson de Guillaume.<sup>7</sup> In fact, of the fourteen chansons de geste selected for study here, it is likely that only a minority date from the first half of the twelfth century. The justification for including them, however, in a study where the chapter sequence is otherwise based on chronological considerations, is that they represent a spirit and a



genre which are pre-courtly in literary terms, and that, as individual texts arising from an oral tradition, they almost certainly reflect earlier related versions.

After the chapters on Alexis and the epic, which are intended to provide a background for the proper evaluation of the role and depiction of grief in early romance, chapter three is devoted to three works representing a transitional period between epic and romance proper. These are Le Roman de Thèbes, Eneas and Le Roman de Troie, the three central works in the corpus known as the romans imités d'antiquité.<sup>8</sup> Although they are all three dealt with in the same chapter, a more differentiating approach is applied to them than to the chansons de geste. However, where the five romances of Chrétien de Troyes are concerned, these are each discussed singly. When I embarked upon work for this thesis, it was not my intention to reserve such a privileged place for Chrétien in it. I initially thought of his romances as being a useful chronological terminus as full-blown representatives of courtly romance towards the end of the twelfth century,<sup>9</sup> while I harboured the expectation that some of the ways in which he depicted grief might represent stylistic variations and developments of earlier established conventions. What I found, and what I hope to show, among other things, is that there is a strong tendency in Chrétien's romances for depictions of grief to be assigned a dynamic role in the outworkings of the plot, quite unlike the role accorded to them in the other works studied. That is why it has seemed most useful to treat Chrétien's romances individually, rather than to approach them through a study of motifs and themes, which would also have been possible.

In that I have not ventured beyond works of the early courtly period in this study, I have chosen a chronological focus narrower than that of Frappier's article. I have, however, chosen to interpret the idea of grief widely, and to extend the scope of the enquiry to encompass what may be thought of as a spectrum ranging from frenzied distraction to gloom and downheartedness. My study does not, however, extend to include a systematic consideration of grief when it appears as a concomitant or ingredient in the depiction of love-sickness, as, for example, in Eneas 7919-30, since the question of love-sickness is a large topic in its own right, and one that has been widely explored hitherto.

## NOTES

Figures in brackets in these and all subsequent notes refer to the Bibliography at the end of this thesis.

1. Jean Frappier, "La douleur et la mort dans la littérature française des XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles", in Histoire, mythes et symboles, Geneva, 1976, 85-109. That article was first published in Il dolore e la morte nella spiritualità dei secoli XII e XIII (Convegni del Centro di Studi sulla spiritualità medievale, V, 7-10 ottobre, 1962), Todi, 67-110.
2. *ibid.*, (81), p.85.
3. A later dating has been proposed. See p. 6 below.
4. Jean Rychner, La chanson de geste: essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs, Geneva, 1955.
5. Raoul de Cambrai (32), pp.lxx-lxxi.
6. La Chanson de Guillaume (3), vol. 2, p.126.
7. See Wathelet-Willem, Recherches sur la Chanson de Guillaume vol.1, (174), pp.483-506.
8. Guy Raynaud de Lage, the modern editor of Le Roman de Thèbes (34), accepts the view that Thèbes is the oldest of the three romans antiques (p.xxx) and comments: 'nous devons noter un accord quasi-unanime chez les médiévistes, un accord aussi rare que durable, pour situer l'apparition du Roman de Thèbes, à dix ans près, dans le milieu du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle.' (p.xxvi).
9. Chrétien's final romance Le Conte du Graal (Perceval) is the subject of my concluding chapter. It is widely accepted that this work was begun after May 4, 1181 (see Loomis, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (117) p.159). Luttrell has proposed the date of 1189-90 in The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance (121) p.32.

## Chapter One

### LA VIE DE SAINT ALEXIS

#### Introduction

La Vie de Saint Alexis as contained in the Hildesheim manuscript (L) is a poem of 125 stanzas each consisting of five assonanced decasyllabic lines.<sup>1</sup> In the preface to one of the earliest editions of the poem, published in 1872, Gaston Paris put forward the view that it was probably composed in Normandy in the middle of the eleventh century.<sup>2</sup> This dating has been widely accepted, and although subsequent studies have suggested that it was composed perhaps some fifty or more years later than Paris thought,<sup>3</sup> the poem's position as one of the very oldest surviving works of literary merit in the French language remains unaltered. It certainly represents a tradition for which there is evidence well back into the eleventh century, that of adapting Saints' lives from Latin into French.<sup>4</sup> La Vie de Saint Alexis seems most likely to have been based on a medieval Latin Vita (itself a later version of a very venerable legend originating in Odessa in the fifth century).<sup>5</sup> Where, in this chapter, it is necessary to distinguish between the Latin and the French versions in question, I shall refer to the Vita and the Vie respectively.

The story as related in La Vie de Saint Alexis is that of a young Roman nobleman who, to the distress of his parents and bride, leaves home on the day of his marriage to pursue a life of poverty and holiness in Laodicea and Odessa. Returning to Rome seventeen years later, he is given shelter by his father and lives unrecognised for another seventeen years under the staircase in his own home. As death approaches, he writes a document describing his past life. A divine

message informs the citizens of Rome of a holy man in their midst. He dies before being discovered, but the document reveals his identity. His father, mother and wife lament in turn over his body, though the discovery of the holy corpse is greeted with joy by the townspeople, on account of its healing properties and the mediation which the saint will effect for them in heaven. The moral of the poem, outlined in the final two stanzas, is that, if we pray to Saint Alexis, and allow his example to inspire us, we too may enjoy the delights of the godly life, both here and in the next world.

Karlheinz Gierden has argued in his study Das altfranzösische Alexiuslied der Handschrift L: Eine Interpretation unter dem Gesichtspunkt von Trauer und Freude that a tension is maintained throughout the poem between grief and holy joy (the joy which springs from a rejection of the world and devotion to Christ) and that an appreciation of the joy-grief tension is fundamental to an understanding of the author's theological intent.<sup>6</sup> My concern in this chapter, however, is to isolate those passages (amounting to nearly one quarter of the whole poem) in which grief is depicted, in order to highlight the intensely expressive style employed in them and the affective appeal with which they are endowed. A comparison with relevant sections of the twelfth-century remaniement (ms 12471 of the Bibliothèque Nationale, known as S) will confirm that, for the remanieur at least, the poem's main appeal was affective rather than theological.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter also, initial consideration will be given to the idea that the grief depictions of Alexis represent a tradition in the vernacular on which later poems of the epic and romance genres draw, though a proper assessment of this can only be made as a more detailed analysis of the later texts proceeds in subsequent chapters.

**Instances of grief prior to the principal laments  
of parents and wife (st.78-99)**

The first portrayals of grief in Alexis result from the celebrated scene in the bridal chamber where Alexis confronts his bride with his decision to renounce worldly pleasure in order to devote himself to the service of God (stanzas 11-15). However, the reactions of the parents and bride to Alexis' sudden departure are not shown immediately. The author appears to clear the ground first, from a narrative point of view, by recounting in five stanzas the travels of Alexis, his sojourn in Laodicea and his eventual arrival in Odessa. It is only then that the author signals a transition from the main action to the first long section dwelling on the family's grief (st.21-32), thereby alerting the audience to an important change of focus:

21 Or revendrai al pedra ed a la medra  
Ed a la spuse qued il out espusethe.  
Quant il ço sourent qued il fud si alet,  
Ço fut granz dols quet il unt demenét  
E granz deplainz par tuta la citiét.

The opening reference to the family's grief (for which there is no precedent in the Vita at this point in the story)<sup>8</sup> is couched in general, and indeed rather unfocused terms (e.g. 'par tuta la citiét'), though the tone of the description is heightened somewhat by the repetition of 'granz' and the prominence given to 'dols' and 'deplainz' before the caesura in lines 104 and 105 respectively. The generalised type of description gives way in the next stanza (22) to the plaintive tones of the three single voices:

22           Ço dist li pedres: "Cher filz, cum t'ai perduto!"  
               Respont la medre: "Lasse! qu'est devenut?"  
               Ço dist la spuse: "Pechét le m'at tolut."  
               E! chers amis, si pou vus ai oût!  
               Or sui si graime que ne puis estra plus."

106-10

In this stanza we have a foreshadowing of the fully-fledged laments, also apostrophising Alexis, which the same characters will utter, in the same hierarchical order, after the saint's death. The elegiac note, which is to assume such prominence in the poem, is thus struck early on. The distinctive aspect of each of these three short utterances has been remarked upon:<sup>9</sup> the father thinks of the loss to himself, the mother is concerned with what has happened to her son, and the bride's opening words 'Pechét le m'at tolut' echo the words spoken by Alexis in the bedchamber: 'cum fort pecét m'apresset!' (1.59) which, in Gierden's view reflects the fact that, of the three characters, the bride is the only one to have any appreciation of the spiritual urge that has motivated Alexis' flight.

The three utterances serve as a prologue to the action contained in the following nine stanzas (23-31) in which father, mother and bride, again in turn, are each shown to act, in their grief, in a very distinctive way. Although each of their reactions flows from their grief as expressed in stanza 22, they are also linked to each other to form a chain of events: the father sends messengers to Odessa, and it is their return without news of Alexis that causes the mother to break into lament and vent her grief upon the hangings in the bedchamber. When she then sinks down, overcome, the bride joins her and vows in her grief to remain with her. So although the period of time covered between the first utterances of grief beginning at line 101 and the rounding-off of the section dealing with the family's grief (lines 156-7) is quite an extended one - longer than it takes for messengers to go to Odessa and return - lines 101-57 form a unified whole. The fact that each of the characters expresses grief in some form of action distinguishes this section from the later one dealing with their grief for Alexis after his death, which is devoted almost exclusively to lament.

The reactions of each of the characters are closely tied to their relationship to Alexis. From the beginning of the poem, Eufemien, the father, has been depicted as the chief agent, (responsible for the education and marriage of Alexis), and after the disappearance of his son it is natural that he should channel his distress into action by sending messengers to look for him. When they return without news, his emotions are described in one line of understatement:

Set il fut graim, ne l'estot demander.

128

This sober comment contrasts strongly with the dramatic reactions of the mother which follow immediately. No further comment on the father's grief is made until, when years have passed, Alexis returns incognito to Rome and asks Eufemien for charity

"Empur tun filz dunt tu as tel dolor."

219

The line referring to Eufemien's tears at this point -

Plurent si oil, ne s'en puet astenir

222 -

is a forerunner of similar lines in both epic and romance, for example:

De pitié pleure, ne se pot aténir

Aliscans 194

Des oilz plora, ne se pot tenir mie

La Prise de Cordres et de Seville 2192

Des ieuz plora, nel pot muër

Le Roman de Troie 1859

De plorer ne se pot tenir

Erec et Enide 2480

It seems unlikely that authors of such later works would be drawing directly on Alexis for this stylised formulation, so it would appear that an established stock of phrases associated with depictions of grief was already available for the Alexis-poet to use. But he uses the conventional detail to good effect, since, when applied to the



father, it suggests a manly (if unsuccessful) effort to overcome grief. It should be noted that in the Vita the father does not display grief at all on either of these two occasions (the return of the messengers or the return of Alexis) so in depicting his sorrow at these points, however restrainedly, the French poet is heightening the affectivity of the account.

The mother's grief on the return of the messengers is expressed initially in lament, formally introduced in the final two lines of stanza 26 and then contained in stanza 27:

La bone medre s'em prist a dementer  
E sun ker filz suvent a regreter.

27 "Filz Ale(x)is, pur quei[t] portat ta medre?  
Tu m'ies fuft, dolente an sui remese.  
Ne sai le leu ne n'en sai la contrede  
U t'alge querre; tute en sui esguarethe.  
Ja mais n'ierc lede, kers filz, ne n'ert tun pedre".  
129-35

The theme of her motherhood, a theme which will be greatly elaborated in her lament after Alexis' death, is introduced with stark emphasis in the opening rhetorical question, and, with the limited view of motherhood, she interprets his flight as a rejection of herself:

Tu m'ies fuft  
132

The extravagance of her statement that she does not know to what country she might go to search for him - extravagant, because it is improbable that she would go herself in search of her son - is stressed by the use of anaphora and enjambement, and suggests the frenzy of grief that is working up within her:

Ne sai le leu ne n'en sai la contrede  
U t'alge querre;  
133-4

The two phrases 'dolente an sui remese' and 'tute en sui esguarethe', thrown into relief after strong caesuras, underscore the idea of her bereftness, and the phrase 'kers filz' in the last line of her lament

provides an emotive echo of 'sun ker filz' in the last line of the previous stanza and of her opening apostrophe 'Filz Alexis'.

The heightened tone introduced by the mother's lament is more than maintained in the two following stanzas, where she enters 'la cambre', tears down its hangings, apostrophizes it and has sackcloth hung in place of curtains:

- 28           Vint en la cambre, plaine de marrement  
              Si la despeiret que n'i remest n'ent:  
              N'i remest palie ne neül ornement.  
              A tel tristur aturnat sun talent,  
              Unc puis cel di nes contint ledement.
- 29           "Cambra", dist ela, "ja mais n'estras parede,  
              Ne ja ledece n'ert an tei demenede".  
              Si l'at destruite cum s'ost l'ait depredethe.  
              Sas i fait pendre, curtines deramedes.  
              Sa grant honur a grant dol ad turnede.
- 136-45

In which room does the mother act thus? It seems to me that there is little doubt, in the immediate context, that it is the bridal chamber from which Alexis has lately flown. Yet in the *Vita*, as Gierden points out, the reference is to her spreading sackcloth 'in pavimento cubiculi sui', and Gierden quotes the thirteenth-century French version and the Middle English version where the mother's own room is likewise specified.<sup>10</sup> Rejecting without argument the interpretation of 'bridal chamber', he adds:

Ich sehe . . . keine Berechtigung, "la chambre" mit "das Zimmer des Alexius" zu übersetzen, auch wenn es zugegebenermassen psychologisch sinnvoller und poetisch wirkungsvoller wäre.

Strangely, he does not mention the late twelfth-century interpolated version where the sense of its being the bridal chamber is unequivocal.<sup>11</sup> In our text the words 'la cambra' have been used three times to mean the room in which the marriage was to have been consummated.<sup>12</sup> In the third of these instances it is also called 'la cambra sum pedre'. In stanza 28 is it not most unlikely that anything but the room designated as the bridal chamber would have been

understood, in spite of what the Vita said, and in spite of the fact that some time elapses between Alexis' flight and the mother's actions in the room? In her address to the room, her words

ja mais n'estras parede,  
Ne ja ledece n'ert an tei demenede

141-2

while echoing the end of her previous stanza of lament -

Ja mais n'ierc lede, kers filz, ne n'ert tun pedre

135 -

call to mind the words of Alexis in what should be understood as the same room:

Cesta lethece revert a grant tristur.

70

Thus the mother's words to the room, especially if it is taken to be the bridal chamber, call attention to the theme of worldly joy, the joy that Alexis has renounced specifically in the form of marriage.

There is little in the Vita to account for the passionate stanza of lament and the two stanzas of frenzied action which the French poet attributes to the mother. In the Latin, her grief at this point is presented, not as a sudden and dramatic outburst, but as an attitude adopted by her from the day of her son's departure:

Mater quoque ejus a die, qua discessit suus filius, sternens saccum in pavimento cubiculi sui, sedensque super illud ejulans et lamentans dicebat: "Vivit Dominus, quia ita manebo, donec cognoscam quid actum sit de filio meo."

Gierden suggests that the tearing down of hangings in the chamber, as depicted in stanzas 28 and 29, is a traditional ritualistic gesture with precedents in classical literature and in the Old Testament:

"Was nun die Verwüstung des Zimmers als solche angeht, so kann man darin zweifellos keine spontane Affekthandlung sehen... Man muss diese Zerstörungsszene, um sie richtig zu deuten, vielmehr im Zusammenhang sehen mit konventionellen Trauerbräuchen, mit deren Verwendung sich der Alexiusdichter in eine literarische Tradition einreicht."<sup>13</sup>

However the powerful simile comparing the despoiling of the room with the devastation wrought by an attacking army does, in my view, colour the mother's actions with a violence perhaps out of keeping with a conventional form of mourning.<sup>14</sup> The apostrophizing of the chamber also contributes a very individualistic note to the depiction of the mother's grief<sup>15</sup> and the poet handles these two stanzas almost in the manner of an epic poet treating a scene in laisses similaires.<sup>16</sup> Each stanza opens strongly, with reference being made to the room:

Vint en la cambre, plaine de marrement  
136

"Cambra", dist ela, "ja mais n'estras parede."  
141

Reference is made in both stanzas to the act of despoliation:

Si la despeiret que n'i remest n'ent:  
N'i remest palie ne neül ornement.  
137-8

Si l'at destruite cum s'ost l'ait depredethe.  
Sas i fait pendre, curtines deramedes.  
143-4

Both stanzas end on an abstract note:

A tel tristur aturnat sun talent,  
Unc puis cel di nes contint ledement.  
139-40

Sa grant honur a grant dol ad turnede.  
145

The ending of stanza 28 (line 140), where we are told that the mother was never again to behave in joyful fashion, finds emphatic echo at the beginning of stanza 29 (lines 141-2) where, in apostrophising the room, she declares that it is never again to witness joy:

Unc puis cel di nes contint ledement.  
140

"Cambra," dist ele, "ja mais n'estras parede,  
Ne ja ledece n'ert an tei demenede.  
141-2

All the strength in this eruption of the mother's emotion is thus conveyed simply and forcefully by repetition.

The reference in the Vita to the mother sitting on the floor is now taken up by the French poet as a means of introducing the figure of the wife, who sits down beside her:

Del duel s'asist la medre jus a terre;  
Si fist la spuse danz Alexis a certes.  
"Dama", dist ele, "jo i ai si grant perte,  
Ore vivrai an guise de turtrele;  
Quant n'ai tun filz, anseml'ot tei voil estra".  
146-50

The image of the turtle-dove is taken from the short speech made by the wife in the Vita,<sup>17</sup> where she refers to the bird's supposed faithfulness to its mate. In the triptych of which the mother's frenzied grief forms the centrepiece, the impression of quiet acceptance on the part of the wife duplicates the earlier brief reference to the father's sorrow.

The whole section containing the grief of the family of Alexis, which opened on a corporate note, ends similarly, though it is in particular the mother and daughter-in-law who are united in grief, as suggested by the mother's words:

"Plainums anseml le doel de nostre ami:  
Tu tun seinur, jol f[e]rai pur mun filz".  
154-5

These words conclude stanza 31. Stanza 32 opens with two lines signalling a shift of focus:

Ne poet estra altra, turnent el consirrer;  
Mais la dolur ne pothent ublfer.  
156-7

Now the poet reverts to an account of Alexis' doings. The way in which the depiction of the family's grief overruns thus into a new stanza, and indeed a new section, contrasts with the formalistic way in which it was heralded ('Or revendrai al pedra ed a la medra ...' st. 21) and underlines the idea of its enduring nature, since it does not neatly round itself off when the initial shock of Alexis' disappearance is over. A further reference to the fact that



Instances of grief in the interpolated version (S)  
prior to the principal laments

There are no further references to grief until the three great laments of the father, mother and wife on the discovery of Alexis' death (st. 78 et seq). It now seems appropriate, therefore, to draw some comparisons between the poem as contained in the Hildesheim manuscript (L) and the twelfth-century interpolated version S.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, in S, the longest section of the original poem to be reproduced without major interpolations is precisely the section where the three great laments begin, and these are reproduced very much as they stand in the original. Overall, S is more than twice as long as L (1356 lines in G.Paris' edition to the 625 lines of the original poem). It is not my intention here to make an exhaustive comparison of the two versions. I shall be discussing only those divergences which have a direct bearing on the subject of grief depiction.

The title given in S to the interpolated version - C'est li Roumans de Saint Alessin - betokens a movement towards a less austere treatment of the material than in L. This is evident in the elaborations and embellishments added to the opening stanzas which themselves are lengthened into laisses of differing lengths: the prologue opens with an appeal to 'Signour et dames' to listen to the tale of Alexis and the woman who became his wife, and is significantly extended; more names are provided (for example, we are told the name of Alexis' mother and her father, line 56); we are told more of the wedding itself and of the decking-out of the bridal chamber. When all is made ready the door is barred and Alexis gazes upon his bride in candlelight:

Sains Alessins esgarda la pucele.  
Assés i ardent candoiles et lanternes.  
Mout la vit gente et couvoiteuse et bele.

§ 124-6

In place of the seven lines of direct speech in the original version of the scene (two of soliloquy and five of address to the bride, L, 59-60 and 66-70) Alexis speaks twenty lines (§ 129-38; 144-53) which prompt a lengthy dialogue with the bride extending over 154 lines (§ 166-317). In the course of this dialogue she expresses her grief at his departure and he himself weeps. The latter innovation is particularly noteworthy, since the figure of a lachrymose Alexis contrasts sharply with the determined ascetic of the original scene.

Already in this early scene it is evident that the author of the interpolated version has lost sight of the sober lines and religious vision of the original, and is producing a 'courtly' version quite different in spirit from the Vie, though not without merits of its own. Although the dialogue in the bridal chamber contains certain longueurs, notably in Alexis' sermonizing, it does quite effectively depict the shifting emotions of the pair. The bride's opening words are prompted by Alexis offering her one half of the ring that he has cut in two. She is little impressed by his idea that this may later serve as a means of identification if he ever returns, and in a heartfelt outburst she begs him to take her with him:

Dist le pucele: "Or sui molt esgarée;  
Mainne me la dunt tu m'as amenée.  
Por coi me lais? Ja m'as tu espousée.  
Que querras ore en estrange contrée?  
Que porai dire ton père ne ta mère?  
Sempres m'aront de lor terre jetée.  
Puis m'en irai com autre asoignentée.  
Tel honte arai jamais n'iere hounérée."

§ 166-73

This inspires Alexis to deliver a lengthy discourse on the fate of human flesh and the sad destiny of those who do not pursue eternal life. The grief of the sinner as he depicts it, however, seems coldly



theoretical in contrast with her tears as she resigns herself to the inevitability of his departure:

. . . Dolant celui ki ne puet amender;  
S'il ert dolant ne l'estuet demander."  
Ot le la bele, ne cesse de plorer:  
"Sire", fait ele, "or te commant a Dé  
Quant autrement ne te puis retorner."  
§ 205-9

His joy at her acquiescence completes the little mosaic of emotions at this point:

Cil fu moult liés, si volt del lit lever;  
§ 210

But, unable to make a clean break, he returns to the question of the ring: if he does not send it back in a year as evidence of being still alive, she is free to remarry (§ 211-20). At this she utters a cry -

Ot le la bele: si a jeté un cri:  
Quide sa mère que il juast a li  
§ 221-2 -

and renews her complaints:

"Sire", dist ele, "moult ai mon cuer mari;  
Se moi en poise pour coi me as plus vil?"  
§ 225-6

Alexis explains that he is going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (§ 227-32) and she again acquiesces (§ 233). But she questions him on the reason for his going (§ 234-6) and he explains for a second time that it is to seek God (§ 239-41). She again gives him leave to go, though stressing her grief, and he, again, by contrast, is depicted as being joyful at her giving him leave:

"Au congié Diu, sire", dist la pucele:  
"Grant duel arai et nuit et jors acertes;  
Jou remanrai caitive en ceste terre."  
  
Quant il oi qu'elle l'ot otroié,  
Sous ciel n'a home qui l'peust courecier.  
§ 242-6

The to-ings and fro-ings of the dialogue, and the repetitiveness of objections, explanations, consentings - a repetitiveness that is less rhythmical than in good examples of laises similaires but which is clearly, at base, exploiting the same technique - conveys the emotional turmoil into which the bride has been thrown, and suggests also the human sensitivity of Alexis, willing as he is to delay his departure in order to enter into such lengthy discussions with the bride. This sensitivity becomes even more prominent when he gives way to tears on being asked by her when he will return:

Dont ploura il des biaux oels de son cief.  
§ 253

The ornate periphrasis focuses attention on his weeping. When, after some more sermonizing, he finally convinces the bride of the rightness of the path of renunciation (§ 267-84), they weep together:

Estes les vous belement departis,  
Florent des oels, ne se porent tenir.  
§ 285-6

The adverb belement seems to suggest a certain relish on the part of the author for sad partings, and indeed he does linger on the motif of congié. The bride's farewell speech, in which she commends him to God and refers to the grief which his father, mother and she herself will feel, forms the end of one laisse and is repeated at the beginning of the next. In the two parts of the farewell speech, spread thus over two consecutive laises, a sense of lingering is quite delicately created by the use of patterned repetition, as shown below. In each case the mournful formulation

Hui verrai noeces a grant duel departir  
§ 295

Hui verrai noeces a grant duel desevrer  
§ 302

provides a point of culmination, being the penultimate line in the first part of the speech and the last line in the second:

Et la pucele gentement li a dit:  
 "Or t'en vas, sire, Dieus te laist revenir,  
 Quant autrement ne te puis retenir.  
 Dolante en ert cele qui te nori,  
 Si ert li péres qui toi engenui,  
 Et jou meisme qui t'avoie a mari.  
 Jou remanrai en estrange pais,  
 Et esgarée entre tous mes amis.  
 Hui verrai noeces a grant duel departir;  
 S'encor ne t' voi, de duel m'estuet morir.

"Or t'en va, sire, jou te commant a Dé,  
 Quant autremant ne te puis retorner.  
 Cil ert dolans qui t'avoit engené,  
 Si iert ta mère qui te porta en lés,  
 Et jou meisme qui sui en vevée.  
 Hui verrai noeces a grant duel desevrer."

§ 287-302

Admittedly the impression of delicacy here is vitiated by the author's subsequent lack of restraint. No sooner has Alexis crossed himself and has in turn commended her to God than she is making beguiling attempts to be taken with him:

"Sire", dit ele, "jou te commant a Dé.  
 Con faitement m'en porrai consirer?  
 S'a ten conseil le peusse trouver,  
 Qu'ensamble toi me laissaisses aler,  
 Ja me veroies gentement conreer,  
 Tondre mes crins, un capel afubler,  
 Et prendre escerpe et un bourdon ferré;

§ 305-11

The consirer of her question in line 306 is not the same word as the consirrer of lines 156 and 244 of the original poem (discussed above on page 16). Godefroy gives the meanings of consirer as 'se priver, s'abstenir, se passer, se séparer, s'éloigner'. As it happens, the distance in meaning between the two words and their contexts reflects the distance between the contemplative resignedness of the bride in L and the unwillingness of her counterpart in § to accept what Alexis decrees:

Con faitemant m'en porrai consirer?

§ 306

Alexis does not, however, yield to her persistence, and, while she is distracted by her grief, makes his departure:

Ele commence grant duel a demener.  
Il vint a l'uis, sel deffrema souef;  
A mienuit s'enfuit de la cité.

§ 318-20

Once again her sorrow at his departure and his joy at being able to go are juxtaposed:

De c'est moult liés, s'en loe Damedé  
Que la pucele l'en a congié douné.

§ 323-4

Nevertheless, the feelings of this very human Alexis are mixed. In an interesting little vignette he is depicted looking over Rome at daybreak from the vantage point of a hill, praying for the pucele and then, as if remembering some of the last things she said to him, weeping for his parents (§ 325-36).

The author of the interpolated version has, as we have seen, constructed a scene in the bridal chamber which is much longer and more elaborate than the scene in the original French poem. Since he clearly has a strong predilection for affective situations, it is not surprising to see that he proceeds to incorporate much of the original section dealing with the parents' and wife's grief after Alexis' departure. He has, even so, made a number of striking changes, the most important involving a restructuring of the original poem at this juncture. It will be remembered that, in L, the family grieve collectively (st.21), then each member utters an individual brief expression of grief (st.22), and then each channels personal grief into a distinctive action: the father sends messengers (st.23-26), the mother laments and devastates the bridal chamber (st.26-30), and the wife joins with the mother in her grief and is received by her (st.30-31). The author of the interpolated version postpones the trilogy of brief individual laments and the sending of the messengers. The mother's grief and the despoiling of the chamber were the most spectacular elements in the section describing the family's grief at

Alexis' departure in L, and it is these elements to which he gives priority, introducing them awkwardly, however, by the clumsy juxtaposing of stanza 21 and stanza 27 of the original (for which see page 8 and page 11 above):

XXX Or revenrons au père et a la mère,  
Et a l'espouse ki seule en est remése.  
Quant il çou sorent ke il fuis s'en ére,  
Çou fu grans deus que il en demenèrent,  
Et grans complaints par toute la contrée.

XXXI "Fius Alessins de ta dolante mère  
Tu m'es fuis, dolante en sui remése.  
Le liu ne sai ne ne sai la contrée  
U jou te quière: toute en sui esgarée.  
Ja n'ierc mais lie, biaux fuis, si n'iert tes père,  
Se ne reviens en iceste contrée."  
Çou fu grans deus que il en demenèrent.

§ 394-405

An attempt to make an organic link between what were originally two unconnected stanzas is seen in the repetition of line 397 at the end of what has now become laisse XXXI. Much more expressive use of repetition is made in the following two laissez describing the mother's actions in the bridal chamber:

XXXII Vint en la cambre plainne de mariment;  
Si le despoille que n'i laissa nient;  
N'i laisse paille ne nul cier garniment.  
Tost a tourné a grant duel son talent;  
Par grant dolour se dejète souvent.  
Ains puis cel jour n'en fu lie gramment.

XXXIII Vint en la cambre, toute l'a desparée,  
Si l'a destruite coome elle ert la vesprée,  
Ostent les pailles et les courtines lées,  
Sa grant ricoise a a grant duel tornée,  
Ains puis cel jour ne fu lie li mère.  
"Cambre, dist ele, mal fuissiés atornée.  
Contre ques nueces vous avoie parée!  
Jamais en vous n'iert leèce trouvée."  
Tel duel en ot, a poi ne ciet pasmée;  
Quant par la main le relieve li père.

§ 406-21

In these two laissez the author of the interpolated version strengthens the parallelisms already to be found in the two corresponding stanzas (28 and 29) in L,<sup>20</sup> and indeed creates thereby a striking incantatory effect.

An interesting modification has been made in the interpolated version at the end of the mother's apostrophising of the room. In *L*, her outburst was concluded by her sitting down on the ground, a manifestation of grief for which Gierden finds precedents in the Old Testament.<sup>21</sup> The author of the interpolated version chooses to round off her speech instead with a form of what seems to be a more widespread convention in grief depiction in the vernacular, whereby the character falls in a faint from grief and, in some instances, is helped up.<sup>22</sup> Here, as we see in the lines quoted above (§ 420-1) she only nearly falls in a faint (another variation of the convention) - her husband prevents her and helps her up. But immediately after, at the beginning of the next *laisse*, she is nonetheless still depicted sitting down on the ground, as in *L*:

De la dolour s'asist la mère a tere,  
Ne s'asist mie ne sour banc ne sour sele;  
Si fist l'espouse saint Alessin, la bele  
§ 422-4

So there is a thematic overlap between the motifs of fainting and sitting on the ground; the line of amplification (§ 423 above) suggests that the author felt the convention of sitting on the ground as a sign of grief needed some gloss, but he has retained it as a useful means of introducing the wife at this point.

The wife's speech to the mother, ten lines long in comparison with the three lines in *L* (§ 425-34; *L* 148-50), has a pious tinge to it not found in the original, since in it she expresses her desire to serve God in the absence of Alexis. This may be seen as a response to the exhortations which Alexis made to her before his departure, and it reflects the religiosity of the later poet. Surprisingly it is the father who answers this speech, using words similar to those that, in *L*, had been attributed to the mother (§ 435-9; *L* 151-5). This seems to be a clumsy way of drawing the father into the account of the

women's grief. The wife's reply to the father, in which she once more speaks of her desire to serve God (§ 440-7) is greeted by the weeping of the mother. Prominence is given now to the motif of weeping, leading up to the three brief utterances of lament. These utterances, which represented the initial stages of the parents' and wife's grief in L, become here instead the climax of the corresponding section in the interpolated version:

. . . Quant ot la mère que la pucele dit,  
 Que Damedeu servira pour son fil,  
 Tout em plourant la baise enmi le vis;  
 Plourent ensamble del duel de lor ami,  
 L'une son fil et l'autre son mari.

XXXVI Pleurent ensamble lor ami c'ont perdu.  
 Pleure la mère et la pucele plus.  
 "Dius, dist la mère, qu'est mes fiex devenus?"  
 Çou dist li pères: "Peciés le m'a tolu."  
 "Dius," dist l'espouse, "com petit l'ai eul  
 Hier euc signour, mais n'en ai ore nul,  
 Sans Damediu, le glorious la sus."  
 § 448-59

It is significant that the original words of the wife: 'Pechét le m'at tolut' (L 108), which Gierden sees as evidence of her greater understanding of the spiritual import of what has happened,<sup>23</sup> are here attributed to the father, with little or no rationale. Although the wife is still distinguished as making the most pious utterance of the three, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the author of the interpolated version has failed to sense and reproduce all of the subtleties, particularly the religious subtleties, of his model.

Nevertheless, there does seem to be some justification for the re-ordering of events that we have found in this early part of the poem. In the new context that the author has created by important alterations - the introduction of references to the decking-out of the bridal chamber (§ 120-1) and the much longer scene there, as well as the anticipatory references to the parents' grief (§ 290-1; § 299-300; § 334-5) not found in L - the bringing-forward of the mother's grief

and despoiling of the chamber provides a strong and awaited counterbalance to the extended scene in the bridal-chamber between Alexis and his wife.

The sending of messengers to look for Alexis, which, in L, had occurred after his flight from the chamber and before the depiction of his relatives' grief, comes now in the interpolated version after the grief depiction, and is extended from twenty to forty-six lines. In extending it and introducing, as we shall see, a more affective note than was to be found in the original somewhat bald account (L, st.23-26), the author of the later version has apparently wanted to make it quite a strong focus of interest in its own right, which is a explanation for his having postponed it until after he had exploited the relatives' grief. A link is made between that latter episode and the messenger episode, in that the messengers recount the grief of Alexis' family to their hosts in Odessa:

"Signour", dist il, "ques hom est que querés?"  
"Un chevalier, un jove ne baceler,  
Un gentil homme, si iert de Roume nés;  
Onques ses pères, qui l'avoit engenré,  
N'ot plus d'enfans; sel pooit moult amer . . .  
Sous ciel n'a houte, s'il l'ooit regreter,  
Ne li estuece des iex del chief plourer.

S 482-8

Although these lines are incomplete in S, it is possible to reconstruct them by reference to ms M containing a thirteenth-century rhymed version based on S,<sup>24</sup> and it then becomes clear that the object pronoun in line 487 of our interpolated version ("S'il l'ooit regreter") refers to the wife. Lines 487-8 represent quite a complex formulation common in depictions of grief in other twelfth-century texts and found also in L, where it figures in the description of the mother's grief at Alexis' death, in stanza 86.<sup>25</sup>



The report of the relatives' grief not only serves to throw retrospective stress on the account of their grief in the previous section of the poem, it also arouses the grief of Alexis himself, who has secretly followed his father's messengers and has listened to what they have said:

Sains Alessis a bien tout escouté.  
 "E! cuers, dist il, com estes adurés!  
 Gente pucele, mout de mercis et grés:  
 Jou t'ai fait mal et tu m'as hounéré."  
 Pitié en ot: si commence a plourer.

§ 492-6

Alexis' weeping at the mention of his wife's grief is a refined type of reaction in keeping with the more courtly spirit of the interpolated version, and in fact it clashes somewhat with his earlier-reported ascetic joy at having received alms from his father's servants, a reference which has been taken over from L in almost identical form:

XXXIX    Nel reconnurent, ne ne l'ont entercié.  
 Sains Alessis en loe Diu del ciel,  
 Des sers son père qui il ert aumoniers.  
 Ains fu lor sire: or est lor provendiers:  
 Ne vous sai dire comme il par s'en fist liés.

§ 471-5 (cf. L st.25)

Yet again we see that the author of the interpolated version is interested in creating pathos at the expense of much of the theological thrust of the original. But, to express the matter in more positive terms, it can be said that he has a strong propensity for exploiting potentially affective situations which the earlier poet chose not to develop. This is illustrated once more very strikingly in the episode where Alexis meets his parents on his return to Rome. In the Vie the father meets him in the street, fails to recognise him and weeps when his long-lost son is mentioned. (The later version retains the same line here as the original: 'Pleure des oels, ne s'en pot astenir' § 676, cf. L222) But in the later version the mother is also present and joins her tears to those of the father, and the

latter wrings his hands so much that he drops his gloves and Alexis picks them up:

Pleure la mère le duel de son enfant  
Qu'ot ramentoivre, dont ot le cuer dolant.  
Li père en va ses mains si detorjant  
Que a la tere en cairent si gant.  
Sains Alessins s'abaisse, se li rent.  
§ 734-8

The elaboration of the motif of hand-wringing is very much in keeping with the elaborated - even somewhat over-blown - type of grief rhetoric favoured by the interpolator. The detail of the picking-up of the gloves by Alexis rounds off the motif of hand-wringing in the same way as we have seen the motif of fainting from grief rounded off by a reference to the grieving character being helped up again.

The humanity of Alexis, which was so much in evidence in the bridal chamber scene, is demonstrated here in his sorrow at his parents' weeping - though the plot demands that his sorrow must be concealed at this point, hence the religious explanation:

Com il les voit plourer si tenremant,  
Iriés en est, mais il n'en fait samblant,  
Crient et redoute ne l'voisent ravisant.  
De tout a mis en Jesu son talent.  
Mieus aime Diu ke nul home vivant.  
§ 747-51

The interests of the author of the interpolated version have by now emerged most clearly: the several intriguing situations in the story of Alexis which the author of *L* has chosen to treat with great restraint are the very ones which the later author has chosen to develop, and in this development references to grief have contributed to a heightening of the affectivity. The last of these intriguing situations to be elaborated by the later author concerns the period of seventeen years which Alexis spends beneath the staircase in his father's house. The later author introduces conversations taking place between Alexis and his parents and wife. Father, mother and

wife each have a touching exchange with him. His father on one occasion asks him his name, to which he replies enigmatically 'Crestiens ai a nom' (§ 807); his mother, intimidated by the silence of the saintly man living in her house, eventually goes to him to wash his sheets as an act of charity. She is accompanied by the wife and admits to her that the saintly man reminds her of her long-lost son:

"Quant je l'regart, membre moi de mon fil;  
Pour un petit ne l'resamble del vis.  
Lors plour des oels, ne m'en puis astenir.  
Çou est li dels dont m'estora morir."  
§ 852-5

In exchanges which ensue between Alexis and his mother, he asks her to forgive him for the trouble he has caused her (§ 870-81). Finally, as the moment of death approaches for Alexis, he makes a series of utterances to his wife in which he all but reveals his identity (§ 980-1034). This little scene is quite redundant to the plot (the episode in which a heavenly voice reveals to the inhabitants of Rome the presence of a holy man in their midst is taken over unchanged from L just before the scene with the wife), it is quite out of keeping with the original poem's austerity at this point, but it is of dramatic interest in its own right, as the following lines from the end of the exchange show:

"Jou ne sui mie de mout lointaing pais,  
Quant mi parent seront al sevelir,  
Si ert mes père et ma mère autresi,  
Et une espouse que jou ai deguerpi."  
Ot le la bele, si jeta un souspir.  
"E Dius!" dist ele, "jou quic c'est mes amis!  
Sire", dist ele, "sont il bien lonc de ci?  
Mandas lors tu par mes qui lor desist?"  
Ne pot parler, s'est transis l'esperis.  
§ 1021-9

On the evidence presented so far, it seems fair to regard the author of the interpolated version as a talented populariser. The next, and last, interpolated episode is one which both Jessie Crosland

and John Fox refer to, with evident disapproval, in their literary histories.<sup>26</sup> It involves a rather ludicrous incident concerning the document which Alexis had written just before his death (in both versions) in order to explain his true identity. When, in the interpolated version, this is discovered and handed to the pope, it is miraculously wafted from his hands and flies through the air to lodge in the bosom of the wife:

Tout droit en va el sain de la pucele,  
Sous son blier, entre ses deus mameles,  
U ele pleure les mals et les souffraites  
Que li sains hom sour le degré a traites.

§ 1100-3

Alexis' half of the ring is contained in this letter and the pope joins the two halves together. Fox says:

These additions to the story are highly significant. They show how perplexed the author of the revised version must have been over the attitude towards marriage revealed by the legend. He has invented this ingenious but highly contrived way of correcting possible misconceptions concerning the attitude of the Church to marriage. Unfortunately, in trying to forestall one misinterpretation, he has introduced a far more serious one which makes nonsense of the spirit of the legend, utterly foreign to sugary sentiment and romance. Unwittingly he has produced a complete negation of the original version, a veritable anti-Alexis.<sup>27</sup>

Crosland similarly leans heavily on this episode in her résumé of the poem and says, in summing up,

There is no need to point out the difference in tone between the eleventh- and twelfth-century poems - the one sincere and deeply religious in spite of its poetic form, the other didactic and superficial (in its added parts) and clearly adapted to meet a popular demand.<sup>28</sup>

This curiously-worded comment ('... sincere and deeply religious in spite of its poetic form...didactic and superficial...') and Fox's more considered judgement do not, in my view, tell the whole story. The sober lines of the original have become blurred, the interpolated version is overall an inferior version, yet the pathetic elements introduced do not deserve to be written off as 'sugary sentiment' and there is a narrative verve in the interpolator's depictions of the

characters' grief which in some ways compensates for the lack of philosophical and artistic rigour. The author of the original poem was himself strongly drawn to the depiction of human emotions in a work which, ironically, was intended to celebrate a man who had turned his back on human emotions. And the artistic judgement of the interpolator is vindicated by the very fact that he incorporates in almost totally unmodified form the great fresco of laments which are the highpoint of the Vie de Saint Alexis in L. It is to these laments that we must now turn in taking up again the analysis of grief depiction in the original poem.

#### **The Depiction of Grief in the Principal Lament Scene (st.78-99)**

In the Vie de Saint Alexis (L) the revelation of the identity of Alexis, now dead, gives rise to the lamentations of father, mother and wife, their separate reactions being recounted in the same order as before (in the previous 'grief interlude' after Alexis' flight). This time, however, there is no interval between the event causing the grief and the expression of the grief itself, and the abrupt transition from the neutral tone in which the content of the saint's document is reported, to the heartfelt expression of deepest grief, is highly dramatic. It is surely to enhance the dramatic effect that the variety of physical reactions manifested by Euphemianus in the Vita at this point are reduced to one:<sup>29</sup>

Quant ot li pedre ço que dit ad la cartre,  
Ad ambes mains derumpt sa blance barbe  
386-7

The plucking of the beard, as the sole gesture of grief, is invested with particular significance. The violence of the gesture is conveyed



Eufemien now turns from his own grief to describe the mother's, and in this stanza (80) both content and form reach a new level of expressivity. Pathos is heightened by the stressing of the close-knittedness of the family, where each member has to cope, not only with his own grief, but with the spectacle of the grieving of others:

The lack of verb in the opening line of this stanza throws into relief both hemistiches, and the adjective in this line, 'dolenta', is echoed later in the stanza by its cognates 'dolurs' and 'dols', both harking back to 'dolerus' in the father's opening words (l.388) and by 'dols' (l.392). These repetitions intensify the tone of lament. The device of anaphora, here consisting of the repetition of the word 'tantes', stresses all that the mother has endured, and the cumulative effect is furthered by the similarity of the three end-of-line words, a series of feminine past participles which reaches a climax in 'acurede' in the last line. In this stanza the father's compassion for the mother's sufferings, a facet of his own grief, underlines the distance between the family and the sternly ascetic son, who has witnessed the grief of his parents and wife over many years (st. 48, 49) but has remained dispassionate towards it.

81           O filz, qui erent mes granz ereditiez,  
Mes larges terres dunt jo aveie asez,  
Mes granz paleis de Rome la cité?  
Ed enpur tei m'en esteie penét,  
Puis mun decés en fusses enorét.

401-5

82           Blanc ai le chef e le barbe ai canuthe;  
               Ma grant honur t'aveie retenude  
               Ed anpur tei, mais n'en aveies cure.  
               Si grant dolur or m'est apar e ðde!  
               Filz, la tue aname el ciel seit absoluthe!

406-10

Ma grant honur t'aveie retenude  
Ed anpur tei, mais n'en aveies cure.  
407-8

Al las, pecables, cum par fui avoglét!  
Tant l'ai vedud, si nel poi aviser.

Filz, la tue aname el ciel seït absolute!

34



Dieser letzte Vers ist eine bei Totenklagen stereotype Redeweise, wie eine Stelle aus "Li roumans de Berte aus grans piés" beweist, wo es heisst: 'Or soit de Dieu li ame de Bertain assolue!' (Berte 2424). Aber im Falle des Alexius, der bereits im Himmel ist, kann doch von einer Schuld nicht mehr gesprochen werden, die vergeben werden müsste. Der Topos hat hier die Funktion, die Seelenblindheit des Vaters in grelles Licht zu rücken.<sup>32</sup>

Gierden may be correct in his interpretation of the function of the topos in this line, as he is surely correct in his insistence on the theme of the father's blindness elsewhere in his study,<sup>33</sup> but it is an interpretation arrived at only when the line is considered on a rather abstract level. P.R. Vincent, in his article 'The Dramatic Aspect of the Old-French Vie de saint Alexis',<sup>34</sup> argues that we should distinguish between the more hidden meaning of the poem and the immediate impact it would have made on listeners. It is possible to empathise with the father at this point, whether we consider that he is, mistakenly, supposing that Alexis is in need of forgiveness, or whether we see him as uttering purely ritualistic expressions of concern for his son's soul. In contrast to the two preceding stanzas, this stanza (82) appears disjointed. The two preceding stanzas show a more logical structure and flow. In this one the rhythm is less even, and the statements less obviously connected. This creates the impression of a man distracted by grief. Such an impression is strengthened by the fact that though line 410 ('Filz, la tue aname el ciel seit absoluthel') sounds like a closing line, the lament continues for two more stanzas, elaborating a theme already explored, that of Alexis' failure to take up his inheritance. The father's grief thus seems to outrun the structure of the lament. Stanza 83 is particularly poignant, conjuring up, as it does, with the concrete nouns 'helme', 'brunie', 'espede' and 'gunfanun', a vision of the military glory that Alexis has foregone:

83            Tei cuvenist helme e brunie a porter,  
              Espede ceindra cume tui altre per;  
              E grant maisnede doûses guverner,  
              Le gunfanun l'emperedur porter,  
              Cum fist tis pedre e li tons parentez.

411-5

Juxtaposed with this vision of military glory is the picture sketched in the next and final stanza of the life Alexis did lead. The contrast is all the more stark because of the words 'dolor' and 'poverte' appearing in the first line, and because of the rhetorical question underlining the father's lack of comprehension:

84            A tel dolor ed a si grant poverte,  
              Filz, t'ies deduit par alîenes terres!  
              E d'icel[s] bien[s] ki toen doûs sen t estra,  
              Que n'am perneies en ta povre herberge?  
              Se Dou ploûst, sire en doûsses estra.

416-20

The fact that the father's lament does not end on a strongly conclusive line renders more striking the arrival of the mother, who is summoned to the scene by the sound of the father's grieving. She seems therefore to break in on his lament in a very dramatic way:

85            De la dolor qu'en demenat li pedra  
              Grant fut la noise, si l'antendit la medre:  
              La vint curant cum feme forsenede,  
              Batant ses palmes, criant, eschevelede;  
              Vit mort sum filz, a terre chet pasmede.

421-5

The idea of the mother running in when she hears the father grieving is taken over from the Latin *Vita* ('Mater vero ejus haec audiens quasi leaena rumpens rete ita scissis vestibus exiens'). Whereas in the Latin the mother is compared to a lioness breaking through a net, the French poet replaces this phrase by the simple human comparison 'cum feme forsenede' (l.423). It may be felt that the idea of the strength and ferocity of the mother's love has been sacrificed by the rejection of the animal image - but in the French poem we have already witnessed the ferocity of her grief in the attack on the bridal chamber ( - 'Si l'at destruite cum s'ost l'ait depredethe' - ). A different note is



In stanza 85 the accumulation of present participles 'curant' 'batant' 'criant' and the staccato rhythm of lines 423-4 increase the drama of the mother's arrival, while the extreme simplicity of expression and strongly marked caesura of the last line of the stanza -

Vit mort sum filz, a terre chet pasmede  
425 -

vividly convey the impression of her stopping in her tracks on coming upon her dead son. The adjective 'mort' here appears for the first time in the poem. The death of Alexis was described in theological terms -

Deseivret l'aneme del cors sainz Alexis;  
Tut dreitement en vait en paradis  
332-3 -

and the father, in his lament, made no explicit reference to the fact that Alexis had died. So now to hear in uncompromising monosyllables that the mother sees her son dead brings us face to face with the physical reality of the situation, with a little shock that corresponds to the shock sustained by the mother herself. The overwhelming effect that the sight has on her is shown by her falling to the ground in a faint. Although this reaction is highly dramatic in itself and in its immediate context, it does seem that the phrase 'a terre chet pasmede' is felt by the poet to be a purely conventional notation, not to be taken seriously on a narrative level, since no reference is made to her recovering from her faint, and immediately afterwards, in the next stanza, she is depicted in a frenzy of grief. In this next stanza, 86, is found another motif common in grief descriptions in later texts, suggesting once more that a body of conventions relating to the depiction of grief existed early in the development of French narrative. The motif in question, 'Chi dunt li vit...' corresponds to the 'Qui veïst..' motif as will be found, for example, in epic:

Qui dont veïst la belle Biautris  
Ses chevex traire et esgrater son vis,  
Sou ciel n'a home cui pitiez n'en preïst.  
Garin le Loheren 16601-3

in the romans antiques:

qui lor veïst cel duel mener  
ne se tenist ja de plorer.  
Eneas 6373-4

and in Chrétien's romances:

Qui li veïst son grant duel fere,  
ses poinz tordre, ses chevex trere,  
et les lermes ded ialz cheoir,  
leal dame poïst veoir;  
et trop fust fel qui la veïst,  
se granz pitiez ne l'an preïst.  
Erec et Enide 3789-94

The motif is used to striking effect in Alexis since it occupies one whole stanza and serves as a frame for the description of her grief-stricken gestures. Gierden comments that the frame is not strong enough, as it were, to contain her grief, since references to hair-tearing and beating of the breast are repeated at the beginning of the next stanza (87):

Der Rahmen ist ... zu eng und zu schwach. Er kann den gewaltigen Schmerz nicht fassen, dem Toben nicht standhalten und wird gesprengt. Zwei Gebärden wilden Schmerzes sind es, die den Rahmen sprengen . . . Sie erscheinen wieder als repetitio in der ersten Zeile der folgenden Strophe.<sup>37</sup>

As further evidence that the Alexis poet has recourse to phrases that are to be elements in an enduring rhetoric of grief, it is worth noting the conventional aspect of the line which opens stanza 87:

Trait ses chevels e debat sa peitrine.  
431

Compare, for example,

Desront ses dras, ses cevels a tirés  
Aliscans 3540a

des poinz se fiert, ses chevols tire  
Eneas 5144

ses mains detuert et ront ses dras  
Yvain 1159

The mother's violent gestures are summed up in the next line -

A grant duel met la sue carn medisme  
432

and her lament begins with an apostrophe of her dead son:

"E filz", dist ele, "cum m'ots enhadithe!  
E jo, dolente, cum par fui avoglie!  
Net cunuissie plus qu'unches net vedisse."  
433-5

The effect of rhetorical formalization is heightened by close similarities with elements in the father's lament, for example, his opening words:

"E! filz", dist il, "cum dolerus message"  
388

and his reference to his failure to recognise Alexis:

"A! las, pecables, cum par fui avoglét!  
Tant l'ai vedud, si nel poi aviser"  
394-5

A further similarity between the two laments lies in there being a second 'départ' to the mother's lament at the beginning of stanza 88 (after her initial apostrophe of Alexis in stanza 87) and this parallels the second 'départ' to the father's lament referred to on page 32 above.

88 Plurent si oil e si jetet granz criz;  
Sempres regret et : "Mar te portai, bels filz!  
E de ta medra que n'aveies mercit?  
Pur quem vedeies desirrer a murir,  
Ço'st grant merveile que pietét ne t'en prist".  
436-40

The phrase 'Mar te portai, bels filz!' reintroduces a theme present in her first speech, after Alexis' flight, that of her motherhood. This theme is to dominate the remainder of her lament:

89 Al lasse, mezre, cum oi fort aventure!  
Or vei jo morte tute ma portedre.  
Ma lunga atente a grant duel est venude.  
Pur quei[t] portai, dolente, malfedre?  
Ço'st granz merveile que li mens quors tant duret.

- 90           Filz Alexis, mult oñs dur curage,  
              Cum avilas tut tun gentil linage!  
              Set a mei sole vels une feiz parlasses,  
              Ta lasse medre, si la [re] confortasses,  
              Ki si'st dolente. Cher fiz, bor i alasses!
- 91           Filz Alexis, de la tue carn tendra!  
              A quel dolor deduit as ta juvenal!  
              Pur quem fuís? Jat portai en men ventre,  
              E Deus le set que tute sui dolente;  
              Ja mais n'erc lede pur home ne pur femme.
- 92           Ainz quet vedisse, sin fui mult desirrusse;  
              Ainz que ned fusses, sin fui mult angussuse;  
              Quant jo [t] vid ned, sin fui lede e goiuse.  
              Or te vei mort, tute en sui doleruse.  
              Ço peiset mei que ma fins tant demoret.
- 93           Seinurs de Rome, pur amur Deu, mercit!  
              Aidiez m'a plaindra le duel de mun ami.  
              Granz est li dols ki sor mai est vertiz,  
              Ne puis tant faire que mes quors s'en sazit:  
              N'est pas merveille: n'ai mais filie ne filz."

441-65

The theme of bereaved motherhood occupies a central position in stanza 89, where the first and last lines consist of general expressions of grief but the middle three make specific reference to the mother having carried Alexis in the womb. Line 442 -

Or vei jo morte tute ma porteüre

harks back to that previous striking line, 425 -

Vit mort sum filz, a terre chet pasmede.

The word 'morte' stands out starkly in its directness, on account of its position before the caesura, and by its being echoed in the other stressed word 'porteüre' which evokes, in contrast, the process of pregnancy and birth. The whole statement is driven home by the repetition of the dental consonants. The reference in the next line to the 'longa atente' which has come to nought might be thought of as the thirty-four years since his flight, during which she has awaited his return, and also perhaps to the years of childlessness which preceded his conception. However the most likely interpretation is that she is referring to the months in which she carried him, since

this is the subject of the rhetorical question in the next line - 'Pur  
quei[t] portai, dolente, malfede?' The line completing the stanza,

Ço'st granz merveile que li mens quors tant duret  
445

parallels the final line of the preceding stanza,

Ço'st grant merveile que pietét ne t'en prist  
440

and a similar formulation is used in the very last line of lament:

N'est pas merveile: n'ai mais filie ne filz.  
465

These repetitions, particularly if the text was spoken aloud, would have had incantatory value.

In stanza 90 passing reference is made to Alexis' contempt for his 'gentil linage' (446-7). The mother's concern for her kin can be seen as corresponding to the father's concern for her. But it is not dwelt upon, and the focus is on the mother's self-pity and regret. The sense of what-might-have-been is highlighted by the end-of-line forms - 'parlasses', 'confortasses' and 'alasses' (which are echoed internally by 'lasses' and 'si'st'). It is understandable that the author of the interpolated version should have retained this poignant stanza when incorporating the mother's lament, even though, in the interpolated version, Alexis had spoken kindly to her before his death (see pages 28-29 above), and the stanza thereby loses its point.

In the following stanza (91) the mother briefly evokes the passing of Alexis' youthful comeliness:

Filz Alexis, de la tue carn tendra!  
A quel dolor deduit a ta juvena!  
451-2

These words echo a reference in a much earlier stanza (24) to the fact that the messengers sent by Alexis' father to seek him after his initial flight do not recognise him:



Si at li emfes sa tendra carn mudede,  
Nel reconurent li dui sergant sum pedre;

116-7

This faint reminiscence in stanza 91 of Alexis' original flight from his family is part of a larger network of echoes in that stanza, which is very similar in content to a stanza of the lament uttered by the mother after his flight (27):

27 Filz Ale[x]is, por quei [t] portat ta medra?  
Tu m'ies fuft, dolente en sui remese  
Ne sai le leu ne n'en sai la contrede  
U t'alge querre; tute en sui esguarethe.  
Ja mais n'ierc lede, kers filz, ne n'ert tun pedre.

91 Filz Alexis, de la tue carn tendra!  
A quel dolor deduit as ta juventa!  
Pur quem fufs? Jat portai en men ventre,  
E Deus le set que tute sui dolente;  
Ja mais n'erc lede pur home ne pur femme.

Of the ten hemistiches in each of these two stanza, no fewer than five occur in identical or very similar form in both stanzas, though, mosaic-like, the pattern is different in each case. Elements of the mother's earlier grief are thus built in to her grief at his death. In stanza 92, the perspective is very different. In that much more rigorously structured stanza we have a summing-up of the evolving nature of the mother's relationship to her son over a life-time:

92           Ainz quet vedisse, sin fui mult desirrusse;  
Ainz que ned fusses, sin fui mult angussuse;  
Quant jo t vid ned, sin fui lede e goiuse.  
Or te vei mort, tute en sui doleruse.  
Ço peiset mei que ma fins tant demoret.  
456-60

456-60

The chronological progression is strongly marked by a series of temporal conjunctions - 'ainz que... ainz que... quant... or...' The

stages of the relationship are based on the physical stages of motherhood: her attitude to her son before his conception, before his birth, at his birth, and now, when she sees him dead. These milestones emphasise the elemental nature of her relationship with her son and hence the strength of her grief at his death. The four adjectives representing her successive feelings stand out because of their length and their end-of-line position. The last line, not ending in an adjective and not part of the chronological progression, is isolated, and on account of this and its directness of expression it receives particular stress:

Ço peiset mei que ma fins tant demoret.

460

Her response to Alexis' death is a wish that she should die too, and this completes the impression of the whole stanza: since, in her grief, she sees her whole life in terms of her relationship with her son, it is logical that when he ceases to live she has no longer any 'raison d'être'.

Vincent says of the mother's lament:

The phrases pour out, pell-mell, scarcely coherent, amply testifying to the vivid realism of the poet's conception.<sup>38</sup>

This does not seem to me to be a totally accurate comment on the lament. Not only is controlled use made of repetition at various points, but the whole is held tightly together by the dominant theme of bereaved motherhood and this theme is expressed in a poetically heightened form in the penultimate stanza of the lament, the one just discussed. Furthermore, the final stanza, 93, provides a very definite rounding-off to the lament, since in it she makes a rhetorical appeal to the noblemen of Rome to join her in her lamentations, and this signals the end of the lament by reminding us of the external circumstances of the narrative.

The sense of formalisation is sustained by the arrival of the wife, whose lament immediately follows. She is referred to here (1.467) as once previously (1.237) as 'la pulcele que il out espusede'. Although thirty-four years have passed since the marriage ceremony, she is presented here, along with the father and mother, as an emblematic figure, with no suggestion of the fact that she is now a middle-aged woman, and, as the father and mother expressed specifically paternal and maternal concerns in their laments, so hers is infused with the passionate longing appropriate to the figure of the disappointed bride. Notably, whereas the father tore at his beard in a dignified patriarchal gesture and the mother was depicted in a frenzy of grief, no mention at all is made of signs of grief accompanying her lament. She simply appears and begins to speak. The opening lines of her lament are distinguished by the respectful address 'Sire', and by the controlled, yet at the same time emotionally charged, statement of her situation:

466-70

95

Sire Alexis, tanz jurz t'ai desirrét,  
E tantes lermes pur le tuen cors plurét,  
E tantes feiz pur tei an luinz guardét.  
Si revenisses ta spuse conforter  
Pur felunie nfent ne pur lastét.<sup>39</sup>

471-5

In stanza 80 the father had been describing the grief of the mother. In the stanza just quoted, the sorrows described are those of the speaker herself. The effect of poignancy thus created is increased by the image of the girl expectantly scanning the horizon. The fleeting evocation of this realistic scene gives life to the theme of her long-sustained sorrow.

A new departure is signalled in stanza 96 with the reference to the youthful comeliness of Alexis and the fact that it will not decay in death. This more sensuous note is heralded by the apostrophe 'O kiers amis' (1.476):

96

O kiers amis, de ta juvente bela!  
Ço peiset mai que purirat en terre.  
E! gentils hom, cum dolente puis estral!  
Jo atendeie de te bones noveles,  
Mais or les vei si dures e si pesmes!

97

O bele buce, bel vis, bele faiture,  
Cum est mudede vostra bela figure!  
Plus vos amai que nule creature.  
Si grant dolor or m'est apar[e]ñde!  
Melz me venist, amis, que morte fusse.

476-85

As was noted on page 42 (above), the theme of Alexis' comeliness was evoked briefly by the mother in stanza 91, but appropriately it receives most emphasis in the wife's lament. In stanza 96 her regret that his youthful beauty will decay now in death contradicts somewhat the reference at the beginning of the next stanza to the changes his appearance have already undergone. However, in the perspective offered by stanza 96, Alexis has remained the comely youth who left home on the day of his marriage, in the same way as she, the middle-aged woman, is presented as the virgin bride. Alongside the regard for Alexis' physical appearance, it is appropriate too that the wife's

lament should be the only one of the three to contain a direct declaration of love:

Plus vos amai que nule creature  
483

Even so, if her lament does contain elements particularly appropriate to the lament of a wife, as the father's and mother's laments expressed specifically paternal and maternal concerns respectively, still there are links between her lament and the other two which bind the three characters together as a unified grouping. The theme of Alexis' comeliness present in the mother's and wife's lament has already been mentioned. Line 484 of the wife's lament -

Si grant dolor or m'est apar[e]üde!

is identical to a line from the father's lament (409). Both wife and mother express a desire for death:

(mother) Melz me venist, amis, que morte fusse  
485

(wife) Ço peiset mei que ma fins tant demoret  
460

In stanza 98 she declares that if she had known the identity of the recluse below the stairs, she would have gone to him there. This stanza may be compared with stanza 90 in which the mother expressed the wish that her son might have spoken to her before his death:

(mother) Filz Alexis, mult oûs dur curage,  
Cum avilas tut tun gentil linage!  
Set a mei sole vels une feiz parlasses,  
Ta lasse medre, si la [re]confortasses,  
Ki si'st dolente. Cher fiz, bor i alasses!  
446-50

(wife) Se jo[t] soûsse la jus suz lu degrét  
Ou as geûd de lung' amfermetét,  
Ja tute gent ne m'en soûst turner  
Qu'a tei ansemble n'oûsse conversét:  
Si me leûst, si t'oûsse guardét.  
486-90

In the first of these stanzas the mother is entirely self-centred in her grief, lamenting that Alexis had not come to comfort her, while

the wife speaks less selfishly of going to be with him in his discomfort, but in both stanzas the tone of weary regret is uppermost, intensified by the repetition of the dragging sibilants, particularly in the repeated use of the imperfect subjunctives.

The last stanza of the wife's lament (99) is distinguished by a firmly conclusive tone, appropriately so, since this stanza rounds off the three laments. The first three lines contain simply expressed statements of fact about the wife's present and future situation as a widow, with a note of negation dominant:

"Or sui jo vedve, sire," dist la pulcela,  
"Ja mais ledece n'avrai, quar ne pot estra,  
Ne ja mais hume n'avrai an tute terre".

491-3

In the fourth line an entirely new perspective is opened up with the phrase 'Deu servirei' (494) where the name of God is thrown into strong relief by the contrast with 'hume' in the previous line, by its position at the beginning of the line, by the phrase in apposition, and by the fact that God becomes the main subject of the final line:

Deu servirei, le rei ki tut guvernet:  
Il nem faldrat, s'il veit que jo lui serve.

494-5

The most apparent interpretation of the wife's decision to 'serve God' is that she now declares herself willing to be led, by Alexis' example, and doubtless also by the memory of his parting words to her (lls. 66-7), to reject ephemeral human love in order to seek what is lasting. Howard S. Robertson, however, puts forward a sterner view:<sup>40</sup>

. . . the mother's wish for death (v.460) is mirrored in the spouse's resolution to die to this world; rejecting mortal men, she will serve God (vv.493-4). The bride's uncomprehending and selfish response offers no evidence that her reasons stem either from Alexis' saintly example or from his raisun (vv.66-7), however edifying it might be so to interpret it even at a distance of 427 lines. Her only comment is "Il nem faldrat, s'il veit que jo lui serve" (v.495), which suggests a disappointed wife seeking a more rewarding abode for her affections.

Robertson's interpretation is an element in his argument for the superiority of the version of the poem referred to as A which ends at stanza 110 (omitting also stanza 108). The final fifteen stanzas in L (i.e. those omitted in A), as well as describing the miracles of healing wrought by the saint's body, and its eventual burial, refer to the reunion of Alexis and his wife in Heaven (st. 122). Robertson argues that this 'happy ending' is at variance with, as he sees it, the austerity at the core of the poem. He emphasizes the self-centred nature of the family's grief, maintaining that they fail to respond appropriately to the revelation that Alexis is 'l'ume Deu' (1.343). Disapproval of the family's reactions is indeed expressed, albeit it fleetingly, in the poem itself. Where a formal end is brought to the description of their grief by the introduction of those who accompany the body, the Pope himself condemns lamentation:

- 100            Tant i plurat e le pedra e la medra,  
                  E la pulcela, que tuz s'en allasserent.  
                  En tant dementres le saint cors conreerent  
                  Tuit cil seinor e bel l'acustumerent:  
                  Com felix cels ki par fait l'enorerent!
- 101            "Seignors, que faites?" ço dist li apostolie.  
                  "Que valt cist crit, cist dols ne cesta noise?  
                  Chi chi se doilet, a nostr'os est il goie,  
                  Quar par cestui avrum boen adjutorie;  
                  Si li preiuns que de tuz mals nos tolget."  
                  496-505

In the dismissive phrase 'Chi chi se doilet' (1.503) the pope seems to be referring to the family's grief. If indeed the text in A does represent the more authentic version, then that phrase contains the final reference in the poem to the parents and wife of Alexis. But it seems improbable that these three characters, who have played such important roles from the beginning and whose grief has been twice depicted at such length and with such poignancy, should be dismissed so summarily and disappear from view so suddenly. Uitti suggests that, since the text of A ends at about the same place as the Vita,

the scribe might have compared the poem on hand with its source and decided, rather clumsily, to 'restore' the vernacular version to its pristine Latin form by lopping off the end.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, even if the family's grief is to recede in importance against the wider theological context, the Pope's words and the aphorism in line 500 ('Com felix cels ki par feit l'enorerent') in no way provide an adequate counter to the weight of description accorded to the grief. If anything, a text ending at stanza 110 of the poem, only nine stanzas after the laments (omitting stanza 108), gives more prominence, not less, to the theme of human suffering. After the twenty-two stanzas devoted to the parents' and wife's laments, the longer ending of L, with its stress on the celebration of the saint, provides a very necessary counterbalance to the grieving. Indeed, starting from the stanza after the Pope's exhortation (101), and discounting the final two stanzas which form an epilogue (124 and 125), we find there are, similarly, twenty-two stanzas describing the veneration of the saint, the miracles his body brings about, his ceremonious burial and his ultimate union with the wife in Heaven. These stanzas are necessary to place the extended depiction of grief in a proper perspective in a poem which purports to show that lasting joy comes from God.

The placing of grief in its proper perspective in La Vie de Saint Alexis does not, in my view, entail condemnation of the parents and wife, in spite of their failure to respond to the revelation that Alexis is 'l'ume Deu'. Their grief is depicted in so poignant a fashion and expressed in places with - one might almost say - such lyricism, that it stands unashamedly in its own right as a passionate expression of human suffering. In the overall context of the poem it may indeed represent the sorrow that comes in the wake of all love not directed solely to God, but in the Vie, as in the Vita, its immediate



effect is to create empathy rather than arouse condemnation. It is of interest to note that at Alexis' burial the parents and wife (having been forced by sheer fatigue to end their lamentations - 1.497) resume their expression of grief, but are outdone in this by the people of Rome (the subject of lines 593 and 594):

Such a rich note of affectivity near the end of the poem is perfectly in keeping with the tone created by the descriptions of the parents' and wife's grief in the central areas of the work. The epic ring of line 595 -

suggests that the author was at least as interested in portraying human emotion as he was in transmitting a theological view. Indeed, one might question whether ultimately these two aims are not at variance with each other, as they are more glaringly in the remanement.

## The Presentation of Grief in the Vita<sup>42</sup>

To complete the analysis of grief depiction in the principal lament scene, some comparison with the corresponding section in the Vita is necessary, in addition to the points of comparison between the two versions that have already been noted on pages 13, 15, 31 and 36 above. Whereas in the Vie the lament of each character, father, mother, wife, provides a strong focus, in the Vita the mother's is pre-eminent. The father's lament is not only shorter than the mother's, but unrhetorical and somewhat colourless. The keynote is 'Why has this happened to me?' He regrets the death of a lost son with whom he had hoped to be reunited and who should have looked after him in his old age, and asks what consolation remains.

In the Vita the mother appears, as we have noted, 'quasi leaena rumpens rete', clothes rent, hair flying, eyes raised heavenward. She cannot reach the body because of the crowd ('prae nimia multitudine') and begs to be allowed through to see her son. The French poet omits this realistic detail in favour of the much more dramatic and immediate confrontation:

Vit mort sum filz, a terre chet pasmede  
425

The stress on motherhood, while not absent in the lament in the Vita, is less pronounced. The French poet has gone well beyond his model here, as in the father's lament also. The burden of the first of two utterances by the mother in the Vita ('Why have you done this to your father and myself?' - 'Heu me! fili, lumen oculorum meorum, quare sic nobis fecisti? Videbas patrem tuum et me miserabiliter lachrymantes et non ostendebas te ipsum nobis . . .') seems to figure briefly in

the mother's speech in the Vie as

Filz Alexis, mult oßs dur curage,  
Cum avilas tut tun gentil linage.  
446-7

The reference to 'patrem tuum' seems to resurface in the father's reference, in the Vie, to the sorrows Alexis' mother bore for him (st. 80). In the Vita the mother breaks off from her lament to throw herself on her son's body and embrace and caress him. These details have been incorporated, in the French, into the depiction of grief which precedes her single long speech of lament, the French poet being concerned not to interrupt the flow of rhetoric. The opening words of the mother's final speech in the Vita, 'Plorate mecum omnes qui adestis', are quite closely reflected in the opening lines of the final stanza of maternal lament in the Vie:

Seinurs de Rome, pur amour Deu, mercit!  
Aidiez m'a plaindra le duel de mun ami.  
461-2

The lament of the wife in the Vie is, as we might now expect, more elaborate than its Latin equivalent, but with one clear echo: in the last stanza of her lament, the words

Or sui jo vedve  
491

are a reminiscence of her opening words in the speech in the Vita: 'Heu me, quia hodie desolata sum et apparui vidua'.

The wife's lament in the Latin contains the delicate image of her husband as a mirror in which she can no longer gaze: 'Jam non habeo in quem aspiciam nec in quem oculos levem. Nunc ruptum est speculum meum et periit spes mea'. This has not been taken over by the French poet - doubtless it was too precious an image for his rather sober taste. Indeed, the Latin laments are interspersed with a number of rather refined phrases, none of which are retained in the Vie: the father refers to his son as 'custos senectutis meae' and the mother

uses the set phrase 'lumen oculorum meorum'. In the Vie Alexis is addressed by name or by the appellation 'filz', 'Filz Alexis' or 'bels filz' by his parents, and 'Sire', 'Sire Alexis' and 'Kiers amis' by his wife, imagery being sacrificed in favour of directness. The mother's request in the Vita that her eyes be granted 'fontem lachrymarum' has no counterpart in the French.

To sum up, it is clear that in this part of the poem the French poet has incorporated a modicum of detail from his Latin model, but has greatly adapted the basic elements, rendering the family's grieving more dramatic and more intense.

## NOTES

1. For a brief description of the manuscripts of La Vie de Saint Alexis, see pp.24-30 of Christopher Storey's edition: La Vie de Saint Alexis. Texte du Manuscrit de Hildesheim (L) (39). All quotations from ms L are based on Storey's edition.

Claims that ms A offers a superior version to ms L are discussed by Howard S. Robertson, "La Vie de Saint Alexis: Meaning and Manuscript A" (149). See pp. 48-9 above.

2. See G. Paris et L. Pannier (eds), La Vie de Saint Alexis, poème du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle et renouvellements des XII<sup>e</sup>, XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles (37) p.45.
3. See O. Pächt, C.R. Dodwell, F. Wormald, The St Albans Psalter (140), pp. 126-46; S. Sckommodau, "Das Alexiuslied. Die Datierungsfrage und das Problem der Askese" (155), pp. 298-324.
4. G. Paris (op. cit., (37) pp.43-4) quotes from an eleventh-century document referring to one, Tedbalt of Vernon, of whom it was said: "Hic quippe est ille Tetbaldus Vernonensis, qui multorum gesta sanctorum, sed et sancti Wandregisili, a sua latinitate transtulit atque in communis linguae usum satis facunde refudit, ac sic ad quamdam tinnuli rhythmī similitudinem urbanas ex illis cantilenas edidit." Paris translates thus: "C'est ce Tedbalt de Vernon qui a traduit de leur latinité les vies de plusieurs saints et entre autres celles (sic) de saint Wandrille, les a refondues pour l'usage de la langue commune avec assez d'éloquence, et en a fait d'agréables chansons d'après une sorte de rythme tintant."
5. The Vita is contained in the Acta Sanctorum Bollandiorum, July 17, IV, pp.251-3. It is reproduced by J-M. Meunier in the preface to his edition of La Vie de Saint Alexis (38), pp.11-17 and is partially reproduced below (footnote 42).
6. Gierden's study (82) is primarily an exploration of the theological aspects of the poem, while dealing also with the classical and scriptural precedents for the depiction of grief.
7. S is edited by Paris, Pannier op. cit., (37) pp.197-260 and also by Hildegard Heineremann, Das altfranzösische Alexiuslied der Handschrift 12471 der Bibl. Nat. in Paris (cod.S). (40)
8. In the Vita the family begin to grieve only when messengers have returned after their fruitless search for Alexis.

9. See Gierden, op. cit., (82) pp.20-1; P.R. Vincent, "The Dramatic Aspect of the Old-French Vie de Saint Alexis (172), pp. 532-3.
  
10. Gierden, op. cit., (82) p.32, note 66.
  
11. "Cambre, dist ele, mal fuissiés atornée.  
Contre ques nueces vous avoie parée!"  
ms S, 417-8
  
12. Lines 55, 61, 74.
  
13. Gierden, op. cit., (82) p.32.
  
14. It ought however to be noted that the line containing the simile of the army has been called into question. Meunier reproduces it as "Si l'at destruite cumdis l'ait host depredethe" and Storey as "Si l'at destruite cum s'ost l'ait depredethe." Storey says in a footnote (op. cit., (39) p.99) 'Dans L le vers est trop long et le mot dis n'a pas de sens. Les variantes de A (s.l.d. cum hum la ust preee) et P (s.l.d. cum sel leust preee) montrent l'embarras des copistes devant ce vers difficile. Nous croyons qu'on lira le mieux cum s'ost l'ait depredethe, mais encore ait est étrange; on s'attend à est, et dans ce cas il faudrait lire pre[d]e[th]e avec A, P.'
  
15. This uncommon use of apostrophe to address a room is also found in La Chanson de Guillaume where Guillaume, returning home from a defeat, surveys the empty hall, set for a meal, where his dead barnage will not now dine:  
  
"Ohi, bone sale, cum estes lung et lee! . . . "  
2399
  
16. However E.R. Curtius, "Zur Interpretation des Alexiusliedes" (66) argues forcibly against there being affinities between epic style and the style of Alexis, which he considers to reflect the Latin tradition: 'Das Alexiusleben ist kein mehr oder minder sorgloser Umguss einer Prosavorlage in epische Laissen - schon die Symmetrie und Sorgfalt des Strophenbaus spricht dagegen -, sondern eine nach lateinischen Mustern und Regeln gearbeitete poetische Composition.' (p.117).
  
17. "Sponsa vero ejus dixit ad socrum suam: Non egrediar de domo tua, sed similabo me turturi, quae omnino alteri non copulatur, dum ejus socius captus fuerit; sic et ego faciam, quousque sciam, quid factum sit de dulcissimo conjugate meo." Vita, 54-7.
  
18. Storey, op. cit., (39) p.100, p.105.

19. Heinermann, in a discussion attaching to her 1957 edition of S (40), places it in the mid-twelfth century (p.131).

20. See p. 12 above.

21. Gierden, op. cit., (82) p. 34.

22. Compare:

A icest mot chiet a terre pasmee.  
Li clers Estevenes l'en a sus relevee.  
Aliscans 4038-9

Plure Willame, Guibure s'est pasmee;  
Il la redresce, si l'ad confortee.  
Chanson de Guillaume 2408-9

See also pp. 90-2 below.

23. Gierden, op. cit., (82) p. 21.

24. "Pierdut avomes un gentil bachelier,  
Le fil au conte ki Rome doit warder;  
N'ot plus d'enfans, mout le devoit amer,  
Tant k'il le fist une dame esposer;  
Mais il le fist a forche....  
Fuis s'en est en essil decha mer.  
Li pere en cuide esragier et dierver.  
Se douche mere ne l'puet entroublier;  
Et li puchiele ki tant le pot amer,  
Sos chiel n'est hon, s'il li ot regreter,  
Ne li estueve d'andos les ieus plorer.  
13th century rhymed version  
(M 469-79)

25. See pp. 38-9

26. Jessie Crosland, Medieval French Literature (65); John Fox, A Literary History of France: The Middle Ages (75).

27. Fox, op.cit., (75) p.33.

28. Crosland op cit., (65) p.11.

29. "Euphemianus autem pater ejus, ut audivit verba chartae, factus exanimis cecidit in terram, et surgens scidit vestimenta sua, coepitque canos capitis sui evellere, barbam trahere, atque semetipsum discerpere et corruens super ipsum corpus clamabat . . . " (Vita, 137-41).
  
30. Compare:  

Ses lons cheveus blans e chenuz  
A o ses dous mains derompuz.  
Le Roman de Troie 25189-90
  
31. In La Chanson de Roland, Charlemagne reacts similarly in his grief at the loss of Roland:  

Sa barbe blanche cumencet a detraire,  
Ad ambes mains les chevels de sa teste.  
2930-1
  
32. Gierden, op. cit., (82) p. 50.
  
33. ibid, pp. 165-7.
  
34. Vincent, art. cit., (172) pp. 529-30.
  
35. Gierden op. cit., (82) p. 52.
  
36. "... coma dissoluta ad caelum oculos levabat. . . . Et iterum atque iterum prosternabat se super corpus, et nunc brachia super illud expandebat, nunc manibus vultum angelicum contrectabat . . . " (Vita, 148, 155-7).
  
37. Gierden op. cit., (82) p. 56.
  
38. Vincent, art. cit., (172) p. 535.
  
39. In a footnote relating to this problematic line, Storey proposes the adoption of Wilmotte's interpretation of it: "Si tu étais revenu consoler ta femme ce n'aurait été (de ta part) ni par félonie ni par lâcheté". See Storey's edition (39) pp.117-8.
  
40. Robertson art. cit., (149) p. 434.
  
41. Karl D. Uitti, "The Old French Vie de Saint Alexis: Paradigm, Legend, Meaning," (168) p. 292.



42. The lines describing the grief of the parents and wife at the discovery of Alexis' death in the Vita are reproduced below (see note 5):

Euphemianus autem pater ejus, ut audivit verba chartae, factus exanimis cecidit in terram, & surgens scidit vestimenta sua, coepitque canos capitis sui evellere, barbam trahere, atque semetipsum discerpere: & corruens super ipsum corpus clamabat: Heu me Domine Deus meus, quare mihi sic fecisti, & quare ita contristasti animam meam, & per tot annos suspiria, & gemitus incussisti mihi? Ego enim sperabam aliquando audire vocem tuam, & de te agnitum habere, ubicumque esses, & nunc video te custodem senecturis meae in grabato jacentem, & mihi non loquentem. Heu me! qualem consolationem in corde meo ponam?

Mater vero ejus haec audiens, quasi leaena rumpens rete, ita scissis vestibus exiens, coma dissoluta ad caelum oculos levabat, & cum prae nimia multitudine ad sanctum corpus adire non posset, clamabat: Date mihi viri Dei aditum, ut videam consolationem animae meae, ut videam filium meum, qui suxit ubera mea. Et cum pervenisset ad corpus, incumbens super illud, clamabat: Heu me! fili, lumen oculorum meorum, quare sic nobis fecisti? Videbas patrem tuum, & me miserabiliter lachrymantes. & non ostendebas te ipsum nobis; servi tui te injuriabant, & sustinebas. Et iterum atque iterum prosternebat se super corpus, & nunc brachia super illud expandebat, nunc manibus vultum angelicum contrectabat, osculansque clamabat: Plorate mecum omnes, qui adestis; quia decem & septem annos eum in domo mea habui, & non cognovi, quod unicus filius meus esset, sed servi ejus injuriabant, alapsis percutiebant eum, & sputa in faciem ejus jactabant. Heu me! Quis dabit oculis meis fontem lachrymarum? ut plangam die, ac nocte dolorem animae meae. Sponsa quoque ejus induta veste Adriatica, cucurrit plorans, & dicens: Heu me! quia hodie desolata sum, & apparui vidua. Jam non habeo in quem aspiciam, nec in quem oculos levem. Nunc ruptum est speculum meum, & periit spes mea; amodo coepit dolor, qui finem non habet. Populus autem videns haec, lachrymabiliter flebat.

## Chapter Two

### THE EPIC

#### Aspects and Causes of Grief in Selected Epics<sup>1</sup>

In broadest terms the epic genre is characterised by the narration of large-scale martial events in a feudal setting. The epic poet's chief concern is to depict action so he is on the whole more interested in telling 'what happened next' on the plane of external events than in spinning a web of intricate connections, investigating motives or speculating on what he is relating. The essentially paratactic nature of epic structures and the fact that, in Payen's words, 'L'acte y prévaut sur la sensibilité'<sup>2</sup> account for the large proportion of references to grief which are brief almost to the extent of being parenthetical:

Et Vivfens voit ses hommes morir;  
Teil duel en a, le sens ouide marir.  
Par molt grant maltalent vait sor paiens ferir.  
Chev.V. (ms C) 825-7

Premierement lo bon destrier trova  
Qu'Aymeris ot com en l'angarde ala.  
Qant le conut forment se dementa.  
Puis vit le cor que Aymeris brisa.  
Guib.d'A. 2070-3

Ot le Guillaumes si prist a lermoier,  
Molt belement l'en prist a araisnier  
Mon.G. (II) 5542-3

Raoul l'of, mornes fu et enbruns.  
A l'ostel va, o lui maint compaignon.  
Raoul 634-5

In these and many other instances the poet simply documents the fact that a character grieves in a certain situation. He is recording an event rather than evoking a state. Even when the description of grief is several lines or laisses long the emotion is nearly always

portrayed as an immediate reaction to a well-defined cause. This is borne out by the frequency with which characters grieve in response to something they hear (often bad news brought by a messenger) or see:

Guillelmes l'ot, s'an est molt afrés;  
Ne pot mot dire, tant par fut abosmés.  
Dame Guibor a .iii. sopirs giteis,  
Li cuens Bertrans est de deul enclinés;  
Grant deul en fait li riches parentés.  
Chev.V. (texte cr.) 1152-6

Quant l'ot Marsilie vers sa pareit se turnet,  
Plureit des oilz, tute sa chere enbrunchet  
Roland 3644-5

A grant marvoille fut corociés Guillelmes,  
Cant Vivien voit gesir a la terre.  
Chev.V. (texte cr.) 1865-6

Quant Lowis, le rei preisié,  
vit si murir ses chevaliers  
e ses cumpainnes detrenchier,  
mut fut dolenz e esmaié.  
Gorm. 360-3

Duel ot Fromons cant sa jent vit morir  
Garin 12630

Voit le Raoul, mornes fu et pensis  
Raoul 2845

Examples of this kind, while indicating the stereotyped presentation 'ot/voit + effect', also show that instances of grief in the epic constitute limited responses to particular stimuli rather than pervasive moods or lasting states of mind. Hence the ease with which characters make the transition from one extreme of emotion to another. In La Chanson de Guillaume the hero weeps because of the defeat and dishonour he has sustained at Archamps, but when he learns that Guiborc has assembled a large company of men to help him make a comeback his tears become laughter:

Dunc rist le cunte, si laissad le plorer  
Ch.de G. 1359

Similarly with Bertran in La Prise d'Orange:

Li cuens Bertrans fu dolanz et plains d'ire.  
Endementiers que il pleure et sopire,  
Ez Gillebert qui entra en la vile,  
Les degrez monte de la sale perrine.  
Voit le Bertrans, si commença a rire;  
A sa voiz clere hautement li escrie:  
"Bien vieigniez vos, franc chevalier nobile!"  
Pr.d'O. 1727-33

While the apparent abruptness of such changes of mood may, on the syntactic level, be the result of parataxis (as in the two instances quoted) they may also indicate a real fact of medieval sensibility. Paul Rousset, in an article entitled 'Recherches sur l'émotivité à l'époque romane',<sup>3</sup> cites aspects of the history of the feudal epoch which suggest that the atmosphere of the period was one of permanent insecurity and concludes that

la sensibilité était tendue, en état d'alerte, et ceci explique dans une large mesure les brusques revirements d'humeur d'une population en état de tension continuelle.

Huizinga's comment on the later Middle Ages seems pertinent to the earlier period too:

To the world when it was half a thousand years younger, the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us...All things presenting themselves to the mind in violent contrasts and impressive forms, lent a tone of excitement and of passion to everyday life and tended to produce that perpetual oscillation between despair and distracted joy..which characterize [s] life in the Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly grief and joy are held in tension throughout the epic.

Grief may be referred to in terms of absence of joy, e.g.

Hui perdera Guillelmes sa baldor  
Chev.V. (texte or.) 1720

N'auroie mes joie en tote ma vie  
Guib.D'A. 114

Poi avrai joie quant de moi partirés  
Mon.G. (I) 35

Cum decarrat ma force et ma baldur!  
Roland 2902

Elsewhere the two extreme emotions are juxtaposed. The omniscient narrator may point the contrast between present joy and future grief:

En la vile entre qui molt est grans et bele;  
[Trueve] ces dames qui gisent as fenestres,  
Et en ces places carolent ces puceles;  
Dedens la vile demenoient grant feste,  
Mais grant dolor i fera en cort terme.

Chev. V (ms C) 1263-7

or between present grief and future joy:

Adont plorerent maint baron chevalier,  
Tordent lor poins et font un doel plenier,  
Pleurent puceles et bachelier legier.  
Mais il ne sevent la joie qui lor vient.

Mon.G (II) 5521-4

In Roland the joy of the triumphant pagans is set against the lamentation of the French:

Il l'abat mort; païen en unt grant joie.  
Dient Franceis: 'Mult decheent li nostre.'

Roland 1627-8

Very telling use is made of implied contrast in two epics that relate the story of the defeat of the French at Archamps, Aliscans and La Chanson de Guillaume. In Aliscans Guillaume is pictured riding back to Orange after the battle that has been such a disaster for his side. The sight of Orange as it looms into view (Al 1555-8) reminds him of the buoyancy of spirits with which he set out from the town, a buoyancy which contrasts with the bleakness of his return:

"Diex", dist li quens, "qui tot as a baillier,  
A com grant joie je m'en issi l'autr'ier!  
Puis ai perdu maint vaillant chevalier,  
Ou je n'avrai mais nul jor recovrier."

Al 1559-62

The same device of implied contrast to create a sense of grief is used in La Chanson de Guillaume when Guiborc fails to recognise the dejected Guillaume, whom — she is expecting to come home amidst scenes of victorious joy:

"Si vus fuissez Willame al curb niés,  
 Od vus venissent set mile homes armez,  
 De Frans de France, des baruns naturels;  
 Tut entur vus chantassent ces juglers,  
 Rotes e harpes i oist hom soner.  
 - Allas, pecchable!" dist Willame al curb niés,  
 "A itele joie soleie jo ja aler."

Ch.G 2244-50

(There is a corresponding exchange in Aliscans 1812-24).

In La Chanson de Guillaume also, Guillaume's grief is conveyed with extraordinary sensitivity when he sees the empty hall decked out for the victory feasts that will not take place:

Il veit les bancs, les formes e les tables,  
 La u soleit seer sun grant barnage;  
 Il ne vit nul juer par cele sale,  
 Ne deporter od eschés ne od tables.  
 Puis les regrette, cum gentil home deit faire.

"Ohi, bone sale, cum estes lung e lee!  
 De totes parz vus vei si aurné,  
 Beneit seit la dame qui si t'ad conreié.  
 Ohi, haltes tables, cum estes levees!  
 Napes de lin vei desure getees,  
 Ces escuiles emplies e rasees  
 De hanches e d'espalles, de niueles e de obleies.  
 N'i mangerunt les fiz de franchises meres,  
 Qui en l'Archamp unt les testes colpees!"  
 Plure Willame, Guiburc s'est pasmee;  
 Il la redresce, si l'ad confortee.

Ch.G 2394-409

Conceptually, then, there is a strong sense of interplay between joy and grief - two extremes of emotion. Grief is also often presented as being something which is in itself experienced violently - witness the frequency of the stereotyped line which consists of a four-syllable formula containing the phrase 'tel / si grant duel' followed by the six-syllable formula conveying the notion of a violent or deeply-felt reaction, often expressed in terms of the character nearly losing his senses:

Tel duel en ot,	le sens quida marir
	<u>Al</u> 1145

Tel duel an a,	le sens quide derver
	3808

Tel deul en ot	ne pot .i. mot soner
	<u>Chev. V. (Texte cr.)</u> 719

Teil duel en a,	le sens quide marir <u>Chev.V.</u> (ms C) 826
Moine tel duel	que n'a soing de sa vie <u>Pr. de Cordres</u> 462
Tel deul en fait	lou sanc cuide desver 719
Lors a tel duel	a pou d'ire ne fent <u>Pr. d'O</u> 1071
Lors a tel duel	a pou ne pert le senz 1830
Tel duel en fait	si grans ne fu ofs <u>Raoul</u> 31
Tel duel demaine,	chiet li li brans d'acier 1517
Or a tel duel	le sens quida changier 1731
Tel duel en a	le sens quide changier 1846
Tel duel en a,	toz en va tressuan t 2662
Tel duel en a	le sens quide changier 2706
Lors ot tel duel	del cens quida issir 3192
Tel duel en a	le sens quide changier 3363
Tel duel en a	le sens quide marir 3465
Tel duel en a	le sens quide derver 4072
Tel duel en a	cheüe en est pasmé e 4179
Dunc ad tel doel,	pur poi d'ire ne fent <u>Roland</u> 304
Si grant doel ad	que par mi quiet fendre 1631
Si grant doel out	que mais ne pout ester 2219
Dunc out tel doel,	unkes mais n'out si grant 2223
Si grant doel ad,	por poi qu'il n'est desvét 2789
Si grant doel ai	que jo ne vuldreie estre 2929
Si grant dol ai	que ne voldreie vivre 2936
Si grant doel ad	sempres quiad murir 3506

As confirmation of the statement that grief in the epic is often presented as an immediate reaction to a well-defined cause, it is worth noting that in thirteen of the twenty-seven instances here

quoted, the 'tel / si grant duel' formula is preceded by a line relating that a character sees (or hears of) harm done to comrades or loved ones (or, in Raoul, 4197, a town), for example:

Quant Aerofles vit Danebur morir,  
Tel duel en ot, le sens quida marir.  
Al 1144-45

Cant vit ses homes et chaïr et verser  
Tel deul en ot ne pot .i. mot soner.  
Chev. V (texte cr.) 718-19

Quant Arragon voit tormenter sa gent,  
Lors a tel duel a pou d'ire ne fent.  
Pr. d'Q. 1070-71

Li sors Gueri vit ces homes morir,  
Et son neveu travillier et fenir,  
Et sa cervele desor ces oïls gesir.  
Lors ot tel duel del cens quida issir.  
Raoul 3189-92

Dame A. fu par matin levée,  
Et vit la vile par defors alumée;  
Tel duel en a cheüe en est pasmé e  
Raoul 4195-97

Li arcevesques, quant vit pasmer Rollant,  
Dunc out tel doel, unkes mais n'out si grant.  
Roland 2222-3

(Other examples Chev.V. ms C 826, Raoul 1729-31, 1844-46, 3362-63, 3464-5, 4071-72, Roland 1630-31). Such a sequence may herald a speech (Al 1146, Raoul 3193) or may be followed up by avenging action (Ch.V. ms C 827, Pr. d'Q. 1072, Raoul 3364, 4073-4). When grief is transmuted into avenging action, as it frequently is in epic, duel clearly represents two emotions in modern terms, grief for the pain and loss that has been caused, and anger towards the perpetrator.<sup>5</sup>

In one short laisse from Roland, the grief of the hero (who is presented in the first line) arises out of his hearing the lamentations of his men and results in his both uttering a speech and taking avenging action:



Li quens Rollant tint s'espee sanglente.  
 Ben ad oft que Franceis se dementent,  
Si grant doel ad que par mi quiet fendre.  
 Dist al païen: 'Deus tut mal te consente!  
 Tel as ocis que mult cher te quid vendre.'  
 Sun ceval brochet, ki del curre cuntence;  
 Ki que.l cumpert, venuz en sunt ensemble.

Roland ls CXXIV

Here the stereotyped grief-reference under discussion acts as a kind of pivot on which the finely-structured laisse balances - an example of what measured effects can be achieved with the seemingly blunt components represented by the stereotyped phrases and motifs.

### **The planctus, and Scenes of Mourning for Fallen Warriors**

In an era when the element of oral delivery was important in many forms of popular literature, the use of direct speech was a compelling feature of epic, and characters in the throes of grief frequently put their grief into words, be it individually or collectively, in soliloquy or to others. Two articles by Paul Zumthor, "Etude typologique des planctus contenus dans la Chanson de Roland"<sup>6</sup> and "Les planctus épiques"<sup>7</sup> focus attention on the speech of mourning particularly cultivated in the epic genre, which he defines as

un passage d'une chanson de geste, exprimant la douleur ressentie par un personnage en présence du cadavre d'un compagnon d'armes.<sup>8</sup>

Basing his researches on six epics, La Chanson de Guillaume, La Chanson de Roland, Gormont et Isembart, Le Moniage Guillaume, Raoul de Cambrai and Girart de Roussillon, he classifies and lists examples of the following motifs recurrent in the planctus:

- (1) 'lien narratif / annonce de la plainte'
- (2) 'l'apostrophe'
- (3) 'la prière'
- (4) 'l'éloge du défunt'
- (5) 'signes extérieurs de la douleur'
- (6) 'la douleur intérieure'
- (7) 'allusion à la patrie lointaine'
- (8) 'ubi est?'
- (9) 'évocation de la situation présente'
- (10) 'mare fustes'

Using a slightly modified scheme of classification and a larger number of texts, J.J. Duggan extends the scope of Zumthor's researches by a masterly analysis of the frequency of the various motifs and the configurations in which they are found. Arguing that, after Roland, the planctus form tends to be diluted by interposed narrative, he concludes:

The Chanson de Roland holds the sole literarily effective example of the genre, and has no successors in this respect ... The planctus as a semiautonomous traditional motif disintegrated during the century following Oxford.<sup>9</sup>

The planctus commends itself to study as a highly distinctive (because clearly defined and easily recognizable) element in epic. It has no doubt attracted attention also because of the resemblance it bears both to speeches for the dead found in medieval Latin literature<sup>10</sup> and autonomous lyric forms in French that were to have currency throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>11</sup> But for the contemporary audience we may surmise that the epic planctus in themselves (and some of them are very short)<sup>12</sup> would be of less interest than the larger mourning episodes in which they were sometimes embedded. The individual planctus most often provides a focal point in a long scene or lengthily developed situation and there is a strong tendency for it to be associated with other planctus for the same individual character. Of the fourteen epics selected for this study, five contain no planctus at all.<sup>13</sup> In the other nine, out of 45 planctus,<sup>14</sup> 31 are in groupings of two or more and are inspired by a total of merely seven different characters (in only six epics). These are as follows (the line or laissez references include the planctus itself and its immediate context):

#### Aliscans

1. VIVIEN is lamented by his uncle, Guillaume, in four planctus (somewhat loose examples of laissez similaires) when he is dying, and in one brief planctus when he is dead  
706-14; 728-49; 750-60; 766-8051. 907-11

#### Ch. de Guillaume

2. VIVIEN is lamented by Guillaume in three planctus when he is dying  
1996-2000; 2001-10; 2016-30

#### Ch. de Roland

3. OLIVER is lamented in three planctus by Roland  
1978-88; 2024-34; 2207-14
4. ROLAND is lamented in five planctus (in consecutive laissez) by Charlemagne  
2881-91; 2892-908; 2909-15; 2916-2932; 2933-45

#### Gormont et Isembart

5. GORMONT is lamented by his vanquisher King Louis in two consecutive planctus  
525-35; 537-45

#### Raoul de Cambrai

6. RAOUL is lamented on the battlefield by his uncle Gueri in three planctus (laissez similaires)  
3165-74; 3175-88; 3189-200  
He is lamented when his body is brought home, by his mother Aalais in one planctus  
3557-67  
by his cousin Gautier in two planctus (in laissez similaires)  
3610-27; 3636-45  
by his sweetheart Heluſs in three planctus  
3665-82; 3683-95; 3711-5

#### Garin

7. BEGUES is lamented by Fromondin (the son of his sworn enemy) 10846-54; by his nephew Rigaut, 10966-75; by his brother Garin, 11429-53; by his wife Biatris, 11552-64.

Duggan's findings showed that the planctus occurred in its most complete form in Roland (as an expression of Charlemagne's grief for his nephew) and later, in Duggan's terms, became diluted. He has demonstrated this latter assertion from the specialised and restricted viewpoint of a study of formulae. Interest in the formulaic character of the planctus has perhaps distracted attention from their wider

contextualisation. From one point of view the planctus may become diluted; from another point of view the scenes of mourning become more elaborate. In La Chanson de Guillaume and Aliscans the mourning of Vivien may have been inspired in some particulars by Roland<sup>15</sup> but the narrative interest of the mourning scene is stronger than that of Charlemagne's mourning for Roland. Most strikingly, the mourning of Vivien is interwoven with the account of his death, since Guillaume's lament brings him back sufficiently to consciousness to partake of the Sacrament before expiring (La Chanson de Guillaume 2031 et seq; Aliscans 806 et seq). In Aliscans, which treats at greater length than La Chanson de Guillaume material they seem to have from a common source,<sup>16</sup> the theme of mourning extends into a long episode where Guillaume tries unsuccessfully to carry Vivien's body away on horseback, and finally, after a night of vigil, abandons it tearfully and with many backward glances (Aliscans 865-938; compare La Chanson de Guillaume 2052-67).

In Raoul de Cambrai the mourning of the dead Raoul by his uncle Gueri on the battlefield matches Charlemagne's mourning of Roland in narrative sobriety; the three planctus uttered by Gueri depend on a restricted number of motifs (one of which, the revenge motif, does not figure in Zumthor's list as a characteristic planctus motif). The motifs used occur in the same order in each of the three planctus to create a tightly controlled group of laisses similaires. They are as follows: the finding of Raoul by Gueri (3165-6; 3175-80; 3189-91), Gueri's physical reactions (3167; 3181; 3192), the apostrophe allied to Gueri's opening expression of grief (3168; 3182; 3193) and the motif of revenge (3169-72; 3183-9; 3194-200). But this impressively sober series of planctus is only a prelude to an embellished scene of mourning for Raoul when his body is brought home and he is lamented by a succession of those who love him. While it may be argued that the

grief of his mother Aalais and his nephew Gautier fuel the theme of revenge which was introduced in Gueri's laments and which is to be worked out in the subsequent part of the epic, that of his sweetheart Helufls seems to be included merely to prolong the impact of the scene.<sup>17</sup>

In Garin le Loheren it would be incorrect to speak of a single scene of mourning incorporating the planctus for Begues listed above; each of the four marks a stage in the progress of his body as his bier is borne on its way from the forest in which he is killed to his home in Belin, with the news of Begues de Belin's death being disseminated along the route. This lengthily developed progress, with its ever increasing momentum leading up to his burial, forms a climax in the poem somewhat comparable in power to the climax provided in Roland by the death of the hero, setting in motion the 'endgame' of the poem's action, in which Begues' death is avenged.

Prefiguring the four planctus for Begues are two 'pseudo-laments' spoken for him at two much earlier points in the epic (4977-83, 7522-5) where he is thought dead after encounters with enemies, but recovers to fight another day. These two pseudo-laments lend a tragic finality to the actual laments when they occur.

We have established that well over half the planctus in the fourteen selected epics are concentrated in a small number of situations and that in each of these the linking and context of the planctus may provide a more distinctive kind of interest than the stereotyped nature of the planctus form, considered alone, might lead us to expect. (This is true too of Charlemagne's mourning for Roland, since, although it is barely elaborated beyond the planctus form, the planctus themselves are here part of a whole network of elegy which, as Duggan argues so convincingly,<sup>18</sup> spreads throughout the entire

work). On this evidence, grief for warriors fallen in battle may be seen as a major focus of interest in some epics. But it is not so in the majority of the selected epics, and although highly developed in some instances, it is by no means the only noteworthy category of grief to figure in the genre.

#### Other causes of grief: personal misfortune

Although grief at the fall of the prominent individual warrior (as typified by the planctus) leads to impressive elaboration, and may be thought of as the most distinctive form of grief in the epic genre, there are a large number of other well-defined situations to which epic characters commonly respond with grief. Some (but not all) of these situations are directly linked to the central theme of military conflict. In particular, personal misfortune arising from military conflict is not borne stoically by its victims, but, as the examples below show, may provoke sorrow, lamentation and tears:

(Vivien realises that he will be worsted by superior numbers):

Li anfes plore par dedesos son elme,  
Car il voit bien sor lui en est la perte.  
Chev.V. (texte cr) 602-3

(Guillaume de Monclin loses his castle to the enemy):

Mout fu pensis et tint le chief enclin,  
Por son chastel qu'est abatus et prins.  
Garin 4447-8

(Guillaume d'Orange is held seven years in a dungeon):

Mout se desmente dans Guillaumes li pros,  
Set ans i fu en mout très grant dolor.  
Mon.G. (II) 3260-1

(Bertrand and his kin are taken prisoner):

En mi la chartre ont .j. perron trové,  
Granz fut et larges et de mabre listé.  
Sus sont assis li conte naturel,  
Tuit .iij. ensamble commencent a plorer.  
Pr. de Cordres 695-8

(Berneçon is weary and wounded in battle):

Berneçons ot le cuer triste et dolant  
Par la bataille qi avoit duré tant,  
Et por les plaies qe ci le font pesant.  
Raoul 4539-41

Alongside elegiac grief, centred on the person of a dead warrior, there is, then, the more self-centred grief as represented in the above examples. And in the feudal context, where personal and blood ties are important at a political level and where identification with the group is strong, grief for others' misfortune can have a strongly self-interested element. Such is the case in those instances where characters express grief for a kinsman who has been dishonoured. In Roland, part of Bramimunde's grief at the fatal wounding of her husband Marsile is that he has succumbed to the enemy in a shameful fashion (having had his hand cut off in battle):

E Bramidonie vient curant cuntre lui,  
Si li ad dit: 'Dolente, si mare fui!  
A itel hunte, sire, mon seignor ai perduto.'  
Roland 2822-24

In Raoul part of Aalais' lament for her dead son is that he has been killed by a bastard:

-Diex!" dist la dame, "cum est mes cuers maris!  
Se l'eüst mort un quens poeste's,  
De mon duel fust l'une motiés jus mis."  
Raoul 3596-8

In La Chanson de Guillaume after the disaster at Archamps, Guillaume commends Guiborc for weeping: she is right to do so because he has been so dishonoured:

"Par Deu, Guiborc, tu as dreit que tu plurs!  
Kar ja diseient en la cur mun seignur  
Que eres femme Willame, uns riche hom,  
Un hardi cunte, un vaillant fereur.  
Or estes femme a un malveis fuieur,  
Un quart cunte, un malveis tresturnur,  
Qui de bataille n'ameine home un sul."  
Ch. de G. 1303-9

Sometimes the element of self- or group-interest in grief for a fallen warrior is made explicit, as in the following very disparate examples, firstly where Charlemagne laments for Roland, and secondly where pagans grieve for a dead leader:

"Jamais n'ert jurn, de tei n'aie d'ulur.  
Cum decarrat ma force et ma baldur!  
Nen avrai ja ki sustienget m'onur."  
Roland 2901-3

Molt sunt dolant paien et Sarrasin  
Du roi Charboncle qui est ensi ociz,  
Que por lui sunt durement afoibliz.  
Garin 219-21

### Compassionate Grief

Although much grief in epic is of an openly self-centred nature, there are instances, nevertheless, where grief is experienced disinterestedly on behalf of others. Among prominent characters, Guillaume, whose capacity for grief might almost be thought of as as much a part of his personality as his famous laugh, his nose, his strong right arm and his love of ruse,<sup>19</sup> emerges with a particularly large fund of human compassion expressing itself in grief. In Le Charroi de Nîmes he recalls how he wept at seeing the devastation of the countryside under attack from an enemy:

Tote la terre vi plaine d'aversion,  
Viles ardoir et violer mostiers,  
Chapeles fondre et trebuchier clochiers,  
Mameles tortre a cortoises moilliers,  
Que en mon cuer m'en prist molt grant pitié,  
Molt tendrement plorai des elz del chief.  
Charroi 570-75

In the Chanson de Guillaume he grieves at the sight of his little squire weighed down by his armour:

Un esquier menat, ço fu un enfant,  
Tant par fu joefnes n'out uncore quinze anz.  
La hanste fu grosse, si li pesad formanz,  
E li escuz vers la terre trainant,  
D'ures en altres fors des arçuns pendant.  
Veit le Willame, merveillus duel l'en prent.  
Ch. de G. 2455-60



In Le Couronnement de Louis he weeps for released prisoners:

N'i a celui n'ait sanglent le braier  
Et les espalles et le cors et le chief.  
De pitié plore Guillelmes li guerriers.

Cour.L. 1331-7

In Le Moniage Guillaume he weeps out of pity for his old war-horse  
which has been put into harness again to carry him on an expedition:

Li quens le vit, si commenche a plorer:  
"Chevaus," dist il, "de vous ai grant pité,  
Mout voi vos flans maigres, et vos costés;  
Or vous estuet grans paines endurer,  
Mais jou ne sai se me porrés porter."

Mon.G. (II) 5282-6

Although the noun 'pitié' is used to denote compassionate grief in three out of the four quotations illustrating Guillaume's compassion (above), it should be noted that it has a wider application than modern French 'pitié' or English 'pity'.<sup>20</sup> In Roland, line 822, for example, it denotes a sorrowful, nostalgic tenderness when applied to the weeping of the warriors as they return homewards with thoughts of their own domains and wives in mind:

Cel nen i ad ki de pitét ne plurt.

Elsewhere, in Le Voyage de Charlemagne, it appears in opposition to 'joie' where the two nouns together denote the emotions experienced by Charlemagne when presented with relics in Jerusalem. Here 'joie' and 'pitié' together suggest strong emotion with a religious colouring:

Tut li cors li tressalt de joie et de pitez

Voyage. 183

In Le Moniage Guillaume 'pitiez' denotes the grief experienced by those who regret Guillaume's departure for reasons which, far from suggesting compassion, smack of self-interest!

Tot li serjant, quant le virent aler,  
De la pitié commencent a plorer,  
Car mout l'amoient por sa grantargeté

Mon.G. (II) 865-7

In an incident in La Chevalerie Vivien, 'demener grant pités' appears as an appropriately emotive variation on the common expression 'demener grant duel', conveying the grief of Vivien and his nephew Gerart when they embrace before a battle:

Lors ont entr'als demené grant pités  
Chev.V. (ms C) 509a

### Grief at Partings

The example just quoted, from La Chevalerie Vivien, may be thought of as an expression of grief at separation. Scenes of farewell and separations, which naturally provide scope for grief-depiction, form part of the conventional repertoire of epic situations. A characteristic form of farewell involves the congié or leave-taking, where one character asks for leave, often of a superior, and the other character grants it. The one granting leave may accompany the departing character on the first part of his journey (convoier) and/or give him his blessing. A reference to grief is another optional element in the congié motif:

Congié demande, Gaides li a douné,  
Tout en plorant le convoia assés.  
Mon.G. (II) 2450-51

De la roïne ont le congié requis.  
Tot en plorant sont issu de Pariz.  
Garin 13519-20

The poet may depict a wife's grief at the departure of her husband, and in the three following examples it will be seen that a narrow stereotyping of expression has arisen in this context:

Vait s'en Willame, Guibure remist plorant  
Ch. de G. 2454

Plorant remest la franche enpereriz  
Garin 12200

La reïne remeint, doloruse e pluraunt  
Voyage 92

Guillaume is frequently depicted as the object of others' grief at his departures, and grief expressed on these occasions serves to consolidate the image of one worthy of the utmost esteem, valued for the protection he provides or for his generosity:

Rois Loefs plus ne le convoia,  
De lui parti, a dieu le commanda;  
Et la roïne molt tendrement plora;  
Ele et sa fille au partir se pasma.

Al 3938-41

Vait s'en li cuens, de neient ne se targe,  
Et Loofs le conveie grant masse;  
Plorant apele Guillelme Fierebrace:  
"Hé! gentilz cuens, por Deu l'esperitable,  
Veez mes pere de cest siecle trespasse:  
Vielz est et frailes, ne portera mais armes,  
Et je sui juvenes et de petit eage,  
Se n'ai secors, tot ira a damage."

Cour.L. 253-60

De pitié plore Guillelmes Fierebrace;  
Congié demande a l'apostoile sage,  
Et il li charge mil chevaliers a armes,  
D'or et d'argent trente somiers li charge.  
Au departir en pleure le barnage  
Vait s'en li cuens, qui de riens ne se targe.

Cour.L. 1441-6

Tot li serjant, quant le virent aler,  
De la pitié commencent a plorer,  
Car mout l'amoient por sa grant largeté

Mon.G. (II) 865-7

There is something in all partings which foreshadows the ultimate parting imposed by death, and indeed, in epic, death is often referred to in terms of separation or departure. Oliver says to Roland:

Vos i murrez e France en ert hunie.  
Oi nus defalt la leial compaignie,  
Einze le vespre mult ert gref la departie.

Roland 1734-6

In La Chanson de Guillaume, when Girard leaves the wounded Vivien on the field of battle in order to seek help, the emotive terms in which their parting is depicted indicate strongly that death will prevent them from ever meeting again:

La desevrerent les dous charnels amis.  
Il unt grant duel, ne unt giu ne ris;  
Tendrement plurent andui des oilz de lur vis,  
Lunsdi al vespre.  
Deus, pur quei sevrerent en dolente presse?

Ch de G. 691-5

Later, when Girart dies in the presence of Guillaume, the poet takes up the same verb, '(de)sevrer', denoting separation:

Deus, quel doel quant tels baruns desevrerent

Ch. de G. 1174

Guiborc's death is likewise spoken of as a separation between herself and Guillaume:

Li quens Guillaume a de pitié plouré,  
De la dame est en cest siecle sevrés.

Mon. G. (I) 49-50

Perhaps it is because parting is a frequently-used image for death (itself a central focus of interest in some epics), perhaps because the characteristic motif of departure, the congié, is a piece of formal feudal ceremonial, that partings in epic do not usually give rise to expanded descriptions of grief. I have found only two examples of a lament at a departure. One of these occurs in the memorable scene in Roland where Ganelon takes leave of his kinsfolk to go on the dangerous mission to Marsile (349-56). The other instance of a lament at a departure occurs in La Prise de Cordres et de Seville (650-5; 658-68) where Guibert is taken prisoner by the Saracens. In both cases those lamenting have strong reason to fear that they may not see their kinsman again, so the laments uttered are really in anticipation of the individual's death and are more than simply an expression of grief at his departure.

There are certainly some striking instances of sorrowful partings in the epic. In Le Couronnement de Louis, when a message from the king interrupts Guillaume's wedding, there is a poignant reference to the tearful parting with his bride:

Guillelmes boise la dame o le vis cler,  
Et ele lui, ne cesse de plorer.  
Par tel covent es les vos dessevrez,  
Que ne se virent en trestot lor aé.

Cour.L. 1413-6

The departure of Guillaume's kinsmen at the end of Aliscans (8362-72) precipitates such sorrowfulness in Guillaume that Guiborc has to shake him out of it with a stirring speech of comfort and good sense.<sup>21</sup> However, as with other instances of parting, grief, though a factor, is not elaborately depicted in either of these instances.

### Nostalgic Grief

Not unconnected with the grief of parting and separation is the grief springing from nostalgia, and this form of grief, with its feudal emphasis on absent kin and distant homeland, receives poignant, if relatively infrequent, expression in the corpus of epics on which this study is based. Reference has already been made to Charlemagne's troops weeping as they return from Spain at the thought of homes and families. The dying Roland, thinking of France, of his lord and of the glories of past battles cannot help but weep and sigh:

Li quens Rollant se jut desuz un pin,  
Envers Espaigne en ad turnét sun vis;  
De plusurs choses a remembrer li prist:  
De tantes teres cum li bers conquist,  
De dulce France, des humes de sun lign,  
De Carlemagne, sun seignor ki.l nurrit;  
Ne poet muer n'en plurt e ne suspir.

Roland 2375-81

In one version of Le Charroi de Nîmes<sup>22</sup> Guillaume laments on his way south as a breeze from France, striking his face, reminds him of home and friends:

Va s'an Guillaumes, li marchis au cor neis,  
Entre en un val, si ot un mont monté.  
Cant vint en som, si s'estoit regardé;  
Vers douce France a son vis retorné.  
Uns vans de France lou fiert an mi lou neis:  
Ovre son sain, si l'an laist plain antrer,  
Ancontre l'ore se prist a guarmenter:

Ch.de N. (ms D) 793-9

There is a touching scene in La Chanson de Guillaume where the little squire Gui is reminded by the sun's rays striking his shield that it is the time Guiborc normally gives him breakfast - though here what might begin as something akin to nostalgia is quickly transmuted into an expression of sheer hunger!

Clers fu li jurz e bels fu li matins;  
Li soleiz raie qui les armes esclargist;  
Les raies ferent sur la targe dan Gui;  
Mult tendrement pluret des oilz de sun vis.  
Veit le Willame, demander li prist:  
"Ço que pot estre, bels niés, sire Gui?"  
Respunt li enfes: "Jo vos avrai ja dit;  
Mar vi Guiborc qui suef me norist,  
Qui me soleit faire disner si matin!  
Ore est le terme qu'ele le me soleit offrir;  
Ore ai tel faim ja me verras morir."  
Ch.de G. 1730-40

### Contrite Grief

Whereas nostalgia seems somewhat foreign to the spirit of immediacy which infuses so much of the epic genre - and is indeed shown to be so in the lines from La Chanson de Guillaume just quoted - the combination of bold action and religious faith might be expected to produce scenes of repentance and regret for misdeeds. However, Payen, who devotes more than one hundred pages to the epic in his work on the motif of repentance in medieval French literature, concludes that repentance, particularly in relation to the Contritionist movement of the twelfth century, plays a negligible role in the genre.<sup>23</sup> His conclusion is amply corroborated in the selection of epics on which this chapter is based. Only in two epics do we have the spectacle of a character grieving for his sins and expressing contrition in tears and sighs:

1. Guillaume expresses contrite grief in Le Moniage Guillaume, as is fitting at a time in his life in which religious preoccupations

play an increasing role:

"Sainte Marie, dame, car en pensés,  
Que jou me puisse a vo fil acorder,  
Car trop ai fait de grans peciés mortels."  
Lors comencha Guillaumes a plorer,  
Del cuer del ventre forment a souspirer.

Mon.G. (II) 2018-22

2. Garin expresses contrite grief in Garin le Loheren at the end of a long and terrible period of internecine warfare:

Bien fu .iii. anz que il guerre ne fist;  
Ainz se repent et se clainme: "Las! chetiz!"  
Ses pechiez pleure au soir et al matin,  
De ce qu'il a tanz homes morz et pris.

Garin 16399-402

Roland's act of contrition preceding his death (ls CLXXIV, CLXXV, CLXXVI) is not accompanied by any show of grief, though in the context of the debate surrounding the inspiration of the poem, feudal or Christian, it is significant that there is a reference to his weeping with thoughts of his home and liege-lord in the line preceding his second culpa (2381).

There are two instances of grief for specific misdeeds. In La Chevalerie Vivien, in an instance of regret for a specific action, the wounded Vivien faints with grief on realising that he has mistakenly struck Guillaume:

Ot le li enfes, li sans li est mués;  
Quant seit que c'est Guillelmes au cort nés,  
Et feru l'ot de son branc d'achier cler,  
En pamisons est de dolor versés.

Ch.V. (ms C) 1754-7

This incident seems to be modelled on the one in Roland where Oliver, blinded by blood, strikes Roland in error (ls CXLIX). Although Oliver asks for forgiveness, no reference is made to any grief on his part. The Roland poet lets the pathos of the scene speak for itself.

In another instance of grief for a specific misdeed, Guiborc weeps in Alisoans when she realises that the knight to whom she has

refused entry at the gates of Orange is none other than Guillaume:

Voit le Guiborc, si commence a plorer.  
Aliscans 1713

Here, however, although her grief may be taken as an expression of her regret for having refused entry to him, it might equally well be interpreted as an expression of the emotion she experiences simply on recognising him, as other instances of grief at recognition suggest.

### Grief at recognition

Not infrequently in the course of epic plots, identities are uncovered which have been concealed by armour or disguise, and family relationships, until then unsuspected, are brought to light. When this happens it is customary for one or both characters involved to express their emotion in grief. Sometimes, grief on such occasions may be an expression of compassion, as when Landris recognises Guillaume who has spent seven years in a dungeon:

Li quens estoit maigres et descarnés,  
Tous ert pelus, les iex ot enfossés,  
Si drap estoient rompu et despané,  
Sous ciel n'a houte, tant ait le cuer serré,  
S'il le vëist, qui n'en eüst pité.  
Landris le voit ens el palais monter,  
Tost le conut, quant il l'ot avisé,  
Au grant corsage, as puins gros et quarrés,  
E a la boche qu'il avoit sour le nés;  
De la dolour chiet a terre pasnés.  
Mon.G. (II) 3580-9

But often when friends recognise each other, or family relationships are uncovered, weeping and other signs of grief are simply an expression of the general emotion aroused by such an event:

Guiborc l'oi, si le reconuit assez;  
Del quor suspire, des oilz comence a plorer.  
Ch.de G. 2828-9

A icest mot li cousin s'entrebaissent,  
Cascuns d'aus deus a plains les iex de larmes.  
Mon.G. (II) 2267-68



A ces paroles comenche a lermoier,  
Car bien conut Ansēys le guerrier;  
Mon.G. (II) 5001-2

Betranz lou voit, sel reconut assés,  
Et Guiberz lui, si commence a plorer.  
Pr.de Cordres 2455-6

## Grief and fear

The above examples, where the emotion experienced at recognition is expressed through grief, suggest that epic poets often depict the effect of a 'primary' emotion, grief, in situations where a modern reader might expect subtler, less determinate forms of emotion, or possibly even a different emotion altogether. A striking form of this phenomenon involves the linking of grief and fear. Characters in epic may display signs of grief when anticipating danger or disaster, in situations where, to the modern mind, fear would seem to be a more appropriate emotion. In La Chevalerie Vivien, for example, Vivien sighs at the sight of the pagan forces approaching by sea:

Dont commençait l'anfes a sopirer.  
Dist a ses homes: "Or poés esgarder:  
Bataille avrons, sel poons endurer."  
Ch.V. (texte or) 345-7

In Raoul, warriors weep as they anticipate battle:

Chascuns frans hom de la pitié plora;  
Prometent Dieu qi vis en estordra  
Ja en sa vie mais pechié ne fera.  
Raoul 2424-6

Louis both weeps and sighs out of fear of Ysoré the giant:

Rois Lōēys a au cuer mout grant ire,  
Pleure des iex et de son cuer souspire,  
Car mout redoute Ysoré de Coninbre  
Mon.G. (II) 4732-4

How is the overlap between grief and fear to be accounted for? It is the practice of the epic poet to externalize and concretize emotions, and since it would seem that few striking signs naturally and traditionally associate themselves with fear,<sup>24</sup> some of the signs

which, as we shall see,<sup>25</sup> normally accompany grief in the epic, and which may be thought to denote the effect of any strong unpleasant emotion, demonstrate fear as well as grief. Either grief or fear may cause a character to faint, to look or bend downwards, to be struck speechless, or simply to sit down, as the following examples explicitly illustrate:

De la dolor ciet a terre pasmés.  
Mon.G. (II) 3589

De la paor chiet a terre pasmee.  
Al. 2810

Tel deul en ot ne pot .i. mot soner.  
Chev.V. (texte cr.) 719

Le chief enbrunce si commence a penser;  
Tel paor a ke n'osa mot soner.  
Al. 3098-9

A tant se siet la roïne esplouree.  
Al. 2848

(cf. Del duel s'asist la medre jus a terre.  
Alexis 146)

De la paor a la terre s'assist  
Mon.G. (II) 5708

From another point of view the conflation of the two primary emotions, grief and fear, may be interpreted as the poet's attempt to capture a more subtle, less easily definable emotion such as apprehension, anxiety or foreboding. The character experiences fear at the prospect of some unpleasant thing that may happen, and at the same time he grieves as though it had already happened.

Grief and fear are most effectively associated in La Chanson de Roland where Charlemagne and the Franks are depicted in sorrowful anticipation of the battle of Roncevaux. At the moment of Roland's accepting the staff in token of his assuming the leadership of the rearguard, the emperor, concerned for the safety of his nephew, is overcome by an emotion which expresses itself in tears:

Li empereres en tint sun chef enbrunc,  
Si duist sa barbe e detoerst sun gernun,  
Ne poet mïer que des oilz ne plurt.

Roland 771-3

On the way back to France, while the Frankish warriors are moved to tears at the thought of seeing their homes again, Charlemagne weeps for a different reason, again because of a dim sense of anxiety for the safety of Roland and France:

Puis que il venent a la tere majur,  
Virent Guascuigne, la tere lur seignur.  
Dunc lur remembret des fïus e des honurs  
E des pulcele s e des gentilz oixurs:  
Cel nen i ad ki de pitét ne plurt.  
Sur tuz les autres est Carles anguissus:  
As porz d'Espaigne ad lessét sun nevold,  
Pitét l'en prent, ne poet mïer n'en plurt. AOI

Roland 818-25

Later, while the battle rages at Roncevaux, Charlemagne's continuing fearful grief (1404) is echoed and magnified in the natural disasters occurring in France which foretell doom, and which the poet calls

. . . li granz dulors por la mort de Rollant.

Roland 1437

The sound of Roland's horn, summoning aid, greatly increases Charlemagne's grounds for anxiety, and now his grief-stricken reactions are taken up and echoed by his men:

Li empereres cevalchet par irur  
E li Franceis dolenz e curuçus.  
N'i ad celoi ki durement ne plurt

Roland 1812-4

Li empereres chevalchet ireement  
E li Franceis curuçus e dolent;  
N'i ad celoi n'i plurt e se dement

Roland 1834-6

While Charlemagne's fear in the first half of the poem heightens our sense of foreboding, its repeated depiction in terms of grief enhances the pathos of his situation and prepares us for the tragic climax. The Roland poet thus exploits to the full the possibilities inherent in the conceptual overlap of grief and fear.

Grief and fear are strongly associated, with very different results, in the presentation of Charlemagne's son and successor Louis. In Le Couronnement de Louis, where his career as king begins, his tears reflect his consistent inability to stand on his own two feet without the constant support of Guillaume Fierebrace. When Guillaume sets off on a pilgrimage to Rome, Louis tearfully and fearfully bemoans his vulnerability (255-60). Later, when faced with a challenge from his enemy Gui d'Alemaigne and with the lack of support from his barons, he again responds by sighing and weeping and is found thus by the returning Guillaume:

Ot le li rois, s'embronche le visage;  
 Quant se redrece, s'apele le barnage:  
 "Seignor baron, entendez mon langage:  
 Gui d'Alemaigne me mande grant oltrage,  
 Par noz dous cors me mande la bataille,  
 Et ge sui juvenes et de petit eage,  
 Si ne puis maintenir mon barnage.  
 A il Franceis qui por mon cors le face?"  
 Quant cil l'oïrent, s'embronchent lor visages.  
 Veit le li reis, a pou que il n'enrage;  
 Tendrement plore desoz les pels de martre.  
 A tant es vos Guillelme Fierebrace,  
 Qui les forriers a conduiz en la place.  
 Toz armez entre en la tente de paille  
 Et veit le rei qui sospire en granz lairmes.  
Cour.L. 2403-17

It is not because Louis is susceptible to grief that he cuts such a despicable figure - Guillaume too, as we have seen, is not infrequently depicted grieving. But Louis' grief is characteristically an expression of his impotence, and thus, in his grief, he contrasts strongly with Guillaume himself. In Le Moniage Guillaume, when Paris is besieged by the pagan Ysoré, Louis laments for Guillaume (who is feared dead) and faints grief-stricken on the floor (5505-12). At the same time Guillaume is arriving at the gates of the town, and although he responds with tears (5542) on learning of the consternation within, that is merely a momentary prelude to good sense and action on his part.

## The Manifestations of Grief

### Weeping

Weeping and fainting are by far the commonest outward reactions of grief in epic and are depicted through a wide range of formulae. In its simplest form the reference to weeping consists of a four-syllable phrase made up of subject and verb, ('plorer'), for example:

Guillaumes pleure,	ne se puet saouler <u>Al</u> 841
Plure Willame,	Guiburc s'est pasmee <u>Ch.de G</u> 2408
Pleurent puceles	et bachelier legier <u>Mon.G.</u> (II) 5523
Plore Bertranz	et Guillelmes sospire <u>Pr. de Cordres</u> 648

A slightly more elaborate possibility is for the monosyllabic verb to be modified by an adverb or adverbial phrase of three syllables, such as 'de pitié', 'tendrement', which make up the required four syllables of the first part of the line while contributing a somewhat more affective note:

De pitié pleure	ne se pot aténir <u>Al</u> 194
Tenrement pleure,	sa main a sa maisele 751
De pitié plore	Guillelmes le guerriers <u>Cour.L.</u> 1331
Forment en plore	Hermenjarz la jentils <u>Guib. d.A.</u> 2387
Tenrement pleure	li gentieus quens adont <u>Mon.G.</u> II 3242
De pitié pleure	li hardi chevalier <u>Raoul</u> 1495

Where 'plorer' itself occurs in the second part of the line, it is in some duo-syllabic form, e.g. the past definite tense or the past or present participle. The six syllables can then be made up with a

trissyllabic adverb or adverbial phrase e.g. 'tendrement' plus a monosyllabic element:

Li quens Guillaumes	vait tendrement plorant
	<u>Al</u> 715
Li uns por l'autre	va de dolor plorant
	1965
Grant duel demaine,	tendrement en plora
	3887
Li quens Guillaume	a de pitié plouré
	<u>Mon.G.</u> (I) 49
Et la rōine	a tenrement ploré
	(II) 5377
La dame l'ot,	s'a de pitié ploré
	<u>Pr.d'O.</u> 941

Another common possibility for the second part of the line is the formula 'commença a plorer' / 'si commence a plorer':

Rainouars l'ot,	si commence a plorer
	<u>Al</u> 7795
Al departir	commença a plorer
	<u>Garin</u> 13233
Li quens le vit,	si commenche a plorer
	<u>Mon.G.</u> (II) 5282

The reference to weeping is often expanded syllabically by the device of periphrasis, the simplest form of which is 'plorer des iex', found in the first hemistich:

Plurad des oilz	pitusement e suef
	<u>Ch.de G</u> 1008
Des iolz plora,	ne se pot tenir mie
	<u>Pr.de Cordres</u> 2192
Plurent des oilz	de doel e de tendrur
	<u>Roland</u> 1446

A corresponding six-syllable formula is provided by an expanded reference to the eyes:

Voit le Guillaumes,	des iex dou cief ploura
	<u>Al</u> 2199
Mult tendrement	pluret des oilz de sun vis
	<u>Ch.de G.</u> 1733

N'i a celui  
Ou ne plorast

qui n'en soit esbahis,  
des biaux eus de son vis  
Garin 57-8

Lermoier is an infrequent synonym for 'plorer'; it occurs less than a dozen times in the selected texts, mostly in the six-syllable formula 'commence' / 'si prist a lermoier'. There is one example, in La Chanson de Guillaume line 1315, of a pure latinism - 'lacrimat':

Plurad Willame, dunc lacrimat Guiburc.

References to weeping may be highlighted by periphrasis, whereby the progress of the tears is traced down the cheeks (or along the nose!) and sometimes on to the garments. In Raoul we read of a character whose tears reach his trousers:

Tenrement pleure, ne se seit consellier,  
L'aigue li cort contreval le braier.  
Raoul 3382-3

De pitié pleure li marchis au cort nes.  
L'aige li cort fil a fil lonc le nes.  
Al 1635-6

L'aige dou cuer li est as iex montee,  
A val la face li est chaude colee  
Al 1801-2

Plorad des oilz pitusement e suef,  
L'eve li curt chalde juste le niés,  
La blanche barbe moille tres qu'al baldré  
Ch. de G. 1008-10

De ses beaus oilz commença a plorer;  
L'eve l'an cole fil a fil sor lou neis  
Que ses bliaus en estoit arousés.  
Ch.N. (ms D) 809-11

This is an extension of the more standardised reference to the tears wetting the face:

L'aige des iex                      li a moillié la face  
Al 2070

Plure de ses oilz,                si li moille sa face  
Ch.de G. 478

Pleure des iex,                    la face en a moullie  
Mon.G. (II) 2212

Tant a ploré                      mollie a sa maissele  
Raoul 3494

## Fainting

Fainting is denoted by the verb 'se pasmer' which, like 'plorer', functions in a number of distinctive formulaic contexts. If occurring in the first part of the line, the reference to fainting may consist simply of subject and verb, for example:

Li quens se pasme	tant a son duel mené
	<u>Al</u> 806
Elle se pasme	ne se pot tenir mies
	<u>Pr. de Cordres.</u> 475

The expression 'chaf̃r pasmé' / 'chaf̃r jus' also provides a four-syllable formula:

Pasmé en ch̃ient	set mile des archons
	<u>Mon.G.</u> (II) 6266
Lors chiet pasmee;	on la cort redrecier
	<u>Raoul</u> 3555
Il chēf̃ jus	ne se pot sostenir
	<u>Garin</u> 11427

The 'chaf̃r pasmé' reference can be made to fit six syllables by the addition of the detail that the character fell to the ground:

Ot le Guibors,	a terre chiet pasmee
	<u>Al</u> 1831
Voeillet o nun,	a tere chet pasmét
	<u>Roland</u> 2220
Guichart le voit,	pasmé caf̃ a terre
	<u>Chev. V.</u> ms C, 1788

Characters may be said to faint several times in a row, the number of times usually being stated in the first part of the line, while, in the second part, reference may be made to what he falls on:

treis feiz se pasma	sur le cors
	<u>Gormond</u> 425
Sovent se pasme	li rois sour le plancié
	<u>Mon.G.</u> (II) 511
.ii. foiz se pasme	sor le mabrin degré
	<u>Pr.d'O</u> 1703





A icest mot chiet a terre pasmee.  
Li clers Estevenes l'en a sus relevee.  
Al 4038-9

De la dolor ciet a terre pasmés.  
Si compaignon l'en ont amont levé.  
Mon.G. (II) 3589-90

Tel duel en a cheüe en est pasme{e}  
Et Gautelès l'en a sus relevée.  
Raoul 4197-8

In another instance from Raoul, Gautelès, helping up the grief-stricken daughter of Aalais from her faint, accidentally knocks the pall from Raoul's bier, and the sight of Raoul's body, suddenly revealed, causes him to utter a speech of vengeance (Raoul ls CLXXIX). But it is very unusual for the motif of fainting and being helped up to have such specific circumstantial details associated with it and it normally functions in purely stereotyped conditions.

Finally the fainting motif is often used as a convenient way of ending a lament or a sad speech, for example, after Guillaume's lament at the thought of telling Guiborc about Vivien's death:

Ha! Guibor, gentil france moillier,  
Quant vos savés cel mortel encombrier  
De mes neveux, ke tant aviés chier,  
Je quit le deus vos fera esragier."  
Li quens se pasme sor le col dou destrier.  
Al 1563-67

-after Heluys' lament for Raoul:

"Mors felonese, trop par fustes hardie  
Qí a tel prince osas faire envafe!  
Por seul itant qe je fui vostre amie,  
N'avrai signor en trestoute ma vie."  
Lors chiet pasmée, tant par est esbahie;  
Tos la redrese la riche baronie.  
Raoul 3677-82

- after Roland's lament for Oliver:

'Sire cumpaign, tant mar fustes hardiz:  
Ensemble avum estét e anz e dis.  
Ne.m fesis mal, ne jo ne.l te forsfis.  
Quant tu es mor{z}, dudur est que jo víf.'  
A icest mot se pasmet li marchis.  
Roland 2027-31

## Sighing

Sighing is next in order of frequency to weeping and fainting as a manifestation of grief. Emphasis is often given to this somewhat unspectacular reaction by the use of the formulae 'geter un souspir' or 'souspirer del cuer':

Parfondement	commence a soupirer <u>Charroi.</u> 791
Dame Guiborc	a .iii. sopirs giteis <u>Chev. V. (texte cr.)</u> 1154
Li rois mēismes	a del cuer sospiré <u>Mon.G.</u> (II) 5372
La franche Agaie	getait .j. grief sospir <u>Pr. d'O.</u> 718
La dame l'ot,	si gita un souspir <u>Pr.d'O.</u> 718

Another way of giving emphasis to sighing is to couple it with weeping:

Veez de Willame, cum plure e suspire  
Ch. de G. 2578

Ne poet mēer n'en plurt e ne suspirt.  
Roland 2381

## Violent Signs of Grief

The same range of violent reactions that were found in Alexis - tearing of hair, rending of clothes, wringing of hands - occur also in epic, though less frequently than weeping, fainting or sighing:

Desront ses dras, ses cevels a tirés  
Al 3540a

Dunc tort ses mains, tire sun chef e sa barbe  
Ch.de G. 477

Grans fu li dieus el palais demenés,  
Lor puins detordent, lor ceviaus ont tirés.  
Mon.G. (II) 82-3

Qui dont ofst la pucelle orfer,  
Ses paumes batre et ses chevos tirer!  
Pr. de Cordres. 1779-80

Li quens Guillaumes vait tendrement plorant,  
 E ses .ii. poins vait si fort detorgant,  
 a Ke sor les jointes en vait li cuirs rompant  
 b E li clers sans des ongles degoutant.

Al 715-6b

In the last of these examples, it will be seen that a variant reading of Aliscans provides a rather macabre elaboration of the hand-wringing motif, as does a variant reading of some lines near the end of Garin le Loheren (16601-3):<sup>26</sup>

Qui donc véist la bele Biatriz,  
 Ses chevous traire, esgratiner son vis,  
 L'un poing a l'autre par angoisse ferir,  
 Le sanc vermoil par les ongles chaïr?  
 Soz ciel n'a home qui pitié n'en préist.

It is possible that the embellishment of the hand-wringing motif may owe something to courtly influences. The mid-twelfth century Ovidian conte Narcisus<sup>27</sup> contains a portrait of the heroine Dané hurrying along a road, grief-stricken and bare-foot. There the detail of the blood oozing from her toes is clearly calculated to heighten the pathos of her situation:

Li sans li saut parmi l'orteil,  
 Qui tot le pié li fait vermeil.  
 L'iaue li ciet aval la face.

Narcisus 513-5

We saw also (p. 28 above) that in the twelfth-century interpolated version of Alexis the motif of hand-wringing is elaborated by a reference to the character dropping his gloves.

By contrast, the tearing of hair and plucking of beard belongs to a more authentic, widespread epic tradition. In La Chanson de Roland Charlemagne, in grief, has frequent recourse to these gestures:

Trait ses crignels pleines ses mains amsdous.

Roland 2906

Sa barbe blanche cumencet a detraire,  
 Ad ambes mains les chevels de sa teste.

2930-1

Pluret des oilz, tîret sa barbe blanche

3712

## Attitudes Adopted in Grief

Instead of the more violent and dramatic signs of grief, characters may adopt certain stances or show their grief in less ostentatious manner. In Alexis we saw that the mother expressed her sorrow by sitting down on the ground:

Del duel s'asist la medre jus a terre.  
Alexis 146

There are a few examples of this type of reaction in the selected epics. Guillaume, angry and sad in Aliscans at being rejected by Louis, goes to sit and weep under an olive tree, and, later, the queen sits down, regretful of her treatment of him:

Li quens s'asist, n'ot en lui c'afrier.  
Al 2461

A tant se siet la roïne esplouree.  
Al 2848

In Garin le Loheren a sense of foreboding causes Garin to sit down in the midst of merry-making - just before he learns of his brother Begues' death:

Soz .i. olive li Loherenz s'asist,  
Molt fu dolenz, ne se pot sostenir.  
Garin 11394-5

In La Chanson de Guillaume the hero is so sad on his return from battle that he can get no further than the lowest table in the dining hall - though this is less an example of the conventional motif and more, I think, a telling and realistic detail which has come from the poet's own imagination:

Puis l'ad assis a une basse table,  
Ne pout aler pur doel a la plus halte.  
Ch.de G. 1402-3

A much commoner attitude adopted by grief-stricken characters in epic is that of looking downwards:

Ot le li quens, vers terre est aclinés  
De pitié pleure li marchis au cort nes.  
Al. 1634-35

Li cuens Bertrans est de deul enclinés  
Chev. V. (texte cr.) 1155

Les mes encontrent, chascun le chief enclin;  
Tenrement plourent chascuns soz son hermin.  
Garin 1350-1

This attitude is often rendered by 'enbronchier' or cognates:

Dame Aalais vers terre s'enbroncha:  
Plore des iex, .j. grant soupir jeta.  
Raoul 174-5

Li empereres en tint sun chef enbrunc,  
Si duist sa barbe e detoerst sun gernun,  
Ne poet muer que des oilz ne plurt.  
Roland 771-3

Another attitude sometimes adopted by grieving characters is that of having the jaw resting on the hand:

Cascuns tenoit sa main a sa maissele.  
Pleurent et crfent et font dure moleste.  
Mon.G. (II) 2920-1

E Gueri pleure, sa main a sa maisele.  
Raoul 3487

Perhaps the least ostentatious reaction is denoted by the verb 'penser' which, on occasion, is very clearly associated with grief, as in Roland, when Baligant hears bad news of Marsile:

E Baligant cumencet a penser,  
Si grant doel ad, par poi qu'il n'est desvét.  
Roland 2788-89

In Garin, Begues sighs at the sight of his two little sons which reminds him that he has lost contact with many old friends and kin. On hearing him sigh, his wife asks "por coi pensez vos si?":

Li dus les voit, a sospirer a pris.  
Voi le la dame, si l'a a raison mis:  
"He, sire Begues, por coi pensez vos si?"  
Garin 10161-2

The idea of sadness is carried over into a cognate of 'penser', the adjective 'pensis' with its variant 'trespensés':

De Vivfen est dolans et pensis  
Al 8388  
De ses peciés est forment trespensés  
Mon.G. (II) 2033

## The Attribution of Grief

Throughout the - admittedly limited - spectrum of characters who figure in epic, the propensity to grieve and to express grief openly seems to be universal. An emperor of the stature of Charlemagne, a weakling such as Louis, a practical and supremely effective warrior such as Guillaume grieve with equal readiness. But although the grief of such individuals may stand out, it should be noted that, as is to be expected in a genre as stamped by convention as the epic, the attribution of grief is to a large extent governed by stereotyping. Such stereotyping may be thought of partly as a reflection of feudal - and human - reality, and partly as a result of the formulaic nature of epic diction.

A number of instances, few but quite suggestive, imply that men of rank are under an obligation to mourn their vassals. This seems to be indicated in the following phrases from La Chanson de Roland and La Chanson de Guillaume:

Carles le pleint par feid e par amur<sup>28</sup>  
Roland 2897

Rollant reguardet es munz e es lariz.  
De cels de France i veit tanz morz gesir,  
E il les pluret cum chevaler gentill  
Roland 1851-53

Puis les regrette cum gentil home deit faire  
Ch.de G. 2398

Weinand refers to the same phenomenon in German heroic literature:

Es ist die Totenklage, die häufig als eine Pflicht betrachtet wird, die die Überlebenden dem Toten zu erweisen haben: darauf deuten verschiedene Wendungen hin, die sich gelegentlich in derartigen Zusammenhängen finden. Herzog Ernst zum Beispiel und seine Gefährten haben ihre toten Gesellen 'mit weinenden zühern' beklagt 'was uns zuo stuond' (Ernst-Prosa 267, 15). Im Nibelungenlied erscheint die Heldenklage als Dienst, den man 'guoten vriunden' erweisen 'müsse' (Nib. 1062).<sup>29</sup>

It would seem therefore that the idea of obligation attaching to the mourning of comrades was a conventional aspect of medieval grief

rhetoric - even though our selected texts happen to yield only a small number of instances in which the idea is made explicit. Certainly it is common for references to be made to the sorrowful reactions of leaders who see their men suffer in battle:

Quant Lowis, le rei preisié,  
vit si murir ses chevaliers  
e ses cumpainnes detrenchier,  
mut fut dolenz e esmaié.

Gorm. 360-3

Quant Arragon voit tormenter sa gent,  
Lors a tel duel a pou d'ire ne fent

Pr. d'Q. 1070-1

Li sors Gueri voit sa gent enpirier;  
Tel duel en a le sens quide changier.

Raoul 3362-3

In a genre in which considerations of 'lignage' are of great importance, the mourning of relatives is often specified:

Por son neveu s'est danz Garins pasmé

Garin 15144

Son fil vit mort; le sens quide changier

Raoul 2547

Qi trova mort son pere ou son effant,  
Neveu ou oncle ou son appartenant,  
Bien poés croire, le cuer en ot dolant.

Raoul 3228-30

Asez ad doel quant vit mort sun nevoid

Roland 1219

Il nen i ad chevaler ne barun  
Que de pitét mult durement ne plurt;  
Plurent lur filz, lur freres, lur nevolz  
E lur amis e lur lige signurs.

Roland 2418-21

References to characters grieving collectively are common in epic, and relatives may be referred to grieving as a collectivity:

Grant duel en fait li riches parentés

Chev.V. (texte cr.) 1156

Tos li lignages en demoine .j. deul tel/ . . .

Pr. de Cordres 451

When other types of references to collective grief are made, they often have the effect of stressing the gravity of the events



which have provoked the grief, or enhancing the status of the person being grieved for. With collective grief, stress may be laid on rank:

Al departir en plore li barnages  
Cour.L. 1445

De pitié pleurent li conte et li marchis  
Mon.G. (II) 4587

Maint gentill home en pleure de pitié  
Raoul 3613

Characters grieving collectively are often referred to as 'chevaliers', and here the metrical requirements of the decasyllabic line seem to dictate this choice of detail as much as anything else. With a preceding monosyllabic determiner this trisyllabic noun of wide application fills the four syllables before the caesura:

Maint chevalier i vefssiés pasmer  
Al 7369

Si chevalier en pleurent de pité  
Chev. V. (ms. C) 1521

With adjectival qualification it may provide the six syllables needed for the second part of the line:

Pour lui plorerent maint vaillant chevalier  
Cour.L. 88

Adont plorerent maint baron chevalier  
Mon.G. (II) 5521

De pitié pleurent li hardi chevalier  
Raoul 1495

It is virtually unknown for the grief of non-noble groups to be depicted. In Le Moniage Guillaume (II) the servants in the monastery weep at Guillaume's departure (865-6) and seven thousand pagan archers faint at the death of their champion Ysoré (6266). In Roland an impressive effect is created by references to mass grief:

Encuntre tere se pasment .xx. millers  
Roland 2416

Trait ses crignels pleines ses mains amsdous;  
Cent milie Franc en unt si grant dultur,  
Nen i ad cel ki durement ne plurt.  
2906-8

The rhetorical effect gained by references to mass grief is sometimes enhanced by the use of the veïssiez/oïssiez formulation which authenticates such descriptions by involving the audience:

La veïssiez plorer maint chevalier

Garin 9415

La oïssiés tante dame plorer

15415

La veïsez tant chevaler plorer

Roland 349

La veïssiés une dolor pesant

Chev.V. (texte cr.) 672

Dont i peïssiés veoir grant plorefs.

Chev.V. (ms C) 474

La oïssiés de Turs grant plorison

Mon.G. (II) 6264

The latter three examples illustrate also the use of impersonal references to denote collective grief. This is frequently rendered by the four-syllable formula 'grans fu li deus'. The impersonality of the expression is appropriate to descriptions of collective grief, and the formula is, when it occurs in the selected texts, most often completed by a reference to place or occasion:

grans fu li deus + place

(Molt fu li deus en Orenge pesans

Al 1840)

Grans fu li deus el palais segnoris

1881

Grans fu li dieus el palais demenés

Mon.G. II 82

Grans fu li deuls leans en Salernie

Pr.de Cordres. 476

grans fu li deus + occasion:

Grans fu li deus a celle departie

Pr.de Cordres 647

Grans fu li diex as effans enterrer

Raoul 566

Grans fu li dues iluec au departir

4561

The bulk of references to collective grief are short, contained in one or two lines. Collective laments are rare. In Le Moniage Guillaume (II) Guillaume's men voice their sorrow in a lament of nine lines (73-81) on discovering that Guillaume has secretly left Orange to become a monk. In Garin townspeople mourn their relatives killed in battle (13762-70). A form of collective lament is however used to greatest effect in Roland. A section of the poem - laissez CXVII-CXXIII - describes the death in battle of seven of the twelve peers. The even laissez refer to the peer or peers by name and describe their fall. The odd laissez describe how their killers are immediately slain out of revenge by another Frank. At the end of each even laisse a one-line collective lament is spoken by the company of Frankish warriors. Thus:

- CXVII Engeler de Guascoigne killed by Climborins  
1544 Dient Franceis: 'Deus, quel doel de prodome!'
- CXVIII Engeler's death avenged by Oliver.
- CXIX Sansun killed by Valdabrun.  
1579 Dient Franceis: 'Deus, quel doel de baron!'
- CXX Sansun's death avenged by Roland
- CXXI Anseïs killed by Malquiant.  
1604 Dient Franceis: 'Barun, tant mare fus!'
- CXXII Anseïs' death avenged by Turpin.
- CXXIII Gerin, Gerers, Berenger and Guiun, also Austorie (not a peer) killed by Grandonies.  
1628 Dient Franceis: 'Mult decheent li nostre.'
- (CXXIV, CXXV Deaths of the above five avenged by Roland.  
1652 Dient Franceis: 'Ben fiert nostre guarent').

The regular repetition of the single line lament intensifies our sense of the decline in the fortunes of the Frankish side. As is so often the case, economy and symmetry are here the key-notes of the Roland-poet's effects.

Understandably, because of the viewpoint adopted in the epics, non-Christian adversaries are depicted grieving less frequently than the Christian protagonists. However, little distinguishes their manner of grieving and their reasons from grief from those of their Christian counterparts. The fact that they are shown to be just as susceptible to grief as the heroes whose enemies they are is a strong indication that grief in the epic is first and foremost regarded as a narrative fact rather than as the mark of a noble sensibility. In Roland, for example, the pagan Baligant, Charlemagne's arch rival and the supreme enemy of Christendom, gives way to weeping at the sight of the maimed Marsile:

Al doel qu'il ad s'en est turnét plurant  
Roland 2839

In Guibert d'Andrenas the pagan king Judas has to be restrained from doing himself harm when he learns of a dreadful disaster that has been wreaked on the Sarracen side, and is only dissuaded by the argument that he should comfort his people:

Judas l'entent, a po n'est forsenez.  
Ses poinz a tors, ses chevels a tirez.  
A poi ne s'est a un piler hurtez,  
Quand lo retint Persagant et Janbez.  
"Judas, bon roi, ne vos desconfortez!  
En fere duel neent vos recovrez.  
Prenez bon cuer et vos jenz confortez."  
Guib. d'A. 1429-35

In La Prise de Cordres et de Seville, the 'aumaçor' is shown weeping for love of the city of Cordres:

Li aumaçors la prist a regarder,  
Ens en son cuer la prist a regrater;  
De ses vers oilz conmença a plorer.  
Voit Aymeri, so prist a apeler:  
"Sire Aymeris, envers moi entandés.  
Vefstes honques si mirable cité?"  
Pr. de Cordres. 2164-69

Although pagans are shown to be as susceptible to grief as other characters, few laments are attributed to them. One exception is the lament spoken by pagan warriors for their champion Ysoré. The description of the grief his death arouses among his men and the content of their lament for him are entirely conventional in tone, and could equally well apply if the characters involved were Christians, but for the detail that the mourners curse their gods:

Mort le troverent gisant sour le sablon,  
Trestout sans teste gisoit mors l'Esclavons.  
La ofssiés de Turs grant plorison,  
Lors puins detorgent s'ont lor cevax derons,  
Pasmé en chfent set mile des archons.  
Sovent maudfent Tervagant et Mahon.  
"Ysoré sire, chi a trop grant dolor!  
Qui feront ore vo prince e vo contor?  
Ja en vo terre mais ne retornerons."

Mon.G. (II) 6262-70

The same motif of the dishonouring of pagan gods occurs in Roland, in greatly expanded form, when the inhabitants of Saragossa are described grieving at the return from battle of Marsile, routed and wounded (Roland CLXXXVII).

Of the few laments attributed to pagans, two (in La Chanson de Guillaume) are uttered by pagans at the loss of their steeds, which have been taken by Guillaume. Desramé expresses the fear that Guillaume will not tend Balçan properly:

E il le comence tant fort a regretter:  
"Ohi, Balçan, que jo vus poei ja tant amer!  
Jo te amenai de la rive de mer,  
E il qui ore te ad ne te seit proz conreier,  
Ne costier ne seigner ne ferrer."

Ch. de G. 1932-36

In the following laisse all the elements - the use of apostrophe, the motif 'tant mare fustes', the tone of eulogy, the account of the horse's past deeds and the reference to the grief that news of its loss will cause among the pagans in general - give the speech every appearance of the conventional planctus:<sup>30</sup>

"Ha, Balçan, bon destrer, tant mar fustes,  
 Vostre gent cors e voz riches ambleures!  
 La me portas u ma cuisse ai perdue.  
 Tantes batailles sur vus ai vencues!  
 Meillur cheval n'ad suz ces nues.  
 Paene gent en avront grant rancune."

Ch. de G. 1942-7

Alderufe laments similarly and even more lengthily over the loss of Florecele (Ch. de G. 2180-93; 2201-6). Norman Daniel, in his recent study of the presentation of Saracens in the epic, says, of their attitude to horses

The suggestions that Saracens will take better care of a horse may be meant seriously, and may have a foundation in fact. It is certain that a love of riding and admiration for the horse link the Saracens and the Christians of the songs.<sup>31</sup>

It does seem likely that the image of pagan characters would have been momentarily enhanced when they are depicted grieving for their horses, as it would be on those rare occasions when a Christian warrior laments a dead pagan adversary:

Lowis ad trové Gormunt  
 a l'estandart, en sum le mont;  
 regreta le com gentilz hom:  
 "Tant mare fustes, rei baron!  
 Se creissiez al Creator,  
 meudre vassal ne fust de vus."

Gorm. 537-42

Guibelin[s]lou regraite: "Con mar i fus, Butor[s]!  
 Se tu creüsses Deu et saint Piere et saint Pol,  
 N'aüst tel chevalier desi au chief des pors."

Pr. de Cordres. 2927-9

But the attribution of grief in itself, so frequent and widespread a response throughout the whole spectrum of epic characters, does not seem to imply unusual sensitivity or nobility of character in those who are depicted in grief.<sup>32</sup>

As far as women characters are concerned, descriptions of collective grieving constitute the one area in the epic where they are conventionally accorded a role:

Les gentix dames plorent por leur maris,  
Et les puceles regretent lor amis.

Al 1882-82a

Li quens Guillelmes estoit dedenz son tref;  
Parfondement commence a soupier,  
Del cuer del ventre commença a penser<sup>33</sup>  
Voit le Bertran, sel prent a esgarder:  
"Oncle, dist il, "qu'avez a dementer?  
Estes vos dame, qui pleurt ses vevetez?"

Charroi 791-5

La oðssies tante dame plorer

Garin 15415

Deus! con grant deul troverent en la ville!  
Plorent il dames, pucelles et meschines,  
Et la moillier dan Baldus d'Orcanie.

Pr. de Cordres 459-61

Dame Aalais, ou n'ot qe corecier,  
Devant la biere sist el fauestuef chier

Lors chiet pasmeé, on la cort redrecier.  
De pitié pleure mainte franche mollier.

Raoul 3546-7, 3555-6

The expression of grief is the most important single function of women in epic. Often it would seem that the poet has called them into being simply to heighten the affectivity of a particular situation, as when Louis' wife and daughter appear in a farewell scene in Aliscans:

Rois Loefs plus ne le convoia,  
De lui parti, a dieu le commanda;  
Et la roïne molt tendrement plora;  
Ele et sa fille au partir se pasma.

Al 3938-41

or when Hermenjarz weeps at the illness of her husband Aymeris in Guibert d'Andrenas:

Forment en plore Hermenjarz la jentils,  
Car ele quide que ja n'eschapast vis.

Guib. d'A. 2387-8

Aude provides the most striking example of a woman character called into being to express grief and thereby heighten the pathos surrounding the death of a hero, since news of Roland's death causes her to fall dead:

Alde respunt: 'Cest mot mei est estrange.  
Ne place Deu ne ses seinz angles,  
Aprés Rollant que jo vive remaigne!  
Pert la culor, chet as piez Carlemagne,  
Sempres est morte, Deus ait mercit de l'anme!  
Franceis barons en plurent e si la pleignent.  
Roland 3717-22

This dramatic reaction is echoed faintly in Garin le Loherain, where Garin's two sisters live only three and a half days after the news of his death (Garin 16609-15).

Heluïs, the sweetheart of Raoul in Raoul de Cambrai is a female character who, like Aude, seems to have been created purely as a mouth-piece of grief. The embellished presentation which she is accorded, however, immediately sets her apart from Aude:

A ces paroles vint Heluïs sa mie;  
Abeville ot en droite anceserie  
Cele pucele fu richement vestie  
Et afublée d'un paille de Pavie:  
Blanche char ot comme flors espanie,  
Face vermelle con rose coulurie;  
Qi bien l'esgarde vis est qe toz jors rie.  
Plus bele fame ne fu onques en vie.  
Raoul 3657-64

Such a portrait is unusually long for epic, and its wording is more than a little reminiscent of the wording of portraits in courtly romance,<sup>34</sup> which doubtless influenced Raoul at this point, dating as it does, in its existing form, from late on in the twelfth century.<sup>35</sup> The influences of the romance genre must explain also the passionate tenderness of Heluïs' lengthily recounted lament:



El mostier entre comme feme esmarie;  
 Isnelement a haute vois escrie:  
 "Sire Raoul, con dure departie!  
 Biax dous amis, car baisiés vostre amie.  
 La vostre mors doit estre trop hafe.  
 Qant vos seiés el destrier d'Orqanie  
 Roi resamblés qi grant barnaige guie.  
 Qant aviés çaint l'espée forbie,  
 L'elme lacié sor la coife sarcie,  
 N'avoit si bel desq'en Esclavonie,  
 Ne tel vasal dusques en Hongerie.  
 Las! or depart la nostre druerie.  
 Mors felonese, trop par fustes hardie  
 Qi a tel prince osas faire envafe!  
 Por seul itant qe je fui vostre amie,  
 N'avrai signor en trestoute ma vie."  
 Lors chiet pasmée, tant par est esbahie;  
 Tos la redrese la riche baronie.

CLXXX1

"Sire Raoul," dist la franche pucele,  
 Vos me jurastes dedens une chapele.  
 Puis me requist Harduïns de Nivele  
 Qi tint Braibant, cele contrée bele;  
 Mais nel presise por l'onnor de Tudele.  
 Sainte Marie, glorieuse pucele,  
 Pourquoi ne part mes quers soz ma mamele  
 Qant celui per cui devoie estre ancele?  
 Or porrira cele tenre maissele  
 Et cil vair oel dont clere est la prunele.  
 La vostre alaine estoit tos jors novele."  
 Lor chiet pasmée la cortoise pucele;  
 Cil la redresce qi la tint par l'aissele.

CLXXX11

"Dame Aalais, por Dieu le raemant,"  
 Dist la pucele au gent cors avenant,  
 "Cest vostre duel, je le parvoi si grant!  
 Dès iert matin en aveiz vos fait tant  
 Dont pis vos iert a trestout vo vivant;  
 Laissiés le moi, car je ving maintenant;  
 Si le doi faire, par le mien esciant.  
 Il me presist ançois .j. mois passant.  
 Sire Guerí, por Dieu le raemant,  
 Gentix hom sire, je te pri et comant  
 Qe li ostez son hauber jazerant,  
 Et en après son vert hiaume luisant,  
 Les riches armes et l'autre garnement;  
 Nos amistiés iront puis departant."  
 Guerí le fait trestout a son commant,  
 Et la pucele le va souvent baisant;  
 Puis ci l'esgarde et deriere et devant:  
 "Biax dox amis," dist la bele en plorant,  
 N'avrai signor en trestout mon vivant;  
 Nos amistiés vont a duel departant."

Raoul 3665-3715

The attribution of such a lengthy lament to a woman character is unusual in epic, as is the love relationship which links Heluís to Raoul. The apostrophe of Death ('Mors felonese . . . ' 3677) is a common feature of laments in romance.<sup>36</sup> But principally her lament seems to look back in time, rather than to contemporary works, for its inspiration. Certain elements seem even to hark back to the mourning scene in the Vie de Saint Alexis. Heluís, whose grief is depicted in the same scene as that of Raoul's mother Aalais (3546-605), is referred to repeatedly (3659, 3683, 3694, 3697) as the 'pucele' and, like the 'pucele' in the Vie, she is virtually a disappointed bride, since Raoul had plighted his troth to her (3684) and they were to have been married within a month (3703). Her declaration of renouncement:

Por seul itant qe je fui vostre amie,  
N'avrai signor en trestoute ma vie  
Raoul 3679-80

is reminiscent of the words of the earlier 'pucele':

Ne ja mais hume n'avrai an tute terre  
Alexis 493

Heluís, like Alexis' bride, pictures her beloved's beauty decaying in the tomb:

Or porrira cele tenre maissele  
Et cil vair oel dont clere est la prunele  
Raoul 3691-2

O kiers amis, de ta juvente bela!  
Ço peiset moi que purirat en terre.  
Alexis 476-7

Aalais, the mother of Raoul, plays a key part in the scene of his mourning, as did the mother of Alexis in the mourning of the saint. The expression of her grief, however, is not easily assimilated to maternal stereotypes. The distracted grief with which Alexis' mother appears upon the scene -

La vint curant cum femme forsenede  
Alexis 423

is transferred in Raoul to the sweetheart:

El mostier entre comme feme esmarie  
Raoul 3665

whereas Aalais is depicted in full command of the situation, seated in a chair of state:

Dame Aalais, ou n'ot qe corecier,  
Devant la biere sist el faudestuef chier.  
Raoul 3546-7

When Aalais laments, her preoccupations are martial in tone. Although she herself faints from grief (3555-8) she harangues Gueri when he faints:

Lors vint Gueri qui tant fait a douter;  
Vait a la biere le paille souslever:  
Por la dolor le convint a pasmer.  
Dame A. le prist a ranprosner.  
Raoul 3568-71

She taxes Guerri for not having kept watch over Raoul in the conflict (3572-76, 3587-90) and expresses shame that he has been killed by a bastard (3596-98). She resembles more the father than the mother of Alexis in regretting the loss of her heir:

Qui lairai je ma terre et mon païs?  
Or n'i ai oir, par foi le vos plevis  
Raoul 3599-600

cf. O filz, cui erent mes granz ereditez,  
Mes larges terres dont jo aveie assez,  
Mes granz paleis de Rome la cité?  
Alexis 401-3

There is a telling little episode which takes place at Christmas, some time after Raoul's burial. Her grief and consequently her desire for revenge are still fresh, but she has to remind the young Gautelet of his obligations:

A .i. haut jor de la Nativité,  
Dame Aalais q'le cuer ot iré  
Le Dieu servise a la dame escouté.  
Del mostier ist si com on ot chanté;  
Gautelet a en la place trové;  
La dame l'a de son gant asené,  
Et il i vint de bone volenté:  
"Biax niés," dist ele, "or sai de verité  
Raoul vostre oncle aveiz tout oublié,  
Son vaselaige et sa nobilité."

Gautiers l'oi, si a le chief cliné:  
"Dame," dist il, "ci a grant cruauté;  
Por ce se j'ai o les effans joé,  
S'ai je le cuer dolant et trespensé."  
Raoul 3744-58

Aalais is not, of course, simply a stock female character introduced to add pathos, but plays a dynamic role in Raoul de Cambrai which goes well beyond the conventional function of the woman as one who passively voices grief, and this is reflected in the way she is presented when she does grieve. The same is true - and to an even greater extent - of Guiborc, the heroine of the Guillaume cycle. The poems where she plays her largest role are those in which the disaster of Archamps is a prime and potent source of grief - La Chevalerie de Vivien, Aliscans and La Chanson de Guillaume. Even so, in these poems her grief is presented as an aspect of her solidarity with Guillaume, which is the guiding factor in all her activities:

Guillames a sa teste desarmee;  
Dame Guibors li a deschaint l'espee,  
L'elme li oste, dolente et esploree.  
Al 1794-6

Plurad Willame, dunc lacrimat Guiborc  
Ch.de G. 1315

Commenchiés est et li dels et le cris  
Dont dolant ert Guillelmes le marchis,  
Si ert Guiborc au jent cors segnoris.  
Chev.V. (ms C) 653-5

Paradoxically it is a woman, Guiborc, who is credited with the only long speech of consolation in the selected texts, which she delivers to Guillaume at a point after the defeat of Aliscans (at the end of Aliscans) when the great warrior falls prey to a disabling attack of grief:

Plore Guillames et par nuis et par dis.  
Tout por ses freres est dolans et maris  
Et por son pere et ses autres amis;  
De Vivien est dolans et pensis:  
L'aigue li coule a val par mi le vis.  
Al 8387a-89

Guiborc's speech of consolation is an amalgam of homespun wisdom and proverbial and theological relections, the flavour of which is evident from its opening lines:

"Gentiex quens, sire, ne vos esmaiés ja!  
Teus a perdu ki regaaignera,  
Et teus est povres qui riches devenra.  
Ne se doit plaindre li hom ki santé a..."  
Al 8393-6

In spite of its banalities it culminates in a dramatic and supremely practical exhortation:

Refai Orenge! A grant pris tornera  
Al 8413

She concludes by telling Guillaume to hire masons, and by assuring him of her support (Al 8414-7), and Guillaume sets about following her advice. Frappier sums up this conclusion to the poem by a comparison with la Chanson de Roland:

A la fin de la Chanson de Roland, l'ange de Dieu ordonne à Charlemagne de recommencer la guerre éternelle contre les païens, et l'empereur ne peut s'empêcher de pleurer; à la fin de la Chanson d'Aliscans, Guillaume sèche ses larmes et rebâtit les murs d'Orange. Cette perspective plus terrestre a elle aussi sa valeur et sa noblesse.<sup>37</sup>

It is fitting that the poem of Aliscans, in which the theme of grief is so prominent, should end on a note of comfort and encouragement, setting grief in the wider context of popular and practical values. As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, grief tends to be a short-lived response in the outlook of epic characters. Speeches of dissuasion from grief stress the futility of grieving and the importance of getting on with the job, for example

Li quens Guillaumes l'en prist a castoier:  
"Amis, biaux frere, le dolouser laissiés,  
Car dieus a faire ne vaut mie un denier."  
Mon. G (II) 4986-8

'Sire emperere!' ço dist Gefrei d'Anjou,  
'Ceste dolor ne demenez tant fort.  
Par tut le camp faites querre les noz  
Que cil d'Espagne en la bataille unt mort.'  
Roland 2945-8

Religious consolation is surprisingly rare. The two examples below are virtually the only instances of it which are to be found in the selected texts:

"Oncle Guillelmes, por ce lessiez ester.  
De ceste chose ne vos chant d'afrer:  
De l'aventure vet tot en Damedé."  
Charroi 805-7

Dist Viviens: "Or ne vos esmaiés,  
Mi chevalier, or ne vos deshaitiés;  
C'est tot por Dieu que vos vos travelliés,  
En paradis arés le grant loier."  
Chev. V. (ms c) 934-7

But not only is the theme of religious consolation rare. Speeches of more general consolation and dissuasion from grief are very brief and relatively infrequent.<sup>38</sup> In a speech to a grieving character in Garin le Loheren, the speaker, Herviz, says:

"Duel sor doloir, ne joie sor joïr,  
Ne hom ne fame ne le doit maintenir."  
Garin 748-9

The distinction he makes between 'duel' - the abstracted notion of grief - and 'doloir' - the act of grieving - is a telling one. (The same distinction is made in lines 4896-7). It is the impetus to action which drives and shapes the outlook of epic characters, and in such an ethos grief may be expected, of its own accord, to fall into its limited place.

## NOTES

1. The following is a list of the epics referred to in this chapter, along with the abbreviations used. The numbers in brackets refer in each case to the edition quoted from, as listed in the bibliography.
  - Aliscans : Al (1)
  - La Chanson de Guillaume : Ch. de G (3)
  - La Chanson de Roland : Roland (5)
  - Le Charroi de Nîmes : Charroi (6)
  - La Chevalerie Vivien : Chev. V (7)  
 The texte critique and the version from the Boulogne ms presented in Terracher's edition as designated in this chapter as texte cr. and ms C respectively
  - Le Couronnement de Louis : Cour. L (18)
  - Garin le Loheren : Garin (21)
  - Gormont et Isembart : Gorm (22)
  - Guibert d'Andrenas : Guib. d'A (23)
  - Le Moniage Guillaume : Mon. G (24)  
 The shorter and longer versions presented in Cloetta's edition are designated in this chapter as (I) and (II) respectively.
  - La Prise de Cordres et de Seville : Pr. de Cordres (30)
  - La Prise d'Orange : Pr. d'O (31)
  - Raoul de Cambrai : Raoul (32)
  - Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople : Voyage (44)
2. Payen, Le motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale (142) p.228.
3. Rousset, "Recherches sur l'émotivité à l'époque romane" (150) p.57.
4. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (105) pp. 9..10.
5. In his semantic analysis of La Chanson de Roland, G.Fenwick Jones points out that, in that work, doel, dolor and irur 'can mean

both grief and grievance' (The Ethos of the Song of Roland (100) p.86). Words connected with this important semantic overlap are discussed by Hackett, "Ire, courroux et leurs dérivés en ancien français et en provençal" (86) and by Kleiber, Le mot 'ire' en ancien français (103).

6. Zumthor, "Etude typologique des planctus contenus dans La Chanson de Roland" in La technique littéraire des chansons de geste (182) pp. 219-34.
7. Zumthor, "Les planctus épiques", Romania 84 (1963), 61-69.
8. Zumthor, "Etude typologique..." (182) p.219.
9. Duggan, The Song of Roland: Formulaic Style and Poetic Craft (71) p.175.
10. See Cohen, "Les éléments constitutifs de quelques planctus des X<sup>e</sup> et XI<sup>e</sup> siècles" (62).
11. See Thiry, La plainte funèbre (166).
12. For example, the words spoken by Roland in one planctus for Oliver constitute only four lines:

"Sire cumpaign, tant mar fustes hardiz:  
Ensemble avum esté e anz e dis.  
Ne.m fesis mal, ne jo ne.l te forsfis.  
Quant tu es mor[z], dudur est que jo vif."  
Roland 2027-30

Similarly the words spoken by Guerri over his son Garnier in Raoul de Cambrai:

"Fix," dist li peres, "tant vos avoie chier!  
Qi vos a mort, por le cors s. Richier,  
Ja de l'acorde ne vuel oïr plaidier  
Si l'avrai mort et fait tot detrenchier."  
Raoul 2551-5

13. Le Charroi de Nîmes, La Chevalerie Vivien, Le Couronnement Louis, Guibert d'Andrenas, Le Voyage de Charlemagne.
14. Aliscans 706-14, 728-49, 750-60, 766-8051, 907-11  
La Chanson de Guillaume 1996-2000, 2001-10, 2016-30  
La Chanson de Roland 1851-68, 1982-88, 2024-34, 2207-14,  
2246-58, 2397-417, 2881-91, 2892-908, 2909-15, 2916-32,  
2933-44



Garin le Loheren 10846-54, 10966-75, 11429-53, 11552-64, 12933-6, 13792-9, 14455-62, 15149-53, 16604-6.  
Gormont et Isembart 464-88, 525-35, 537-42  
Le Mariage Guillaume (II) 6262-70  
Raoul de Cambrai 2546-54, 3165-74, 3175-88, 3189-3200, 3376-83, 3546-56, 3557-67, 3610-27, 3631-45, 3665-82, 3683-3695, 3711-5.  
La Prise de Cordres et de Seville 2927-29

Two long adjacent laments in La Prise d'Orange uttered by Bertrand for his uncle Guillaume and his brother Guélin (1664-7042, 1705-26) are shown to have been mistaken in the laisse immediately following them when the news reaches Bertrand that his kinsmen are alive.

15. See Wathélet-Willem, Recherches sur la Chanson de Guillaume (174) pp.453-72.
16. *ibid.* pp. 483-506.
17. See pp.106-8 below.
18. Duggan, *op.cit.*, (71) pp. 175-6.
19. Frappier, Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d'Orange (76), vol. I, pp.96-7.
20. Simon, in Die Wörter für Gemütsbewegungen in den altfranzösischen Wortfeldern des Rolandslied und des Yvain-Romanes (162), suggests that, in Roland, 'pitet' is often experienced where 'persönliches Eingreifen ausgeschlossen ist; es scheint ein resignierter Schmerz zu sein.' (p.72).
21. See pp. 110-1 below
22. Ms bibl. nat. 1448, quoted by Bédier, Les légendes épiques (52), vol.1, p.71.
23. Payen, *op. cit.*, (142) pp.227-8.
24. One memorable sign of fear, occurring once, in La Chanson de Guillaume, does not seem to have achieved the status of a literary convention:  

De la pour en ordead sa hulce  
Ch. de G. 346
25. See pp. 87-96 below.

26. La Mort de Garin le Loherain edited by E. du Méril (25), 4790-4.
27. It has been suggested by its most recent editors, Thiry-Stassin and Tyssens, that Narcisus was composed in the decade beginning 1160.
28. In La Chanson de Roland 'par feid e par amur' is a formula of quasi-legal aspect: Marsile sends word to Charlemagne that he will be his liege-man 'par amur e par feid' (86); Ganelon at his trial declares that he has served his emperor 'par feid e par amur' (3770).
29. Weinand, H.G., Tränen. Untersuchungen über das Weinen in der deutschen Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters (175) pp. 85-6.
30. See the repertoire of planctus motifs drawn up by Zumthor, p.67 above.
31. Daniel, Heroes and Saracens (68), p.55.
32. Jenkins, in a note to l.349 of La Chanson de Roland (4), says that in Roland the ability to weep readily 'is to the poet a merit, one of the finer qualities which distinguishes Roland and Charlemagne from ordinary men.' But, on the contrary, the ability to weep is one attribute constant throughout the entire spectrum of characters in Roland, including the Frankish warriors, the pagans and the household of the traitor Ganelon. The point to be made is not that weeping is a sign of nobility but that it is not thought to be incompatible with either nobility or courage.
33. For the use of 'penser' here, see p.96 above.
34. Compare, for example, the description of Enide:
 

Plus ot que n'est la flors de lis  
 cler et blanc le front et le vis;  
 sor la color, par grant mervoille,  
 d'une fresche color vermoille,  
 que Nature li ot donee,  
 estoit sa face anluminee.

Erec et Enide 427-32
35. See p. 2 above.
36. See for example Le Roman de Thèbes 6089-94, Piramus et Tisbé 754-57, Erec et Enide 4582, Cligés 6154-59, 5726-30, Le Chevalier de la charrete 4263-64.

37. Frappier, op. cit., (76) vol.1, p.278.
38. A character tries to divert another from grief in the following instances (all of them brief, apart from the instance involving Guiborc in Aliscans):

Aliscans 8393-417

La Chanson de Guillaume 1319-27

La Chanson de Roland 2945-50

Le Charroi de Nîmes 794-5, 805-7

La Chevalerie Vivien (texte cr.) 1877-8, (ms C) 934-7

Guibert d'Andrenas 1433-5

Moniage Guillaume (II) 4986-8

Garin le Loheren 746-9, 4893-7, 12283-4, 12937-43, 13377-80

## Chapter Three

### ASPECTS OF GRIEF DEPICTION IN THE ROMANS IMITES D'ANTIQUITE

#### Introduction

Le Roman de Thèbes, Eneas, and Le Roman de Troie, the three most important works in the corpus referred to as the romans imités d'antiquité, occupy a key position in the evolution of early Old French narrative because they contain important elements which herald the advent of the courtly genre, while still retaining some markedly epic traits. This chapter will be concerned mainly with those two aspects of grief depiction which reflect the dual nature of the romans antiques. The first section will deal with some instances of the grief of women, whose greatly increased role is the most distinctive new element in these works, and the one that points forward to romance proper. The instances chosen will be drawn largely from Thèbes and Troie; in Eneas the two women who most experience grief are Dido and Lavinia, but the grief they experience belongs to that affliction usually referred to as love-sickness and therefore represents a trend other than the one I wish to explore here, and the French author's handling of the Dido episode in particular has been amply explored in the past.<sup>1</sup> Eneas will, however, figure largely in the second section, providing useful illustrations of the second major aspect covered in the chapter, which is the depiction of grief over warriors fallen in battle. This type of grief depiction is one of the elements in the romans antiques which most strikingly hark back to the epic genre, since, as has been seen in the preceding chapter, the mourning of warriors provides a strong focus of interest in a number of epics. In Thèbes, Eneas and Troie the death of a warrior is the commonest

situation in which grief depictions are elaborated. (Since women often play a role in these elaborations in the romans antiques, there will inevitably be some overlap between these two main sections).

Although a comparison between the French works and their Latin sources will not be a prime concern of this chapter, some account will be taken of the Latin antecedents of Thèbes and Eneas, the Thebaid and the Aeneid respectively.<sup>2</sup> In many of the instances in which they depict grief, the authors of these two works are following their Latin models. However this in no sense 'explains away' occurrences of grief in the French. Since both authors were capable of taking bold liberties with their models, those instances in which they reproduce depictions of grief from the Latin represent a definite choice on their part. It will be seen that, in maintaining depictions of grief, the French authors invariably introduce considerable adaptations, sometimes making the depictions more elaborate, sometimes reducing them, and they sometimes introduce descriptions of grief where none exist in the original works.

Where, in the course of this chapter, discussion involves well-known characters, it has seemed natural to refer to them by the forms of their names which have currency in English, though as notable exceptions to this rule I have retained the Old French name Briseïda, since this appears to have been the earliest form of Cressida's name, and I use the form Eneas to distinguish the eponymous hero of the French work from the Aeneas of Virgil's poem.

## The Grief of Women in the 'romans antiques'

### The Grief of some Individual Women in Le Roman de Thèbes

In Le Roman de Thèbes the first woman character to be depicted in grief - and that within the first hundred lines of the poem - is Jocasta, about to be deprived of her baby son Oedipus. There is no corresponding episode at the beginning of the Thebaid, and while it makes sense for the French author to have filled in the story of Oedipus, father of Eteocles and Polynices, whose feud is the cause of the events that follow, the description of the mother's grief is quite gratuitous in terms of subsequent plot, and is an early indication that the author revels in the creation of pathos, particularly through the depiction of women's grief:

La mere pleure, crie et bret,  
ses poinz detort, ses chevex tret;  
pasmee chiet sor son enfant  
et demeine doulor mout grant  
53-6

As we have seen, she is not, of course, the first grieving mother to be depicted in French narrative, and there is an echo of Alexis' mother's 'Mar te portai, bels filz!' (Alexis 437) in her lament (57-78):

Ha! douce rien, mar te porté,  
mar te norri, mar t'aleté  
67-8

The vernacular tradition of grief depiction as found in Alexis emerges clearly in two subsequent instances in Thèbes which involve women's grief: the grief of the wife of Tydeus, the Argive warrior, when, after a Theban ambush, he is brought home wounded (an episode which is not described at all by Statius) and the grief of the mother - wife of King Lygurges - whose infant son is bitten to death by a snake. Stanza 85 of Alexis, when placed alongside these two descriptions of

grief in Thèbes, seems to represent something of a prototype:

<u>Alexis</u> st.85 Mother of Alexis	De la dolor qu'en demenat li pedra Grant fu la noise, si l'antendit la medre; La vint curant cum femme forsenede, Batant ses palmes, criant, eschevelede; Vit mort sum filz, a terre chet pasmede.	421-5
---	--	-------

<u>Thèbes</u> 1869-72 Wife of Tydeus	Sa fame eschevelee et pale vint acorant par mi la sale. Par mi la sale, eschevelee, acort conme fame desvee
---	--

<u>Thèbes</u> 2519-26 Mother of dead baby	La roïne s'estoit levee, dormi avoit la relevee. Bien ert vestue estroit a cors, isnelement s'en issi hors. Pour la noise qu'ot en la sale, descouloree fu et pale. Quant la nouvele parentent, paumee chiet el pavement.
--	--

In both instances from Thèbes, as in Alexis, the woman comes running (A 423, T 1870, 2522); the mother of Alexis is described as being 'eschevelede' and as running in 'cum femme forsenede', while the wife of Tydeus is likewise described as being 'eschevelee' and as running in 'conme fame desvee'; the mother of Alexis and the mother of the baby prince are summoned specifically by 'la noise' (A 424, T 2523) and each falls down in a faint on learning of her son's death:

Vit mort sum filz, a terre chet pasmede  
Alexis 425

Quant la nouvele parentent,  
paumee chiet el pavement  
Thèbes 2525-6

That the author of Thèbes is dealing in stereotyped description, and not seeking to do anything other, is indicated by the duplication of detail that he introduces into his two scenes: in both, the near identical phrases 'eschevelee et pale' (1869) and 'descouloree et pale' (2524) are used, and rhymed with 'sale'; the reference to the mother's fainting 'el pavement' (2526) provides an echo of the earlier episode, since the wounded Tydeus was gently lowered 'el pavement'

(1860) by the grieving king. (Interestingly enough, the same detail appears later in the description of knights grieving for their dead lord Athon:

Pasmez gisent el pavement  
6007

It gives the merest hint of a formal setting, perhaps thought particularly appropriate to the expression of grief, as in La Prise d'Orange, where a character is seen depicted fainting from grief 'sor lemarbrin degré' (La P. d'O. 1703)).

One rather more distinctive detail in the description of the grief of the dead infant's mother is the reference to her having been asleep, and rushing to the clamour without having had time to dress formally (2519-22 above).

Grief depiction in the instances reviewed so far, then, seems to reflect a loose vernacular tradition. One episode in which womanly grief appears in a new guise in Thèbes (and for which, again, there is no antecedent in the Thebaid) involves Salemandre, the daughter of Daire. Daire is presented as a Theban lord whose son, having been captured by the Argives, tries to persuade his father to ransom him by giving his tower to the enemy side. Loyalty to Eteocles and the Theban side leads Daire at first to resist his son's claims, but later, after a heated disagreement with Eteocles, he surrenders the tower, and is eventually brought to trial for this betrayal. While the barons are engaged in ponderous deliberations, Eteocles is persuaded to pardon Daire when Daire's daughter, Salemandre, appears on the scene, a tear-stained beauty:



Savez quele est la fille Daire?  
 Gent ot le cors et le viaire,  
 la face fresche et couloree,  
 petite bouche bien moulee,  
 levres grossetes par mesure;  
 pour bien baisier la fist Nature!  
 Char blanche, plaine, tendre et mole,  
 simple vout et douce parole,  
eulz vers rianz et amorous;  
grant deul est quant il sont plorous!  
 Mout fu grelle par la ceinture  
 si fu de mout gente estature,  
 ne fu trop grant ne trop petite;  
 vestu ot unne catefite:  
 ce fu un poile de coulors  
 menuement ouvré a flors.  
 Cheveus ot lons, deugiez et sors,  
 plus reluisanz que n'est fin ors,  
 et ot sor ses espaules mis  
 un fres mantel qui estoit gris.  
De plorer ot mouillié le vis.  
son pleur vaut d'autre fame ris.

7999-8020

Salemandre does not speak. Her grief itself represents her intervention on her father's behalf, as well as being an integral part of her attraction. The sight of her sorrow arouses grief and pity among onlookers:

Sa noblece, sa contenance  
 fet a meint houme grant pesance;  
 hom ne la voit pitié n'en ait  
 qui voit le duel que ele fait.

8021-4

Eteocles is in love with Salemandre, but she has so far been hostile to his suit. Jocasta presses her son to take pity on the maiden as an act of 'cortoisie' (8041-4). Eteocles' sister Antigone now aligns herself with Daire's daughter, and both maidens kneel before him weeping - 'el pavement' (8048). Antigone suggests that if he shows mercy to Salemandre she will accept his love (8059-60). Onlookers too, moved by the sight of the grief-stricken Salemandre, add their voice:

li gentilz houme d'autre terre  
de Daire vont merci requerre.  
De la pucele pitié ont  
et pour lui tuit au roi en vont;  
de Daire quierent merci tuit.  
et il la trouveront, ce cuit;  
au roi plect mout ceste proiere.  
8075-81

Although for a moment all looks to be in the balance, the tear-stained face of Salemandre finally tips the scales in favour of Daire:

Pour quant si fet marrie chiere,  
de la merci se fet gaingnart  
et nepourquant si li est tart;  
tart li est que merci li face:  
poise lui de la tendre face  
qu'il voit moilliee de plorer  
8082-7

Thus a decision is reached without the verdict of those who had been set to judge the case (8091-2) and although there is surprise and criticism among some of his barons that Eteocles should have decided to pardon Daire because of 'la proiere d'une meschine' (8105), others welcome it, and Othon speaks for the majority when he comments:

"Si vet d'amie,  
d'amors et de chevalerie;  
se le tenez a vilannie,  
nous le tenons a cortoisie".  
8111-4

Hoepffner has said of these lines:

Rien ne saurait mieux faire ressortir toute la distance qui sépare les conceptions de l'ancienne et de la nouvelle génération.<sup>3</sup>

But as well as epitomising the great distance between old and new conceptions, the incident is a measure of the distance between the role of grief in epic, where it is presented as a conventional response to predetermined situations and with no bearing on the plot (as is indeed still the case elsewhere in Thèbes) and the role of grief here (and a maiden's grief at that), where it is a completely unexpected ingredient and a central motivating factor in a debate involving matters of state. The grief of Daire's daughter foreshadows

instances of grief in Chrétien, some of which, as we shall see, are endowed with a strongly functional role in plot terms.

A noteworthy feature of the episode is the effect that Salemandre's grief has on onlookers. The author of Thèbes seems particularly fond of depicting characters grieving in response to the sight of the grief of others. This kind of reaction is not unknown in epic<sup>4</sup> but it is particularly recurrent in Thèbes, where it is always attributed to men who are moved at the sight of sorrowful women. When Queen Jocasta and her daughters weep for joy on being reunited with Polynices, their emotion strikes a note in the hearts of a large company of men:

La ou le puet avoir chascune,  
cent foiz le baise comme unne,  
et nepourquant plorent si fort  
com s'eles le vefssent mort.  
De la joie que font, les dames  
firent plorer plus de mil houmes.  
4329-34

The whole Theban court weeps out of pity for the bereaved Ismene:

De la pitié qu'il ont d'Ysmaine  
plorent contor, plorent demaine,  
plorent tuit cil qu'ilueques sont  
et riche et povre grant deul font.  
6191-4

The tears of Salemandre, as we have seen, create 'pesance' among onlookers:

Sa noblece, sa contenance  
fet a meint houte grant pesance;  
hom ne la voit pitié n'en ait  
qui voit le deul que ele fait.  
8021-4

Near the end of the poem, the Athenian knights and their duke grieve at the spectacle of the sorrowing Theban women:

li dus vient a eles parler,  
eles commencent a plorer,  
encontre vienent au seignor;  
il ne se pot tenir de plor.  
.....  
Li chevalier ques esgardoient  
de pitié tendrement ploroient  
10015-8; 10033-4

These instances may be said to contribute to the 'courtliness' of the poem by evoking an atmosphere of mannered leisure in which male characters have both the time and the refinement to share disinterestedly in the sorrow of women. Indeed, the idea that sympathetic grief is a mark of nobility is implied in the course of the description of Theban women grieving at news of the ambush in which some of their menfolk have been killed:

Par la cité mainent tel duel  
 n'a si felon houme soz cuel,  
 .....  
 qui ne plorast de la doulor  
 et du pleur que cil font des lor.  
 1961-2..65-6

## Collective Grief of Women in Le Roman de Thèbes and Le Roman de Troie

### Le Roman de Thèbes

The lines just quoted highlight a form of grief which was a minor feature in epic,<sup>5</sup> but is given prominence in both Thèbes and Troie, namely, the collective grief of women. Of seven extended descriptions of grief in Le Roman de Thèbes,<sup>6</sup> the first and last involve women grieving together. In the earlier instance, women's grief is an important element in the collective reaction of the citizens of Thebes when they learn that a band of Thebans have been slaughtered by the redoubtable Tydeus, whom they were ambushing. The overall description of which the women's grief forms a part (and which is loosely based on a passage in the Thebaid)<sup>7</sup> is thirty-eight lines long (1961-98) and relatively elaborate in style. The flat formulation of the opening line ('mainent tel deul') is the starting point for a statement of some complexity which fans out into a double hyperbole incorporating a simile before it returns to the factual plane:

Par la cité maintenant tel deul  
n'a si felon houme soz cuel,  
nes s'il eüst le cuer si dur  
comme est la pierre de cel mur,  
qui ne plorast de la doulor  
et du pleur que cil font des lor.

1961-6

The women's grief specifically is then highlighted by the use of distributio, which, in the form it takes here, harks back to a similar use of the device in epic:<sup>8</sup>

Par ces rues ces dames corent,  
pour leur amis crient et plorent;  
pour leur enfanz plorent les meres,  
les sereurs plorent por les freres;  
lor amis plaignent les puceles,  
dont ont oy froides nouveles;  
leur chevex tirent et enrachent,  
par po de deul vives n'enragent.

1967-74

Statius, in his much longer account, depicts the reactions of groups and named individuals as they search for and find the bodies of their slain kinsmen. Although the French author sacrifices a great deal of the horror, pathos and sheer scale of the original, his affective references to ladies weeping for their sweethearts, mothers for their children, and sisters for their brothers is poignant in its own more limited way, and force is given to the description of the women's grief by the comparison in which it culminates:

Se la cité fust lors assise  
ou alumee ou toute esprise,  
ne cuit que plus em plorissant  
ne greingnor deul en fefissant.

1975-8

(This image of conflagration, if it is not the poet's own, seems to owe more to Virgil than to Statius).<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to the women, who are defined by relationships within the family, the men are categorised by social rank, and, again in contrast to the women, they react first angrily and then practically:

Li chevalier et li bourgeois  
 et li vilain et li courtois  
 de traïson le roi blastengent,  
 dient n'est droiz que bien l'em praignent.  
 Trestuit ensemble vont au roi,  
 demandent li par grant esfroi  
 que il a fait de leur amis,  
 ou les querront, en quel païs.

1979-86

The men are then depicted going to where their dead countrymen lie,  
 and performing the necessary obsequies over them:

Quant il orent assez ploré  
 et pour leur amis garmenté,  
 enterrent les, car contre mort,  
 ce savez bien, n'a nul resort.

1995-8

This somewhat laconic description of the men's grief suggests that they are discharging their duty over dead comrades. Even if we understand 'assez' in line 1995 to mean 'a great deal' rather than 'sufficiently' (von Wartburg's Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch allows both interpretations) the extent of the grieving is clearly delimited by the bald and emphatic reference to the burial ('enterrent les' 1997) and by the trite aphorism which rounds the section off. Whereas the women's grief was depicted as being spontaneous and boundless, the men's grief is portrayed as controlled and limited.

As the collective grief of Thebans, particularly Theban women, marked one of the opening stages of armed hostility between Thebans and Argives, so the collective grief of Argive women is an important concomitant of the resolution of the conflict at the end of the poem. Again the French author is influenced by his Latin model at this juncture: the initial impetus for the episode comes from Statius, though its outworking in the French poem is very different. Statius describes how a band of Argive women, distraught that their dead kinsmen are denied proper funeral rites, set out to seek help. Argia, one of the two daughters of the Argive king Adrastus, breaks away from

the main company and goes to find the body of her husband Polynices, coming upon it in the dark at the same moment as his sister Antigone does. The rest of the women reach Athens and gain the sympathy of the powerful duke Theseus, who, although he has just returned from war, is willing to set out on their behalf against King Creon, in whose sway Thebes now is. Theseus regroups his battalions, reaches Thebes and kills Creon, and the narrative ends with a brief evocation of the eagerness with which the dead are accorded the funeral pyres that are their due.<sup>10</sup> In some respects the French author simplifies the lines of this account, most notably by omitting the lengthy and highly dramatic episode of Argia's search for the body of Polynices. But in compensation he increases the role of the grief-stricken women. In the Thebaid, these women were introduced as they set out from Argos, but in Thèbes they are depicted at an earlier stage, grief-stricken on hearing the news of their army's defeat:

Or ont les dames grant dolor,  
 chascune pleure son seingnor,  
 qui desconfit sunt en bataille  
 et trestuit mort sanz nule faille.  
 Par la cité font deul mout grant  
 meres et filles et enfant;  
 lor poinz detordent et lor doiz  
 et se pasment par plusors foiz;  
 tieux troi mile s'en i pasmerent  
 qui onques puis n'en releverent,  
 et celes qui remestrent vives  
 sont mout dolentes et chetives;  
 tant ont crié et tant ont bret  
 et si grant duel ont iluec fet  
 que tant sunt lasses de plorer  
 a painne pueent mot soner.

9871-86

This description, not found in the Thebaid, must have been composed by the French author as something of a counterpart to the first extended description of grief in the poem, which also involved women reacting in grief to the news of a messenger, a scene quite considerably developed from a short reference in Statius.<sup>11</sup> The words of the messenger bringing the news in each case bear comparison:

Onques fors moi nul n'en estort,  
ce poise moi qu'il ne m'a mort.  
1897-8

onques un seul vis n'en estort  
fors seul Acastus et leur roi  
et moi qui en morrai, ce croi  
9868-70

The emphasis in both subsequent descriptions is on 'ces dames' (1967) 'les dames' (9871), who are then referred to as representing various categories - 'meres..sereurs..puceles..' (1969-71), 'meres et filles et enfant' (9876) - as they grieve 'par la cité' (1961, 9875). Although there is no counterpart in the later description to the image of conflagration used in the earlier one, the French author makes a significant change to the very end of the Thebes narrative: while in the Latin poem the Argive dead are eventually accorded the funeral pyres that Creon had refused to allow, in the French poem Theseus the Duke of Athens actually sets fire to Thebes:

Le feu fet apporter li dus  
et tout esprendre sus et jus;  
la vile fu mout tost esprise  
10477-9

It is as if the poet had been anticipating this ending when he said of the Theban women in that much earlier passage

Se la cité fust lors assise  
ou alumee ou toute esprise,  
ne cuit que plus em plorissant  
1974-6

The grief of the Argive women is an important factor in the resolution of events at the end of Thebes. The French author charts their journeyings extensively and highlights their power to arouse compassion in those they meet on their sorrowful way - a messenger sent to question them (9964-97), the Duke of Athens and his companions (10015-34), and, as the author assures us (10177-8), anyone else they might have encountered:



Sachiez qui les dames vefst,  
que mout grant pitiez l'em prefst.

In the same way as Salemandre's grief became a motive force earlier in the poem, so, at the end, does the grief of this band of Argive women: in the Thebaid the noble Duke of Athens is briefly referred to as being moved by the women's tears<sup>12</sup> but it is his warrior-like desire for vengeance that is quickly brought to the fore, whereas in the French version his pity for their grief-stricken state is repeatedly brought out, as in the following instances:

li dus vient a eles parler,  
eles commencent a plorer,  
encontre viennent au seignor;  
il ne se pot tenir de plor  
10015-8

-Dame, dist li dus, ce sachiez  
de vous toutes me prent pitiez;  
ne lerai que n'aiez secours,  
car des barons est granz dolours  
10105-8

In the French version, but not in the Latin, the women meet King Adrastus coming from the field of battle. He too is moved by their grief and especially by the plight of his daughters Deipyle and Argia, and impresses it upon the already sympathetic Duke of Athens, which results in yet another depiction of the women:

"Gardez la sus en cel larriz  
celes chetives qui la sont,  
qui pour leur amis querre vont;  
querre vous alerent afe  
si rest en vous toute lor vie.  
Dolentes sont et esgarees,  
chetives et maleurees,  
pour leur amis qui mort i sont,  
dont jamés nul confort n'avront."  
10340-8

In all, the grieving band of Argive women dominates the latter part of the French poem - possibly, it may be thought, to its detriment, when we consider some of the splendid features of the ending of the Thebaid that the French author has chosen to neglect - notably the episode of Argia's quest, and the portrayal of the Duke of

Athens, depicted by Statius as returning home victorious from war yet ready to galvanise his weary men to set out again for a just cause. The French author has recognised that there is great affective potential in the depiction of women grieving collectively and has used it to some extent as a structuring device, but he may be judged to have exploited it excessively in the episode of the Argive women. In turning now to Troie and examining first Benoît de Sainte-Maure's handling of the collective grief of women, we shall see how this feature, when used as a recurrent motif rather than expanded to form the basis of whole episodes, can become a compelling element with some rhetorical power.

### Le Roman de Troie

In Le Roman de Troie, depiction of the collective grief of women significantly punctuates the narrative at frequent intervals. Their initial grief when Troy succumbs is presented as an aspect of their fear<sup>13</sup> and there is a realism in the depiction of them running through the streets with their children in their arms to seek sanctuary in the temples:

De femmes e d'enfanz petiz  
I ert trop granz li plorefz;  
Es temples as deus s'en fuieient,  
Quar aillors guarir ne saveient.  
Mainte dame, mainte pucele,  
Mainte borgeise riche e bele  
Vefst om foïr par les rues,  
Paoroses e esperdues:  
En lor braz portent lor enfanz.  
Tant par i esteit li dueus granz,  
Onques ne fu en nul lieu maire,  
Ne nus nel vos savreit retraire.

2761-72

In the thick of hostilities, however, repeated references to the fear and lamentation of women provide events with an incantatory backing more than they contribute to realism:

Li dueus, la noise e li resons  
 En est ofz par le pafs  
 E par les tors de marbre bis,  
 Ou les dames sont en error,  
 En crieme, en lermes e en plor;  
 Quar chascun jor creist li damages  
 Des plus prochains de lor lignages,  
 De lor freres e de lor fiz.  
 Tant ont sovent les cuers marriz  
 Que tote en ont joie obliee.

19354-63

Par mi la vile ot grant criëe  
 E granz esmais e granz dolors.  
 Es murs batailliez e es tors  
 A mil dames e mil puceles  
 Cui l'eve cort par les maïsseles  
 Que hauz criz criënt e hauz braiz:  
 Ja mais teus dueus ne sera faiz.  
 Mout se dotent que li Grezeis  
 Prengent la vile de maneis.

21644-52

....li peceiefz  
 E l'estranges abatefz  
 En est ofz par la cité  
 E el palais d'antiquité,  
 Ou mil dames a paoroses,  
 Ploranz, pensives e dotoses,  
 Quar chascun jor creist lor damages.

23877-83

The references to women's grief encourage us to view the battles in their total context, not merely as virtuoso displays of military prowess, but as events which have sorrowful repercussions in society as a whole. The tragedy of war is measured by reference to the grief it brings to women:

Estranges jorz lor i ajorne:  
 Mainte pucele en sera morne,  
 Mainte dame en iert esvevee,  
 Anceis que vienge la vespree

7637-40

Women often figure collectively in the mourning of the dead:

for N'i a dame que duel n'en ait  
 Doroscaluz: E por sa mort ne se deshait

11951-2

for Ainz l'en portent vers la cité.  
 Margariton: A com grant duel i a entré!  
 Com plorent dames e puceles,  
 Enfant e toses e anceles!

15845-8

for  
Troilus: Dames, borgeises e puceles,  
E les preisiees dameiseles  
Font si grant duel que rien vivant  
Ne vit onc mais faire si grant  
21761-4

Hector, whose death is more ornamented with grief than that of any other warrior, is mourned in a lament of twenty-four lines by 'les puceles...E les dames de la cité' (16329-52), the only collective lament for a dead warrior in Troie. A year after his death a grief-stricken vigil is kept at his tomb by Hecuba, Polyxena and Helen, and along with them

Mainte dame, mainte pucele  
E mainte riche dameisele  
17515-6

#### The Grief of some Individual Women in Le Roman de Troie

Against the sad background of collective grief provided by women in Le Roman de Troie, a number of individual female characters stand out in their grief, none more than Helen. Although she is one of the four love-heroines in the poem,<sup>14</sup> it is through the portrayal of Helen in grief rather than in love that we receive the most marked impression of her. Her grief when she is captured and taken by boat to Tenedos has been somewhat dismissed by commentators. Both Adler<sup>15</sup> and Lumiansky<sup>16</sup> speak of her as being 'easily consoled' / 'more than ready to be consoled' by Paris. It is true that she and Paris, at their first meeting before her abduction, were shown to be mutually attracted (4357) and that she did not put up much resistance when Trojan forces captured her in the temple (though her lack of resistance could be interpreted as a form of self-preservation, in the light of the comment

Ne se fist mie trop laidir,  
Bien fist semblant de consentir  
4505-6).

In the first scene in which she appears after her abduction, en route for Troy at Tenedos, she is depicted grieving for home:

Dame Heleine faiseit semblant  
Qu'ele eüst duel e ire grant:  
Fortment plorot e duel faiseit,  
E doucement se complaigneit.  
Son seignor regretot sovent,  
Ses freres, sa fille e sa gent,  
E sa ligniee e ses amis,  
E sa contree e son païs,  
Sa joie, s'onor, sa richece,  
E sa beauté e sa hautece.

4639-48

Given this long enumeration of people and things she has lost, it seems unlikely that 'faiseit semblant' (4639) should mean 'pretended', as Lumiansky implies.<sup>17</sup> It is more likely to be a statement about the outward impression she gave rather than the inward intention she harboured. In any case, the description of her grief, feigned or not, culminates in a statement about her sorrowing compassion for the ladies of her entourage, with no suggestion that this compassion for the grief of others - surely intended by the author as a sign of the nobility of her character - is anything but sincere:

Ne la poëit nus conforter,  
Quant les dames veeit plorer  
Que estoient o li ravies.

4649-51

When Paris comes to comfort her with his offer of love and marriage (4737-54) she responds with resigned dignity:

-"Sire", fet el, "ne sai que dire,  
Mais assez ai e duel e ire:  
N'en puet avoir nule rien plus.  
Se jo desdi e jo refus  
Vostre plaisir, poi me vaudra.  
Por ço sai bien qu'il m'estovra,  
Vueille o ne vueille, a consentir  
Vostre buen e vostre plaisir.  
Quant defendre ne me porreie,  
De dreit neient m'escondireie:  
Nel puis faire, ço peise mei.  
Se me portez honor e fei,  
Sauve l'avreiz — ma valor."

4755-67

Her speech is followed by a reference to her weeping:

Donc ne se pot tenir de plor  
4768

In all, hers is hardly the response of a woman 'only too happy to be consoled', and even on her entry into Troy for her marriage to Paris she is still depicted as sorrowful and in need of consolation by Priam:

Mout fu li reis proz e corteis:  
Les regnes a nouas d'orfreis  
Prist del palefrei dame Heleine;  
Il toz sous la conduit e meine.  
Mout la conforte e mout li prie  
Qu'ele s'esjoie e ne plort mie.  
4845-50

Helen's ready sympathy for others, expressed through grief, is not only one of the first emotions with which she is credited, but is shown to be a consistent feature of her personality. She joins in the general sorrow when Briseida is forced to leave Troy:

Les puceles e la reine  
Ont grant pitié de la meschine,  
E mout en plore dame Heleine.  
13413-5

Full of sorrow herself, she is at hand to comfort Andromache when Hector appears deaf to entreaties not to go to battle:

Adonc chaf a denz pasmee  
Desus le pavement a quaz.  
Cele l'en lieve entre ses braz,  
Que angoissos duel en demeine:  
C'est sa sororge, dame Heleine  
15486-90

Her sorrow at the death of Hector is as deep as that of his own kinswomen, and Benoît points out that it greatly endears her to the Trojans:

Dame Heleine ne s'est pas feinte:  
De dolor a la color teinte;  
Ses cheveus a rompuz e traiz  
E sovent giete criz e braiz:  
N'i a nule que plus en face.  
Lermes li fondent sor la face,  
Si que la peitrine a moilliee.

Tel dolor a e tel haschiee,  
 Se morte fust, mout li fust bel:  
 Mout l'en present mieuz li danzel,  
 E mout l'en sorent puis bon gré  
 Li plus prochain del parenté.

16479-90

The death of Paris himself has a devastating effect upon Helen, conveyed in her lament of ninety-two lines (22920-3011). This is the longest lament in the poem, and the only one for Paris. The description of the grief of his men (22841-6), his mother and father (22900-8), his friends (22909-11) and the whole town (22912-13) culminates in the statement in l.22914:

Tote rien vivant s'i deshaite.

In face of such universal lamentations, enormous force attaches to the next lines, introducing Helen's grief:

Qui veit Heleine bien puet dire  
 Que sor toz dueus est la soeire

22915-6

Sorrow at the death of Paris is the theme of the first seven and the last twenty-three lines of Helen's lament (22920-6 and 22989-3011) but they flank a much longer middle section of sixty-two lines (22927-988) in which she grieves, not on a personal level for her dead husband, but, in a much wider perspective, for all the sorrow and distress of which she has been the cause, the link between the sections being her desire for death, both to join Paris (23002-3011) and to atone for her guilt (22977-8). This sense of personal guilt, which provokes her grief, is distilled in the recurrent phrase 'par mei' ('par m'acheison'):

Ja plus terre ne me sustienge,  
 Ne ja mais par femme ne vienge  
 Si grant damage com par mei!

22927-9

Ha! tante dame ai mise en duel,  
 Dont lor seignor e lor ami  
 Sont ja par mei enseveli!

22944-6

Mil mui de sanc de cors vassaus  
De chevaliers proz e leiaus  
Sont espandu par m'acheison

22957-9

Que ne m'oci le rei Priant,  
Qui par mei est vis confonduz  
E que ses fiz li ai toluz?  
Par mei se veit desheriter.

22962-5

Des cors me traient les mameles  
Dames, meschines e puceles,  
Qui par mei ont perdu lor joie.

22979-81

In these extracts the focus is for the most part on concrete instances of the ills for which she holds herself responsible, - the grief brought to other women, the blood spilt, the loss of Priam's sons - but she grieves too for having brought destruction to the whole world:

Lasse! a quel hore fui jo nee,  
Ne por quei oi tel destinee  
Que li monz fust par mei destruit?

22933-5

and this vision of herself as responsible for grief on an almost cosmic scale is a recurrent one:

C'est grant dolor que onques fui:  
A ma naissance vint sor terre  
Ire e dolor e mortel guerre;  
Del mont chaf e joie e pais.

22938-41

Sor mei torront les maudiçons  
De ceus qui sont e qui seront  
E qui el siegle mais naistront

22948-50

Helen's long lament for Paris ends with her fainting and being carried away to be laid on a bed.<sup>18</sup> Benoît, however, seems loath to abandon his tour de force at this natural point of conclusion and reactivates the account of her grief by the use of anaphora:

En un chier lit en est portee.  
Par maintes feiz se resperist,  
Par maintes feiz se respasmist;  
Par maintes feiz se fait mener  
Al cors por plaindre e por plorer;  
Sovent le prent entre ses braz  
E sovent chiet sor lui a quaz.

23106-22



Since Helen has constantly been depicted grieving at the grief of others, it is fitting that this long and elaborate account of her grief for Paris should culminate in a description of the sorrow that others now feel for her:

De li a l'om greignor pitié  
Que de Paris l'une meitié.  
Mil lermes fist la nuit plorer:  
Ne la poëit nus esgarder,  
Hom ne femme, jovnes ne vieuz,  
Qu'el ne feïst plorer des ieuz.  
23023-8

To sum up, Benoît could have left Helen to be a mere 'function' in the story - the woman whose abduction leads to the conflict between Trojans and Greeks - or he could have limited her role to that of love-heroine. Instead, through his sympathetic depiction of Helen in grief, and particularly through her long lament, ostensibly for Paris, he has elevated her to the position of tragic heroine, endowing her with a terrible self-awareness whereby she fully recognises the disaster of which she has been the cause, and arousing in us pity and admiration for her.

While Benoît has made the grief of Helen an important source of affectivity in the romance, he has infused his presentation of the grief of Briseïda, another female character, with a very different spirit. When Briseïda's Trojan father defects to the Greek side, she is compelled to part from her Trojan lover Troïlus, declaring in heartfelt tones that she will never be happy again (13282-5). Her leave-taking of the ladies of Troy is likewise sorrowful (13416-8). However, in a short space, the tone of the episode changes completely with the author's unexpectedly sardonic comments on her grief:

Mais , se la danzele est irree,  
 Par tens resera apaiee;  
 Son duel avra tost obl      
 E son corage si m      
 Que poi li iert de ceus de Troie.  
 S'ele a hui duel, el ravra joie  
 De tel qui onc ne la vit jor:  
 Tost i avra torn   s'amor,  
 Tost en sera reconfortee.

13429-37

There ensues an attack on the short-lived nature of women's grief and on their fickleness in love - they can weep with one eye and laugh with the other; they can love for seven years and forget their love in three days (13438-46). In a word:

Onc nule ne sot duel avoir.

13447

To prove the point, Brise  da is subsequently shown yielding to the love of the Argive king Diomedes.

The Brise  da story, apparently an invention of Beno  t's own, has passed into general currency with Guido's and Shakespeare's treatment of it.<sup>19</sup> Although it is an interestingly told tale in itself, and may in some respects echo the story of Helen - (a woman is led by the fortunes of war to transfer her affections to a man from the hostile side) - its anti-feminist strain, concentrating on the ephemeral nature of women's grieving, is vitiated by the many instances in the romance where women are depicted in heartfelt and long-sustained grief. Ladies still grieve for Hector a year after his death. Hecuba, a mater dolorosa, is stoned to death because those about her wish to put an end to her violent demented mourning for her daughter Polyxena (26553-90). The story of Brise  da and the manner of its telling - a courtly interlude with a somewhat piquant flavour - does not sit altogether happily with the story of Troy that Beno  t has inherited, and with the sense of suffering which he choses to bring out in so many other areas of the work. However it is interesting to find the depiction of grief tinged for once with authorial scepticism.

Besides Helen and Briseida, two other prominent women characters, Cassandra and Andromache, are distinctive in their grief. Cassandra is depicted, in accordance with tradition, as having second sight, and her grief is that of a visionary who can foresee the disasters which will inevitably befall her countrymen if her warnings are not heeded. Her grief-stricken ominous warnings are all the more impressive for being uttered amid general rejoicing at Paris and Helen's wedding:

"Lasse", fet ele, "quel dolors  
Iert, quant charront cez beles tors,  
Cist riche mur e cez meisons  
E cist palais e cist donjons!  
Ha! quel dolor, quant mi bel frere  
En seront mort e mis chiers pere!  
A tart se clamera chaitis,  
Quant les verra morz e ocis.  
Ecuba, mere, queus pechiez!  
Tant sera vostre cuers iriez!  
Tant par a ci fort aventure!  
Com dolorose porteeure  
As fait, dame, de tes enfanz!..."  
4897-909

The grief of Andromache, wife of Hector, while it is depicted in the conventional context of mourning for the dead warrior (16459-78), is also earlier given particularly dynamic expression in the episode in which she tries to dissuade him from going into battle. The initial stress is on the violence of her grief in the face of his refusal to heed, and then on the state of near-madness into which she falls:

O ses dous mains granz cous se fiert;  
Ses cheveus tuert e ront e tire,  
Fier duel demeine e fier martire:  
Bien ressemble femme desvee.  
Tote enragiee, eschevelee  
15456-60

Although the reference to the 'femme desvee' is conventional enough, the concentrated force of the description sets it apart from the merely conventional. She is then depicted, in accordance with classical tradition, running to fetch her infant son:

E trestot fors de son sen,  
 Cort por son fil Asternaten.  
 Des ieuz plore mout tendrement,  
 Entre ses braz le charge e prent  
 15461-4

When her impassioned plea to her husband on behalf of their child fails, she falls in a faint - the conventional reaction here not taking into account the fate of the child in her arms! Her loud cries are vividly described in 15496-500 -

N'i a si sort qui cler ne l'oie  
 15500 -

but they shortly give way to grief-stricken speechlessness when she goes to beg help of Priam:

Si grant duel a que mot ne sone.  
 A chief de piece l'areisone  
 15507-8

Her grief has an effect on the action (as did Salemandre's and the Argive women's in Le Roman de Thèbes). Priam is sufficiently moved by it to go and intercept Hector on his way to battle and prevail on him to stay at home. This delaying mechanism in the plot contributes to the build-up preceding Hector's eventual last battle and death. Hecuba too, depicted in grief with Priam for the deaths of their sons Deiphobus (19133-36) and Paris (22900-8) and shown lamenting lengthily over two other sons, Hector (16425-56) and Troilus (21702-51), is not simply passive in her grief. Already when war has deprived her of her first son Hector, she tries unsuccessfully to instigate peace by arranging a match between Polyxena and the Greek Achilles (17885 et seq.) Later, when Achilles has killed Troilus, her grief drives her to plot revenge and when begging Paris to be party to the assassination of Achilles, she explains at length that this is the only way that she will find comfort (21861-8). In channelling her grief into a matriarchal desire for vengeance, she resembles Aalais, the grieving, vengeful mother in Raoul de Cambrai.<sup>20</sup>

There is, near the end of le Roman de Troie, a description of a picture that was placed on the tomb of Achilles. The picture was a life-sized one of Polyxena, mourning for him, and it greatly affected those who saw it, creating in them both sorrow and pleasure:

Ja hom l'image n'esguardast,  
Qui o ses dous ieuz ne plorast.  
Bien plaist a toz comunaument.  
22471-3

Here, fortuitously, is a comment on much of the women's grief in le Roman de Troie as a whole: frequently incorporated into the traditional context of mourning for the loss caused by war (as is the picture of the grieving Polyxena), the depiction of women's grief is, like that picture, an important source of affectivity and of aesthetic pleasure in the romance. But two minor features should be noted also: the depiction of grief is occasionally endowed with a function in the plot and, in the case of the grief of Briseida, an element of distancing enters into the presentation.

### **The Mourning of Warriors in the romans antiques**

While the elaboration of women's grief represents a significant new departure in the romans antiques, the mourning of warriors fallen in battle is, as we have seen, an established topos in epic, as it is in classical literature. It is not surprising, then, that the influence of epic and of the Latin texts should combine to make it a major focus of interest in Thèbes, Eneas and Troie. Not only does grief over a fallen warrior occur several times in each of these works (there being four instances in Thèbes, three in Eneas and about a score in Troie)<sup>21</sup> but in each work there is one central elaboration of the topos (a double-focused elaboration in Eneas, where a diptych is

formed by the two parallel episodes of mourning for Pallas and Camilla). In Thèbes the mourning of Atys (Athon) is the most important grief-episode, and in Troie pride of place goes to the mourning of Hector. I shall look at each of these episodes in turn, paying particular attention to the Pallas-Camilla pair. From Thèbes I shall also discuss the mourning of Tydeus, since, in that episode, prominence is given to the attitude that grief should be eschewed.

### **The Mourning of Warriors in Le Roman de Thèbes: Atys (5831-6198)**

The mourning of Atys is prominent in Le Roman de Thèbes because of its length (368 lines); because of the position it occupies approximately mid-way through the poem; because it is the only detailed account of the death of a Theban warrior; because it is closely related to the love-theme; and because the young Atys has previously been introduced and portrayed in a highly sympathetic manner (a Roland to Othon's Oliver). Atys is defeated by the valiant and magnanimous Argive hero Tydeus, and Tydeus is the first to grieve for him (5831-6; 5849-54). The depiction of Tydeus in grief for Atys is noteworthy not only because grief for an enemy was unusual in epic<sup>22</sup> but also because in the Thebaid Tydeus had attacked Atys contemptuously and, having defeated him, rode on 'et spoliare superbit' (bk. VIII, 587) - disdaining to plunder him. The Tydeus of the French version tears his hair, almost goes mad with grief<sup>23</sup> and even repudiates his own lance and horse (an attitude which is the very antithesis of his Virgilian counterpart's disain for spoils from the victim).

The wounded Atys is lamented by the women and the 'gent menue' of Thebes (5909-14) and his death is greeted by the grief of old men and children (5947-52). Ismene faints at his death, as if dead herself (5953-62). Eteocles and members of his court grieve for him (5969-72,

5981-92), and one hundred knights of Atys's personal retinue grieve (5993-6008) and utter a lament (6009-50). The climax of the episode is the grief and lament of his sweetheart Ismene (6051-136) who, though she does not die from grief as Aude does for Roland, succumbs to a kind of death by retiring, anachronistically, to a convent.

A detailed discussion of the Atys episode in relation to the Thebaid has recently been given by Donovan, who argues that much of the prominence and pathos which Statius accords to Parthoneus has been transferred in the French poem to Athos.<sup>24</sup> I will refer again to the Atys episode later in this thesis, in the section on Cligés.<sup>25</sup>

#### **The Mourning of Warriors in Le Roman de Thèbes: Tydeus (6399 et seq).**

The death and mourning of Tydeus is separated from the Atys episode only by a description of the arming of Eteocles and a listing of the ten knights who accompany him to the field (6199-338). Tydeus advances to join battle with Eteocles, but while fighting with him is fatally wounded by a treacherous archer (6363-98). There is a loose balancing between the mourning of the Argive Tydeus, and the mourning of the Theban Atys, whom Tydeus slew: like Atys, Tydeus is mourned by his king (6399-408), is lamented at length by a character close to him (- in Atys's case Ismene, in the case of Tydeus Polynices - 6409-89) and by his personal retinue (6777-96). But the differences are more striking than the resemblances. Grief in the Tydeus episode is less concentrated than in the Atys episode, being interspersed with other events and connected as much with the loss of his body (which the Thebans steal - 6736-58) as with his actual death. Above all, the episode is distinctive as a vehicle for the attitude expressed in it that grief should not be given free rein, but should be restrained, concealed and overcome. Thus King Adrastus is depicted as a tower of

strength among his people, having interiorised his grief:

Li rois ot deul, onc n'ot greignor,  
Thideüs pleure et sa valor,  
sa prouesce et son vasselage  
et sa largesce et son aage;  
mes neporquant de sa pesance  
ne faisoit pas grant demoutrance,  
car tuit s'esmaient por le mort,  
mes li rois est de grant confort;  
plus sage houme ne sai du roi:  
bien conforte sa gent et soi.

6399-408

By contrast, the grief and lament of Polynices culminates in the latter's attempt to kill himself (6488-9). His lengthy lament (6429-87) began and ended with the expression of a death-wish:

Compainz, fet il, mout ert grant tors  
s'après vous vif quant estes mors;  
puis vostre mort ne quier plus vivre

6429-31

Puis vostre mort vivre ne quier!

6487

His attempt at suicide therefore flows naturally from this lament:

Atant a tret le branc d'acier;  
par mi le cors s'en volt ferir

6488-9

Adrastus intervenes to prevent him (6490-2), representing again the attitude that rejects grief in favour of a more practical response.<sup>26</sup> He gives voice to the same attitude when, next, amidst continuing Argive lamentations over Tydeus, the Thebans attack with the intention of stealing the body: in his exhortation, the response of grief and the response of action (between which in epic there seemed rarely to be any conflict) are set against each other:

Cil de l'ost grant deul demenoient,  
li pluseur sus li se pasmoient;  
quant virent venir ceus dedenz,  
Adrastus du monter n'est lenz;  
il ne fu pas lenz du monter:  
"Lessiez, fait il, cest deul ester!  
Veez venir noz annemis  
qui Thideüs nos ont ocis:  
or i parra qui deul avra  
et qui hardiement ferrai!"

6527-36



The lesson is repeated specifically for Polynices (which strengthens the interpretation that the grief of Polynices is intended as an object-lesson of how not to respond, as much as a pathetic excursus in its own right):

Pollinicsés se pasme et plore,  
mes li rois li est coruz sore:  
"Lessiez, fet il, ester cest plor."  
6541-3

Vengeance is put forward as an antidote to grief:

"Se de sa mort avez doulor,  
veez venir cex qui mort l'ont  
et qui entr'ex grant joie font.  
Gardez leur joie et lor baudor  
lor faites torner en tristor."  
6544-8

and an antithesis expressed between sorrowing women and avenging knights:

"Tu le doiz vengier es estors,  
sa fame en doit plorer toz jors;  
fame et enfant doivent plorer,  
et chevaliers granz coux donner."  
6549-52

After further exhortation from Adrastus (6553-62) the Argives are described advancing to meet the oncoming Thebans and this is depicted as a triumph of action over grief, with emphasis provided by some rhetorical ornamentation in the form of repeated chiasmus:

Pollinicsés a quelque paine  
se conforte du deul qu'il maine;  
a quelque paine se conforte,  
monte el cheval qui tost le porte;  
mout sont dolent il et li rois,  
des or ferront granz cox manois.  
Li autre ferront ensement,  
leur roi sivent hardiement;  
hardiement sivent le roi  
6563-71

The play on 'hardiement' in the last two lines quoted provides an echo of the king's exhortation, thus underlining the rejection of outward forms of grieving:

or i parra qui deul avra  
et qui hardiement ferra!  
6535-6

The altogether more detached presentation of grief emerging in this episode becomes more prominent as it proceeds. In the midst of the Argive attack on the Thebans, the Theban king Eteocles decides to use trickery and sends a false messenger to the Argive side. The bold fighting of Ipomedon (it is said of him that 'hardiement se combat', 6704) is deflected by the feigned grief of the treacherous messenger who reports that Adrastus needs help in another part of the field:

Cil vet avant, plore et sopire,  
ses chevex enrache et decire:  
"Sire, fet il, que fes tu ci?  
Pour Dieu, aies du roi merci!  
Lesse les mors, aïde as vis,  
car cil de la ont le roi pris."  
6705-10

Thus the feigned grief of the messenger enables Eteocles to have the body of Tydeus stolen.

The loss of the body of Tydeus deals a severe blow to the morale of the 1,500 men of his own retinue, so grief-stricken that they want to return home (6759-96). King Adrastus himself is moved by the tearful representations they make to him (6797-802). But the practical advice of his seneschal Capaneus (6805-44) leads him to resume his role of inspirer of his troops. In a highly politic fashion he manipulates the grief of the men of Tydeus to get them to stay: he arouses their sympathy for the aged father of Tydeus (6853-8). He reminds the warriors that the old man would be cheered to receive Tydeus' son, the child of Adrastus' daughter, and cunningly asks them to wait until he has sent for the child so that they may take him back with them (6859-80). So the troops are retained and the situation, which had been threatened by their grief, is saved ironically by the manipulation of that grief. Thus, in this episode, grief is featured, not as something which the audience might empathise with, but as something which may be viewed in a more detached light. A

distance is marked here between the depiction of grief in epic, where it is presented either quite factually or in an embellished fashion as a means of arousing pathos, and its depiction in this episode from the earliest work of courtly inspiration, where it is presented as something which can be both feigned and manipulated (as well as overcome). It is a distance which, as we shall see, is to be greatly widened by Chrétien de Troyes.

**The Mourning of Warriors in Eneas: Parallelisms of Structure in the Mourning for Pallas and Camilla (5847-56, 6143-241; 7213-56, 7365-429, 7492-523).**

Pallas is the son of King Evander, an ally of Eneas in the struggle against Turnus and the inhabitants of Latium. Previously untried in battle, he is knighted by his father (4811-4) and proves his prowess when he passionately exhorts retreating comrades to return to the fray (5667-708). Confronted with Turnus himself, he succumbs only after a keen struggle which ends in his death (5709-62).

Pallas stands out among the secondary characters because his youthful valour is prematurely extinguished by a formidable adversary. Camilla is conspicuous for her womanhood. Her first appearance as an ally of Turnus is described at length as she and her horse enter the town of Latium (3959-4106). Although she is on the side hostile to Eneas, and although her undoing is less worthy than that of Pallas (- she is killed by a Trojan spear when dismounting to appropriate as booty a costly helmet-) the episodes in which she is mourned are, in broad outline, identical to those in which Pallas is mourned.

The deaths of both Pallas and Camilla result in initial expressions of grief. Eneas utters a short 'ad hoc' lament over Pallas (5847-56) while the death of Camilla provokes an immediate

reaction of spontaneous grief among her retinue, the townspeople and in Turnus (7213-56). Both Eneas and Turnus are depicted as feeling responsible for the death in question, Eneas because Pallas had been in his tutelage (5852-6), Turnus because Camilla had died as his ally (7251-3).

There is no immediate equivalent for Pallas of the widespread grief for Camilla at this point (though he is mourned lengthily by his parents later when his body is returned home.)<sup>27</sup> The strength of the grief felt immediately after Camilla's death is conveyed in the repeated detail that there is a withdrawal from the military encounter:

Camile jut a terre morte,  
sa mesniee s'an desconforte,  
guerpi ont lo tornoiement,  
cele part vont isnellemant.  
Grant duel demainent ses pucelles.  
Ses mains, qui tant estoient beles,  
an po d'ore furent nercies  
et ses colors totes persies,  
sa tendre char tote mñee.  
An la cité l'an ont portee.  
Grant duel demoinent cil dedanz,  
remés est li tornoiemanz.

7213-24

(This detail was used in Thèbes to evoke grief at the death of Atys -

remés est li tornoi mes hui,  
car des ore torne a anui  
Thèbes 5975-6)

For an emotional issue to take precedence over martial events in so explicit a fashion is surely a sign of changing tastes! Nevertheless, Camilla is mourned first and foremost as Turnus' ally. The description of the communal grief for her which greets Turnus when he arrives post-haste in Laurentium is in sad counterpoint to the description of communal admiration for her when she had first proudly ridden in:

Quant a Laurente vint errant,  
 temolte ot an la vile grant,  
 borjois monterent sus as estres,  
 dames, meschines as fenestres,  
 et esgardoient la pucelle  
 qui tant ert proz et tant ert bele.  
 A grant mervoille lo tenoient  
 tote la gent qui la veoient.

4089-96

Turnus vait a Laurente droit  
 et trova morte la meschine.  
 Plore li rois et la rafne,  
 borjois et dames et serjant,  
 duel font li petit et li grant;  
 tuit regretent la damoiselle,  
 qui tant ert proz et tant ert bele  
 et diënt tuit que mare fu;  
 formant lor est mesavenu,  
 molt ont perdue grant afe,  
 afeblofe est lor partie.

7240-50

These scenes are connected by the opening reference to the city's name, Laurente (4089, 7240), by the idea of sound (4090, 7245), by the use of distributio which includes mention of borjois and dames (4089, 4090, 7243) and by the repetition with significant variation:

et esgardoient la pucelle  
 qui tant ert proz et tant ert bele.  
 4093-4

tuit regretent la damoiselle  
 qui tant ert proz et tant ert bele.  
 7245-6

After Eneas' initial expression of grief for Pallas, there ensues a period of renewed fighting, ending when the Latins ask Eneas for a truce to permit each side to bury its dead (5999-6102). In the Camilla episode, a truce is also obtained soon after the immediate mourning which greeted her death, and during this truce Eneas erects a vast tent, and Latins and Trojans again dispose of their dead (7257-364). So in each instance Pallas and Camilla are lamented formally only after more immediate duties have been attended to. A similar gap between the death of a character and a principal lament being spoken

over him occurs in La Chanson de Roland, where, after Charlemagne's return to Roncevaux, a number of incidents, including the rout of the Saracens, are described in the space of some twenty-seven laisses before the poet depicts the emperor giving full rein to his grief for Roland.<sup>28</sup> While such a gap between the death and the mourning of a character may have been created in the interests of realism, its stylistic effect is to arouse anticipation and to highlight the principal mourning episode when it occurs.

The formal laments spoken by Eneas and Turnus are virtually identical in length, being sixty-two and fifty-eight lines long respectively (6147-208; 7369-426). Both laments contain elements of conventional eulogy, as epitomised by Eneas' apostrophe of Pallas:

"Pallas", fait il, "flor de jovente"  
6147

and by Turnus' judgement of Camilla:

D'autres fames estiez flor  
7400

Camilla, of course, unusually for a woman, is praised for her valour:

tant estiez cortoise et bele,  
tant amiez chevalerie,  
vos an avez changié la vie.  
Ne fu femme de nul parage  
qui anpreist tel vasalage,  
ne qui de ce s'antremest.  
7376-81

Pallas, conversely, is referred to in terms which are preponderantly feminine:

ta blanchor est tote nergie  
et ta color tote persie.  
Bele faiture, gente chose,  
si com soloil flestist la rose,  
si t'a la morz tot tost plessié  
et tot flesti et tot changié.  
6191-6

Apart from the eulogistic strain, the laments resemble each other by referring at or near the beginning to Fortune (6157, 7370). They also

highlight once more the responsibility of the speaker for what has happened e.g.

(Eneas)           ja mes n'iert jors, ne me repente  
                  que ça venis ansanble moi.  
                  Malvese garde ai fait de toi,  
                  quant tu sanz moi recoillis mort;  
                  g'en ai les corpes et le tort.  
  6148-52

(Turnus)           Ou ere ge, quant ge n'i fui?  
                  Ne fussiez pas ansi ocise,  
                  greignor garde fust de vos prise;  
                  ne morissoiz lez moi noant,  
                  ge vos gardasse feelmant  
                  come la moie chiere amie.  
  7418-23

Both laments incorporate near the end the same rather unconvincing line:

Ge ne sai plus que ge te die  
  6200

Ge ne sai mes que ge vos die  
  7424

and both Eneas and Turnus are depicted fainting at the end of their laments (6209-11 and 7427-9). Each leader then accompanies the cortège for part of the journey as a mark of grief, the parallelism being evident in the repetition of key elements:

Eneas  
  
La biere fist aler avant,  
se les a donc mis a la voie;  
fors de son chastel les convoie  
une grant liue tote antiere  
ala a pié apres la biere.  
Sa gent lo firent arester,  
lo mort lascia avant aler,  
et quant il vint al departir  
maint plaint gita et maint sospir;  
unques ne s'en pot retourner  
tant com lo pot veor errer.  
Quant il an perdi la veüe,  
a molt grant anviz se remue,  
retorna s'en a quel que poine,  
sa gent a Montauban an moine.  
6214-28

Turnus  
  
Turnus, al convoier lo cors,  
soantre vet a pié plorant,  
demante soi et fait duel grant.  
.....  
Turnus ala grant piece avant,  
puis que tuit furent retorné,  
grant liue loing de la cité.  
Al departir baisa defors  
cent foiz la biere ou gist li cors  
trente fefes se pasma,  
a grant poines s'an retorna.  
7492-4; 7506-12

There is too a close verbal parallel between the descriptions of the communal grief which the news of the deaths and the entry of the

cortèges provoke in the native cities of Pallas and Camilla:

Pallas            La nouvelle fu tost oïe,  
                     la vile an est tote estormie,  
                     contre lo cors li borjois corent  
                     et les dames crïent et plorent;  
                     tuit regretent lo damoisel.

6237-41

Camilla            Quant la nouvelle fu oïe,  
                     la vile an est tote estormie;  
                     encontre li corent plorant,  
                     duel font li petit et li grant;  
                     tote la gent est esfreee.

7519-23

The narratives diverge now, in so far as Pallas is lamented at length by his parents (6242-374: see below, pages 155-9) before preparations for his burial, whereas much briefer reference is made to the fact that Camilla lay in state for three months while her tomb was being built (7524-30). But both bodies are then decked out with princely accoutrements (6399-404; 7640-1), the tomb of each is described (6409-518; 7531-718), each is accorded an epitaph (6491-4; 7663-8) and reference is made to each tomb being walled up (6525-8; 7719-24), after which, in each case, the narrative resumes its course with a council of barons being held by the king of Latium (6537 et seq; 7725 et seq).

Clearly such a striking series of parallels between the Pallas and Camilla episodes has come about by careful design. Although both characters are mourned in Book XI of the Aeneid, Virgil draws no obvious parallels. To bring the episodes into line with each other, the French poet has radically altered his source material relating to Camilla, since, in the Aeneid, mourning for her is confined to one speech, uttered by a supernatural being, Opis (Aeneid XI, 836 et seq). Virgil's Pallas and Camilla are not presented as being counterparts to one another in any way, but the French author goes so far as to



suggest (in Turnus' lament, 7388-91) that the death of Camilla on the side of the Latins pays off the debt of Pallas' death on the side of the Trojans.<sup>29</sup> Adler has discerned parallelisms between Eneas and Lavine (the puer senex and the puella senex, each desirably young in some respects and desirably old in others) which he links to the overall forward-looking humanistic spirit of the work,<sup>30</sup> but in the case of Pallas and Camilla, who are, after all, on opposing sides in the conflict, the parallelism seems to exist for primarily rhetorical reasons. The similarity between the patterns of mourning for both characters underlines the 'set-piece' nature of the theme and the poet's conviction that there is an optimum way for such a theme to be handled. The rhetoric of grief has become its own justification.

**The Mourning of Warriors in Eneas: Pallas mourned by his parents (6242-374)**

Taking his initial inspiration from the Aeneid, where Pallas is mourned by his father King Evander when his body is returned home (bk.XI, 139-81) the French author, as we have seen, includes in the mourning of Pallas a lengthy scene in which the young man is mourned by both father and mother. It is a scene which we have been led to anticipate when Eneas, in his own lament for Pallas some two hundred lines earlier, foresees their grief:

grant duel porra avoir tes pere,  
froide nouvelle orra ta mere,  
quant de ta mort lor iert noncié.  
6171-3

King Evander learns of his son's death as the cortège moves into the city, and he displays his grief in the conventional manner accorded to patriarchs - fainting and plucking his beard (6253-8). The Queen joins him in rushing towards the bier:

Et quant l'ot dire la raïne,  
son vis depiece et sa petrine,  
de la chanbre ist el palés fors  
et vet corant contre le cors,  
eschevelee, tote pale.

6259-63

The very existence of the Queen, rushing to associate herself in her husband's grief, is a gesture to the conventional pattern represented in Alexis and Thèbes (see pages 120-1 above), since in the Aeneid, Evander states at the beginning of his lament that the Queen, his wife, is fortunate to be dead and not to know of the loss of their son (bk.XI, 159). The French author, by contrast, makes the Queen the predominant participant in his depiction of grief. Initially he has King and Queen come in opposite directions to meet over the body of their son and join in a duo of condemnation directed at the gods:

Anz el porche devant la sale,  
la encontra son fil li pere,  
de l'autre part i vint sa mere;  
de desor lui mil foiz se pasment  
et toz les deus chosent et blasment,  
que chascun jor lor comandaient,  
a lor auteus sacrefioient,  
que lor anfant lor garantissent,  
en bataille lo deffandissent

6264-72

Thereafter there is a certain differentiation in the parts they play. The King (but not specifically the Queen) is shown the battle spoils that Pallas' bravery has won (6277-87); both are bidden to inspect the death wound, but react differently:

duel ot li rois quant il la voit,  
ne la puet la mere esgarder

6290-1

Each utters a lament, the Queen's being by far the longer, fifty-four lines (6317-70) to the King's fourteen (6301-14). Evander's lament is largely divergent from its Virgilian counterpart and centres on the father's distress at losing an heir (a preoccupation identical to that of Alexis' father, as seen in the following lines:

Evander            Qui maintandra or mon país,  
                      mon realme, tote m'enor,  
                      dunt tu fusses eir aucun jor?  
                      N'ai mes anfant qui mon regne ait  
    6304-7

Eufemien        O filz, qui erent mes granz ereditez,  
                      Mes larges terres dont jo aveis asez,  
                      Mi grant paleis de Rome la cité?  
                      Ed enpur tei m'en esteie penét:  
                      Puis mun decés en fusses onorét.  
    Alexis st.81).

Unexpectedly perhaps, the Queen's lament does not display any specifically maternal preoccupations. Indeed, its three guiding ideas are fairly original. The poet has transferred some of the content of the Virgilian king's lament to hers, but, in transferring it, has stood part of it, at least, on its head. In the Aeneid, King Evander, far from feeling bitter towards the Trojans, is consoled by the thought that it was they in whose service Pallas fell (bk.XI, 164-71). In the roman, the Queen is full of bitterness towards the Trojans, whom she accuses of 'felonie et trafson' (6322) and 'malveise foi' (6332). There is a veiled criticism of her husband too, when she says

onc Euander ne me volt croire,  
 o aus vos ajosta an oirre,  
 et avoc aus vos an menerent  
    6329-31

The spoils of war won by Pallas, which, in the lament of the Virgilian Evander, are a further source of consolation,<sup>31</sup> serve, in the Queen's view, to increase grief rather than assuage it, since proof of his valour merely underlines his parents' loss:

ne sai antandre an nule guise  
 quel proz soit cist confortement,  
 ainçois nos fet molt plus dolant,  
 car or savons lo vasalage  
 qui ert an vos et lo barnage:  
 tant com vos oons plus loër,  
 de tant nos an doit plus peser.  
    6346-52

The Queen is logical in her view, but entirely unheroic, giving precedence to natural affection and steadfastly refusing to take

comfort in 'los'. In the same spirit that sets the pathetic above the heroic, the author has chosen in the course of his romance not to relate the many deeds of valour that are ascribed to Pallas in the Aeneid (bk.X 362-425), though he was prepared to invoke them near the beginning of the description of the parents' mourning (6292-6) where they added weight to the theme of grief:

Quant il oïrent reconter  
de lor anfant tant vasalages,  
tant proëces et tant barnages,  
n'ert mervoille se duel menoient  
pere et mere, que tant l'amoient.

The remainder of the Queen's lament consists largely of a harangue against the gods (6353-66), developed from a fleeting complaint in the speech of the Virgilian Evander (Bk.XI, 157-8). At the end of the Queen's lament, she and the King are brought together again in the conventional reference to the sympathetic grief that their grief must necessarily provoke in any who might see them:

La rafne se dementot,  
li rois molt sovant se pasmot;  
qui lor vefst cel duel mener  
ne se tenist ja de plorer.

6371-4

Their grief is now subsumed in the preparations for burial and description of the tomb, which, in the case of both Pallas and Camilla, provide such an impressive - one might say monumental - climax to the mourning activity. However an affective strain is still present in the detail that Pallas was dressed in 'dras de cheinsil' which his mother had given him (6391-2) and in the comment that his father grieved in seeing his son the occupant of a tomb that he had expected himself to occupy first:

iluec quidot que il geüst,  
li rois, quel ore qu'il morust,  
mais mis i ert ses fiz ainçois;  
de tant est plus dolanz li rois.

6415-8

In all, the grief of Pallas' parents is depicted in a manner more distinctive than stereotyped. But it is bounded by a conventional framework and it is part of that wider pair of episodes, the mourning of Pallas and of Camilla, where parallelism of structure and symmetry of content are otherwise the order of the day.

The highlighting of the grief surrounding Pallas and Camilla has repercussions in other episodes, notably in the episode involving Nisus and Euryalus. In book IX of the Aeneid, these two warrior comrades slip out of the Trojan camp to go in search of Aeneas and are pursued by a company of the Volcens, allies of Turnus. Euryalus is caught, and Nisus tries to rescue him, but both are killed and their heads displayed on spear-ends. The episode ends with a lament spoken by the mother of Euryalus (Aeneid IX, 473-502). The French author reproduces the episode more or less faithfully, though he omits the mother's lament, along with two references to her from book IX. The first of these references occurred in the Aeneid when Nisus tried to dissuade Euryalus from joining him in his dangerous mission by reminding him of the grief his mother would feel if anything ill were to befall him (bk.IX, 216-8). The second reference occurred when the two men took leave of their Trojan comrades and Euryalus sought an assurance that his mother would be looked after if he died - a request which moved his listeners to tears (bk.IX, 283-94). I have already commented on the relatively scant attention paid to scenes of parting in the epic;<sup>32</sup> Euryalus' request, as well as several other emotive aspects of the departure of Euryalus and Nisus, has no place in the French version of the scene (5037-42). Likewise, the scene of parting between Evander and his son Pallas, magnificently recounted in the Aeneid (bk.VIII, 558-84) is omitted in the roman at the point where

Eneas leaves Evander, taking with him to battle the newly knighted Pallas (4810-24), and is alluded to only briefly in Eneas' lament for Pallas (6174-7). So the fact that the mother is not referred to in the departure scene of Nisus and Euryalus is not surprising, since scenes of departure are not generally treated in a way that might be thought to maximise their pathetic potential. But the omission of the mother's lament at the death of Euryalus is more noteworthy. It seems as if the French author has preferred to develop the set piece of mourning in the parallel cases of Pallas and Camilla alone, and to treat cursorily other episodes which might detract from that elaborate dyptych. Hence Euryalus loses a mother and Pallas gains one! Although the lament of the mother of Pallas draws largely on the content of King Evander's lament in the Aeneid, as we have just seen, the reference to the 'dras de cheinsil' in which she clothes her dead son (6391-2) may hark back to the garment referred to in the lament of the mother of Euryalus:

nec te, tua funera, mater  
 produxi pressive oculos aut volnera lavi,  
 vesti tegens, tibi quam noctes festina diesque  
 urgebam, et tela curas solabar anilis.

Aeneid IX, 486-9

(Nor have I, thy mother, led thee - thy corpse - forth to burial, or closed thine eyes, or bathed thy wounds, shrouding thee with the robe which, in haste, night and day, I toiled at for thy sake, beguiling with the loom the sorrows of age).

Indeed, those funeral duties which, in the Aeneid, the mother of Euryalus says she has been unable to perform for her son's corpse are of the same kind as we see performed in Eneas for Pallas (6379-92).

Although the mourning of Euryalus is not carried over from the Latin to the French poem, for the reason I have suggested, the French author does develop the other important emotive element in Virgil's account, the affection between Nisus and Euryalus. Nisus' realisation

that he has left Euryalus behind him, which is briefly

conveyed in the Latin (bk.IX, 389-92), becomes a full-scale depiction of grief in the French: Nisus reacts in the grand manner:

de son compaignon li menbra,  
arestut soi, si esgarda;  
il ne l'ooit ne il nel vit,  
ne fu dolanz pas un petit,  
molt ot grant duel, forment sospire,  
des poinz se fiert, ses chevols tire.  
5139-44

Although he has no evidence that Euryalus is dead, the speech he utters (5145-84) soon takes on the character of a lament, with the use of apostrophe, the 'mar fu' motif and the death wish:

Eüriale, dolz amis,  
por vostre amor perdrai la vie,  
soantre vos ne vivrai mie.  
Tant mar i fu vostre jovante:  
an vos avoie mis m'antante,  
perdu vos ai an molt po d'ore.  
Or m'est avis que trop demore  
que la moie ame n'est jostee  
o la vostre qu'est esgaree;  
ele i sera hastivement  
5156-65

In this situation, where we might expect to find depicted anxiety and consternation, the conventional grief response seems a somewhat unnuanced expression of the character's feelings. However it is turned quite adroitly to good account in the remainder of the speech, where Nisus breaks off from the lament to say

mais ge quit bien veralement,  
n'est ancor pas morz mes amis;  
ge sent mon cuer, il est toz vis...  
5166-8

In this way the theme of comradely affection is stressed and the speech becomes dynamic again, with the narrative thrust resumed as Nisus sets off to look for his comrade (5185 et seq.).

Lausus, son of Mezentius, is the only other character in the Eneas to be mourned after his fall on the field of battle. Eneas is searching for Pallas' killer Turnus when he meets and wounds Mezentius (5861-72). Lausus' reactions to the wounding of his father are summed

up in a brief conventional formula:

Lausus, ses fiz, molt grant duel ot,  
quant vit son pere abatre a terre  
5878-9

Here, 'duel', unaccompanied by tears or groans (which are present at the corresponding point in the Latin)<sup>33</sup> represents that blurred area of grief/anger, which expresses itself immediately in the urge to seek revenge (5880-3).<sup>34</sup>

In the Aeneid, when Lausus is killed by Aeneas, Aeneas laments over his young victim because of the young man's love for his father (bk.X, 821-30). This affective lament has no counterpart in the French poem, where it is replaced by a somewhat conventional description of the grief of Lausus' household. Their lament, couched briefly in indirect speech, (see 5925-6 below) is identical to that later attributed to the townspeople for Camilla (7247-8):

Lausus gist morz el champ adanz,  
anvion lui vienent ses genz,  
qui molt menoient grant tristor  
et molt grant cri et molt grant plor,  
et d'fent tuit que mar i fu,  
formant lor est mesavenu.  
5921-6

The grief of Mezentius on learning of the death of his son is likewise less vividly portrayed in the French. In the Latin he covers his hair with dust, stretches his hands heavenward and utters a lament while holding his son in his arms (bk.X, 844-56). The French version states merely

molt ot grant duel, onc n'ot graignor  
5947

and we are then left to gauge the strength of his grief from the fact that he overcomes the pain from his wound in order to go in search of the warrior responsible for his son's death (5948-58).

The grief element in Virgil's version of the Lausus episode has been carried over in reduced form to the Eneas. To have exploited it



would again have detracted from the grief surrounding the death of Pallas, an incident with which the Lausus episode is closely bound up. It is significant that the French poet has omitted the incident where Pallas and Lausus meet briefly in the field and where Virgil draws a direct comparison between them (Aeneid X, 433-8). In Eneas the distinctive character of Camilla is made to provide a much more compelling counterpoise to Pallas, and the toning-down of the pathos present in the source episodes involving Nisus and Euryalus, and Lausus and Mezentius, gives maximum impact to the grief surrounding Pallas and Camilla.

#### **The Mourning of Warriors in Le Roman de Troie: Hector (16231 et seq.)**

In Le Roman de Troie a central place is occupied by the mourning of Hector. Again, this extended episode occurs approximately halfway through the work (beginning at l.16231 in the Constans edition of 30316 lines). Benoît's depiction of the mourning of Hector is nothing less than prodigal. Hector's death is thrown into special relief by the author's delaying technique<sup>35</sup> and by Andromache's prophecies of his fate (15284-324). After his death the narrator himself is the first to express grief:

Ha! las, com pesant aventure!  
Tant par est pesme e tant est dure  
Com dolorose destinee!

16231-3

Hector is then grieved for by his own soldiers (16237-44) who throw away their weapons, as Tydeus did at the death of Atys; and by all manner of people in Troy itself:

Del champ fu li cors aportez:  
 Quant en la vile fu entrez,  
 Onc nel vit nus sor piez estast  
 Ne de dolor ne se pasmast.  
 Braient femmes, braient enfant,  
 Toz li pueples, petit e grant;  
 Florent li rei, plorent contor,  
 Florent demeine e vavassor.  
 Les puceles l'ont regreté  
 E les dames de la cité

16319-28

With an impressive use of apostrophe, maidens lament the fact that the hero's death is a blow to their marriage hopes:

Sire Hector douz, nobles guerriers,  
 Sire nobiles chevaliers,  
 Sire qui tant nos amiēz,  
 Sire qui toz nos guardiēz,  
 Sire qui tant estiēz proz  
 Que nos defendiēz de toz,  
 Queus damages quant estes morz!

16329-35

He is then mourned by his father Priam (16360-8), his brother Paris (16369-98), other brothers (16400-3) and by his female relations collectively (16404-24) and then separately - by his mother Hecuba (16425-58), by his wife Andromache (16459-71), his sister-in-law Helen (16479-90) and finally by his sister Polyxena (16491-8). In the case of Polyxena the modern reader notes with amused relief the use of in the topos of inexpressibility:

De Polixena que direie,  
 Quant retraire ne vos savreie  
 La merveille qu'el fait de sei?  
 N'i a duc, amiraut ne rei  
 Cui ne face des ieuz plorer.  
 Se jos voleie raconter  
 La verité de sa dolor,  
 Iço durreit mais tote jor;  
 Mais ne vos vueil pas enoier

16491-9

Even after Hector's body has been embalmed, his tomb described and his prowess once more eulogised (16503-848) the account of the mourning for him is not complete. Hecuba, Polyxena and Helen are depicted grieving for him at the festival held on the first anniversary of his death (17511-4). Some seven thousand lines after the account of his

death (in the tenth battle) he is lamented on yet one more occasion by the Amazon Queen Panthesilea, as she arrives to help the Trojans in the twenty-first battle (23395-416).

In the central mourning episodes in each of the romans antiques, but particularly in the description of the mourning for Hector, the set piece of mourning for a warrior fallen in battle seems to have been developed to its extreme limits. That topos in particular, and the depiction of grief in general, are themes which, after the composition of the romans antiques, appear ripe for renewal. The extent to which Chrétien de Troyes renews these themes is the subject of the remainder of this thesis.

## NOTES

1. See A. Pauphilet, "Eneas et Enée" (141), J. Crosland, "Eneas and the Aeneid" (64), R. Jones, The Theme of Love in the romans d'Antiquité (101), pp. 30-42. The most recent analysis of the relationship between the French Dido episode and its Virgilian precursor is in an article published in 1982 by D. Shirt, "The Dido Episode in Enéas: The Reshaping of Tragedy and its Stylistic Consequences" (161).
2. It is widely accepted that the French authors had access to these two Latin texts as we know them. See Crosland, art. cit., (64) pp. 283-4 and L.G. Donovan, Recherches sur "Le Roman de Thèbes" (70), pp. 1-29.

For the story of Troy, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, the author of Le Roman de Troie, acknowledges his sources to be two Latin accounts attributed to Dares the Phrygian and Dictys of Crete. While he seems to have followed Dares and Dictys at some points (see Sullivan, "Translation and Adaptation in Le Roman de Troie" (165)) the vast edifice of his poem (30316 lines in the Constans edition) leaves these comparatively brief prose chronicles far behind.

Editions of French texts referred to in this chapter are as follows: Le Roman de Thèbes edited by Guy Raynaud de Lage (34); Eneas edited by J.J. Salverda de Grave (20); Le Roman de Troie edited by L. Constans (2). Quotations and English translations of the Aeneid are based on the edition with translation by H. Rushton Fairclough in the Loeb Classical Library series (42) and quotations and English translations of the Thebaid are based on the edition with translation by J.H. Mozeley in the same series (36).

3. "Lais et romans bretons" in Revue des Cours et Conférences (93), p. 496.
4. For example, in Roland 2906-8:

Trait ses crignels pleines ses mains amsdous;  
Cent milie Franc en unt si grant dultur,  
Nen i ad cel ki durement ne plurt.

and in Raoul de Cambrai 1535:

Por sa dolor pleurent les gens Bernier.

5. See p. 105 above.
6. These are as follows:
  - i) grief of citizens of Thebes on learning that Ty deus has massacred a company of their best knights (1961-998)
  - ii) grief at the death (from a snake bite) of King

Lygurge's baby son (described between 2385 and 2586)

iii) grief at the death of the Argive sooth-sayer, Amphiaraus (5106-150).

iv) grief at the death of the Theban knight Atys (5831-6198)

v) grief at the death of the Argive knight Tydeus (6399-562, 6737-802)

vi) grief at the death of the Argive knight Parthonopeus (8833-76)

vii) grief of the Argive ladies at the final defeat of their army (9857 et seq.).

7. In the Thebaid Theban mothers raise a great cry when they see the lone messenger arriving at the gates (bk. III, 53-7), and Theban citizens including women are shown making their way to the scene of the slaughter and grieving there wildly and at length (bk. III, 114-68). The French poet lays more stress on the women's initial grief on hearing the news and dismisses in a few lines (1991-8) the citizens' eventual reactions over the bodies.

8. See p.98 above.

9. In the Thebaid the single cry uttered by the women on seeing the messenger is likened to "that last cry when cities are flung open to the victors, or when a ship sinks at sea" -

clamoren, qualis bello supremus apertis  
urbibus, aut pelago iam descendente carina.

Thebaid bk. III, 56-7

In Virgil's account of grief after the death of Dido, we read

it clamor ad alta  
atria; concussam bacchatur Fama per urbem.  
lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu  
tectata fremunt, resonat magnis plangoribus aether,  
non aliter, quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis  
Karthago aut antiqua Tyros. flammaeque furentes  
culmina perque hominum volvantur perque deorum

Aeneid bk.IV, 665-71

(A scream rises to the lofty roof; Rumour riots through the startled city. The palace rings with lamentation, with sobbing and women's shrieks, and heaven echoes with loud wails - even as though all Carthage or ancient Tyre were falling before the intruding foe, and fierce flames were rolling on over the roofs of men, over the roofs of gods).

10. These events, from the departure of the Argive women to the description of the funeral pyres, are related in the final book of the Thebaid, XII, 105 to the end.

11. See note 7 above.

12. Thebaid, XII, 588-9: rubuit Neptunius heros / pernotus lacrimis  
(The Neptunian hero flushed, deeply stirred by their tears).
13. See pp. 83-6 above.
14. See Lumiansky, "Structural Unity in Benoit's Roman de Troie" (120).
15. Adler, "Militia et Amor in the Roman de Troie" (47), p.17.
16. Lumiansky, art.cit., (120) p.416.
17. *ibid.* p.416: "Benoit .. says that Helen only "faisoit semblant" (4639) that she grieved deeply at being kidnapped by Paris, in order to comfort the other Greek captives."

Compare the description of Andromache's grief at Hector's death, where, clearly, there is no hint of feigning in the phrase 'fait semblant':

Andromacha ot tant ploré  
Et tant lo jor brait e crié  
Que parole n'en puet eissir.  
Sovent fait semblant de morir  
Sovent est verte et pale et vaine;  
De li nen ist funs ne aleine.  
16459-64

18. There is a precedent for this detail in the Aeneid, when Dido is grief-stricken at the thought of Aeneas' departure:

suscipiunt famulae conlapsaque membra  
marmoreo referunt thalamo stratisque reponunt  
bk.IV, 391-2

(Her maids support her, carry her swooning form to her marble bower, and lay her on her bed).

This detail is reproduced in the Eneas:

Ses puceles l'en ont portee  
desi qu'an sa chambre pavee 1861-2

A similar detail in Thèbes, with no equivalent in the Thebaid, is included in the description of Ismene fainting for grief over Atys:

sa mere et sa seur la remuent,  
les autres dames lor aiuent;  
en une chambre l'ont portee,  
un lit ont fet, enz l'ont posee.  
5963-6

Indeed, for a character to be so overcome with grief that he or

(mostly) she has to be carried away to bed is something of a minor motif in the romans antiques: King Priam, having fainted with grief at the death of his son Hector, is dealt with similarly:

Osté l'en ont a mout grant peine  
 si fil, si rei e si contor.  
 En une chambre peinte a flor  
 En est portez si come morz

Troie 16364-7

19. R.M.Lumiansky, "The Story of Troilus and Briseida according to Benoît and Guido" (119).
20. See pp. 108-10 above.
21. The following warriors are mourned in Thèbe: Amphiaras (5106-50), Atys (5831-6198), Tydeus (6399-562, 6737-802), Parthonopeus (8833-76).

The following warriors are mourned in Eneas: Lausus (5921-58), Pallas (5847-56, 6143-374), Camilla (7213-56, 7365-429, 7492-523).

The following warriors are mourned in Troie: Eliachim (2623-38), Philemenis (7321-32), Proteselaus (7519-30), Celidis (8865-8), Patroclon (10331-70), Doroscaluz (11945-58), Epistrot (12193-201), Margariton (15840-54), Hector (16231 et passim), the king of Persia (17354-97), Deïphebus (19124-40), Saupedon (19141-47), Palamedes (19148-62), Troilus (21451 et passim), Troilus and Memnon (21677-97), Memnon (21783-8, 21809-37), Achilles (22317-46), Antilochus (22368-84), Paris (22893-3088), Glaucon (25258-67), Penthesilee (25268-88), Telamon (27117-34), Ulysses (30189-218).

22. See pp. 104 above.

23. Thideüs ses chevex enrache;  
 par pou de deul tout vif n'enrage  
 5849-50

Almost losing one's wits through grief is a commonplace of epic grief depiction, e.g.

Si grant doel ad, por poi qu'il n'est desvét  
Roland 2789

Tel duel en a le sens quide changier  
Raoul 2706, 3363

24. Donovan op.cit., (70) pp.151-86. Rosemarie Jones also discusses the relationship of the death of Atys in Thèbes to the account in the Thebaid (op.cit. (101) pp. 90-6). She concludes that 'the French author has used not only Statius's account of the death of

Atys, but also the lament of Argia for Polynices, (XII, 322-48).'  
(p.91) The Argia episode is, as has been noted on p.129 above,  
omitted by the French author.

25. See pp.211-6 below.

26. Near the end of Thèbes King Adrastus does succumb to grief when he meets his grieving daughters with other Argive women (see p. 131 above). It is striking, given his earlier attitude, that when faced with the grief of his daughters and other women, he should himself try to commit suicide and be prevented from doing so by Acastus in exactly the same way as he had prevented Polynices from doing so in the military situation:

Atant a tret le branc d'acier,  
par mi le cors s'en volt ferir,  
Acastus le li court tolir;  
du poing li vet tolir l'espee,  
loing en mi le champ l'a gitee  
10246-50

Compare:

Atant a tret le branc d'acier;  
par mi le cors s'en volt ferie,  
mes li rois li corut tolir.  
Li rois a l'espee saisie  
si li prie qu'il ne s'ocie  
6488-92

27. 6242-374. See pp. 155-9 above.

28. Charlemagne reaches Roncevaux and finds Roland dead in laisse CLXXVII and begins his lament for Roland in laisse CCVII.

29. There is no basis for this view of Camilla's death in the Aeneid, and, indeed, in both the Aeneid and the Eneas, Turnus' death at the hand of Aeneas/ Eneas is seen as vengeance for the death of Pallas (Aeneid XII 938-52, Eneas 9794-814).

The killing of Turnus by Aeneas is the very last episode in the Aeneid. In that episode, Aeneas' words

Pallas te hoc volnere, Pallas  
immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit  
948-9  
( 'Tis Pallas, Pallas who with this stroke sacrifices  
thee, and takes atonement of thy guilty blood!)

are almost the closing words of the poem, so it is not surprising that the French author included them (some way from the end of his own work) even though he had previously depicted the death of Camilla as the atonement for Pallas' death.



30. "Eneas and Lavine: puer et puella senes" (46).
31.                magna tropaea ferunt, quos dat tua dextera Leto  
                    Aeneid XI 172
- (Great are the trophies they bring, to whom thy hand deals death)
32. See pp. 76-9 above.
33.                ingemuit cari graviter genitoris amore,  
                    ut vidit, Lausus, lacrimaeque per ora volutae  
                    Aeneid X, 789-90
- (Deeply Lausus groaned for love of his dear sire, when he saw the sight, and tears rolled down his face).
34. See p. 66 above.
35. See p. 142 above.

## Chapter Four

### EREC ET ENIDE

#### Sorrowful Departures in Erec et Enide

For those of Chrétien de Troyes's predecessors whose work has been discussed here so far, the portrayal of grief provides an opportunity for rhetorical excursions of the most elaborate kind, as is evident in the lament scenes in Alexis and in some of the scenes of mourning over dead warriors which figure in the epics and the 'romans antiques'. Chrétien, however, in his first romance Erec et Enide, distinguishes himself (among many other ways) by his ability to conjure up scenes of gladness and rejoicing on an equal scale and intensity to the descriptions of grief which are the ornaments of the earlier works. As Carol Bang says:

Joie de vivre seems to be the normal basic emotion in Chrétien de Troyes' Erec.<sup>1</sup>

This joie de vivre manifests itself multifariously throughout the romance, as Bang shows, but there are in particular a number of broad canvases, linked in significance, on which is depicted joyfulness on a grand scale, the joyfulness of whole communities.<sup>2</sup> The descriptions of the wedding celebrations of Erec and Enide (1983-2020), and of the welcome afforded to the couple on their return to Lac's court (2276-317; 2381-401) foreshadow the climactic scenes of joy when Maboagrain is defeated in the Joie de la Cort episode (6106-358) and the romance ends with an account of the sumptuous festivities with which the couple's coronation is celebrated (6596-878).

In contrast to these depictions of collective joyfulness, depictions of collective grief, of which there are several, are mere vignettes, but each, as we shall see, is strategically placed and part of an overall patterning. In three instances, depictions of collective grief provide emphasis to scenes of departure, which, in a romance where the quest theme is treated for the first time, receive much more attention than hitherto. Enide and her parents grieve when she and Erec leave her parental home for Arthur's court, and marriage (1438-48). Lac's court grieves when Erec sets out with Enide on their mysterious journey (2738-61). Arthur's court grieves when Erec insists on resuming that journey with Enide, after a brief stop for the healing of wounds (4262-4).

The first of these three descriptions of grief occurs in the context of a prevailing mood of merriment and conviviality:

n'i remaint chevalier ne dame  
 qui ne s'atort por convoier  
 la pucele et le chevalier.  
 Tuit sont monté; et li cuens monte.  
 Erec chevalche lez le conte  
 et delez lui sa bele amie,  
 qui l'esprevier n'oblie mie:  
 a son esprevier se deportte,  
 nule autre richesce n'an porte.  
 Grant joie ont fet au convoier.  
 1416-25

Erec's refusal of the count's offer of further accompaniment (1426-33) does not significantly undermine this mood, against which now the grief of Enide and the parents stands out in a clearly-defined and stylistically elaborate excursus:

Puis lor dist\*: "A Deu vos comant." \*Erec  
 Convoiez les orent grant piece;  
 li cuens beise Erec et sa niece,  
 si les comande a Deu le pi.  
 Li peres et la mere ausi  
 la beisent sovant et menu;  
 de plorer ne se sont tenu:  
 au departir plore la mere,  
 plore la pucele et li pere.  
 Tex est amors, tex est nature,  
 tex est pitiez de norreture:  
 plorer leur feisoit granz pitiez  
 et la dolçors et l'amistiez  
 qu'il avoient de lor anfant;  
 mes bien savoient ne por quant  
 que lor fille an tel leu aloit  
 don grant enors lor avandroit.  
 D'amor et de pitié ploroient  
 que de lor fille departoient;  
 ne ploroient por altre chose:  
 bien savoient qu'a la parclose  
 an seroient il enoré.  
 Au departir ont molt ploré;  
 plorant à Deu s'antre comandent;  
 or s'an vont, que plus n'i atendent.  
 1434-58

The phrase 'au departir', repeated near the beginning and at the end of the description of the parents' grief with specific references to their weeping (1441, 1456) provides a framework for the description, which is marked out also by the striking use of repetition - the repetition of 'plorer' (1440, 1441, 1442, 1445, 1451, 1453, 1456, 1457), anaphora ('Tex est...tex est...tex est...' 1443-44) and interpretatio:

plorer leur feisoit granz pitiez  
 et la dolçors et l'amistiez  
 qu'il avoient de lor anfant;  
 .....D'amor et de pitié ploroient  
 que de lor fille departoient;  
 ne ploroient por altre chose  
 1445-47....1451-53

Interestingly, Chrétien lends emphasis to his description of grief, not by multiplying references to a variety of spectacular grief-stricken reactions, but by concentrating on weeping only. Furthermore, he not only records the characters' grief, but comments on its nature and cause. He also places it within a wider perspective:

mes bien savoient ne por quant  
 que lor fille an tel leu aloit  
 don grant enors lor avandroit.  
 ....bien savoient qu'a la parclose  
 an seroient il enoré.

1448-50..1454-5

The parents' conviction that, 'a la parclose', Erec and Enide will receive honour is prophetic. They cannot yet know the honour that will accrue to the couple through the conquering of the Joie de la Cort or the vicissitudes in store for them before the 'parclose' is reached.

When King Lac and his court grieve at the departure of Erec with Enide on their mysterious journey, the mood is one of dark foreboding. Not only does Erec wish to journey in the company of no-one

fors de ma fame seulesmant<sup>3</sup>  
 2720

but he commends his wife and members of his household to the king's care in the event of his death (2721-7). The previous departure, from Enide's home, is evoked by the renewed repetition of 'plorer' (2738, 2740, 2741, 2745 below) but in place of an optimistic future perspective is the dispiriting repetition of present 'duel' (2742, 2743, 2746, 2747 below) and a vision of death:<sup>4</sup>

Del plorer tenir ne se puet  
 li rois, quant de son fil depart;  
 les genz replorent d'autre part;  
 dames et chevalier ploroient,  
 por lui molt grant duel demenoient:  
 n'i a un seul qui duel n'an face,  
 maint s'an pasmerent an la place.  
 Plorant le beisent et acolent,  
 a po que de duel ne s'afolent;  
 ne cuit que greignor duel feïssent,  
 se a mort navré le veïssent.

2738-48

Yet although this description of grief greatly increases the sense of foreboding, its eleven lines are balanced by the eleven lines of Erec's reply, which strikes a note of comfort and hope:

Et il lor dist por reconfort:  
 "Seignor, por coi plorez si fort?  
 je ne sui pris ne mahaigniez;  
 an cest duel rien ne gahaigniez.  
 Se je m'an vois, je revanrai  
 quant Deu pleira et je porrai.  
 Toz et totes vos comant gié  
 a Deu, si me donez congié,  
 que trop me faites demorer,  
 et ce que je vos voi plorer  
 me fet grant mal et grant enui."  
 2749-58

By placing these words of comfort and good sense in Erec's mouth, and indicating that there is a sensitive and compassionate aspect to his nature, Chrétien discourages his audience from passing over-hasty judgement on him and his behaviour towards Enide. It might even be argued that his image is enhanced by two phrases in particular which echo words attributed in the New Testament to Christ. In line 2750 his question "por coi plorez si fort?" is reminiscent of Jesus' words to those bewailing the death of Jairus' daughter:

Quid turbamini et ploratis?  
 Mark 5. 39

(Why do you make a tumult and weep?)

In line 2753 his assertion

Se je m'an vois, je revanrai

seems to echo Christ's words to his disciples when he takes leave of them at the Last Supper:

Et si abiero, [et praeparavero vobis locum,] iterum venio  
 John 14. 3

(And if I go [and prepare a place for you] I will come again)

Thus, to a greater or lesser extent, it can be argued that the image of Erec at this crucial juncture is enhanced, and we see that Chrétien has not included this second passage of collective grief merely for pathetic effect, but has used it to maintain the audience's confidence in the character whose integrity has been called into question.

In the course of their journeyings Erec and Enide come upon an encampment of Arthur's court and stay there for a time to rest and be restored. Their departure from this court clearly replicates the two departures already referred to, since once more Erec refuses to be accompanied by anyone other than Enide (4268-73). On this occasion too their departure is marked by the grief of those they are leaving. But this departure is merely an interim event in the course of the as yet unfinished quest that Chrétien is plotting out for them, and the depiction of grief is appropriately less elaborate. Notably the three lines it consists of contain an almost literal repetition of the simile with which the previous depiction of grief ended:

Lors les veïssiez toz plorer  
et demener un duel si fort  
con s'il le veïssent ja mort.  
4262-4

Compare

...a po que de duel ne s'afolent;  
ne cuit que greignor duel feïssent,  
se a mort navré le veïssent  
2746-8

The motif of sorrowful departure has been firmly established on the two previous occasions. Chrétien does not repeat it for the sake of doing so. Here an echo is enough to evoke the atmosphere of grief.

Of two final instances of collective grief, the first involves an arrival rather than a departure. When Erec enters Brandigan to take up the challenge of the Joie de la Cort, there is a sinister reaction from among the citizens, and maidens cease their singing (5456-7) to bewail the unknown knight:

"Ha! Dex! dit l'une a l'autre, lasse!  
Cist chevaliers, qui par ci passe,  
vient a la Joie de la Cort.  
Dolant an iert einz qu'il s'an tort:  
onques nus ne vint d'autre terre  
la Joie de la Cort requerre  
qu'il n'i eüst honte et damage  
et n'i leïssast la teste an gage."  
5461-68

Erec is unmoved by their forecasts, even in the face of mass dolefulness:

il le plaignent plus de .vii. mile  
5480

The grief of the people of Brandigan greatly increases the air of mystery and foreboding which has already been created around the Joie de la Cort adventure by Erec's guide (5319-444). They grieve also when he sets out to take up the challenge on the following day (a further departure, and although not in Enide's company, with her support, 5818-27):

A l'esmouvoir a molt grant noise  
et grant bruit par totes les rues;  
car les granz genz et les menues  
disoient tuit: "Ha! Ha!  
chevaliers, Joie t'a traï,  
ceste que tu cuides conquerre,  
mes ta mort et ton duel vas querre."  
Ne n'i a un seul qui ne die:  
"Ceste Joie, Dex la maudie,  
que tant preudome i sont ocis.  
Hui an cest jor fera le pis  
que onques mes feïst sanz dote."  
Erec ot bien, et si escote  
que les genz disoient li plus,  
car tuit disoient: "Mar i fus,  
biax chevaliers, genz et adroiz.  
Certes ne seroit mie droiz  
que ta vie si tost fenist,  
ne que nus enuiz t'avenist,  
don blechiez fusses ne leidiz."  
5652-71

The grief of the citizens of Brandigan not only heightens the air of sinister enigma surrounding the Joie de la Cort, it acts as a foil to the fearlessness and determination of Erec, and throw into greater relief their subsequent joy when he is victorious (6311-58). Once again it can be said of a scene of collective grief depicted by Chrétien that it has a function in the total structure of the poem besides that of simply providing a pathetic effect.

There is one further scene of departure in Erec where a collective reaction is depicted. It occurs when Erec and Enide have



finally to leave the scenes of rejoicing at Brandigan to which Erec's victory has given rise. There is no reference in this departure scene to any grief on the part of those going or those left behind. Significantly, now that events have all but run their course, one line in the description harks back to the very first scene of departure when Erec and Enide were escorted on their way on leaving Enide's home:

grant joie ot a lui convoier  
6344

Compare

Grant joie ont fet au convoier  
1425

A general comment on Erec et Enide by A.R.Press may be applied specifically to the departure scenes discussed:

Un jeu subtil de ressemblances et de contrastes se laisse apercevoir, grâce auquel chacune des réalisations d'un même motif apparaît dans une perspective particulière qui permet de mieux apprécier sa propre signification.<sup>5</sup>

If this is true of the motif of sorrowful departures it is even more true of the depiction of Enide's grief.

### **The Sorrows of Enide**

Enide is the character who grieves most frequently and most forcibly in the romance. In this section I hope to show that, from the point of view of function, her grief, unlike the grief of any individual character in the works examined so far, is an integral part of the overall conception of the whole romance, reflecting, in its various instances, the stages of progress towards the resolution of the crisis. This crisis itself is, on a purely mechanical level, precipitated by Enide's grief, and it is striking that the first words attributed to her are the words of lamentation that she utters in the crisis scene.

Enide has heard Erec criticised for neglecting feats of arms since his marriage in favour of amorous dalliance with her (2430-64). In spite of a desire to keep the matter hidden from him, she is overcome with grief one morning as she lies beside his sleeping form:

Quant il l'an prist a sovenir,  
de plorer ne se pot tenir;  
tel duel en ot et tel pesance  
qu'il li avint par mescheance  
qu'ele dist lors une parole  
dom ele se tint puis por fole;  
mes ele n'i pansoit nul mal.

2479-85

The description of her tears falling on Erec<sup>6</sup> contributes to the build-up of emotional tension soon to be released in the revelations of this critical scene:

Son seignor a mont et a val  
comança tant a regarder;  
le cors vit bel et le vis cler,  
et plora de si grant ravine  
que, plorant, desor la peitrine  
an chieent les lermes sor lui.

2486-91

In the speech that follows it is significant that, from the opening exclamation "con mar fui" (first person singular) Enide's grief is largely self-directed. She laments her own situation ("de mon païs que ving ça querre?").<sup>7</sup> She regrets that Erec's prestige has been tarnished, not on his account only, but on her own. She grieves because shame has been brought upon him, but she also grieves out of a sense of personal shame: it is not simply that he has abandoned chivalry, he has abandoned it because of her:

"Lasse, fet ele, con mar fui!  
de mon païs que ving ça querre?  
Bien me doit essorbir la terre,  
quant toz li miaudres chevaliers,  
li plus hardiz et li plus fiers,  
qui onques fust ne cuens ne rois,  
li plus l'ax, li plus cortois,  
a del tot an tot relanquie  
por moi tote chevalerie.  
Dons l'ai ge honi tot por voir;  
nel volsisse por nul avoir."

2492-502

The second exclamation, isolated from the rest of the speech, seems almost an afterthought:

Lors li dist: "Amis, con mar fusi!"  
2503

It is this which wakens him<sup>8</sup> and leads him to extract from her the reason for her tears, at first gently, then with harsh impatience as she prevaricates and tries to persuade him that he has been dreaming (2505-35). When she at length explains, her concern for herself is even more explicit than in her initial soliloquy:

. . . Cuidiez vos qu'il ne m'an enuit,  
quant j'oi dire de vos despit?  
Molt me poise, quant an l'an dit,  
et por ce m'an poise ancor plus  
qu'il m'an metent le blasme sus;  
blasmee an sui, ce poise moi.  
2552-57

The sequence of phrases "Molt me poise . . . por ce m'an poise . . . ce poise moi" throws into relief the egocentric nature of her concern at this point. Admitting that she has been the cause of his downfall (2558-61), she goes on to exhort him to escape the censure of others by regaining his former renown:

Or vos an estuet consoil prandre,  
que vos puissiez ce blasme estaindre  
et vostre premier los ataindre,  
car trop vos ai of blasmer.  
2562-65

Here she seems to be concerned for her own reputation as much as for his, since the phrase "ce blasme" (2563) echoes "le blasme" of line 2256 which referred specifically to the blame incurred by her.

Although some sympathy is generated for Enide by Erec's brusque dealings with her, she does not on the whole emerge from this episode in a good light. Indeed, at the end of the episode, Chrétien depicts a self-possessed Erec who accepts the censure (2572-73) and bids her decisively to get ready for a journey (2574-79) and juxtaposes this with a much less impressive picture of Enide, likened, in her renewed

state of distress, to a scratching goat:

Or est Enyde an grant esfroi;  
molt se lieve triste et panssive;  
a li seule tance et estrive  
de la folie qu'ele dist:  
tant grate chievre que mal gist.

2580-84

Enide now believes that she is being sent into exile. Her ensuing speech opens with purely self-centred considerations. She regrets the change of fortune and the loss of Erec's devotion to her that her 'parole' has brought about:

"Ha! fet ele, fole malveise,  
or estoie je trop a eise,  
qu'il ne me failloit nule chose.  
Ha! lasse, por coi fui tant ose,  
que tel forssenaige osai dire?  
Dex! don ne m'amoit trop mes sire?  
Par foi, lasse, trop m'amoit il.  
Or m'estuet aler an essil;  
mes de ce ai ge duel greignor  
que ge ne verrai mon seignor,  
qui tant m'amoit de grant meniere  
que nule rien n'avoit tant chiere.  
Li miaudres qui onques fust nez  
s'estoit si a moi atornez  
que d'autre rien ne li chaloit.  
Nule chose ne me failloit;  
molt estoie boene eüree"

2585-601

However she accepts her fall from happiness as being the just deserts of pride:

mes trop m'a orgualz alevee,  
quant ge ai dit si grant oltraige;  
an mon orguel avrai domaige  
et molt est bien droiz que je l'aie

2602-5

I shall discuss later the relationship between the pride that she castigates herself for, her 'parole', and the self-centredness that has been such a feature of her lamentations - the relationship between these things being far from self-evident. Suffice here to say that her recognition that she is somehow receiving her just deserts in being (as she believes) sent into exile -

an mon orguel avrai domaige  
et molt est bien droiz que je l'aie  
2604-5

may be compared with Erec's acceptance of censure:

- Dame, fet il, droit an eüstes,  
et cil qui m'an blasment ont droit.  
2572-73

Thus it may be argued that Erec and Enide set out on their journey together on a similar footing.<sup>9</sup> Erec, in his self-indulgence and neglect of knightly duty, has been self-centred. Enide has also shown herself to be self-centred, on the evidence of her laments. Yet both possess potential for growth in the moral sphere.

While Enide has been lamenting, she has been preparing for the journey. At the level of the couplet, it is notable that her grieving is realistically woven into the fabric provided by external action, in this case, her getting ready:

Tant s'est la dame demantee  
que bien et bel s'est atornee  
de la meillor robe qu'ele ot.  
2607-9

When Erec's squire comes to summon her she is still weeping at the thought of exile, but the news that Erec has armed himself and is awaiting her outside (2671-75) turns her grief to puzzlement - and to the expectation, doubtless, of a happier turn of events:

Molt s'est Enyde merveilllee  
que ses sires ot an corage,  
mes de ce fist ele que sage,  
car plus lieemant se contint  
qu'ele pot, quant devant lui vint.  
2676-80

Potential optimism, however, is soon dispelled, and after a sorrowful leave-taking by the court and with Erec's harsh and enigmatic injunctions ringing in her ears, Enide grieves softly to herself:

mes Enyde fu molt dolante:  
a li seule molt se demante,  
soef an bas, que il ne l'oie.  
2775-77

Her ensuing lament reinforces the impression already gauged in previous speeches, an impression of self-oriented grief. The burden of her regrets is still her own dramatic change in circumstances: she had been exalted from a position of poverty and she grieves now for the loss of the privileged way of life her new status had brought her (amplificatio is used in emphasis of this point - both God and Fortune have withdrawn their favour from her):

"Hé! lasse, fet ele, a grant joie  
m'avoit Dex mise et essauciee,  
or m'a an po d'ore abessiee.  
Fortune, qui m'avoit atreite,  
a tost a li sa main retreite.

2778-82

What is worse, a barrier has arisen between herself and Erec (2783-4) - but although she speaks of Erec, the bias is still towards herself, as underlined by the repetition and rhyming of the past participles 'm'a anhafe' and 'trafe' (2785, 2786, 2787):

"de ce ne me chaussist il, lasse!  
s'a mon seignor parler osasse;  
mes de ce sui morte et trafe,  
que mes sires m'a anhafe.  
Anhafe m'a, bien le voi,  
quant il ne vialt parler a moi;  
ne je tant hardie ne sui  
que je os regarder vers lui."

2783-90

On this, the first day of their journey, Enide is allotted two more speeches (Hilka refers to them as Entschlussmonologe)<sup>10</sup> at points where she debates with herself whether or not to warn Erec, against his wishes, of impending danger. Her next lament occurs at the end of the first day, and is quite significantly different in tenor from the previous laments. Events on the first day of the journey have placed Enide in a situation where her concern for Erec's well-being has been put to the test<sup>11</sup> - not in the secure setting of Carnant, where the issue of what is best for herself and Erec had been allowed to go by default, but in the forest where life and death themselves are at

stake. In this more elemental setting Enide speaks out to warn Erec of the threat posed to him by first three, then five aggressive knights, although in speaking out she risks, and indeed incurs, his wrath.<sup>12</sup> Erec vanquishes the aggressors, thereby re-establishing his prestige in her eyes. When night falls, she offers to keep watch so that he can sleep. This situation provides a clear counterpart to the crisis scene, as is indicated by the repetition of the line:

Cil dormi et cele veillea  
2475, 3093

In the earlier scene Erec's sleep of sloth could well be said to represent an image of his death, the death which, in the eyes of others, including Enide, he has died in respect of the values of chivalry. (Referring to the phrase 'con mar fus', Brogyanyi remarks:

Her exclamation is reminiscent of formulaic expressions frequent in the chansons de geste, where they often accompany the death of a hero.)<sup>13</sup>

Here, by contrast, as he lies before her tired out from fighting, her admiration for him occupies the centre of her lament, and with it comes regret for ever having expressed doubts about his prowess:

molt a, ce dit, mal exploitié,  
"que n'ai mie de la mité  
le mal que je ai desservi.  
Lasse, fet ele, si mar vi  
mon orguel et ma sorcuidance!  
Savoir pooie sanz dotance  
que tel chevalier ne meillor  
ne savoit l'an de mon seignor.  
Bien le savoie. Or le sai mialz;  
car je l'ai veü a mes ialz,  
car trois ne cinc armez ne dote.  
Honie soit ma leingue tote,  
qui l'orguel et la honte dist  
dont mes cors a tel honte gist."  
3099-112

This episode, in which Enide watches over the sleeping Erec and eulogizes him in her lament, marks a significant advance in her attitude to him, consolidating the spirit of concern she has shown by

risking his wrath to warn him of marauders. The next day her rejection of the amorous advances of the 'comte vaniteux' and her ruse to save Erec from the count's wicked machinations are proof to Erec of her love for him, a love which he had cause to doubt when her esteem for him was called into question in the crisis:<sup>14</sup>

Or ot Erec que bien se prueve  
vers lui sa fame l'œumant.

3480-81

Thus a watershed in the action is reached and the foundations established for a new relationship between the couple.

The encounter with Guivret follows the escape from the 'comte vaniteux', and in this episode Enide is depicted grieving in a way that greatly strengthens the image of the loyal lady that she has attained in Erec's eyes. While Erec and Guivret engage in combat, Enide gives way to grief which Chrétien describes, for the first time, in the grand manner:<sup>15</sup>

Enyde, qui les esgardoit,  
a po de duel ne forssenoit.  
Qui li veïst son grant duel fere,  
ses poinz tordre, ses chevox trere,  
et les lermes des ialz cheoir,  
leal dame poïst veoir;  
et trop fust fel qui la veïst,  
se granz pitiez ne l'an preïst.

3787-94

The tone of this description, with its repeated use of the 'qui veïst' formula, appealing to the sympathetic involvement of the audience, contrasts notably with that earlier description of Enide in grief in which Chrétien had likened her to a scratching goat (2584). The distance between these two descriptions measures the progress she has made in her relationship with Erec. A still more significant rapprochement can, in my view, be made with a very much earlier instance of Enide's grief. In the early part of the romance Enide witnesses Erec in combat with Yder in the contest for the sparrow-



hawk. Both she and Yder's maiden weep and extend their hands in prayer for their respective knights, and Chrétien comments that the sight of Enide gives Erec the strength to go on (907-12). Enide's weeping on that occasion can hardly be considered as anything other than a courtly nicety which Yder's maiden also performs:

Andui les puceles ploroient:  
chascuns voit la soe plorer.  
890-91

It certainly does not represent grief springing from true love based on knowledge of Erec, whom she has been acquainted with for only a short time. In contrast, when she is a weeping spectator of Erec's encounter with Guivret, her grief is based on a love and esteem for him which have grown as a result of the rigours of their journey together.

For all that the couple's relationship has been re-established, Erec feels unable to re-enter courtly society, as his temporary contact with Arthur's court shows (3914-4279). Greater heights of achievement have to be scaled. As far as Enide is concerned, this means that greater depths of grief are to be plumbed. Indeed, from the point of view of spectacle, it is possible to trace a gradation in the manifestations of her grief, from the courtly conventionalised weeping in the early part of the romance, through the tears and grief-stricken utterances which escape her in the crisis scene and the covert regrets on the first part of the journey, the more dramatic display of grief as she watches Erec fight with Guivret, and, as a climax, in the episode in which she believes Erec to be dead, an unbridled frenzy of lamentation, culminating in her attempt at suicide. It is this episode to which we now turn.

Enide's greatest display of grief is the outcome of an episode which befalls the couple after they have left Arthur's court. Erec and Enide respond to the grief of a maiden in the forest whose ami has been taken captive by two giants (4280-352). In thus responding to another's plight they are, as Bezzola has shown,<sup>16</sup> moving onto a plane of activity superior to that on which they have operated hitherto in their journey. Thus the grief of the maiden in distress is far from being merely a plot mechanism for furthering the action. But as well as being the stimulus for the couple to undertake an action directed towards the good of autrui, the maiden's grief is a prefigurement of Enide's own reactions a little later, when Erec himself falls victim to the giants. As a prefigurement, the maiden's grief is part of the orchestration of effects in the depiction of Enide's grief. A further, minor device serving to throw Enide's grief into prominence is the contrast between her joy when she sees Erec return from his encounter with the giants and her distress when she sees him fall from his horse as a result of his wounds:

Cele le vit, grant joie en ot;  
mes ele n'aparçut ne sot  
la dolor dom il se plaingnoit,  
car toz ses cors an sanc baignoit  
et li cuers faillant li aloit.  
A un tertre qu'il avaloit,  
chef toz a un fes a val  
jusque sor le col del cheval;  
si com il relever cuida,  
la sele et les arçons vuida,  
et chiet pasmez con s'il fust morz.  
Lors comanca li diax si forz,  
quant Enyde cheü le vit.

4559-71

Because, on occasions in the past, she has been depicted grieving covertly, emphasis is created by the comment that she runs to him

. . . come cele  
qui sa dolor mie ne cele.

4573-4

The most violent manifestations of grief ensue:

An haut s'escrie et tort ses poinz;  
de robe ne li remest poinz  
devant le piz a dessirier;  
ses chevoux prist a arachier  
et sa tandre face desire.

4575-9

This depiction appears to be a rendering of the conventional motif of violent grief. It can be compared with the earlier description of the maiden in distress:

La pucele s'aloit tirant  
et ses dras trestoz desirant  
et sa tandre face vermoille.  
Erec la voit, si s'an mervoille,  
et prie li qu'ele li die  
por coi si formant plore et crie.

4305-10

Notably, however, specific reference is made to Enide's 'robe':

de robe ne li remest poinz  
devant le piz a dessirier.

4576-7

The dislocated sentence-structure places the word 'robe' in an emphatic position near the beginning of the statement and the line, and for emphasis too we are presented with the fact of her garment already rent, rather than with the flat information that she rends it. This is presumably the 'robe la plus bele' (2577) that Erec had ordered her to don for their journeyings together. Maddox says of that order that it

reveals his [Erec's] desire to restore her prestige along  
with his own.<sup>17</sup>

So in the rending of this dress we see indicated the nadir of their fortunes on the journey, as well as the destruction of all pride that Enide may once have taken in her status as Erec's lady.

A noteworthy stylistic feature of the description of Enide's grief and the few lines around it is the series of homophonic rhymes employed: 'vit : vit'; 'cele : cele'; 'poinz : poinz'; ('dessirier : arachier'); ('desire : sire') (4571-80), which, in the context of

despair, have a deadening effect on the verse.

The lament itself begins on the highest possible pitch by Enide calling upon God and Death to let her die herself. The pitch is maintained by the reference to her fainting on Erec's body:

"Ha! Dex, fet ele, biax dolz sire,  
por coi me leisses tu tant vivre?  
Morz, car m'oci, si t'an delivre."  
A cest mot sor le cors se pasme.  
Au revenir formant se blasme.

4580-4

Her thoughts turn to her 'parole', which she sees as ultimately having set in motion the events which have brought her to this situation. Through her 'parole' she has been his murderer - the full force of the idea is conveyed in the bold rhyming of 'Enyde : omecide':

"Ha! fet ele, dolante Enyde,  
de mon seignor sui omecide;  
par ma folie l'ai ocis:  
ancor fust or mes sires vis,  
se ge, come outrageuse et fole,  
n'eüsse dite la parole  
por coi mes sires ça s'esmut;  
ainz boens teisirs home ne nut,  
mes parlers nuist mainte foiee:  
ceste chose ai bien essaiee  
et esprovee an mainte guise."

4585-95

The lament is interrupted again, now by a reference to her sitting down beside Erec's recumbent form and taking his head on her lap (yet again a homophonic rhyme is used: 'chief : de rechief'):

Devant son seignor s'est assise,  
et met sor ses genouz son chief;  
son duel comance de rechief.

4596-8

While her action of getting down beside Erec intensifies the pathos and animates the speech, it also pointedly recreates the recurrent situation of Enide watching over Erec, as in the crisis episode and on the first night in the forest. Her renewed expression of grief:

"Ha! sire, con mar i fus!"

4599

is a striking replica of the phrase that woke him at the crisis, but

the context has entirely altered. There she pitied him because his reputation had been diminished; now, in complete opposition to the earlier occasion, she uses the phrase to lament the death (as she thinks) of a most worthy knight. The contrast is underlined by Chrétien's vivid treatment of the eulogy motif (a frequent element in the traditional epic planctus) whereby the personified virtues of 'biautez', 'proesce', 'savoirs' and 'largesce' all centre on the idealised figure of Erec:

A toi ne s'apareilloit nus,  
qu'an toi s'estoit biautez miree,  
procesce s'i ert esprovee,  
savoirs t'avoit son cuer doné,  
largesce t'avoit coroné,  
cele sanz cui nus n'a grant pris.  
4600-5

Enide then turns relentlessly back to what, for her, is the most pressing aspect of the situation, her responsibility for uttering the 'parole' which has proved, as she believes, fatal:

Mes qu'ai ge dit, trop ai mespris,  
qui la parole ai mantee  
don mes sire a mort recee,  
la mortel parole antoschiee,  
qui me doit estre reprochiee,  
et je requenuis et otroi  
que nus n'i a corpes fors moi;  
je seule an doi estre blasmee."  
4606-13

Another short interlude in the recital of her sorrow, during which she faints and revives, adds again to the animation of the scene. The adverbial phrase 'plus et plus' marks an intensification of her grief, while the rhetorical questions introduce a note of frenzy:

Lors rechiet a terre pasmee;  
et quant ele releva sus,  
si se rescrie plus et plus:  
"Dex! que ferai? por coi vif tant?  
La morz que demore, qu'atant,  
qui ne me prant sanz nul respit?"  
4614-19

For all the impression of frenzy, her next thoughts have a logical basis: death will not come to her, she must seek it by herself. Erec's sword is to be the instrument of her suicide (4620-31). Only God, by manipulating the timely arrival of the count of Limors (who has heard her wailing in the forest as Erec heard the distressed maiden) saves her from death (4632-46).

In her grief, Enide has been to the brink of self-destruction. No greater proof of her love for Erec could be required. She continues now to prove that love, in the face of repeated offers of honour and wealth made by her rescuer the count of Limors. Although, with Erec's presumed death, she is free to remarry, and is made to go through a ceremony of marriage with Limors, who argues forcibly to her that grief cannot restore the dead (4758-60), her devotion to Erec remains strong.

The episode in which the count of Limors presses his case with the ever-grieving Enide seems, in some particulars, to exorcise the episode with Erec that represented the crisis of the poem. The starting-point in each of these two widely-separated episodes is a reference to Enide labouring under a burden of grief: in the first instance it is on account of the criticisms Erec is incurring because of her ('De ceste chose li pesa' - 2465); in the second instance it is on account of Erec's supposed death (for which, as we have seen, she holds herself responsible):

Onques ses diax ne recessoit  
4743

The crisis involved a confrontation with Erec (a victim to sloth) as they lay in bed one morning (2469-72). In the episode with Limors it is evening, the evening of the day on which Erec has fallen victim to the giants. Enide is at a table, seated opposite the angry count whose bed she refuses to share (4741-53). In response to her

confrontation with Erec she had lamented her fall from privilege (2585-606; see page 182 above). In the scene with Limors she disdains his offers of riches and social elevation:

Sovaigne vos de quel poverte  
vos est granz richesce aoverte:  
povre estfez, or estes riche;  
n'est pas fortune vers vos chiche,  
qui tel enor vos a donee  
c'or seroiz contesse clamee.

4761-66

Most strikingly of all, the 'parole' which awoke Erec in the crisis scene, which made him doubt her love and which brought in its wake suffering and, as she believes, death, is replaced by another 'parole' of hers - her protestations to the count, proof of her love for Erec, which awaken him from his death-like state and galvanise him into action. Furthermore, it is a 'parole' that she cannot suppress (see 4802 below), as she could not suppress her grief on the first occasion ('de plorer ne se pot tenir' - 2480):

Lors ne se pot cele teisir,  
einz jure que ja soe n'iert;  
et li cuens hauce, si refiert;  
et cele s'escria an haut:  
"Ahi! fet ele, ne me chaut  
que tu me d'fes ne ne faces:  
ne criem tes cos ne tes menaces.  
Asez me bat, aseze me fier:  
ja tant ne te troverai fier  
que por toi face plus ne mains,  
se tu or androit a tes mains  
me devoies les ialz sachier  
ou tote vive detrenchier."

Antre ces diz et ces tançons,  
revint Erec de pasmeisons,  
ausi come hom qui s'esvoille.

4802-17

In the dramatic escape which follows, Enide plays an active part by seizing Erec's lance (4848-50). A tender reconciliation takes place between them. Erec recognises - as well he might - that she loves him 'parfitemant' (4887) and forgives her for her 'parole':

et se vos rien m'avez mesdit,  
je le vos pardoing tot et quit  
del forfet et de la parole.

4891-3

The nature of Enide's fault has become one of the central issues in Erec scholarship. For what exactly is Erec forgiving her when he forgives her for her 'parole' (and her 'forfet'), and what is it that she herself has been lamenting when she castigates herself for her 'parole'? The first problem lies in determining what exactly her 'parole' consists of. When she is overcome with grief as she lies in bed beside Erec, the narrator says

tel duel en ot et tel pesance  
qu'il li avint par mescheance  
qu'ele dist lors une parole  
dom ele se tint puis por fole;  
mes ele n'i pansoit nul mal.  
2481-5

The reference to the 'parole' is not, however, immediately followed up. Instead her tears are described (2486-91). It is thereafter possible to discern three distinctive speeches which might separately or together constitute her 'parole': her opening speech, beginning "Lasse, con mar fui!" (2492), her exclamation "Amis, con mar fus!" (2503), and her exchanges with Erec culminating in her account to him of the problem (2536-71). It seems likely that the 'parole' that awakens Erec is the single exclamation:<sup>18</sup>

Lors li dist: "Amis, con mar fus!"  
A tant se tot, si ne dist plus.  
Et cil ne dormi pas formant,  
la voiz oï tot an dormant;  
de la parole s'esveilla.  
2503-7

If he had dimly heard the whole of her foregoing lament (as lines 2505-6 quoted above might seem to suggest) he would not have needed to ask, as he does, seemingly in all sincerity

"Dites moi, douce amie chiere,  
por coi plorez an tel meniere?"  
2511-2

What he focuses on is her grief-stricken exclamation "Amis, con mar fus!":



Dites le moi, ma douce amie,  
gardez nel me celez vos mie,  
por ou'avez dit que mar i fui?  
Por moi fu dit, non por autrui;  
bien ai la parole antandue."  
2515-9

It is these few words of grief that must constitute the 'parole' for which he later forgives her, not her subsequent speech of criticism, the justness of which, indeed, he accepts ("Dame, fet il, droit an eüstes" 2572). It is her grief, then, encapsulated in these few words, a grief which she did not intend to communicate to him, that is her fault. Her grief is proof that she is fully aware of the seriousness of Erec's 'recreantise', but she gives utterance to it only involuntarily and clandestinely because she does not want to alert him to his situation, for fear that their love-idyll should be disturbed. She therefore fails in the duty of a lady to inspire her knight in the exercise of chivalry. She has not only been the reason for his 'recreantise' (which she cannot initially be blamed for), she has subsequently connived at maintaining him in this state. I stated at the outset that her grief precipitated the crisis (page 179 above). But now it has been shown to be much more than a plot mechanism only. It is proof of her insight into the situation and, in that it is involuntary and clandestine, it is symptomatic of her selfish unwillingness to face the truth with Erec.

A problem of interpretation remains. While, as I have argued, she is not at fault in conveying criticism to Erec, she herself reproaches herself for pride. The self-centred nature of her earlier laments has been shown, and, in forgiving her for her exclamation of grief, Erec is, in effect, forgiving her for a form of selfishness. But are pride and selfishness the same thing? While it might be possible to impute pride to Enide in her desire to maintain her position as Erec's 'amie' in their love-idyll, it is nonetheless clear

that on the three occasions that Enide reproaches herself for pride she is referring to specific words that she has uttered that betoken arrogance on her part.

Enide makes three statements about her pride, which are as follows: firstly (when she believes that Erec is sending her into exile) she says:

. . . trop m'a orgualz alevee,  
quant ge ai dit si grant oltraige;  
an mon orguel avrai domaige.

2602-4

Secondly (in her lament on the first night of their journey) she says:

Lasse, fet ele, si mar vi  
mon orguel et ma sorcuidance!  
Savoir pooie sanz dotance  
que tel chevalier ne meillor  
ne savoit l'an de mon seignor.  
Bien le savoie. Or le sai mialz;  
car ge l'ai veü a mes ialz,  
car trois ne cinc armez ne dote.  
Honie soit ma leingue tote,  
qui l'orguel et la honte dist  
dont mes cors a tel honte gist.

3102-12

Thirdly (in her lament when she believes Erec dead) she says:

Ha, fet ele, dolante Enyde,  
de mon seignor sui omecide;  
par ma folie l'ai ocis:  
ancor fust or mes sires vis,  
se ge, come outrageuse et fole,  
n'eüsse dite la parole  
por coi mes sires ça s'esmut;  
ainz boens teisirs home ne nut,  
mes parlars nuist mainte foiee:  
ceste chose ai bien essaiee  
et esprovee an mainte guise.

4585-95

Coghlan, in a recent article entitled "The Flaw in Enide's Character", quotes these three extracts in the course of her argument that Enide is guilty of pride, and says

We must believe [Chrétien] when he makes a direct statement, and Enide tells us three times that her pride is the mainspring of the action.<sup>19</sup>

But words attributed to a character through direct speech can

certainly not be equated infallibly with a direct statement on the part of the narrator. In the third of the extracts quoted above, Enide also says:

. . . boens teisirs home ne nut,  
mes parlars nuist mainte foiee.

4592-3

Although these words are put in her mouth they are certainly not applicable to her situation, since it is clear that she should have spoken sooner to Erec than she did, rather than have remained silent as the proverb recommends.

It has been ascertained that the crucial 'parole' is "Amis, con mar fus!" (2503). In her lament over the supposedly dead Erec, Enide says she spoke her 'parole' "come outrageuse et fole" (4589). That she is wrong in this assessment of herself is suggested in a few lines at the beginning of the crisis scene:

. . . ele dist lors une parole  
dom ele se tint puis por fole;  
mes ele n'i pansoit nul mal.

2483-5

Her grief-stricken exclamation over the sleeping Erec may betoken a very wrong attitude, but neither it nor her subsequent enlarged criticisms of him are intended as arrogance on her part. I would therefore accept Brogyanyi's suggestion that

when speaking of her orguial, Enide is not so much assessing her guilt in rational terms as expressing her vague idea of Erec's reproach.<sup>20</sup>

Because Erec appears to act as one whose pride has been hurt, Enide assumes that she is guilty of the thing she thinks he blames her for, that is, a presumptuous attack on him.

When Erec forgives Enide for her 'parole', which they each (for different reasons) think has been reprehensible, one of the focal points of Enide's lamentations is removed. Twice, however, she is depicted in grief during the remainder of their journeyings, and in

both cases, when viewed against earlier events in the poem, her grief reveals something about the progress she has made to maturity.

Soon after their escape from Limors, in an episode of mistaken identity, Erec and Enide fall victim to a knight (Guivret) who unhorses Erec (4901-82). Enide, who has but recently recovered from her grief at the supposed death of her husband, is once again greatly distressed:

S'onques ot duel, lors l'ot graignor.  
4988

But instead of simply giving way to her grief, she accosts Guivret by catching the reins of his horse and harangues him for his attack (4989-5008). It is not of course the first time that she has taken action on Erec's behalf during their adventures, but the fact that she acts now, and speaks on Erec's behalf, instead of giving way to the great grief which we are told she feels, is a significant indication at this point that she fully identifies herself with Erec and his activities.

The second of the two instances in which Enide grieves after the reconciliation, occurs during the Joie de la Cort episode. Erec is to confront Maboagrain. He wakens early to prepare himself for this combat (5624-27) - his early rising being a clear reversal of his previous sloth! Enide is 'molt . . . triste et iriee' (5629) as are the inhabitants of Brandigan who make much lamentation (5652-71). Amidst their woeful warnings of danger comes an echo of the words of the crisis scene:

. . . "Mar i fus,  
biax chevaliers, genz et adroiz."  
5666-7

Enide herself exhibits no grief. It is not that she feels no apprehension on his account, for she grieves inwardly. But she understands Erec's aspirations and, unlike the people of Brandigan,



Mes por neant vos esmaiez  
 jusqu'a itant que vos voiez  
 que mes escuz iert depeciez,  
 et ge dedanz le cors bleciez,  
 et verroiz de mon hauberc blanc  
 les mailles covrir de mon sanc,  
 et mon hiaume frait et quassé,  
et moi recreant et lassé  
 que plus ne me porrai desfandre,  
 ainz m'estovra merci atandre  
 et deprier outre mon vuel.  
Lors porroiz fere vostre duel,  
que trop tost comancié l'avez.

5789-801

Echoes of the crisis scene are unmistakable. At the time of the crisis others had been calling him 'recreant' (2462, 2551). But although they had been right to criticise him for neglecting arms in favour of amorous dalliance, he had not been truly 'recreant', for no sooner had he been alerted to his failings as a knight than he had set about repairing the situation. Enide had been wrong to grieve, since, as Erec suggests in this speech, only sheer physical inability would render him truly 'recreant'. Although the last two lines in the above quotation

Lors porroiz fere vostre duel,  
 que trop tost comancié l'avez

provide a judgement on her present grief at the prospect of Erec's fate at the hands of Maboagrain, the same judgement is applicable to her initial grief when she thought that he had altogether abandoned knightly pursuits. Then, as now, grief was inappropriate.

As a parting means of comforting her, Erec declares that her love is a source of strength to him in combat (and therefore a defence against 'recreantise'):

car bien sachiez seüremant,  
 s'an moi n'avoit de hardemant  
 fors tant con vostre amors m'an baille,  
 ne crienbroie je an bataille,  
 cors a cors, nul home vivant.

5805-9

In this declaration by Erec lies a statement about the ideal

relationship between knight and lady - a relationship in which the lady's love inspires the knight to deeds of valour. We are reminded of the early combat with Yder when Erec was strengthened by the sight of Enide weeping and praying for him. But how much more is at stake now than then! Then he was fighting on his own account, for the prize of a sparrow-hawk in a contest. Subsequently Enide became a diversion from valour for him, rather than a spur. Now, supported by her love, he is fighting Maboagrain in order to restore to a whole region the Joie de la Cort.

The nature of Enide's love has, of course, changed. Her journey with him has been more than a simple time-space event. It has been a spiritual journey away from a self-centred, untried form of love towards the attainment of a mature, altruistic personality. And what more appropriate image of maturity could there be in the case of one who has so frequently succumbed to grief in the course of the journey than that which depicts her at the end of the Joie de la Cort episode in the role of comforter to Maboagrain's heart-broken mistress (6146 et seq)? This is Enide's particular contribution to the Joie de la Cort, and it is not to be underestimated, since the consolation of Maboagrain's mistress not only completes, but augments, the general joyfulness:

Que qu' eles parolent ansamble,  
une dame seule s'an anble,  
qui as barons le vet conter  
por la Joie croistre et monter.  
De ceste joie s'esjoïrent  
tuit ansamble cil qui l'ofrent.  
et quant Maboagrains le sot,  
sor toz les autres joie en ot.

6275-82

It is the news of Enide's comforting of Maboagrain's mistress that leads into the great crescendo of joyfulness described by Chrétien so vividly and at such length (to line 6358).

Hoepffner has seen a parallel between the tears of Enide in the crisis scene and the tears of Maboagrain's mistress, of whom he says

la cause de ses larmes n'est pas de savoir son ami recréant  
et vaincu par Erec, c'est uniquement l'idée de son propre  
malheur, ou du moins de ce qu'elle considère comme tel, la  
pensée de voir son amant désormais libre et moins solidement  
attaché à elle. Les larmes d'Enide étaient tout au contraire  
dûes au tendre souci qu'elle prend de la renommée de son  
mari, à la souffrance que lui causent les reproches de  
recréantise, même dénués de tout fondement. L'une donc, dans  
un parfait égoïsme, ne pleure que sur elle-même; l'autre,  
dans un sentiment d'abnégation complète, ne souffre que pour  
son mari.<sup>22</sup>

This contrast is, of course, at variance with the interpretation of Enide's grief that I have been arguing. Although Enide was concerned with Erec's reputation in the crisis scene, her thoughts were more for herself and the opprobrium his loss of reputation brought upon her. So too with Maboagrain's mistress. She grieves because of the consequences to herself of her lover's defeat:

A cui qu'il onques abelisse  
ne puet muer qu'il ne s'an isse,  
que venue est l'ore et li termes:  
por ce li coroient les lermes  
des ialz tot contreval le vis.

6167-71

It is a mark of Enide's own progress that she can now comfort and advise one who, in respect of her grief at least, is an image of her former self (as is betokened by the reference to the flowing tears here and in the crisis scene).<sup>23</sup>

One final reference to grief in the romance, Erec's grief on hearing of his father's death, serves as an epilogue to this discussion:

Erec en pesa plus asez  
qu'il ne mostra sanblant as genz,  
mes diaus de roi n'est mie genz,  
n'a roi n'avient qu'il face duel.

6466-9



In that he conceals his grief at this juncture, Erec may be likened to King Adrastus in Le Roman de Thèbes (see pages 145-6 above) but the statement in lines 6468-9 is not a mere cliché - or, rather, it is a cliché with added meaning. Zaddy comments:

The lesson he has been taught by Enide's criticisms is...that duty must take precedence over private inclination. This can be seen from his behaviour at his father's funeral where he restrains his grief, as a king must, to carry out his public obligations.<sup>24</sup>

In the light of the foregoing analysis of Enide's grief, it can be concluded that it is not so much that Erec has learnt from Enide's criticisms, as that her behaviour has provided him with an object-lesson. Enide should have restrained her grief at the time of the crisis in favour of more productive intervention. She restrained it to allow Erec to take up the challenge of the Joie de la Cort. Now the lesson that has been conveyed about the usefulness (or otherwise) of grief in the course of the couple's experiences is expressed in the behaviour Erec opts for at the news of his father's death, where he restrains grief because there are more useful things to be done.

An examination of the instances in which Enide grieves has shown that Chrétien is clearly at home in portraying grief along traditional lines (as when she grieves in watching Erec fight with Guivret and when she laments his supposed death). But what is most striking is the way in which Enide's grief constitutes a motif tightly woven into the fabric of the romance. It is not an embellishment, but contributes to the work's very meaning.

## NOTES

1. C.K.Bang, "Emotions and Attitudes in Chrétien de Troyes' Erec et Enide and Hartmann von Aue's Erec der Wunderaere" (51) p.298.

All references to and quotations from Erec et Enide are based on Mario Roques' edition in the CFMA series (9).

2. Wace's extensive depiction of Carlion during the period of Arthur's coronation there (Brut 10237-620) may well have provided Chrétien with an example of animation and celebration described on a large scale. Margaret Pelan cites numerous instances where Wace's account of Arthur's coronation seems to have influenced Chrétien in Erec (L'influence du Brut de Wace sur les romanciers français de son temps (144) pp. 21-34). Depictions of grief in Wace are relatively sparse, though one noted by Pelan is discussed in note 6 below.
3. In the previous departure scene he refused offers of accompaniment on the journey by stating that he wanted the company of no-one

fors que s'amie solemant (1433)

4. Chrétien's comment regarding the sorrow of the people for Erec

ne cuit que greignor duel feïssent,  
se a mort navré le veïssent  
2747-8

may be compared with the comparison employed in the description of the grief-stricken women of Thèbes (see page 127 above):

Se la cité fust lors assise  
ou alumee ou toute esprise,  
ne cuit que plus em plorissant  
ne greingnor deul en feïssant.  
Thèbes 1975-8

5. A.R.Press, "Le Comportement d'Erec envers Enide dans le roman de Chrétien de Troyes" (146) p.530.
6. F. Lot indicates the existence of an episode similar to that of Enide's tears in the Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth ("Nouvelles études sur la provenance du cycle arthurien: l'épisode des larmes d'Enide dans Erec," (118), pp.333-5). King Cadwallawn of Britanny is sleeping by a river with his head in the lap of his nephew Brian. Brian is sad because he believes his uncle is wrong in wanting to grant a concession to Edwin of Northumbria. He weeps, and his falling tears wet the king's face and awaken him. Lot comments: 'Le motif des larmes était un

lieu-commun épique que Gaufrei et Erec-Geraint ont recueilli chacun de leur côté' (p.335).

Margaret Pelan takes up the question in L'influence du Brut de Wace sur les romanciers français de son temps (144). She compares the episode of Enide's tears, not to the episode in the Historia, but to the corresponding passage in Brut (14500-20). She admits there are certain dissimilarities between the episodes in Erec and Brut, but concludes 'un petit tableau aussi singulier serait difficilement venu indépendamment à l'esprit des deux auteurs.' (p.38).

While it is not inconceivable that Chrétien was partially influenced by Wace in this scene, he may equally be developing the epic motif of flowing tears. Subsequent analysis of grief depiction in Chrétien's works will show that he is adept at infusing life into the clichés of grief depiction as established in epic and in the 'romans antiques'.

7. Of this line (2493) Maura Coghlan says 'What did she seek when she left her country? Was her motive not the same as that of her parents when they gave her in marriage?

mes bien savoient ne por quant  
que lor fille an tel leu aloit  
don grant enors lor avandroit.

1448-50

If it was so then she is grieving now, at least in part, for her own disappointment! ('The Flaw in Enide's Character: A Study of Chrétien de Troyes' Erec", (61), p.28).

8. For a discussion of whether Erec heard all that Enide said, or merely the utterance "Amis con mar fus" (2503) see Sheldon, "Why does Chrétien's Erec treat Enide so harshly?" (156). See also pages 194-5 of this chapter.
9. The fact that Erec and Enide will set out on their journey arrayed in correspondingly elegant attire underlines the idea that they are counterparts one of the other at this point in the romance. For a discussion of the similarity of their attire on this and other occasions, see Donald Maddox, Structure and Sacring, The Systematic Kingdom in Chrétien's Erec and Enide (124), pp.140-1.
10. A. Hilka, Die direkte Rede als stilistisches Kunstmittel in den Romanen des Kristian von Troves, (91), p.87.
11. To say that Enide's concern for Erec's well-being has been put to the test is to skirt somewhat dangerous terrain in Erec scholarship. Whereas several critics, including Hoepffner (in "Matière et sens' dans le roman d'Erec et Enide," (94) and Press (op.cit., 146) suggest that Erec deliberately puts Enide's love to the test, Zaddy has argued that the word on which this interpretation hinges, the verb 'esprover', as well as meaning

'to test deliberately', may mean 'to find out', either fortuitously or deliberately. (See Zaddy, Chrétien Studies, (180), pp.11-14 and 184-89).

Leaving aside the (nonetheless important) question of Erec's motivation, it seems to me quite possible to state that the journey puts Enide's concern for Erec's well-being to the test, independently of whether Erec had planned it to be so or not.

12. In the crisis scene, Enide seeks to conceal information that Erec wants to hear. On the journey she overcomes her inclination to keep silent in order to convey to Erec information that he has said he does not want. Payen says, speaking of the crisis scene, 'Nous croyons . . . qu'Enide n'a point parlé assez tôt, et que dès lors, sa punition lors des aventures qui vont suivre sera moins le fait d'être contrainte au silence que le fait d'avoir à lutter contre sa crainte et ses scrupules pour s'obliger de parler à temps.' (Le Motif de repentir dans la littérature française médiévale(142), p.368).

13. Gabriel John Brogyanyi, "Motivation in Erec et Enide: An Interpretation of the Romance," (57), p.417 note 14.

Kenneth Varty also sees Erec's sloth as 'a kind of death'. See "On Birds and Beasts, 'Death' and 'Resurrection', Renewal and Reunion in Chrétien's Romances," (170) p.202.

14. Ultimately, during their reconciliation, Erec will say to Enide "Or ne soiez plus esmaiee, / c'or vos aim plus qu'ainz mes ne fis, / et je resui certains et fis / que vos m'amez parfitement" (4884-7), indicating that he had earlier doubted her love for him.

15. The grief of Alexis' mother, in La Vie de Saint Alexis, represents the prototype for descriptions of this kind, e.g. Chi dunt li vit sun grant dol demener, / Sum piz debatre e sun cors dejeter, / Ses crins derumpre e sen vis maiseler, / Sun mort amfant detraire ed acoler, / Mult fust il dur ki n'estodst plurer. (Alexis, st.86).

16. R.R. Bezzola, Le sens de l'aventure et de l'amour, (54), pp.179 et seq.

17. Maddox op. cit., (124) p.61.

18. See note 8 above.

19. Coghlan op. cit., (61) pp.29-30.

20. Brogyanyi op. cit., (57) p.414.

21. L.T. Topsfield, Chrétien de Troves: A Study of the Arthurian Romances, (167), p.35.
22. Hoepffner op.cit., (94), pp.448-9.
23. At the beginning of the romance reference is made to the flowing tears of Guenevere's maiden who is struck by the dwarf (a wrong which Erec proceeds to right):

La pucele, quant mialz ne puet,  
voelle ou non, retorner l'estuet;  
retornee s'an est plorant,  
des ialz li descendent corant  
les lermes contreval la face.

187-91

Thus the image of flowing tears occurs at three structurally significant points in Erec, at the beginning, during the crisis scene and at the end.

24. Zaddy op. cit., (180), p.18

## Chapter Five

### CLIGES

#### The Depiction of Grief at the Supposed Death of Alexander

One of the most salient features of Cligés, Chrétien's second romance, is the frequent discrepancy between reality and appearance. Reality is continually being concealed or falsified, for example, in the repeated use of the disguise motif; when Alexander and Soredamors conceal their love for each other; when Alis experiences the illusion of possessing Fénice; when Fénice feigns death; when Fénice and Cligés live out their idyll in concealment from the world. This discrepancy between reality and appearance, constantly recurring in the romance,<sup>1</sup> is an important factor in the first noteworthy depiction of grief, the grief surrounding the supposed death of Alexander during the Windsor campaign (2036-112).<sup>2</sup>

The background to the episode is as follows: Alexander, elder son of the king of Greece, is fighting for King Arthur against the usurper Duke Angrés. During the siege of Windsor, troops from the rebellious side ambush the tents of the king's men at night, and there is loss of life on both sides. Alexander and six of his twelve Greek comrades penetrate Windsor disguised in the accoutrements of rebel knights killed in the ambush. When other Greeks find the discarded shields of Alexander and his companions beside the dead knights, they presume the bodies to belong to the shields' owners and break into mourning (2036-83). The description of their grief is followed by that of Soredamors' (2084-96) and of an assembled company (2097-112). The theme of mourning for a warrior fallen in battle was, as we have noted, prominent in a number of epics and much favoured by the authors

of the romans d'antiquité. Here is the first and indeed only time in Chrétien's romances that he handles this theme directly. Analysis suggests that he does so with parodic intent.

The ironic mode is established at the outset by an introductory couplet where the mistakenness of the grief is stated, and emphasised by the rhyme:

Si feisoient un duel si fort  
Por lor seignor li Greu a tort.  
2041-2

As the description unfolds, a rather flat use of conventional elements, coupled with unexceptional rhymes and rhythms, militates further against the creation of pathos:

Por son escu qu'il reconoissent  
Trestuit de duel feire s'angoissent,  
Si se pasment sor son escu.  
Et dient que trop ont vescu.  
Cornix et Nereüs se pasment,  
Au revenir lor vies blasment  
Cornfex et Acoriundés;  
Des ialz lor coroient a ondes  
Les lermes jusque sor les piz;  
Vie et joie lor est despiz,  
Et Parmenidés desor toz  
A ses chevols tirez et roz.  
Cist cinc font duel de lor seignor.  
Si grant qu'il ne porent graignor.  
2043-56

In his reference to weeping (2050-1) Chrétien makes use (as he did three times in Erec) of the somewhat studied traditional motif whereby the path of tears is traced. Compare

Tenrement pleure, ne ne seit consellier,  
L'aigue li cort contreval le braier.  
Raoul 3382-3

par la chiere l'eve li coule,  
du peliçon meulle la goule.  
Le Roman de Thèbes 6067-8  
(Atys episode)

Lermes li fondent sor la face  
Si que la peitrine a moilliee  
Le Roman de Troie 16484-5

In the Cligés passage comic exaggeration results from the association of this motif, already hyperbolic in tone, with the phrase 'a ondes', itself highlighted by an amusingly ingenious rhyme involving a proper name ('Acoriundés [Foerster's edition gives Acoriondes] : ondes').

Chrétien's comment later in Cligés (4588-91) that he will not delay his account of the Oxford tournament by lists of names (which were popular in epic) makes it reasonable to assume that the grouping of names in lines 2047-56 has some parodic value. Micha's text is unsatisfactory at this point, since although four different names are mentioned, line 2054 (upheld by Foerster's line 2085) states

Cist cinc font duel de lor seignor

In contrast to lines 2047-9 in Micha's edition

Cornix et Nereüs se pasment,  
Au revenir lor vies blasment  
Cornfex et Acoriundés

Foerster, punctuating differently, gives a preferable reading:

Cornix et Nerifüs se pasment,  
Au revenir lor vies blasment,  
Et Torins et Acoriondes;  
Foerster 2077-9

Employed here is a motif whereby characters faint from grief, immediately recover, and continue to grieve unabatedly, as, for example, in Aliscans:

Ot le Guibors, a terre chiet pasmee,  
Quant se redrece, forment s'est dementee.  
Aliscans 1831-2

and in Le Roman de Thèbes:

Dirceüs qui s'estoit pamez,  
de pamoisons est relevez,  
em piez sailli come desvez;  
son seingnor prist a regreter  
Thèbes 8840-3

In Cligés the elliptic nature of the reference to Torin and Acorionde (who, like their two companions, also faint, recover and continue grieving) somewhat diminishes the motif's rhetorical impact.



The exotic note struck by the Greek proper names suggests that Chrétien may have been influenced here particularly by the romans d'antiquité, and the descriptions of grief for fallen warriors which figure so largely in them. One such description - that of grief for Atys in Le Roman de Thèbes<sup>3</sup> - yields several points of comparison with, and contrast to, the grief for Alexander. An instance from the Atys episode of the motif of flowing tears (Thèbes 6067-8) has been quoted above. Furthermore, when Atys dies, there is a description of the grief of knights that he, like Alexander, has brought from his own land. 'Cenz chevaliers' mourn Atys (as opposed to the band of five who mourn Alexander; by having only a small group mourn, is Chrétien purposely deflating the often large-scale collective mourning for fallen warriors?):

Cil font grant deul, n'of tel fere  
ne par bouche d'oume retrere.  
Cil font grant deul a desmesure,  
leur vies heent, n'en ont cure,  
ainz dient que trop ont vescu  
puis que leur seingnor ont perdu;  
de devant lui ne se remuent,  
ainçois se pasment et se tuent  
et leur seingnor regretent fort  
qu'iluecques voient gesir mort.  
Pasmez gisent el pavement  
et se complaignent franchement.

Thèbes 5997-6008

The description of the Greeks' grief has one line in common with the description of grief for Atys (surprisingly not mentioned by Otto in his study on the influence of Thèbes):<sup>4</sup>

Cl vs 2046

Et dient que trop ont vescu

Th vs 6001

ainz dient que trop ont vescu.

But whereas in Thèbes the episode culminates in a collective lament of forty lines (6009-48), in Cligés the description reaches a pitch only to be undermined by the narrator's comment that all the grieving is 'por neant':

Cist cinc font duel de lor seignor,  
Si grant qu'il ne porent graignor.  
Mes por neant se desconfortent.

2055-7

Another anti-climax occurs in the next few lines, where the reference to the Greeks turning now to faint and lament on the shields of their supposedly dead comrades is juxtaposed to the comment that the very shields mislead them:

Molt les refont desconforter  
Li autre escu, par coi il croient  
Que li cors lor compaignons soient;  
Si se pasment sus et demantent.  
Mes trestuit li escu lor mantent

2060-4

Chrétien emphasises that one of the slain lying beside a Greek shield is indeed one of Alexander's twelve named companions, Leifolis, whom the mourners do not recognise. They grieve over all the bodies whereas, had they not been mistaken, they would have grieved over his alone (2064-72). This irony, whereby their mistaken grief for all prevents them expressing proper grief for one, confounds the set-piece even more, and may be thought to have comic value.

The first movement of grief for Alexander is now over. The collective grief of the warrior's compatriots is followed by the grief of a lady:

Or cuide et croit que mar fu nee  
Soredamors, qui ot le cri  
Et la plainte de son ami.  
De la plainte et de la dolor  
Pert fame morte a la color

2084-8

Similarly, in Thèbes, after the depiction of the grief of Atys' men, Ismene is portrayed in stricken state (Thèbes 6051-72) before uttering her long lament. Earlier, on seeing him expire, she had assumed a death-like appearance herself:

de lui pouez ofr merueille:  
el n'ot ne ne voit ne ne ceille  
et est vers come feulle d'ierre,  
n'el ne se muet ne c'une pierre;  
point de color n'ot en la face,  
plus estoit froide que n'est glace.

Thèbes 5955-60

Soredamors too appears deathlike in complexion, though Chrétien  
relies on concision for his effect

Pert fame morte a la color<sup>5</sup>  
2088

As the description of the Greeks' grief departs from conventional  
lines, so too the depiction of Soredamors' grief takes an unexpected  
direction. Instead of giving her feelings free rein, she does her best  
to hide them (out of the same discretion that prevented her declaring  
her love to Alexander - 574-79):

Et ce la grieve molt et blesce  
Qu'ele n'ose de sa destrece  
Demostrer sanblant en apert.  
An son cuer a son duel covert.  
2089-92

But although the audience is thus deprived of the spectacle of a  
lady's grief, her concealment of it provides a starting point for a  
further depiction of collective grief with parodic undertones.  
Chrétien says that in spite of her efforts to conceal what she felt,  
it would have been obvious to any onlooker (2093-6) - except that  
everyone else is too bound up in his own emotions to notice hers:

Mes tant avoit chascuns a feire,  
A la soe dolor retreire,  
Que il ne li chaloit d'autrui.  
Chascuns pleignoit le suen enui  
Qui li est pesanz et amere.  
2097-101

After line 2100 four lines are missing from the Guiot copy which are  
found in all other manuscripts. If they are taken into account with  
what precedes and follows, we see that repetition is used to emphasize  
the egocentric, as opposed to the sympathetic, grief of those  
surrounding Soredamors:

2100            Chascuns pleignoit le sien enui.  
                  Car lor paranz et lor amis  
                  Truevent afolez et maumis  
                  Don la riviere estoit coverte  
                  Chascuns plaignoit la soe perte  
 2101            Qui li est pesanz et amere

Chrétien seems to be deliberately departing from the convention whereby a prominent character, stricken with grief, becomes the object of the compassionate grief of bystanders. This motif can appear briefly, e.g.

                 Por sa dolor pleurent les gens Bernier  
                                  Raoul de Cambrai 1535

or it can be more elaborate, as in the account of Helen's sorrow at the death of Paris in Le Roman de Troie:

                 De li a l'om greignor pitié  
                  Que de Paris l'une meitié.  
                  Mil lermes fist la nuit plorer:  
                  Ne la poëit nus esgarder,  
                  Hom ne femme, jovnes ne vieuz,  
                  Qu'el ne feïst plorer des ieuz.  
                                  Troie 23023-8

The end of the Atys episode also provides an example:

                 De la pitié qu'il ont d'Ysmaine  
                  plorent contor, plorent demaine,  
                  plorent tuit cil qu'ilueques sont  
                  et riche et povre grant duel font  
                                  Thèbes 6191-4

Such examples suggest that the reference to the bystanders' lack of grief for Soredamors and the insistence on their personal grief may be seen as an ironic manipulation of a common motif.

The lines just quoted from Thèbes contain an instance of distributio, a device common in conventional descriptions of collective grief and illustrated in an earlier episode in Thèbes:

                 pour leur enfanz plorent les meres,  
                  les sereurs plorent les freres;  
                  lor amis plaignent les puceles,  
                  dont ont oï froides nouveles  
                                  Thèbes 1969-72

Chrétien uses distributio to explain why Soredamors' grief passes

unnoticed - the bystanders are preoccupied with mourning their own kinsmen:

La plore li filz sor le pere,  
Plore li peres sor le fil;  
Sor son cosin se pasme cil,  
et cil autres sor son neveu;  
Einsi pleignent an chascun leu  
Peres, et freres, et paranz.

2102-7

This form of distributio, with its use of family relationships, is a highly affective technique. However, Chrétien immediately sidesteps the issue of general grief with an emphatic reminder that, soon, when the misunderstanding is resolved, the greatest grief - that of the five Greeks for Alexander - will turn to joy:

Mes desor toz est aparanz  
Li diax que li Grezois feisoient,  
Don grant joie attendre pooient:  
A grant joie tornera tost  
Li graindres diax de tote l'ost.

2108-12

This is an ironic variation on the more conventional joy/grief opposition, as found in Ismene's lament:

Grant deul a qui son ami pert,  
joie du siecle a deul revert.  
Brieve joie ai eü de toi,  
lons en sera li deulz, ce croi;  
ja n'avrai mes joie en ma vie

Thèbes 6095-9

Since the account of grief for Alexander provides several points of comparison (including one line in common) with the account of grief for Atys, it is tempting to suggest that Chrétien was here deliberately evoking the latter. The story of Thebes, if not Le Roman de Thèbes, was clearly not far from his mind at this point because a little later (2499-500) he refers to

...la guerre Polinics  
Que il prist contre Etfoclés.

But whether he was specifically influenced by the long and richly elaborated description of grief for Atys must remain a matter for speculation. What may be suggested with greater confidence is that, in his account of mistaken grief for Alexander, Chrétien was in a conscious and detailed way parodying the descriptions of mourning so current in epic and in the romans d'antiquité, and of which grief at the death of Atys is such a signal example.

What place does this whole episode of mistaken grief for Alexander have in the overall intent of Cligés? I have tried to show that Chrétien is manipulating traditional literary materials for comic effect. But the episode of mistaken grief in the Alexander section is of course also a prefigurement of the mistaken grief expressed extensively for Fénice in the 'fausse mort' episode which dominates the latter part of the Cligés section (and to which I shall shortly turn). Before that culminating instance of the motif, there are two other minor examples of mistaken grief (and grief which the reader knows to be mistaken). The episode presenting the truest parallel to the grief for Alexander concerns Cligés in a campaign against the Saxons. Adopting the strategy of disguise, as Alexander had done, he rides up to the Saxon ranks with the head of an enemy warrior, boasting that he has killed 'Cligés'. Both sides are deceived by this piece of dare-devilry, and those on the side of Cligés grieve, though here Chrétien does not develop the reference to grief, merely stating that the truth will soon be known:

D'anbes parz cudent qu'il soit morz  
Et Sesne, et Greu, et Alemant;  
S'an sont lié, et cil dolant;  
Mes par tans iert li voirs seüz

3514-7

Later Cligés has to rescue Fénice from the Saxons. The couple ride back to find the army in a state of grief because it is believed that

both Fénice and Cligés are dead:

Et chevalchent a grant exploit  
Vers l'ost ou molt grant duel avoit.  
Par tote l'ost de duel forssenent,  
Mes a nul voir dire n'asenent,  
Qu'il d'fent que Cligés est morz.  
De c'est li diax et granz et forz,  
Et por Fénice se resmaient,  
Ne cuident que ja mes la raient.  
S'est por celi et por celui  
Tote l'oz an molt grant enui.  
3873-82

Once more in conjunction with the motif of mistaken grief comes the emphasis on the fact that it is mistaken:

Mes cil ne tarderont mes gueires,  
Si changera toz li afeires,  
Car ja sont an l'ost retorné,  
S'ont le duel a joie torné.  
Joie revient et diax s'an fuit.  
3883-7

Chrétien's delight in duplicating situations in this way is seen also in connection with the grief of both Soredamors and Fénice. When Fénice falls in love with Cligés, she, like Soredamors, attempts to conceal her true feelings though we are told that she cannot prevent them being reflected to a certain degree in her complexion and in her more subdued behaviour (2947-61). Subsequently Fénice witnesses the single combat in which Cligés fights a Saxon duke on Alis' behalf. When Fénice sees Cligés fall, she cannot dissimulate her grief. She utters a cry - "Sainte Marie!" (4056) - and falls fainting (4060-1). Soredamors had lost her colour on learning of Alexander's supposed death, but then everyone else had been too much taken up with his own personal grief to notice her reaction. Similarly in Fénice's case, the bystanders, though they help her up (in accordance with the literary convention), completely misinterpret her behaviour:

Li haut baron l'ont redreciee,  
Qui l'ont tant sor ses piez tenue  
Que an son san fu revenue.  
Mes onques nus qui la vefst,  
Quel sanblant que ele feïst,

Ne set por coi el se pasma.  
 Onques un seus ne l'an blasma,  
 Einçois l'en ont loee tuit,  
 Car n'i a un seul qui ne cuit  
 Qu'ele feïst ausi por lui,  
 Se il fust an leu de celui.

4062-72

Here again Chrétien is manipulating traditional material connected with grief depiction in a very fresh and humourous way. We have seen that it is common in epic to find bystanders whose raison d'être is to help up characters who have fainted from grief, for example:

Lors chiet pasmée, tant par est esbahie;  
 Tos la redrese la riche baronie.

Raoul 3681-2

De la dolor ciet a terre pasmés.  
 Si compaignon l'en ont amont levée.

Moniage Guillaume (II) 3589-90

But into a clichéd context, Chrétien slips a shrewd and amusing piece of psychological insight: the barons who help Fénice up from her faint do not realise that she is in love with Cligés, since each in his masculine pride flatters himself that she would have fainted on his account, had he been fighting, and not Cligés. In this way Chrétien makes play of the convention - the barons react in a conventional way to Fénice's fainting by helping her up and believe, wrongly, that her fainting is the stock response of any lady watching any knight in single combat!

There is an important difference between Soredamors' attempts to conceal her grief and those of Fénice. It is simply out of maidenly shyness that Soredamors wishes to conceal her feelings at the supposed death of Alexander. As the wife of Alis it behoves Fénice to conceal her feelings for Cligés, her husband's nephew. Ironically she controls her grief less well than Soredamors, though with much more cause to do so. The episode of Fénice's grief for Cligés is a heightened form of the episode of Soredamors' grief for Alexander, not a mere repetition.



## Grief at departure

There are two detailed departure scenes in Cligés. Grief plays a minor part in the first and a major part in the second. In the first instance Alexandre seeks his father's permission to go to Arthur's court. The old king experiences 'joie' at his son's desire to prove his prowess, and 'pesance' at the prospect of his departure (165-70). The empress, on the other hand, is thoroughly grief-stricken:

L'empereriz fut molt dolante,  
Quant de la voie oï parler  
Ou ses filz an devoit aler.  
218-20

But Alexander is heedless of other people's feelings on the matter:

Mes qui qu'an ait duel ne pesance,  
Ne qui que li tort a enfance,  
Ne qui que li blasme ne lot,  
Li vaslez au plus tost qu'il pot  
Comande ses nes aprester.  
221-5

Haidu suggests that Alexander's heedlessness on this occasion is an aspect of his portrayal as a more impulsive, less courtly character than his son Cligés is to appear.<sup>6</sup>

The embarkation of Alexander, watched by his regretful parents and countrymen, is described at some length (231-65) in a scene slightly reminiscent of the sea-departure of Eneas from the sorrowing Dido (Eneas 1955 et seq.) and of Jason from Medea and his compatriots (Troie 1843 et seq.).

The second detailed departure scene involves Cligés and Fénice, who, with Alis and his retinue, are on their way back to Greece from the campaign against the Saxon duke. Cligés remembers that his dying father Alexander exhorted him to seek his fortunes at Arthur's court. He decides to go to England rather than return to Greece. Chrétien refers briefly to the preparations for the departure (4239-43) but gives pride of place to the description of his leave-taking from

Fénice. Cligés seeks her out to say farewell and kneels at her feet, weeping:

Devant li vient, si s'agenoille  
Plorant, que de ses lermes moille  
Tot son bliaut et son hermine.

4249-51

Indicating thus the copiousness of Cligés' tears by remarking that they wet his garments, Chrétien is again making use of the traditional cliché (see page 209 above). However he achieves emphasis by a supple use of the verse form: enjambement lends emphasis to the present participle 'plorant' and the use of the broken couplet renders the cliché less stilted.

The ensuing exchange of conversation between Cligés and Fénice gives the farewell scene a dramatic quality. Fénice, perplexed by Cligés' tears, bids him rise, sit down beside her and stop weeping (4257-63). Cligés explains that he has come to take leave of her and outlines the reason for his departure, ending with the pregnant words:

..droiz est qu'a vos congié praigne  
Com a celi cui ge sui toz.

4282-3

Leaving us to mull over the significance of this declaration, Chrétien goes on to a general description of the grief which marks the parting, giving the theme of grief an extra twist of interest by again allying it to the theme of concealment:

Molt ot fez sopirs et sangloz  
Au partir, celez et coverz,  
Que uns n'ot tant les ialz overz,  
Ne tant i regart cleremant  
Qu'au departir certainemant  
De verité savoir peüst  
Que antr'aus deus amor eüst.

4284-90

Having thus taken leave of the lady, Cligés sets off with all haste. The grief surrounding his departure is conveyed by the repetition of 'pansis' and related forms, and the grief of Fénice in

particular is highlighted by the unusual and difficult image of 'el panser' as a boundless sea with which she is filled:

Pansis s'an vet, pansis remaint  
L'empereres, et autre maint.  
Mes Fénice est sor toz pansive;  
Ele ne trueve fonz ne rive  
El panser dom ele est emplie,  
Tant i entant et monteplie.  
Pansive est an Grece venue  
4293-99

Play on the word 'pansis' makes this scene of departure reminiscent of the passage in Erec describing Enide's departure from her parents and home (Erec 1438-59) where emphasis was achieved by the repetition of 'plorer' in various forms. Here in Cligés a certain hint of mischievous ambiguity can be detected in the choice of the word 'pansis' - the emperor and others are sorrowful at the departure; Fénice is also sad, but we are soon to discover that Cligés' parting words are going to give her food for thought - she is 'pansive' in the sense of thoughtful as well as sorrowful.<sup>7</sup>

From an account of the sorrowful parting Chrétien moves straight into a description of the sorrowfulness which persists in affecting Fénice, reflecting itself in her complexion:

En sa face ses max apert,  
Car molt est palie et changiee.  
Molt est de sa face estrangiee  
La color fresche, clere et pure  
Que assise i avoit Nature.  
Sovant plore, sovant sopire.  
4310-5

She thinks over the behaviour and appearance of Cligés on the occasion of their leave-taking, but above all she ponders his parting words "Je sui toz vostres", and in a long monologue (4366-526) tries to gauge their significance. They seem to be words of love and yet they may have been an empty social formula (4388-97). But surely, she argues with herself, his tears on that occasion were an unmistakable token of his sincerity:

Mes je li vis color changier  
 Et plorer molt piteusemant.  
 Les lermes, au mien jugemant,  
 Et la chiere piteuse et mate  
 Ne vindrent mie de barate,  
 N'i ot barat ne tricherie.  
 Li oel ne me mantirent mie,  
 Don je vi les lermes cheoir.

4398-405

But again she wavers in uncertainty: how can he love her? Has he not caused her unhappiness by stealing her heart?

Ne m'aimme pas, ce sai je bien,  
 Qui me desrobe et tost le mien

4421-2

Yet in that case, what was the reason for his tears? Simply, she concludes, the fact that he was about to leave his acquaintances ('sa conoissance'):

Car de gent qu'an aime et conoisce  
 Se part an a molt grant angoisse.  
 Quant il leissa sa conoissance,  
 Si en ot enui et pesance,  
 Et s'il plora, ne m'an mervoil.

4427-31

The remainder of the lengthy monologue is filled with the same type of oscillation from one view of the situation to the other.

The sorrowful scene of farewell in Cligés is significant precisely because it generates questions in Fénice's mind and makes her suspect for the first time that Cligés might love her. Thus Cligés' grief can be said to be an important spring in the action, in the same way (though to a lesser degree) that Enide's tears over the sleeping Erec precipitated the crisis of the earlier poem. Chrétien has not wanted to create pathos for its own sake. The scene of grief-stricken farewell has a place in the economy of the romance.

It is also noteworthy that Fénice should speculate about the true significance of Cligés' grief. In the epic and for the most part in

the 'romans antiques', emotions were depicted as 'events' on the same plane as any other, and not as elusive areas of experience to be analysed or explored. Poets of the earlier tradition did not, on the whole, look beneath the outward manifestation of an emotion to question the true nature of the emotion itself. We do, however, find grief treated in a speculative, discursive way by Thomas in the Tristan poem with which Cligés is so often linked,<sup>8</sup> for example, in lines 71-183 of the Turin(1) fragment (Wind edition). There Thomas analyses the reasons for grief among his four protagonists and asks his readers to judge whose grief is the greatest. It is possible that Chrétien has Thomas' particular type of speculations in mind when he makes Fénice question the true meaning of Cligés' tears.

#### **Grief surrounding the supposed death of Fénice - 'la fausse mort'**

Mistaken grief is a major element in the 'fausse mort' episode in which Fénice, helped by Tessala, feigns sickness and death as a means of pursuing her affair with Cligés, and it is an element on which much of the piquancy of the episode depends. In the early stages of the deceit, the distress of those at court is introduced fleetingly, with more emphasis laid on the central factor of deceit:

Quant Cligés antant le murmure,  
A la cort vint grant aleüre,  
Mes n'i ot joie ne deduit,  
Car triste et mat estoient tuit  
Por l'emperreriz qui se faint,  
Car li max dont ele se plaint  
Ne li grieve, ne ne se dialt.

5591-7

At Fénice's request, Alis and Cligés go to see her. To allay suspicion, Fénice shortly dismisses Cligés with peremptory words. Chrétien stresses that Cligés' show of grief on leaving her is not genuine, pointing up the contrast between his real and assumed

emotions with the rhyme 'atalante : dolante' and with the antithesis 'dolante...dolante...tristes...liez':

Cligés cui cist moz atalante  
S'an vet feisant chiere dolante,  
Qu'ainz si dolante ne vefstes.  
Molt puet estre par defors tristes,  
Mes ses cuers est si liez dedanz,  
Car a sa joie est atendanz.

5621-6

The feigned grief of Cligés has no function in the plot, except that it strengthens the ruse. Retrospectively, however, it is of some ironic value, since, when the lovers' plan seems to have backfired, Cligés is genuinely stricken with grief for Fénice (6139-81).

Cligés' pretence at grieving is not the first instance of feigned grief in the romance. When Alexander and his men had penetrated Windsor in disguise, they had pretended to be in the grip of grief for dead comrades and had thus been able to make their way through the fortress without having to speak to anyone (1838-49). There, however, feigned grief was not an ironic but a functional element in the plot, as it is in a number of other works that Chrétien probably knew.<sup>9</sup>

Although the feigned grief of Cligés is referred to, little attention is focused on the feelings of Alis in this scene. Chrétien says of him merely:

De duel feire ne se recroit  
5630

and that he is saddened when Fénice says her cure will only be effected by one doctor alone (5634-46; she is referring to Cligés, but Alis thinks she means God). Scant attention is paid to the feelings of Alis in the 'fausse mort' episode as a whole. When Fénice's death seems imminent, we are merely told that he has difficulty in preventing himself swooning from grief (5692-4). The citizens also are affected, but Chrétien points out that though he might have developed a description of their grief, he has chosen not to:

Onques mes gent tel duel ne firent  
Con lors ot par tot le palais.  
La parole del duel vos lais  
5696-8

Indeed, in Cligés as a whole, Chrétien appears to be very selective in choosing to elaborate certain instances of grief and to gloss over others. For example, when Alexander died, only brief reference was made to the sorrow of his brother Alis and son Cligés, even though he is the chief protagonist in the first part of the romance; and whereas affective capital could have been made out of the fact that Soredamors died of grief shortly after her husband, Chrétien does not develop her grief here at all either, his only rather laconic comment being in the form of an aphorism about the uselessness of prolonged mourning (a somewhat ironic aphorism, if one considers the prominence that will be given to lengthy depictions of mourning in the later part of the work):

Soredamors tel duel en ot  
Que après lui vivre ne pot;  
De duel fu morte avoeques lui.  
Alis et Cligés anbedui  
En firent duel si com il durent,  
Mes de duel feire se recurent:  
Mauves est diax a maintenir,  
Car nus biens n'an puet avenir.  
2583-90

As Aude died in the wake of Roland's death and as Ismene retired to symbolic death in a nunnery, so Soredamors is conveniently disposed of to 'clear the ground' for the second part of the story.

So far it has emerged in the analysis of both Erec and Cligés that when Chrétien does develop a description of grief it is rarely, if ever, to provide a pathetic excursus. Usually there are reasons for doing so within the overall economy of the romance. Thus, as we have seen (5696-8) he explicitly omits a depiction of the citizens' grief at the point where they are told how ill Fénice is, choosing to reserve a full-scale description of grief for the more important

moment of her 'death'. The lamentations that he describes when she appears to have died not only highlight that event, but, as we shall see, have the function of attracting the attention of the three doctors of Salerno, thereby providing them with a smooth entry into the action.<sup>10</sup>

The citizens' lamentations at the news of Fénice's 'death' provide us with the most striking example of mistaken grief so far. A strongly ironic note is present from the beginning, since the person whose death is being mourned can actually hear the grief of those around her:

Et s'antant ele bien et ot  
Le duel que l'empereres mainne  
Et le cri don la sale est plainne.  
Et par tote la vile crfent  
Les genz qui plorent et qui dfent:  
"Dex, quel enui et quel contraire  
Nos a fet la morz deputaire...."

5714-20

In this collective lament the townspeople harangue the personified figure of death. The complainte against death is found in a number of contemporary works, for example, in Ismene's lament for Atys (Thèbes 6089-94). Haidu notes that it appeared in Enide's lament for Erec when she believed him to be dead, and in Philomena where another false death is involved, though he sees 'little indication of ironic intent' in these, and 'little of the accusatory nature common to the genre' in the instance from Erec.<sup>11</sup> In Cligés the strength of tone in which the citizens accuse death - heaping up epithets against it and depicting it as a rapacious creature that has devoured Fénice - renders all the more striking the contrast between how they perceive the situation and the fact that she is not dead at all:

Morz, trop es mal, et covoiteuse,  
Et sorprenanz, et envieuse,  
Qui ne puez estre saoulee.  
Onques mes si male golee  
Ne pois tu doner au monde.

5721-25



The tone of extreme outrage is maintained throughout the lament:

Morz, qu'as tu fet? Dex te confonde,  
Qui as tote biauté estainte.  
La meillor chose et la plus sainte  
As ocise, s'ele durast,  
Qu'onques Dex a feire andurast.  
Trop est Dex de grant pacfence,  
Quant il te done avoir puissance  
Des soes choses depecier.  
Or se deüst Dex corregier  
Et gitier hors de ta bataille,  
Car trop as fet grant anvaille,  
Et grant orguel, et grant oltrage.

5726-37

When the three doctors of Salerno arrive and ask what is happening, the citizens' reply becomes a second complainte against death, but with the eulogy of Fénice receiving prominence:

..../Ne savez de la mort destroite  
Qui tot desirre, et tot covoite  
Et en toz leus le mialz agaite,  
Quel felenie a ele or faite,  
Si com ele an est costumiere?  
D'une clarté, d'une lumiere  
Avoit Dex le mont alumé.  
Ce que Morz a acostumé  
Ne puet mûer qu'ele ne face:  
Toz jorz a son pooir esface  
Le mialz que ele puet trover.  
Or vialt son pooir esprover,  
S'a pris plus de bien en un cors  
Qu'ele n'en a lessié defors;  
S'ele eüst tot le monde pris,  
N'eüst ele mie fet pis.  
Biauté, corteisie, et savoir,  
Et quanque dame puet avoir,  
Qu'apartenir doie a bonté,  
Nos a tolu et mesconté  
La morz, qui toz biens a periz  
En ma dame l'empererriz;  
Ensi nos a la morz tûez.

5765-87

The elaborate form taken by the complainte here, especially the way in which it is interwoven with the eulogy motif, makes this lament something of a tour de force. And yet the reader knows that in this and their other outpourings, the citizens of Constantinople grieve (as did Alexander's Greek comrades when they thought he was dead) 'por neant'.

In the depiction of grief in the 'fausse mort' episode, irony is increased by the presence of religious factors. At the beginning of their lamentations, the citizens refer to Fénice as 'la meilleur chose et la plus sainte' (5728) - scarcely an appropriate description of a woman engaged in a plot to deceive her husband. Specific references to religious ceremonial, such as that which rounds off the first part of the citizens' lament, are uncommon in the 'grief rhetoric' of the period and must be seen as contributing to the irony:

Ensi toz li pueples enrage,  
Tordent lor poinz, batent lor paumes,  
Et li clerc an lisent lor saumes,  
Et prfent por la boene dame  
Que Dex merci li face a l'ame.

5738-42

D.D.R.Owen has argued that the whole episode of the 'fausse mort' can be read as an ironic version of Christ's death and resurrection<sup>12</sup> and Marta Powell Harley has put forward the view that the fate suffered by Fénice at the hands of the three doctors of Salerno is a parody of the martyrdom of the sixth-century saint, Margaret of Antioch, as recounted by Wace.<sup>13</sup> Alongside the pattern of biblical reminiscences suggested by Owen, and within the part of the episode relating how the doctors made their approaches, there do seem to be traces of another biblical story, the raising of Jairus' daughter. As the doctors approach the court to see the 'dead' Fénice, they are met with the sound of much grief:

Vers la cort s'an vont maintenant  
Ou l'en n'ofst pas Deu tonant,  
Tel noise et tel cri i avoit.

5811-3

Compare the approach of Christ to the house of the ruler:

Et ueniunt in domum archisynagogi, et uidet tumultum,  
et flentes et heulantes multum.

Mark 5. 38

Seeing the grief of Alis, the chief physician says:

Empereres, conforte toi,  
Je sai certainnement et voi  
Que ceste dame n'est pas morte.  
5825-7

echoing perhaps Christ's words to those grieving for Jairus' daughter:<sup>14</sup>

Quid turbamini et ploratis? puella non est mortua sed dormit.

Mark 5. 39

The physician then orders the palace to be emptied of all but himself and his two colleagues (5844-51), reminiscent of the fact that in the biblical story Jesus 'put them all outside' (Mark 5. 40) except for three disciples and the girl's parents. The situation in which the physicians quell the grief that meets them thus seems to have provided material for a piece of clerical whimsicality.

The unexpected intervention of the doctors very nearly ruins the lovers' plan. The grief of Cligés is now authentic:

Mes Cligés est molt esmaiez  
Et grant duel a, quant il ot dire  
La grant angoisse et le martire  
Que s'amie a por lui sosfert;  
Par un po que le san ne pert,  
Car il crient molt, et si a droit,  
Qu'afolee ou morte ne soit  
Por le tormant que fet li ont  
Li troi mire qui venu sont;  
Si s'an despoire et desconforte.  
5970-9

The intensity of his feelings is conveyed by the comment that grief almost makes him lose his senses -

Et grant duel a.....  
Par un po que le san ne pert  
5971..5974

This comment represents the supple use of a common epic formulation:

Si grant doel ad, por poi qu'il n'est desvét  
Roland 2789

Lors a tel duel a pou ne pert le senz  
Prise d'Orange 1070

Chrétien endorses the intensity of his emotion with the phrase 'et si a droit'(5975), suggesting that Cligés has every reason to fear that Fénice has really died at the hands of the doctors. At this point, hard on the heels of a description of what they have subjected her to (5860-940) the reader shares Cligés' uncertainty about the degree of lasting harm done to Fénice. This uncertainty affects the tone of what follows.

The grief of the citizens as Fénice lies in her bier is described much more briefly than their previous lamentations, but with greater force - the irony of the situation (that she is not dead) does not seem uppermost here in this dramatic account of collective grief where the night is filled with the cries of all the inhabitants, rich and poor alike:

N'onques la nuit lor criz n'abeissent,  
Ne ne cessent, ne fin ne prenent;  
Par tote la vile forssenent  
Et haut, et bas, et povre, et riche.  
Si sanble que chascuns s'afiche  
Qu'il vaintra tot de feire duel  
Ne ja nel leissera son vuel.  
Tote nuit est li criz molt granz.  
5988-95

But with the new day and the arrangements for Fénice's burial in the sepulchre especially constructed by Jehan, the idea that mourning is mistaken becomes strong again. The grief of the citizens of Constantinople as they follow her bier is depicted according to the stereotypes of collective grief description - there is weeping, fainting, breast-beating, and the device of distributio is used once again to convey the wide-spreadness of feeling; there is a short collective lament in the form of the complainte:

An trestote Costantinoble  
N'a remés ne petit ne grant  
Qui n'aut après le cors plorant;  
Si maudfent la mort et blasment,  
Chevalier et vaslet se pasment,  
Et les dames et les puceles  
Batent lor piz et lor memeles,

S'ont a la mort prise tançon:  
 "Morz, fet chascune, reançon  
 De ma dame que ne preïs?  
 Certes, petit gahaing fefs,  
 Car a nostre oes sont granz les pertes."  
 6044-55

What is noteworthy about this depiction is not the use or handling of the stereotypes themselves, but the framework in which the depiction occurs. It is preceded by the information that Jehan has placed a feather-bed in the sepulchre! (6025-35). And its raison d'être seems to be to act as a backdrop to the altogether more equivocal grief of Cligés who caps the grief of the others by being suicidal in his feelings - but with mental reservations: Chrétien, for ever the master of the rhyming couplet, highlights the ambivalence of Cligés' feelings by the rhyme 's'ocit : respit' (6059-60, below); Cligés thinks of ending his own life - but not yet!

Mes Cligés an fet duel a certes,  
 Tel qu'il s'an afole et confont  
 Plus que tuit li autre ne font,  
 Et mervoille est qu'il ne s'ocit,  
 Mes ancor le met an respit  
 Tant que l'ore et li termes veingne  
 Qu'il la desfuee, et qu'il la teingne,  
 Et savra s'ele est vive ou non.  
 6056-63

Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury says of this account of Cligés' reactions:

le récit reste très discret et peu explicite, à la limite entre la description d'un chagrin extrême et le véritable projet suicidaire.<sup>15</sup>

She quotes Faith Lyons:

Cligés agit ici en parfait amant courtois, c'est-à-dire en raisonneur accompli. Il ne mourra pas, comme Tristan, de sa douleur.<sup>16</sup>

From the point of view of Chrétien's handling of conventional grief rhetoric, we see that a line that might be understood as a cliché of grief description (6059: 'Et mervoille est qu'il ne s'ocit') is quite altered in its effect by what follows it (6060 - 'Mes ancor le met an respit').

Fénice is now placed in the grave by some barons who do not see inside the sepulchre itself because they faint from grief:

Sur la fosse sont li baron,  
Qui le cors i colchent et metent,  
Mes sor Jehan ne s'antremetent  
De la sepulture aseoir,  
Qu'il ne la porent nes veoir,  
Einz sont trestuit pasmé cheü;  
S'a Jehanz boen leisir eü  
De feire quanque il i fist.

6064-71

Of these and a second group of knights who later fall asleep while guarding the tomb, Haidu says:

Chrétien sometimes treats tertiary characters in the most cavalier manner!...There is no need for the initial presence of either of these groups of knights: they serve only to fall asleep or faint, i.e., to demonstrate the author's arbitrary freedom in the realm of unreality.<sup>17</sup>

Against this view it might be argued that Fénice is a public figure and her 'death' is a very public one: throughout the proceedings emphasis is laid on the involvement and reactions of the citizens of Constantinople and this creates a strongly implied contrast between the public illusion and the private reality. There is nothing improbable about the initial presence of the barons at her burial, and their fainting from grief fits perfectly with literary convention. But convention and convenience dovetail very neatly, since their fainting allows Jehan to place Fénice in the sepulchre; and once again it can be seen that Chétien has a way of rendering the clichés of grief depiction dynamic, often with humorous effect.

The last important depiction of grief in the 'fausse mort' episode (and in the romance as a whole) is Cligés' grief and lament for Fénice when he later secretly disinters her (6139-81). His grief is attributed to the fact that he does not know about the potion Thessala had given her to make her look as if she were dead:

Et Cligés qui rien ne savoit  
 De la poison que ele avoit  
 Dedanz le cors, qui la fet mue  
 Et tele qu'el ne se remue,  
 Por ce cuide qu'ele soit morte;  
 Si s'an despoire, et desconforte,  
 Et sopire formant, et plore.

6139-45

Attention has been drawn to the fact that it is improbable that Tessala had not told Cligés about the potion. Van Hamel, in an early article on the links between Tristan and Cligés, accounted for this invraisemblance by arguing that Cligés' ignorance provides motivation for his lament, which he would not have uttered had he been cognizant of the situation, and which, in van Hamel's opinion, has a counterpart in Tristan:

Chrétien n'a pas voulu priver ses lecteurs d'une longue et belle complainte semblable à celle qu'Iseut avait fait entendre sur le corps inanimé de Tristan.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that Chrétien had the Tristan story in mind at this point is certainly substantiated by a reference to the fact that the potion is soon to wane (as did the 'philtre' in the Tristan story):

Mes par tans iert venue l'ore  
 Que la poisons perdra sa force.

6146-7

It would seem quite uncharacteristic of Chrétien, however, to indulge to such an extent in the creation of pathos for its own sake (- as van Hamel suggests with the words '[il] n'a pas voulu priver ses lecteurs d'une longue et belle complainte'). The reference to the imminent waning of the potion allows the reader to savour the full irony of Cligés' lament and the added irony of Fénice's anguish at hearing it herself (as she heard the grief of the citizens of Constantinople):

Et molt se travaille et esforce  
 Fénice, qui l'ot regreter,  
 Qu'ele le puisse conforter,  
 Ou de parole, ou de regart.  
 A po que li cuers ne li part  
 Del duel qu'ele ot que il demainne.

6148-53

Cligés' lament is twenty-eight lines long (6154-81) and can be divided into two sections of almost equal length. The first thirteen lines are stereotyped in content,<sup>19</sup> beginning with the harangue against Death, moving into a series of antitheses between life and death, and culminating in the statement that he has been responsible for her death (since she 'died' in a ruse undertaken to further their love):

"Ha! fet il, Morz, com es vilainne,  
 Quant tu espargnes et respites  
 Les vix choses et les despites,  
 Celes leiz tu durer et vivre.  
 Morz, tu es forssenee et ivre,  
 Quant m'amie as morte por moi.  
 Ce est mervoille que je voi:  
 M'amie est morte, et je sui vis.  
 Ha! douce amie, vostre amis  
 Por coi vit, et morte vos voit?  
 Or porroit an dire par droit,  
 Quant morte estes par mon servise,  
 Que je vos ai morte et ocise."

6154-66

Wilmotte has drawn a comparison between these lines and part of Pyramus' lament for Tisbé in the French Piramus where the same use of antitheses is found:<sup>20</sup>

C'est torz  
 Quant ele est morte et ne sui morz  
 .....  
 Chetis  
 Quant ele est morte et je sui vis!  
Piramus 737-8; 741-2

(The first two lines quoted here, with the 'torz : morz' rhyme find an echo too in the second half of Cligés' lament, 6167-8 - see below). Cligés is like Pyramus in seeing himself as being the cause of the lady's death:

Ma bele, douce, chiere amie,  
 Par moi pechierre estes perie.  
 Suer chiere,  
 Je vous ai morte qui derriere  
 Ving a mon terme et vous premiere.  
Piramus 763-7

Enide too, in her lament over the supposedly dead Erec, reproaches herself with his death:



Ha! fet ele, dolante Enyde,  
de mon seignor sui omecide.

Erec 4585-6

In Le Roman de Thèbes both Eneas and Turnus berate themselves with being responsible for the deaths of Pallas and Camilla respectively (see page 152-3 above).

After what is, then, a fairly stereotyped first half of the lament, a new departure is marked in the second half. The opening apostrophe of Death is now paralleled at the beginning of the second half by the statement that he, Cligés, has been 'Death' to Fénice:

Amie, don sui je la morz,  
Qui morte vos ai - n'est ce torz?  
6167-8

From this point, the reasoning of Cligés becomes extremely convoluted: in being responsible for her death he has robbed himself of life, since she constituted his life; and by the same token he has retained her life within himself, that is to say, his own being - for did he not mean life to her?

Amie, don sui je la morz,  
Qui morte vos ai - n'est ce torz? -,  
Qui ma vie vos ai tolue,  
Si ai la vostre retenue.  
Dont n'ert ma joie, dolce amie,  
Vostre santez et vostre vie?  
Et don n'estoit vostre la moie?  
Car nule rien fors vos n'amoie,  
Une chose estiens andui.  
Or ai ge fet ce que je dui!  
Car la vostre gart an mon cors,  
Et la moie est del vostre fors,  
Et l'une a l'autre, ou qu'ele fust,  
Conpaignie porter deüst,  
Ne riens nes deüst departir."  
6167-81

Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury sees in the final lines of Cligés' lament a veiled reference to a desire for suicide, ambiguously expressed. She comments further:

l'aspect de l'amant courtois l'emporte nettement, chez Cligés, sur celui de l'amoureux en proie à une passion mortelle. Son discours n'a pas, comme celui d'Enide, la vivacité de l'élan spontané; le raisonnement est subtil, trop subtil pour être beaucoup plus qu'un exercice intellectuel.<sup>21</sup>

In my view the line of reasoning in the second half of the lament is so tortuous, and the realities of the situation have been spelt out in advance so precisely, that the effect is purely parodic. The coup de grâce to Cligés' rhetoric is given, with impeccable timing, by the sigh and whispered words of the lamented Fénice (6183 et seq). Once again in the romance, and in the culminating instance, pathos has been sabotaged. With Tessala's help, the lady who has been the object of so much mourning will be on her feet in a fortnight! (6227-32).

Fénice, as befits her name, has passed through death (symbolised by her entombment) to be reborn as Cligés' lady. Once she has been brought back to health by the good offices of Tessala, the couple's idyll in the secret tower, and later in the garden, can begin. But a relationship lived in isolation from society is clearly not viable in Chrétien's view. Inevitably the outside world breaks in, in the shape of Bertran the hunter (6342 et seq). The couple's union becomes public knowledge. The lovers flee to Arthur's court to seek redress against the wrathful Alis, who wronged Cligés when he married Fénice.<sup>22</sup> But while Arthur prepares to sail to Constantinople with an impressive fleet, word arrives that Alis has died of 'duel' and that the crown is now available for Cligés.

Alis has to be disposed of to bring the romance to a satisfactory conclusion. We have seen that the conveniently-timed death from grief of Soredamors represented the motif whereby female characters might die of grief in response to the death of a male relative. It is less usual for male characters to die of 'duel'. The death of King Marsile in La Chanson de Roland is a rare, though striking instance.<sup>23</sup> Male characters are, however, frequently so stricken with 'duel' that they

are said nearly to lose their wits, e.g.

Son fil vit mort; le sens quide changier  
Raoul 2547

In the case of Alis, the cliché becomes actualised. The messengers tell Cligés:

Morz est (mes vos ne le savez)  
Vostre oncles del duel que il ot,  
Por ce que trover ne vos pot.  
Tel duel ot, que le san chanja;  
Onques ne but ne ne manja,  
Si morut com huem forssenez.

6604-9

Alis goes mad and, as Guenevere will in Le Chevalier de la Charrete when stricken with grief at the news of Lancelot's death (see page 252 below) stops eating and drinking. Such symptoms seem to suggest that he dies of grief, as much as of rage at not being able to find Cligés and take his revenge. Thus what has been true on so many occasions when grief occurs in the course of this romance holds good when the emotion is referred to for the last time: at Chrétien's hands well-worn conventions take on particular and lively significance.

## NOTES

1. See Peter Haidu, Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troves: Irony and Comedy in Cligés and Perceval (87) pp. 82-98 for a discussion of reality and illusion in Cligés.
2. Pages 208-16 of this chapter have appeared as an article in Forum for Modern Language Studies. See Bibliography (114).  
  
Except where otherwise stated, all references to and quotations from Cligés are taken from Alexandre Micha's edition in the CFMA series (11).
3. See pages 144-5 above.
4. Gustav Otto, Der Einfluss des Roman de Thèbes auf die altfranzösische Literatur (134). Otto makes no reference to Cligés 2036-2112.
5. In his article "Chrétien and the Roland" (139) p.146, D.D.R.Owen suggests that in the description of Soredamors in grief is a reminiscence of Aude on hearing of the death of Roland. He compares Cligés 2118

Pert fame morte a la color

with Roland 3720 and 3721

Pert la color, chet as piez Carlemagne  
Sempres est morte, Deus ait mercit de l'anme!

6. Haidu, op.cit., (87) pp.66-8.
7. Along with the examples quoted in chapter two (page 96 above) the following quotations show clearly the association between 'penser' and the concept of grieving:

sovent pense, sovent sospire  
Troie 15007

Piramus est plains de tristour,  
Plains de souspir et plains de plour  
Plains de penser et plains de cure  
Piramus 145-47

8. For a comprehensive review of the criticism forming the Cligés/Tristan debate, see Maddox, "Critical Trends and Recent Work on the Cligés of Chrétien de Troyes" (123) pp.730-45, esp. pp.730-3.

9. Other examples of feigned grief are found in Le Roman de Thèbes 7359-62, 6705-16; Philomena 926-9 (often attributed to Chrétien); Bérout's Tristan, 8, 233-7, 462 (ed. A. Ewert, Oxford, 1939).
  
10.               Entre les lermes et les criz,  
                    Si con tesmoingne li escriz,  
                    Sont venu troi fisicfen  
                    De Salerne, molt ancifen,  
                    Ou longuemant orent esté;  
                    Por le duel se sont aresté,  
                    Si demandent et si anquierent  
                    Don li cri et les lermes ierent,  
                    Por cui s'afolent et confondent.  
  5743-51
  
11. Haidu, op. cit., (87) p.33, note 18.
  
12. D.D.R.Owen, "Profanity and its Purpose in Chrétien's Cligés and Lancelot" (138).
  
13. Marta Powell Harley, "A Note on Chrétien de Troyes' Fénice and Wace's Saint Margaret" (89).
  
14. See Erec 2750 and p.176 above
  
15. Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury, La tentation du suicide dans le roman français du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle (111) p.96.
  
16. Faith Lyons, "La Fausse Mort dans le Cligés de Chrétien de Troyes" (122) p.171.
  
17. Haidu, op. cit., (87) p.98, note 152. Owen (op.cit., (138) p.41) compares the knights who fall asleep guarding Fénice's tomb to the men set to guard Christ's sepulchre, who report that they fell asleep (Matt. 28.13).
  
18. A.G. Van Hamel, "Cligés et Tristan" (169) p.484.
  
19. Referring to this speech, Haidu says: '..the purely formal elements of the complainte ..place Cligés within the category of the other citizens of Constantinople we saw earlier grieving their "dead" mistress. Cligés too was fooled; since he was one of the conspirators, he was fooled, as was Fénice, by backfire.' op. cit., (87) p.99.
  
20. M.Wilmotte, review of E. Faral Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du moyen âge (178), p.110, note 1.

21. Lefay-Toury, op.cit., (111) pp.108-9.
22. The exact nature of Alis' offences under contemporary matrimonial law are discussed by David J. Shirt in his article "Cligés - A Twelfth-Century Matrimonial Case-Book?" (160).
23. Marsile dies on learning of the defeat of Baligant:

Quant l'ot Marsile, vers sa pareit se turnet,  
Pluret des oilz, tute sa chere enbrunchet,  
Morz est de doel, si cum pecchét l'encumbret;  
L'anme de lui as vifs diables dunet. AOI  
Roland 3644-47

## Chapter Six

### LE CHEVALIER DE LA CHARRETE

#### Introduction

Mario Roques, in the introduction to his edition of Le Chevalier de la Charrete, refers to the difficulties of analysis posed by

la multiplicité des épisodes, (et) leur manque de lien  
logique<sup>1</sup>

and even though recent research has done much to elucidate the structure of the poem,<sup>2</sup> it must still be regarded as being more loosely organised than Chrétien's previous romances. Although Lancelot's liberation of the Queen and the prisoners of Logres, and his defeat of Meleagant, are introduced as closely-related facets of the one initial problem, they are concluded at different stages of the action; and although the central love-intrigue receives a certain fulfilment in the coming-together of Lancelot and Guenevere at Bath (4533-736) it fades out somewhat inconclusively in the latter part of the poem.

Coincidentally, in what is, relatively speaking, a loosely episodic work, instances of grief occur in a less patterned way than in Erec (where accounts of Enide's grief are closely tied to the development of the couple's relationship in its various stages) or in Cligés (where the 'fausse mort' of Fénice, with concomitant accounts of mourning, represents perhaps the highest point of interest in the poem). The chief instances of grief depiction in the Charrete - the paired episodes of Guenevere's mistaken grief for Lancelot and Lancelot's mistaken grief for Guenevere - are, however, highly developed, and will provide the bulk of material for discussion in

this chapter. Other more scattered and more briefly delineated instances of grief lend themselves to analysis in quite disparate groupings. Two of these groupings occur in the earlier parts of the poem and will therefore be treated first, before the main section on the role of grief in the portrayal of Lancelot and Guenevere's love. A penultimate section will deal with contrasts of joy and grief, and Lancelot's lament in the part of the work contributed by Godefroi de Leigni will be considered in a brief conclusion.

### The Opening Scene

After the prologue (1-29) the narrative opens with a scene in Arthur's court. A strange knight enters the convivial after-dinner atmosphere and announces to Arthur that he has many of the king's subjects in his power (51-60). The stranger is willing to free the captives if a knight of Arthur's will fight him for possession of Queen Guenevere (70-79). The king is inveigled into giving permission to Kay to take up the challenge, and Kay, the Queen and the stranger ride off (80-221). Gauvain chides Arthur for having let the Queen go to so uncertain a fate and obtains leave to go after her (222-44). Shortly after setting out he falls in with an unnamed knight whom we later know to be Lancelot (268 et seq).

This opening scene can be compared with the opening scene in Erec in that, in both cases, a harmonious situation at Arthur's court is interrupted in an arresting way by an outsider who intrudes upon the prevailing happy atmosphere and gives rise to sorrow. In Erec the hostile dwarf strikes the Queen's maiden, causing her to weep (Erec 179-91). In the Charrete the stranger causes the king to express sadness by his announcement (61-3) and arouses general grief among



those at court and in the Queen herself by taking her away (198, 206-7, 215-17).

The sorrow of Arthur is something of a leit-motif in this scene, expressed in terms of a heavy-heartedness that seems to prevent him from acting, rather than in a more dynamic form of grief. He is saddened on hearing of his captive subjects, but declares himself powerless to help them:

Li rois respont qu'il li estuet  
sofrir, s'amander ne le puet,  
mes molt l'an poise durement

61-3

He is sad when his seneschal Kay incomprehensibly declares that he wants to leave court:

Au roi poise de ce qu'il ot,  
mes, quant respondre mialz li pot,  
si li a dit eneslepas:  
"Est ce a certes ou a gas?"

93-6

When Kay insists that he is determined to go away from the court, the king is 'molt desperé'(114) and begs the Queen to intervene (115-29). Momentarily cheered when the Queen persuades Kay not to quit court ('Li rois de joie an sopira' 168) he is plunged into sadness again when forced to grant to Kay the boon of taking the Queen away to defend her against the stranger, as the latter has requested:

Au roi poise, et si l'an revest,  
car einz de rien ne se desdist,  
mes iriez et dolanz le fist,  
si que bien parut a son volt

180-83

An overwhelming sadness is depicted as his initial response to every hurdle that arises in the course of the scene, and this creates the impression of an impotent king unable to act in the face of any untoward event or situation. The thrice-repeated use of the impersonal verb 'peser' in this context contributes to the impression of impotence by emphasising the passive nature of his response.<sup>3</sup> Each

time it is used it is associated with some other detail strengthening the same idea. In the first instance the phrase 'il li estuet sofrir' receives emphasis through enjambement (61-2 above); in the second instance the words 'quant respondre mialz li pot' (94 above) suggest that initially his emotions prevent him from replying; in the third instance the narrator comments that he is so affected that his sorrow is visible in his face (182-3 above), thus underlining the fact that he is unable to master it. Not a great deal more is seen of Arthur in the romance, and nothing subsequent to the opening scene corrects the initial presentation of him here as an easy prey to a paralysing gloom which allows himself and his queen to be the victims of events. Such a presentation seems to have the effect of preparing the way for the ensuing story of Guenevere's adultery, which appears more acceptable, given the initial depiction of Arthur.

Guenevere herself is grief-stricken at the prospect of the unknown fate awaiting her at the hands of the strange knight if Kay fails to defend her:

La reïne au palefroi vient,  
qui n'estoit braidis ne tiranz;  
mate et dolante et sospiranz,  
monte la reïne..

204-7

Her departure is highlighted by a striking reference to grief among the members of the court. Their reaction is captured by a brief but very telling simile in which nothing less than the spectre of her death is envisaged:

Au departir si grant duel firent  
tuit cil et celes qui l'offrent,<sup>4</sup>  
con s'ele geüst morte an biere.

215-7

Almost as soon as their grief been thus strongly evoked, however, the effect is negated by a sly authorial comment reflecting on the quality of their emotion:

mes a nelui n'an pesa tant  
que del sivre s'antremefst

222-3

For all the 'grant duel' expressed, no-one is willing to go after Guenevere until Gauvain speaks up (226-38). Here we have a minor but piquant instance of something found on a much larger scale in Cligés - the 'undermining' of the conventional grief response by the introduction of irony.

### **The mysterious funeral procession**

After the opening scene there is no portrayal of grief until line 554. Gauvain has been joined in his quest for the queen by the unnamed knight whom we later know to be Lancelot. The pair have spent the night in a castle where Lancelot's sleep has been disconcertingly interrupted by the incident of the Flaming Lance (398-534). The next morning he and Gauvain are at a window surveying the countryside when a strange sight comes into view: a coffin is borne past containing a dead knight and accompanied by three sorrowing maidens, while in its wake comes the queen herself, escorted by a tall knight:

..tant sor la fenestre jurent  
qu'a val les prez, lez la riviere,  
an virent porter une biere;  
s'avoit dedanz un chevalier  
et delez ot grant duel et fier  
que trois dameiseles feisoient.  
Aprés la biere venir voient  
une rote, et devant venoit  
uns granz chevaliers qui menoit  
une bele dame a senestre.  
Li chevaliers de la fenestre  
conut que c'estoit la reïne;  
de l'esgarder onques ne fine

550-62

The significance of the funeral procession for the rest of the story is never clarified. We do not learn either now or later who the

lamented knight is, or the cause of his death. The reason for the queen's presence in the funeral procession is never explained, nor is the identity of the 'granz chevaliers' who leads her. It may be that the dead knight is a reminder of the dangers that Lancelot has so recently escaped in the incident with the Flaming Lance, or indeed that the bier is meant to remind us of the dangers threatening the queen, at whose departure the court grieved

con s'ele geñst morte an biere

217

In any case it seems unlikely that such an emotive sight as a funeral procession has been introduced solely as a device to enable the queen to cross the stage of the narrative at this point, so that Lancelot can glimpse her. In his attempt to throw himself from the window as she disappears from view (565-74) he does demonstrate the force of his passion for her, but although that is important, it could have been engineered without the introduction of the funeral procession. What can be said for the funeral procession is that it contributes, albeit it in a rather enigmatic and somewhat unintegrated fashion, to the climate of sorrow and foreboding introduced in the first scene.

While the funeral procession cannot be very satisfactorily explained in terms of the narrative, its inclusion can perhaps be accounted for, to some extent, if we link it with the incident in Yvain where Yvain witnesses the funeral procession of Laudine's dead husband from a window and is so greatly struck by the sight of the beautiful lady in grief that he has to be restrained by Lunete from going to comfort her (Yvain 1286 et seq). The sight of Guenevere in a funeral cortège also has a significant effect on Lancelot, who gazes on her person as long as he can (560-64) and is so distressed at losing sight of her that only the intervention of Gauvain prevents him from throwing himself from the window (565-74). Of course there are

salient differences between the two scenes: there is no suggestion that Lancelot is seeing Guenevere for the first time, as Yvain is Laudine; Guenevere is not herself depicted in grief; and the scale of the scene is much greater in Yvain. Since, however, it is widely acknowledged that the Charrete and Yvain were written concurrently,<sup>5</sup> it seems not improbable that Chrétien would have had one scene in his mind when he wrote the other. In the light of Shirt's view that the first two thousand lines of Yvain were composed before Le Chevalier de la Charrete was begun,<sup>6</sup> the episode involving the funeral cortège witnessed by Lancelot may be seen as owing something to the funeral scene witnessed by Yvain, suggesting that Chrétien was pleased with the memorable situation he had managed to create shortly before leaving off writing Yvain, and decided to re-use it in the Charrete (unwisely perhaps, in view of its apparent lack of raison d'être here).

### **The Role of Grief in the Depiction of Lancelot's and Guenevere's Love.**

Grief plays an important part in the overall depiction of the relationship between Lancelot and Guenevere, particularly in the portrayal of Lancelot's feelings towards the queen. His love for Guenevere is early indicated, indirectly, through the grief he experiences in an encounter with an amorous maiden, who offers him shelter on condition that he share her bed (931-45). Many a knight would have been delighted at the prospect (946-47) but for Lancelot, who is in love with another woman, the very act of acceptance is accompanied by grief - and how much more sorrowful will it be for him, says Chrétien, actually to carry out the acceptance and share the

maiden's bed! -

Et cil, des que il ne puet mialz,  
l'otroie si com ele vialt;  
de l'otroier li cuers li dialt,  
quant itant seulemant le blesce,  
molt avra au couchier tristece;  
956-60

While his sorrowfulness here is understandable in terms of his having to act unfaithfully to his love, elsewhere grief is a direct expression of his love-lorn state prior to his first encounter with Guenevere in the romance. The contemplativeness which leads him to ride his horse into a ford while thinking of Guenevere (710-56) is denoted by the repetition of the verb 'penser' (711, 714, 723, 737, 745, 753) and while we might expect a fin amant to be contemplative,<sup>7</sup> 'penser', as we have seen, has marked connotations of sorrowfulness.<sup>8</sup> Later, when he finds the comb with some strands of hair in it, and learns from the maiden accompanying him that it belongs to Guenevere, he is so filled with grief ('il avoit au cuer tel dolor' - 1435) that he loses speech and colour, while almost fainting from his horse:

Quant cil l'ot, n'a tant de vertu  
que tot nel coveigne ploier:  
par force l'estut apoier  
devant a l'arçon de la sele.  
Et quant ce vit la dameisele,  
si s'an mervoille et esbafst,  
qu'ele cuida que il chefst;  
s'ele ot peor, ne l'en blasmez,  
qu'ele cuida qu'il fust pasmez.  
Si ert il, autant se valoit,  
molt po de chose s'an failloit,  
qu'il avoit au cuer tel dolor  
que la parole et la color  
ot une grant piece perdue.

1424-37

Fainting from grief while on horseback is a reaction represented in the epic tradition -

A icest mot sur sun cheval se pasmet  
Roland 1988

Li quens se pasme sor le col dou destrier  
Aliscans 1567 -

but Chrétien avoids the stereotyped in favour of an expanded and more realistic account - Lancelot does not actually faint, although it looks to the maiden as though he has fainted as he leans for support over the front of his saddle. In dismounting and running forward to help him, she seems to fulfil the conventional role of the companion(s) going to the aid of the character stricken with grief:<sup>9</sup>

Et la pucele est descendue,  
et si cort quan qu'ele pot corre  
por lui retenir et secorre,  
qu'ele ne le volsist veoir,  
por rien nule, a terre cheoir.

1438-42

However even that simple conventional feature is not employed by Chrétien without a characteristic twist, since she sees his embarrassment and pretends that she has got down merely to pick up the comb (1443-56).

When Lancelot succeeds in finding the queen and ensures her liberty by winning a combat against Meleagant, she treats him arrogantly, and his love is betokened once more by submissive grief (though mastered with dignity):

Ez vos Lancelot trespansé,  
se li respont molt belemant  
a meniere de fin amant:  
"Dame, certes, ce poise moi,  
ne je n'os demander por coi."

3960-4

As she sweeps off into another room his heart follows her (3970-78) but his eyes remain

plain de lermes, avoec le cors

3980

Stereotyped portrayals of weeping such as those which trace the course of the tears are eschewed here in favour of the courtly conceit of the separation of heart from body, into which the reference to his tears is subsumed.

Although this instance of Lancelot's grief is understandable in terms of the queen's rebuff, earlier the state of being in love per se is accompanied for him by grief and melancholy, and this cannot be accounted for in terms of his being a hopeless aspirant to an unobtainable lady, since he and Guenevere may be deemed to be enjoying some measure of mutual understanding when the poem begins.<sup>10</sup> Rather, reactions of grief seem to be symptoms which Chrétien has chosen to highlight from among the many pathological ones which form part of the convention of love-sickness attested to in earlier texts<sup>11</sup> and which ultimately have their source in Ovid. It is clear too that all but one of the instances in which Lancelot is depicted in grief or in a state of melancholy - his acceptance of the amorous maiden's stipulation that he share her bed, his riding into the ford, his finding the comb - have an element of humour in them. The one exception is the instance of his grief at the queen's rebuff, but though that is hardly humorous, nevertheless it is depicted with more elegance than pathos. All this being so, it is necessary to broach the question of irony and its role in the depiction of grief in the Charrete, since, in these scattered instances at least, it is clear there is an element of detachment in its portrayal. An important test may be sought in the lengthy depictions of the grief experienced in turn by Guenevere and Lancelot at the news of the other's death, which are the only long monologues in the part of the poem composed by Chrétien, and the most striking expressions of grief in it.



## **The Mistaken Grief of Guenevere and Lancelot at the false news of each other's death**

On leaving Bademagu's court after Guenevere's unfriendly reception, Lancelot falls into enemy hands and rumour reaches the court that he has been killed. This rumour plunges the formerly haughty Guenevere into grief (4157-247).

Chrétien specifies that the queen is at table when the bad news reaches her, and this little circumstantial detail enables us quickly to visualise the scene:

Ceste novele par tot vait,  
a la reïne fu retrait,  
qui au mangier estoit assise;  
a po qu'ele ne s'est ocise  
maintenant que de Lancelot  
la mançonge et la novele ot.

4157-62

Her reaction is instant; the rhyming of the disparate words 'assise' and 'ocise' (4159-60) suggests the violent suddenness with which grief comes over her as she is sitting calmly at her meal. But for all her distress, Guenevere cannot afford to make a public display of her emotions. Like the discreet Soredamors at the news of the supposed death of Alexander (Cligés 2084-92) she conceals her true feelings from the public gaze, and for the benefit of the gallery she offers an elegant little speech of circumspect regret:

et tant durement s'en esmaie  
qu'a po la parole n'an pert;  
mes por les genz dit en apert:  
"Molt me poise, voir, de sa mort;  
et s'il m'an poise, n'ai pas tort;  
qu'il vint an cest pafs por moi,  
por ce pesance avoir an doi."

4164-70

The dignified 'voir', slowing up the opening line (4167), and the cool logic with which the speaker accounts for her regret (4168-70) contribute to the measured tone of the little speech, while the use of 'poise' and 'pesance' in this context (4167, 4168, 4170) again

suggests a passive, accepting form of grief.<sup>12</sup>

Guenevere's true feelings, to which she now privately gives vent, are in violent contrast, however, to those measured ones she has expressed in public. She declares inwardly that, if the news is true, she will eschew food and drink. She leaves the table, and clutches at her throat in a frenzy of suicidal despair:

Puis dit a li meisme an bas,  
por ce que l'en ne l'ofst pas,  
que de boivre ne de mangier  
ne la covient ja mes proier  
se ce est voirs que cil morz soit,  
por la cui vie ele vivoit.  
Tantost se lieve molt dolante  
de la table, si se demante,  
si que nus ne l'ot ne escoute.  
De li ocirre est si estoute  
que sovant se prant a la gole.

4171-81

In this description, Chrétien conveys the queen's grief with little recourse to the conventional motifs of grief depiction. Each element is distinctive in the context - the murmured vow not to eat or drink if the news be true (4171-6), the leaving of the table (suggesting her sad rejection of normal pleasures) (4177-8) and her repeated clutching at her throat as if to kill herself (4180-1), which may be thought of as a more significant alternative to the stereotyped action of breast-beating. With her sorrow comes remorse, highlighted by the use of Christian terminology, though, in the context of her unlawful love, devoid of Christian significance:<sup>13</sup>

mes ainz se confesse a li sole,  
si se repant et bat sa colpe,  
et molt se blasme, et molt s'ancelpe,  
del pechié qu'ele fet avoit  
vers celui don ele savoit  
qui suens avoit esté toz diz,  
et fust ancor, se il fust vis.

4182-8

At this point, along with the other rather unconventional elements in the depiction of her grief, an unusual transition is made from her immediate reactions to what must be the longer-term effects - the

eventual changes in her complexion wrought by her fasting and wakefulness:

Tel duel a de sa cruauté  
que molt an pert de sa biauté.  
Sa cruauté, sa felenie,  
la fet molt tainte et molt nergie,  
et ce qu'ele voille et geüne;  
4189-93

A vision of her misdeeds provides the immediate context for a long lament:

toz ses mesfez ansamble aüne,  
Et tuit li reviennent devant;  
Toz les recorde, et dit sovant:  
"Ha! lassel!...

4194-7

She begins by regretting her haughty treatment of Lancelot at their last meeting, castigating her behaviour not simply as folly but as wickedness and cruelty:

"Ha! lassel! De coi me souvint,  
quant mes amis devant moi vint,  
que je nel deignai conjoïr  
ne ne le vos onques ofr!  
Quant mon esgart et ma parole  
li veai, ne fis je que fole?  
Que fole? Ainz fis, si m'aïst Dex,  
que felenesse et que cruex;"

4197-204

Guenevere holds herself responsible for Lancelot's death:

Quant il vint devant moi riant  
et cuida que je li fêisse  
grant joie, et que je le veïsse,  
et onques veoir ne le vos,  
ne li fu donc mortex cos?  
Quant ma parole li veai,  
tantost, ce cuit, le dessevrai  
del cuer et de la vie ansamble.  
Cil dui cop l'ont mort, ce me sanble;  
ne l'ont mort autre Breibançon.

4210-219

She can see no means of exoneration for what she has done:

Et Dex! Avrai ge reançon  
de cest murtre, de cest pechié?  
Nenil voir, ainz seront sechié  
tuit li flueve, et la mers tarie!

4220-3

The passionate and sensuous nature of her feelings is conveyed in her wish that they might have lain naked together in one another's arms just once before his death:

Ha! lasse! Con fusse garie  
et com me fust granz reconforz  
se une foiz, ainz qu'il fust morz,  
l'eüsse antre mes braz tenu.  
Comant? Certes, tot nu a nu,  
por ce que plus an fusse a eise  
4224-9

Since - as she imagines - he is dead through her fault, logic requires that she should kill herself too:

Quant il est morz, molt sui malveise,  
que je ne faz tant que je muire.  
4230-1

But the expression of this idea is not even given the benefit of a complete couplet, as she moves immediately into the argument that by living on in grief for Lancelot, she is doing him no harm:

Don ne me doit ma vie\* nuire,           (\*=Lancelot)  
se je sui vive après sa mort,  
quant je a rien ne me deport  
s'es max non, que je trai por lui?  
4232-35

Not only would Lancelot not be harmed, but, she declares (evoking the ultimately unanswerable argument commonly brought into play following the death of a loved one) he would have wanted it that way!<sup>14</sup>

Quant après sa mort m'i dedui,  
certes molt fust dolz a sa vie  
li max don j'ai grant anvie.  
4236-38

Now, in complete contrast to her previous statement that it would be wrong for her not to seek death -

Quant il est morz, molt sui malveise,  
que je ne faz tant que je muire  
4230-1           -

she roundly declares that to desire death in these circumstances is wrong:

Malveise est qui mialz vialt morir,  
que mal por son ami sofrir.  
4239-40

Her lament ends with nothing less than an admission that indulgence in grief is a pleasure for her:

Mes certes, il m'est molt plaisant  
que j'en aille vivre et sofrir les cos  
que morir et estre an repos.

4241-4

It has been clear from Erec and Cligés that Chrétien rarely inserts depictions of grief simply as lyrical embellishments or pathetic interludes, but that they usually form an integral part of the total work. Even ostensibly, Guenevere's grief is important because it reveals both to the audience and to herself something which has hitherto been unknown, that is, the true nature of her feelings towards him. So far, all we have seen of her attitude to Lancelot has been in her cruel rebuff of him. Yet paradoxically the contrast between her haughtiness towards him at their meeting and the outpourings she now utters at his presumed death are more apparent than real. There is, in fact, no deep discrepancy between the two sets of reactions since it is clear that her grief-stricken outburst betokens the same selfish, even fickle spirit as did her haughtiness. The self-interested nature of her grief on believing Lancelot to be dead is particularly apparent if compared with the grief of Enide for the supposedly dead Erec.<sup>15</sup> In both laments the sorrowful lady declares herself responsible for the knight's death:

de mon seignor sui omecide Erec 4586

Nus fors moi ne li a doné  
le mortel cop, mien escfant Charrete 4208-9

Enide holds herself responsible because in her folly she spoke the fatal 'parole' of criticism:

ancor fust or mes sires vis,  
se ge, come outrageuse et fole,  
n'eüsse dite la parole  
por coi mes sires ça s'esmut

Erec 4588-91

Guenevere similarly accuses herself of folly because she withheld the 'parole' of welcome and gratitude:

Quant mon esgart et ma parole  
li veai, ne fis je que fole?  
4201-2

In spite of elements of correspondence, however, the two laments reveal very different attitudes. Guenevere, unlike Enide (Erec 4599-605), speaks no words of eulogy over her dead knight. In Enide's lament remorse is of a consistently unambiguous quality, but Guenevere's remorse is, before long, modified to regret that she and Lancelot had never had the opportunity to consummate their love before his death (4224-49). Diverres suggests that this regret may be an expression of her awareness of her shortcomings as a dompna, because

According to the conventions of fin'amors, Lancelot should have been rewarded for his services, since a dompna's duty was to encourage her lover by gradually bestowing her favours on him.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, the emphasis in these lines is on the consolation that this would have afforded her now in her conscience-stricken state, rather than on the inherent rightness of such an act, or what it would have meant to him:

Ha! lasse! Con fusse garie  
et com me fust granz reconforz  
se une foiz, ainz qu'il fust morz,  
l'eüsse antre mes bras tenu.  
Comant? Certes, tot nu a nu,  
por ce que plus an fusse a eise.  
4224-9

As in Enide's case, the thought that she should forfeit her own life does occur to Guenevere, and the desire for suicide is indeed manifested in her first frenzied reactions to news of Lancelot's death, but whereas Enide actually prepares to commit suicide with Erec's sword -

("moi meismes estuet que praigne  
la vengence de mon forfait"  
Erec 4622-3)

- and is only prevented from doing so by the sudden intervention of the count of Limors, Guenevere's initial suicidal frenzy is transmuted into a more rationalising consideration of the idea of suicide (4239-40) in which she convinces herself that it will be more of a punishment for her to live on, grieving, than to die. The comparison with Enide's selfless grief underlines the egocentric nature of Guenevere's. Her egocentricity is confirmed later by her gratification when she learns that Lancelot is not dead, but that he has tried to kill himself out of grief for her (4433).

Other aspects of Guenevere's lament combine to strengthen the ambiguity of effect. One important aspect is that the audience, knowing that Lancelot is not dead, is able to view her grief with extreme detachment. Moreover, as Lefay-Toury has pointed out, by imagining that her haughtiness has killed him (4210-9), Guenevere renders herself somewhat ridiculous, since the audience saw that Lancelot had accepted her haughty treatment of him sadly but readily (3960-4, see page 249 above) with no thought of suicide.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the shift of intent between her own near-suicidal frenzy on hearing news of his death -

de li ocirre est si estoute  
que sovant se prant a la gole  
4180-1 -

and her decision, reached by the end of her lament, that it would be better, after all, to remain alive, produces a effect of bathos. Nor does the irony end with the queen's lament. By means of a transparently mechanical plot-device - her failure to eat for two days causes people to think that she has died (4245-7) - the episode of Lancelot's mistaken grief for her is introduced. Is not the fact that both characters expend themselves needlessly on grief for each other, and that the two episodes occur side by side and interlock so very

neatly, a further invitation to view their grief as being rather ridiculous? An element of playfulness can surely be detected in the manner in which Chrétien introduces yet another full-dress depiction of grief (Lancelot's for Guenevere) so hard on the heels of the first (Guenevere's for Lancelot):

Por voir, il fu si adolez,  
s'oïr, et savoir le volez,  
que sa vie en ot an despit:  
ocirre se volt sanz respit,  
mes ainçois fist une complainte.

4255-9

Line 4256, 's'oïr, et savoir le volez', while it may be accepted as mere padding for the sake of the rhyme, may more interestingly be seen as a knowing aside to the audience - 'Whether you like it or not, you are going to be regaled with another embellished description of grief!' The idea is reinforced in 4258-9: no matter how urgent Lancelot's desire for death ('ocirre se volt sanz respit'), a parting complainte is nevertheless artistically de rigueur ('mes ainçois fist une complainte').

Guenevere's grief for Lancelot and his for her initially exhibit a certain structural parallelism:

(G) De li ocirre est si estoute  
que sovant se prant a la gole;  
mes ainz se confesse a li sole  
4180-2

(L) ocirre se volt sanz respit,  
mes ainçois fist une complainte  
4258-9

but, beyond that, his attitude contrasts strikingly with hers. Whereas she gave expression to the idea of suicide only two-thirds of the way through her lament and immediately drew back from the idea, Lancelot acts on the idea before even his lament begins:

ocirre se volt sanz respit,  
mes ainçois fist une complainte.  
D'une ceinture qu'il ot ceinte  
noe un des chiés au laz corrant,  
et dit a lui seul an plorant:



"Ha! Morz! Com m'as or agueitié  
 que tot sain me fez desheitié!  
 Desheítiez sui, ne mal ne sant  
 fors del duel qu'au cuer me descent.  
 Cist diax est max, voire mortex.  
 Ce voel je bien qu'il soit tex  
 et, se Deu plest, je an morrai."

4258-69

The apostrophe of Death introduced here is in one sense a commonplace. Chrétien used it in Erec and in Cligés. And yet its inclusion is an indication of the authenticity of Lancelot's reactions, since it is the traditional expression of extreme grief at the loss of a loved one,<sup>18</sup> and one that Guenevere, significantly, does not use. Since Death has robbed him of the queen, he is convinced that grief will kill him 'se Deu plest' (4269). But this pious proviso is no sooner uttered than it is brushed aside: no matter what God's will, he will take the situation - literally - into his own hands. (Thus Lancelot is prepared to fly in the face of God because of his love for Guenevere, whereas she was concerned to satisfy her conscience by arguing the 'rightness' of her decision to remain alive):

Comant? N'autremant ne porrai  
 morir, se Damedeu ne plest?  
 Si ferai, mes que il me lest  
 cest laz antor ma gole estraindre,  
 ensi cuít bien la mort destraindre  
 tant que mal gré suen m'ocirrai.  
 Comant? N'autremant n'en porrai..  
 Se cez non qui de li n'ont cure  
 ne vialt venir, mes ma ceinture  
 la m'amanra trestote prise,  
 et des qu'ele iert an ma justise,  
 donc fera ele mon talant.  
 Voire, mes trop vanra a lant,  
 tant sui desirranz que je l'aie.

4270-83

The natural, unrhetorical mode of development in this speech after the opening couplet (4263-4) has been commented on by Lefay-Toury.<sup>19</sup> The main linking device is simple association of ideas, and his thoughts move in an apparently linear fashion towards the notion of the accomplishment of his death.

Lancelot's suicide is not to be by the sword like Enide's, or the suicides of Piramus and Tisbé in the highly dramatic dénouement of the Ovidian tale which bears some resemblance to this part of Le Chevalier de la Charrete, but by the much more expeditious and less dignified method of hanging himself from his horse by his own belt, a process which Chrétien describes in some detail:

Lors ne demore ne delaie,  
 einz met le laz antor sa teste  
 tant qu'antor le col li areste;  
 et por ce que il mal se face  
 le chief de la ceinture lace  
 a l'arçon de sa sele estroit,  
 ensi que nus ne l'aparçoit;  
 puis se let vers terre cliner,  
 si se vost feire traïner  
 a son cheval, tant qu'il estraigne.  
 4284-93

His companions - for he has managed this feat while riding along in the company of others - see him fall and come to his rescue, thinking that he has fainted:

Quant a terre cheü le voient  
 cil qui avoec lui chevalchoient  
 si cuident que pasmez se soit,  
 que nus del laz ne s'aparçoit  
 qu'antor son col avoit lacié.  
 Tot maintenant l'ont redrecié,  
 sel relievant antre lor braz  
 4295-301

As in the incident when he almost fainted at the sight of the golden hairs, an epic motif is clearly discernible behind this situation. In epic, the hero, fallen in a faint through grief, may be helped up by his companions, e.g:

De la dolor ciet a terre pasmés.  
 Si compaignon l'en ont amont levé.  
Moniage Guillaume (II) 3589-90

.ii. foiz se pasme sor le mabrin dégradé  
 Quant le barnage le corut relever  
Prise d'Orange 1701-4

But in the epic the simplicity of the action produced a sublime effect whereas the complications of Lancelot's situation result in bathos.

Saved from death by his companions, Lancelot merely redoubles his grief, which he expresses in a second lament (4318-96). In a renewed apostrophe of Death, he berates it for allowing him to outlive his lady (4318-21). Ever humble and devoid of self-assertion, he confesses that his misfortunes are well-deserved: as a true lover he should have sought death the moment that Guenevere rejected him, since, to have merited the disdain that she showed him at their meeting, he must have been guilty of some dreadful thing, even though he does not know what it was, and would have sought to make reparation for it if he had (4330-41).

Thus the theme of remorse for past behaviour is common to the laments of both Guenevere and Lancelot, but rather than providing a parallel, it strengthens the contrast between the two characters. Guenevere, it is true, was full of regret at having been unkind to Lancelot at their meeting, but seems sorry for herself rather than for him. Lancelot's remorse, following his harangue against death for not allowing him to kill himself, is more sustained and, initially at least, quite unambiguous. Interestingly, however, a significant change takes place at line 4347, approximately half-way through the speech, where he begins to question what his fault in Guenevere's eyes might have been:

Dex, cist forfez, quex estre pot?

Assuming that it was because he got into the cart, he argues to himself that it was an act done for love; anyone who would blame him for it must never have known what it is to love:

Onques Amors bien ne conut  
qui ce me torna a reproche;  
qu'an ne porroit dire de boche  
riens qui de par Amors venist,  
qui a reproche apartenist.

4354-8

This is nothing less than an implicit criticism of Guenevere herself. While he does not directly rail against her, his complaint against all those who misjudge deeds done for love is clearly applicable to her:

...tex est la costume  
a cez qui d'amor rien ne sevent  
et qui enor en honte levent:  
mes qui enor an honte moille  
ne la leve pas, einz la soille.  
Or sont cil d'Amors non sachant  
qui ensi les vont despisant  
4384-90

It really looks as if, in the course of this speech, Lancelot is on the way to adopting a more critical stance towards Guenevere, though, as she herself is soon to reveal, he has wrongly interpreted her attitude to his getting into the cart. Indeed, Chrétien makes a convenient and economic use of this speech (Lancelot's second lament) to remind us of the episode of the cart and prepare us for the discussion about it that will shortly ensue between Lancelot and Guenevere (4472-89). This use of the speech is further indication of the fact that Chrétien does not conceive of the lament-form as a purely rhetorical tour de force, hermetically sealed-off from the rest of the work, even though the lament framework is maintained in a conventional form at the end of the speech, with the idea of his grief being duplicated by that of his retainers:

Ensi Lancelot se demante,  
et sa genz lez lui dolante  
qui le gardent et qui le tiennent.  
4397-9

Another mechanical ploy, even more transparent than the one that brought Lancelot's grief about, is employed to dispel his mistaken belief that Guenevere has died, and any tentative criticism of her behaviour towards him is forgotten in his joy at the news he receives:

Et antre tant noveles viennent  
que la reïne n'est pas morte.  
Tantost Lanceloz se conforte,  
et s'il avoit fet de sa mort,  
devant, grant duel, et fier, et fort,  
encore fu bien .c.<sup>m</sup>. tanz  
la joie de sa vie granz.

4400-6

What is the effect of this very abrupt transition from grief to joy and the way in which it is brought about? Like Guenevere's grief, Lancelot's has been attached to the action of the poem by the most slender narrative strand. Each believed the other had died on the tenuous evidence of 'novele' (4157, 4250). Lancelot is now equally ready to believe the same dubious source, when it tells him the exact opposite. We know Chrétien to be too sophisticated and resourceful an artist for this facile device of transition to be anything but deliberate. The result is a distinct sense of anti-climax that so much anguish has been so easily reversed. The depiction of Lancelot's grief, then, is undermined not only at the beginning of the episode by the fact that we know it is mistaken, but at the end, by the fact that Lancelot is so deftly cheered up. Clearly we are being invited to share Chrétien's detached attitude to Lancelot's grief, as we were to Guenevere's. There is an ironic effect too in the brevity with which his reaction to the true situation is depicted. Although his erroneous grief was portrayed in detail in well over one hundred lines, the description of his joy at the truth is more quickly despatched - in five lines (see 4402-6 above). Such brevity is hardly proportionate to a joy which, according to Chrétien, is one hundred thousand times greater than the foregoing grief (4405). Both the joy and the grief are thus devalued. Similarly, Guenevere's joy on learning that Lancelot is alive is couched in very restrained terms - indeed, there is no direct expression of joy at all in what she says to Bademagu, who gives her the news:

Et ele li respont: "Biax sire,  
quant vos le dites, bien le croi;  
mes s'il fust morz, bien vos otroi,  
que je ne fusse ja mes liee.  
Trop me fust ma joie estrangiee,  
s'uns chevaliers an mon service  
eüst mort receüe et prise."

4416-22

Here, to be sure, the need for discretion justifies the brevity and moderation of her public reaction, as the need for discretion earlier necessitated a brief and moderate public expression of grief. But the lengthy description of her private torment is no more matched by a comparable portrayal of her private joy than Lancelot's was. Chrétien remarks merely that she was particularly pleased when she learns that Lancelot had tried to kill himself out of grief for her:

Ele an est liee et sel croit bien

4433

The immediate impression gained from this line is that she receives selfish and thoroughly unworthy gratification at the news of Lancelot's attempted suicide, and this impression is scarcely counterbalanced by the following statement that she would not have wanted any great misfortune to have overtaken him:

mes nel volsist por nule rien,  
que trop li fust mesavenu

4434-5

Of course she would not have wanted ill to befall Lancelot, for then she would have been deprived of the submissive and admiring devotion on which she thrives, like the self-assertive dompna she has been shown to be; and the depiction of Guenevere in grief has made an important contribution to her overall characterization, strengthening the impression of her that we receive from other parts of the work.

Joy and grief are again juxtaposed in the lyrical portrayal of the night of love which Lancelot and Guenevere spend at Bath. Here the joy of love is placed in contrast to the grief of parting:

..il lor avint sanz mantir  
 une joie et une mervoille  
 tel c'onques ancor sa paroille  
 ne fu oïe ne s'eïe;  
 mes toz jorz iert par moi t'eïe,  
 qu'an conte ne doit estre dite.  
 Des joies fu la plus eslite  
 et la plus delitable cele  
 que li contes nos test et cele.  
 Molt ot joie et de deduit  
 Lanceloz, tote cele nuit.  
 Mes li jorz vient qui molt li grieve,  
 quant de lez s'amie se lieve.  
 Au lever fu il droiz martirs,  
 tant li fu griés li departirs,  
 car il i suefre grant martire.  
 4676-91

The repetition of 'joie' is more than counterbalanced by the use of the term 'martirs' to denote the strength of Lancelot's suffering at the moment of parting. The image of the separation of heart and body echoes a similar dichotomy made in the description of the previous parting, after Guenevere's rebuff. Notably it is Lancelot's grief that is described on each occasion of parting, rather than the queen's, and the emphasis too is on his joy (4685-6). Such a presentation concurs with Chrétien's slightly earlier statement that, though the queen loves Lancelot, his love for her is one hundred thousand times greater:

et s'ele a lui grant amor ot  
 et il c. mile tanz a li  
 4662-3

As was remarked at the beginning of this chapter, the occurrence of grief in the Charrete has nothing like the sign-posting role it has in Erec, nor is it so closely bound up with the central focus of the romance, as in Cligés and the 'fausse mort' episode. (Indeed, one criticism of the Charrete could well be that it lacks a central focus). The longest depictions of grief - those of Guenevere's and Lancelot's mistaken grief for each other - are more purely episodic, and it seems more evident here than in the other two romances that, in

including these scenes of lamentation, Chrétien was seeking to provide variation of tone in what, since Alexis and the epics, was a time-honoured way. But he was too intellectual an author to provide pathos for its own sake alone, and the grief of Guenevere and Lancelot provides ironic and, at times indeed, entertaining insights into their characters.

### **Contrasts of Joy and Grief in Le Chevalier de la Charrete**

The representation of joy has been referred to in this chapter where this has been relevant to the discussion of grief-portrayal in the love intrigue. More generally speaking, and in common with all but one of the texts I have examined so far (Erec being the very notable exception), Le Chevalier de la Charrete does not contain any depictions of joyfulness to match the scale of its grief-depictions, and when joy is depicted it is nearly always contrasted to or juxtaposed with its opposite emotion, a simple rhetorical device which throws each into clearer relief. Apart from the instances of grief which have been referred to so far, virtually all the remaining references to grief in the Charrete (with the important exception of Lancelot's lament from the tower in the Godefroi de Leigni section)<sup>20</sup> occur in the context of a joy/grief antithesis.

A topos which occurred in epic and which was represented in the romans d'antiquité too was that of 'the joy of the victors, the grief of the defeated'. A typical straightforward example of this from Le Roman de Troie is

Cil de Grece ont joie e baudor,  
E Trofen ire e dolor

Troie 18821-2



Chrétien uses the same topos several times in Cligés, e.g.

S'an vont fuiant, dolant et morne,  
E Cligés a joie retourne  
Cligés 2915-6

There are two rather more elaborated examples of this feature in the Charrete, linked by their connection to Lancelot's first combat with Meleagant. In the first instance Lancelot is losing the combat because he is too taken up with looking at Guenevere, and Meleagant and his men are exulting in what they expect to be their victory:

si est\* molt liez con cil qui panse \*Meleagant  
c'or n'ait ja mes vers lui desfanse;  
s'an sont cil del païs molt lié,  
et li estrange si irié  
qu'il ne se pueent sostenir,  
einz an i estut mainz venir  
jusqu'a terre toz esperduz,  
ou as genolz, ou estanduz;  
einz molt joie et duel i a.  
3681-9

The tables are turned, however, when Lancelot recovers his prowess and defeats Meleagant, and the end of the combat section is signalled by a similar play on the joy/grief antithesis, but with the joy and grief differently distributed:

Asez ot la, et joie et ire,  
que cil qui sont desprisoné  
sont tuit a joie abandoné;  
mes Melfaganz et li suen  
n'ont nule chose de lor buen,  
einz sont pansif et mat et morne.  
3918-23

Thus Chrétien adopts a well-worn topos but refreshes it by nimble manipulation.

In a cluster of instances, single characters are depicted as having reason for grief and joy together. The first such instance is a particularly interesting one, since it involves Guenevere having to put on a public face of both joy and grief, for Gauvain's safe return and Lancelot's capture by Meleagant respectively:

N'est pas la novele cortoise  
 qui la reïne cest duel porte;  
 neporquant ele se deporte  
 au plus belemant qu'ele puet.  
 Por mon seignor Gauvain l'estuet  
 auques esjoir, si fet ele.  
 Et neporquant mie ne cele  
 son duel, que auques n'i apeire.  
 5190-7

Here indeed, in the last two lines quoted, is a tortuous variation on the theme of concealed grief! In order not to arouse suspicion, she has got to give acceptable public expression to the deep grief for Lancelot which she truly and intimately feels, while having to feign great joy for Gauvain's return. Her position is encapsulated in the last four lines of the description (5198-201). Here the emotions she must show to the world are denoted by the most basic expressions, 'joie / duel feire':

Et joie et duel li estuet feire:  
 5198

By contrast, her true personal grief and the extent of her feigning of joy for Gauvain are each denoted in less stereotyped fashion:

por Lancelot a le cuer vain,  
 et contre mon seignor Gauvain  
 mostre sanblant de passejoie.  
 5199-201

Those around her do not have the same problem: they grieve spontaneously for Lancelot:

N'i a nul qui la novele oie  
 ne soit dolanz et esperduz,  
 de Lancelot qui est perduz.  
 5202-4

while King Bademagu simply lets his grief for Lancelot overcome his joy for Gauvain:

De mon seignor Gauvain eüst  
 li rois joie, et molt li pleüst  
 sa venue et sa conuissance;  
 mes tel duel a, et tel pesance,  
 de Lancelot qui est traiz,  
 que maz en est et esbaiz.  
 5205-10

Arthur, making his first appearance since the beginning of the romance, is also sad at the news of Lancelot's imprisonment, but his sorrow for Lancelot is dispelled by the return of his queen:

Ceste chose le roi desplest  
et molt l'an poise, et molt l'an grieve,  
mes joie le cuer li sozlieve  
qu'il a si grant de la reïne,  
que li diax por la joie fine.

5352-6

The way in which the conflicting emotions of these two characters resolve themselves in so straightforward a manner - Bademagu's joy giving way to grief and Arthur's grief dispelled by joy - provides a vivid contrast with Guenevere's reactions. At the same time the problematic nature of her situation, thus illustrated, reflects ironically on the depiction of Arthur's reactions, reminding us that the knight over whose imprisonment he grieves has cuckolded him, and the queen at whose return he rejoices has been unfaithful to him. Thus we see that in these instances Chrétien has used the conventional joy/grief contrast, yet again, in a particularly original, if somewhat convoluted way.

Godefroi de Leigni tells us that he finished off the romance with Chrétien's consent ('par le boen gré/ Chrestien' - 7106-7), so we must assume that Chrétien approved of, and perhaps even gave instructions for, the ending. Lancelot and the queen are never pictured alone together after the night of love. Indeed, according to a suggestion by Diverres, it is possible to maintain that Lancelot transfers his affections to the maiden who helped him escape from the tower.<sup>21</sup> In the nature of things there can be no satisfactory resolution of the relationship between the two principal characters, since Arthur cannot conveniently be disposed of at the end of the romance as Alis was in

Cligés to make possible the marriage of Cligés and Fénice. So inevitably the end of the romance lacks éclat. True, there is joy at the court at the final return of Lancelot and his defeat of Meleagant, but Godefroi's description of the joyfulness on these occasions is nothing like as splendid as Chrétien's description of the Joie de la Cort in Erec and of Erec and Enide's coronation, nor is it appropriate that it should be. The return of Lancelot to Arthur's court is depicted, briefly, as an occasion for joyfulness. Here Godefroi's use of the joy/grief antithesis is competent but unremarkable:

s'an font grant joie tuit ansamble  
et por lui festoier s'asanble  
la corz, qui lonc tans l'a bahé.  
N'i a nul tant de grant ahé  
ou de petit, joie n'an face.  
Joie depiece et si efface  
la dolor, qui ençois i ert;  
li diaus s'an fuit, si i apert  
joie, qui forment les rapele.

6811-9

The queen is also attributed with joy at Lancelot's definitive return, but as usual discretion wins the day and she conceals her joy in the hope that they will soon be alone together (6820-53). Apart from a short epilogue the romance ends with the defeat of Meleagant and what can only be termed a scant reference to the joy that this produces:

Li rois et tuit cil qui i sont  
grant joie an demainnent et font.  
Lancelot desarment adonques  
cil qui plus lié an furent onques,  
si l'en ont mené a grant joie.

7093-7

Thus no particularly striking balance is created between the gloom and grief of the opening, when the problem first made itself felt, and the atmosphere which prevails when it is resolved.

### The lament by Godefroi de Leigni

Within Le Chevalier de la Charrete it is possible to throw into relief Chrétien's lively and original methods of grief depiction by briefly examining the one long lament which Godefroi de Leigni places in the mouth of Lancelot when the latter is imprisoned in the tower. This is a lament of sixty-two lines (6468-529), highly rhetorical but somewhat repetitive. It opens with an apostrophe of Fortune and the well-worn theme of Fortune's wheel, developed in a series of simple antitheses:

Ha! Fortune, con ta roe  
m'est ore leidemant tornee!  
Malemant la m'as bestornee,  
car g'iere el mont, or sui el val;  
or avoie bien, or ai mal;  
or me plores, or me rioies.  
Las, cheitis, por coi le feisoies  
quant ele si tost t'a lessié!  
An po d'ore m'a abessié  
voiremant, de si haut si bas.  
6468-77

There follows a second apostrophe of Fortune, in which Lancelot castigates her lack of concern, and then an exclamation of a religious nature and a brief expression of his plight:

Fortune, quant tu me gabas,  
molt fefs mal, mes toi que chaut?  
A neant est comant qu'il aut.  
Ha! sainte Croiz, sainz Esperiz,  
con sui perduz, con sui periz!  
6478-82

The remainder of the lament, the major part of it, is directed towards Gauvain. Lancelot lengthily bewails the fact that Gauvain has not come in search of him during his year's imprisonment (6483-91), as he declares he would have done for him (6492-501). The same comment as was made about Fortune is now made about Gauvain - Gauvain cares nothing for Lancelot's situation (6499-501). Some adages on the nature of true friendship are introduced:

Li vilains dit bien voir qu'a poinne  
puet an mes un ami trover;  
de legier puet an esprover  
au besoin qui est boens amis.

6502-5

But after a further castigation of Gauvain, it occurs to Lancelot that the latter must simply not know of his fate (6510-23). He moves then onto surer ground by roundly cursing Meleagant, who has put him in the tower (6524-9).

Godefroi cannot be criticised for including a lament that is purely gratuitous - which would certainly be out of line with Chrétien's practice. This lament has a function, that of informing the maiden who has come in search of Lancelot, and who overhears him, that he is close at hand. Even its length might be seen as an illustration of the comment in the couplet that provides the closing framework and which tells us that Lancelot's life in the tower is devoted to grief:

A tant se coise, a tant se tot  
cil qui a dolor sa vie use

6530-1

But it is stylistically unremarkable, pedestrian in content, and devoid of any meaningful development. The emphasis given in it to Gauvain and the theme of friendship is without any strong rationale. Some irony might be discerned in the fact that, in Lancelot's absence, Gauvain has encouraged a search for Lancelot and offered to fight Meleagant if he is not found (6201-3) - though this could be considered as the least a friend could do in the circumstances, rather than as providing a strongly ironic contradiction of what Lancelot says in his lament. So there is really nothing in the lament or its presentation to suggest that we are to take it at anything other than its face value. In short, it lacks all the mercurial qualities that are such a constant feature of Chrétien de Troyes' work, even, - and perhaps even especially - when he is depicting his characters in the throes of grief.

## NOTES

1. Le Chevalier de la Charrete edited by Mario Roques, (CFMA) Paris, 1958, p.x. All references to the poem are based on this edition unless otherwise stated.
2. Notably by F.Douglas Kelly, Sens and Conjointure in the "Chevalier de la Charrete" (102) and Z.P.Zaddy, Chrétien Studies (180) pp.110-58.
3. In his study entitled Die Wörter für Gemütsbewegungen in den altfranzösischen Wortfeldern des Rolandsliedes und des Yvain-Romanes, (162) p.70, Simon says: 'Die unpersönliche Konstruktion (il poise) verbannt den Gedanken an die Spontaneität des Individuums und erweckt die Idee des niederdrückenden, lastenden Geschicks.'
4. It is not clear whether the line "tuit cil et celes qui l'oïrent" (216) means simply "all those who heard (of the queen's departure)", or whether it is harking back to the statement, a few lines previously, that the queen murmured a comment, softly, "por ce qu'an ne l'oïst" (208), in which case it would mean "all those who heard it" (her murmured comment). The latter explanation is the less likely, in view of the fact that one character, Guinables, is singled out as having heard what she said (213). Her comment itself has been the subject of some critical uncertainty; see Roques' note to 209 in the Notes critiques et variantes of his edition, p.221 and see also note 10 below.  
  
Lines 215-7 may be compared with Erec 2747-8:  
  
ne cuit que greignor duel feïssent,  
se a mort navré le veïssent.
5. For a recent account of the present state of this question, and further discussion of it, see Roberta L.Krueger, "Reading the Yvain/Charrete: Chrétien's Inscribed Audiences at Noauz and Pesme Aventure," (105).
6. D.J.Shirt, "How much of the Lion can we put before the Cart? Further light on the chronological relationship of Chrétien de Troyes's Lancelot and Yvain" (158).
7. See Fanni Bogdanow, "The Love Theme in Chrétien de Troyes's Chevalier de la charrette" (56) p. 55.
8. See note 7 on p. 238 above.

9. See pp.91-2 above and 260.
10. In Foerster's edition the words that she murmurs at the moment of being taken away by Kay -

"Ha! Ha! se vos ce seüssiez  
ja, ce croi, ne l'otroiesiez  
que Kex me menast un seul pas"  
(Foerster 211-213) -

differ from those found in the Guiot text, which begin

"Ha! rois, se vos ce seüssiez..."  
(209)

and the former reading is usually preferred and assumed to refer to Lancelot. Further evidence that there is an understanding between them is later found in her lament at the false news of his death, when she refers to him as "mes amis" (4198).

11. See, for example, Eneas 7919-30.
12. See note 3 above.
13. Jean-Charles Payen, in Le motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale (142) 381-2, has drawn attention to the aspects of Guenevere's grief and lament where use is made of the language and rituals of Christian repentance, for example, the use of the phrase 'sa colpe', her fasting, the occurrence of the word 'pechié'. He makes the distinction between authentic Christian repentance, leading ultimately to joy and salvation, and her sterile remorse.
14. Frappier translates the very convoluted thoughts of 4232-38 thus:  
"Mais quoi? Serait-ce donc offenser mon ami [= ma vie] qu'après sa mort je reste en vie, alors que je ne sais où goûter un plaisir, sinon dans les tourments que j'endure pour lui? Tandis qu'après sa mort, voilà mon seul délaissement, quel baume aurait mis sur son coeur, quand il vivait, cette souffrance, objet présent de ma ferveur."  
(Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot), roman traduit de l'ancien français par Jean Frappier, Champion, Paris, 1962).
15. see pp. 190-2 above.
16. A.H. Diverres, "Some Thoughts on the sens of Le Chevalier de la charrette" (69) p.30.
17. Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury, La tentation du suicide dans le roman français du XIIe siècle (111)pp.114-5.



18. Examples can be found in Erec 4582; Cligés 6154-9; 5726-7; Philomena 979-97; Piramus 754-57; Thèbes 6089-94.
19. Lefay-Toury, op.cit. (111) pp.111-2.
20. See pp. 271-2.
21. Diverres op.cit. (69) pp.33-6.

## Chapter Seven

### LE CHEVALIER AU LION (YVAIN)

#### Laudine's Grief

The depiction of grief figures prominently in the first section of Le chevalier au lion, which recounts how Yvain kills the Knight of the Fountain and wins the hand of the dead man's widow. Laudine's grief at the death of her husband is a vital element in Chrétien's handling of the traditional theme of the sorrowing widow who soon finds consolation in a new love. Her grief is depicted at length on no fewer than four occasions:<sup>1</sup>

- (i) in the description of her entry in the funeral procession (1144-77)
- (ii) in association with the search for the killer (1178-247)
- (iii) in her formal lament at the graveside (1286-304)
- (iv) in Yvain's view of her continuing grief after the burial (1410-91).

#### **(i) Laudine's grief in the funeral procession.**

The first reference to Laudine's grief - leading us to anticipate a direct description of it - is made by Lunete, who recounts to Yvain the distress of the lady and her entourage at the death of Esclados. The general grief for Esclados explains why Yvain's presence in the castle is for the moment undetected:

"Certes, fet ele, chevaliers,  
 je criem que mal soiez venuz:  
 se vos estes ceanz tenuz  
 vos i seroiz toz depeciez,  
 que mes sire est a mort plaiez  
 et bien sai que vos l'avez mort.  
 Ma dame an fet un duel si fort,  
 et ses genz an viron lui crfent,  
 que par po de duel ne s'ocfent;  
 si vos sevent il bien ceanz,  
 mes entr'ax est li diax si granz,  
 qu'il n'i pueent or entendre."

978-89

The description is brief but emphatic: the noun 'duel' is repeated thrice in five lines and is qualified as being 'si fort' and 'si granz', as well as appearing in the formulaic line

..par po de duel ne s'ocfent -

a forceful variation on a type of line that recurs in the romans antiques, e.g.

par po de deul tout vif n'enrage  
Thèbes 5850

car tel duel a, par po n'enrage  
Troie 5700

The emphasis laid on the grief of the people prepares the way for their entry. By then their grief has given place to a furious determination to leave no stone - or stool- unturned in an effort to find their lord's killer. It is in the midst of this upheaval that there enters

..une des plus beles dames,  
 c'onques veïst riens terrfene.  
 1146-7

This anonymous designation of Laudine suggests that she is being seen through the eyes of Yvain (rendered conveniently invisible by Lunete's ring). Only at the end of the ensuing portrayal of her grief is her identity vouched for by Chrétien:

../ne riens ne la puet conforter,  
 que son seignor en voit porter  
 devant li, en la biere, mort  
 1161-3

Thus Laudine makes her first appearance in the midst of a scene of great activity and is at first unidentified, as well as being described as the most beautiful creature ever seen on earth, and then portrayed in a frenzy of grief, and these factors must contribute to making this the most dramatic introduction afforded by Chrétien to any of his characters:

Que qu'il aloient reverchant  
desoz liz, et desoz eschames,  
vint une des plus beles dames  
c'onques vefst riens terrfene.  
De si tres bele crestfene  
Ne fu onques plez ne parole;  
mes de duel feire estoit si fole,  
qu'a po qu'ele ne s'ocioit  
a la foiee, si crioit  
si haut com ele pooit plus,  
et recheoit pasmee jus;  
et quant ele estoit relevee,  
aussi come fame desvee,  
se comançoit a dessirier  
et ses chevols a detranchier;  
ses mains detuert et ront ses dras,  
si se repasme a chascun pas,  
ne riens ne la puet conforter,  
que son seignor an voit porter  
devant li, an la biere, mort,  
don ja ne cuide avoir confort;  
por ce crioit a haute voiz.

1144-65

The most notable feature of the grief portrayal in this passage is Chrétien's unusually heavy reliance on formulaic diction. The previously-noted stereotyped formulation

..par po de duel ne s'ocfent  
986

is used at the beginning of the description in slightly expanded form:

mes de duel feire estoit si fole  
qu'a po qu'ele ne s'ocioit  
1150-51

The phrase 'come fame desvee' (in rhyming position, at the end of line 1156, echoing the end-of-line adjective 'fole' in the lines just quoted) is reminiscent of the description of the mother of Alexis who, in another highly dramatic situation, comes running at the news of her

dead son 'cum feme forsenede' (Alexis 423).

In keeping with the atmosphere of frenzied rather than pathetic grieving, Laudine is not depicted weeping or sighing, but near the beginning and at the end of the description stress is laid on her loud cries:

...si crioit  
si haut com ele pooit plus  
1152-3

..son seignor an voit porter  
devant lui, an la biere, mort,  
don ja ne cuide avoir confort;  
por ce crioit a haute voiz.  
1162-5

Her fainting is also referred to twice:

et recheoit pasmee jus  
1154

si se repasme a chascun pas  
1160

The first of these references figures as part of the common motif whereby a character faints, gets up again (or is helped up) and continues his lamentations:

et recheoit pasmee jus;  
et quant ele estoit relevee,  
ausi come fame desvee,  
se comançoit a dessirier  
et ses chevols a detrachier  
1154-8

Examples of the same motif are found in epic and the romans d'antiquité, e.g.

Quant se redrece sa dolor renouvelle  
Chev. Vivien (texte cr) 1872

Dirceüs qui s'estoit pamez,  
de pamoisons est relevez,  
em piez sailli comme desvez  
Thèbes 8840-2

Chrétien used the motif in Erec:

Lors rechiet a terre pasmee;  
et quant ele releva sus  
Si se rescrie plus et plus  
Erec 4614-6



begins with a general comment closely connected to a reference to her loud cries:

mes de duel feire estoit si fole  
qu'a po qu'ele ne s'ocioit  
a la foiee, si crioit  
si haut com ele pooit plus

1150-3

She is then depicted fainting (1154), and tearing her hair and garments (1155-8), after which - if Foerster's text is followed for line 1159 - the reference to the tearing of hair and garments is repeated in reverse order, and followed by a second reference to her fainting (1160), with the whole ending on a second general comment (1161-4) allied, as before, to a reference to her cries (1165). So as well as being deployed in a context which creates maximum dramatic effect, the description of Laudine's grief combines elegance with emphasis by virtue of its careful structuring. Moreover, a sense of the author's ironic detachment is induced by his measured depiction of an emotional state which is anything but measured.

Nor is interest allowed to wane when the portrayal of Laudine's grief is over. It is followed immediately by a brief description of the ecclesiastical procession accompanying the bier (1166-72) which provides a marked contrast with the spectacle of the lady's grief:

L'eve beneoite, et les croiz,  
et li cierge, aloient avant  
avoec les dames d'un covant,  
et li texte, et li ancenssier,  
et li clerc, qui sont despanssier  
de feire la haute despansse  
a cui la cheitive ame pansse.

1166-72

The listing of people and objects in the procession and the play on 'despanssier / despansse / pansse' suggest an orderliness and circumspection which contrast with Laudine's frenzy. Irony may be intended in the fact that the 'tres bele crestfene' reaps no consolation from the symbols of religion that surround her.

**(ii) Laudine's grief in association with the search for the killer.**

Once Laudine has made her memorable entrance, the situation receives new impetus when the corpse of Esclados begins to bleed, signifying to those present that his murderer is still among them (1178-85). This gives rise to the comic situation where the invisible Yvain finds himself 'molt feruz et botez' (1192) as a new search begins. Correspondingly, Laudine redoubles her grief, with the emphasis again being on her near-dementedness:

Por ce tel duel par demenoit  
la dame, qu'ele forssenoit  
et crioit come fors del san:  
1203-5

Her first speech, occurring now, is not cast in the mould of the traditional lament, but is an energetic expression of the desire that her dead husband's slayer should be found (1206-42). Laudine is soon to renounce her grief in order to love Yvain, and that great irony is here clearly anticipated in the force with which she apostrophises the man who is being sought:

Ha! Dex! don ne trovera l'an  
l'omecide, le traïtor,  
qui m'a ocis mon boen seignor?  
.....  
Ha! fantosme, coarde chose,  
por qu'ies vers moi acoardie,  
quant vers mon seignor fus hardie?  
1206-8...1226-8

Her language becomes almost transparently ambiguous:

Que ne t'ai ore an ma baillie!  
.....  
Por coi ne te puis or tenir?  
1229..1231

The speech is rounded off as if it had been a lament, with a summing-up of her grief and a reference to the grief of her entourage:



Ensi la dame se debat,  
 ensi tot par li se combat,  
 ensi tot par li se confront  
 et, avoec lui, ses genz refont  
 si grant duel que greignor ne pueent.  
 1243-7

But in spite of this conventional framework, the preparation of long-term effects by Chrétien has clearly been of greater importance in the speech than has the adherence to conventional patterns. A phrase which she uses of Esclados, 'le meillor des buens'(1209) is one that will be played upon in subsequent exchanges with Lunete.<sup>3</sup>

**(iii) Laudine's formal lament at the burial of Esclados.**

Some forty lines later, when the funeral procession has passed on its way and Yvain is watching Laudine from a window, she is shown uttering the more traditional, eulogistic form of lament for Esclados (1288-99). This speech comprises all the formal hyperbole with which we have become familiar in such a context. Beginning with the apostrophe 'Biau sire' (1288) and asking God to have mercy on his soul (1288-9), she goes on to praise Esclados for the traditional virtues of knighthood, 'enor', 'compaignie' (Foerster: 'corteisie') 'largesce' and 'hardemanz':

chevaliers sor cheval ne sist  
 qui de rien nule vos vausist.  
 De vostre enor, biax sire chiers,  
 ne fu onques nus chevaliers,  
 ne de la vostre compaignie;  
 largesce estoit la vostre amie  
 et hardemanz vostre compainz.  
 1291-7

This lament has affinities with that spoken by Enide over Erec, where, rather than a series of eulogistic epithets being applied to the supposedly dead man, a number of traditional virtues are personified and depicted as attendants of Erec, in the same way that 'largesce' and 'hardemanz' are depicted as the companions of Esclados:

A toi ne s'apareilloit nus,  
qu'an toi s'estoit biautez miree,  
proesce s'i ert esprovee,  
savoirs t'avoit son cuer doné,  
largesce t'avoit coroné,  
cele sanz cui nus n'a grant pris.

Erec 4600-5

But though Laudine is now shown lamenting Esclados, and though the lament consists of a conventional eulogising, the context in which it arises is not conventional, since the primary interest of the situation lies not in the lament itself, but in the fact that Yvain is watching and listening from the window, as we are reminded by way of introduction:

Par mi cele fenestre agueite  
mes sire Yvains la bele dame,  
qui dit "Biau sire, de vostre ame  
ait Dex merci si voiremant...

1286-9

At the end of Laudine's lament there is the expected brief summing-up of her grief, but again this convention is used to focus attention on Yvain:

Lors se deront et se dessire  
trestot quan que as mains li vient.  
A molt grant poinne se retient  
mes sire Yveins, a que qu'il tort,  
que les mains tenir ne li cort.

1300-4

As with the presentation of Laudine's previous speech, the conventions dovetail neatly with the very specific requirements of the narrative.

#### (iv) Laudine's grief after the burial

After Laudine's lament the romantic intrigue is furthered by Lunete's speech of advice (1305-42) and by the long authorial analysis of Yvain's situation as the victim of Love (1343-409). The narrative resumes with the comment that, when Esclados has been buried, everyone leaves the scene except Laudine. It is stressed that not one single person from her entourage remains with the lady, which clearly

distinguishes the situation from the conventional one in which the entourage plays the role of chorus to the chief mourner:<sup>4</sup>

Quant en ot anfoi le mort,  
s'an partirent totes les genz;  
clers, ne chevaliers, ne sergenz,  
ne dame n'i remest, que cele  
qui sa dolor mie ne cele.  
Mes iqui remest tote sole,  
et sovant se prant a la gole,  
et tort ses poinz, et bat ses paumes,  
et list en un sautier ses saumes,  
anluminé a letres d'or.

1410-9

Thus Laudine is seen alone. Her grief outlasts the formality of the burial - its strength and sincerity will make her subsequent acceptance of Yvain all the more piquant! And if, momentarily, she is depicted alone in her grief, we are promptly reminded that she is being watched:

Et mes sire Yvains est ancor  
a la fenestre, ou il l'esgarde

1420-1

It is through Yvain's eyes, and indeed in his words, that we are confronted once more with the spectacle of the lady in grief (after he has discussed at some length with himself the likelihood of this beautiful creature ever loving him, 1432-64):

1465 Grant duel ai de ses biax chevox  
c'onques rien tant amer ne vox,  
que fin or passent, tant reluisent.  
D'ire m'espranent et aguissent,  
quant je les voi ronpre et tranchier;  
1470 n'onques ne pueent estanchier  
les lermes, qui des ialz li chieent:  
totes ces choses me dessieent.  
A tot ce qu'il sont plain de lermes  
si qu'il n'en est ne fins ne termes,  
1475 ne furent onques si bel oel.  
De ce qu'ele ploie, me duel,  
ne de rien n'ai si grant destrece  
come de son vis qu'ele blece,  
qu'il ne l'eüst pas desservi:  
1480 onques si bien taillié ne vi,  
ne si fres, ne si coloré;  
mes ce me par a acoré  
que ele est a li enemie.<sup>5</sup>  
Et voir, ele ne se faint mie  
1485 qu'au pis qu'ele puet ne se face,

1490

et nus cristaus ne nule glace  
n'est si clere ne si polie.  
Dex! Por coi fet si grant folie  
et por coi ne se blece mains?  
Por coi detort ses beles mains  
et fieret son piz et esgratine?  
Don ne fust ce mervoille fine  
a esgarder, s'ele fust liee,  
quant ele est or si bele iriee?

1465-94

(The speech ends with a variation on the topos of Nature the creator of beautiful men and women).<sup>6</sup>

This is the passage which Alice Colby isolates and analyses as an example of Chrétien's portrait style in Yvain, since it accords with her definition of the portrait as being

one kind of description which consists of nothing but pure panegyric or its exact opposite and is so long, so stereotyped in its content, so stylistically ornate, and so well organised that it stands out from its context as a semi-independent unit...<sup>7</sup>

In her analysis of the passage Colby makes virtually no mention of the fact that the choice of details given in the description of Laudine has not been made arbitrarily from the many possibilities admitted by the portrait conventions, but that the parts of the body referred to are selected solely because they are elements in a full-dress, conventional depiction of grief: the beautiful hair is being torn (1465-8); the eyes are full of tears (1470-6); the face is suffering hurt at Laudine's own hands (1477-87); and the lovely hands themselves are being wrung, as well as striking and scratching the breast (1490-1). The whole passage should be seen as representing a coalescence of two bodies of convention, the portrait and the depiction of violent grief. At the culmination of the description the two conventions neatly merge in the theme of beauty amidst grief:<sup>8</sup>

Don ne fust ce mervoille fine  
a esgarder, s'ele fust liee,  
quant ele est or si bele iriee?

1492-4

Yet a further aspect of the complexity, and the interest, of the passage (and an aspect which lies outside the focus of Colby's attention) is that it is an expression of Yvain's grief as much as it is a description of Laudine's. Side by side with the depiction of her grief-stricken actions is developed the theme of Yvain's sorrowful reactions at seeing her thus. Indeed, this latter theme reinforces the portrait structure, since each of the sections dealing with a different part of the body is accompanied (and in some cases preceded) by a specific expression of Yvain's feelings, thus:

her hair (1465-9)

Grant duel ai de ses biax chevox  
c'onques rien tant amer ne vox,  
que fin or passent, tant reluisent.  
D'ire m'espranent et aguissent,  
quant je les voi ronpre et tranchier:

her eyes (1470-6)

n'onques ne pueent estanchier  
les lermes, qui des ialz li chieent:  
totes ces choses me dessieent.  
A tot ce qu'il sont plain de lermes  
si qu'il n'en est ne fins ne termes,  
ne furent onques si bel oel.  
De ce qu'ele plore, me duel,

her face (1477-81)

ne de rien n'ai si grant destrece  
come de son vis qu'ele blece,  
qu'il ne l'eüst pas desservi:  
onques si bien taillié ne vi,  
ne si fres, ne si coloré.

her throat (Roques 1482-7; Foerster 1478-83)

(I reproduce Foerster's reading of this section of the portrait here. See note 5):

Et ce me par a acoré.  
Que je li voi sa gorge estraindre.  
Certes ele ne se set faindre,  
Qu'au pis, qu'ele puet, ne se face.  
Et nus cristaus ne nule glace  
N'est si clere ne si polie.

her hands (1488-91)

(in this section Yvain does not state his distress; it is conveyed through his exclamation and the series of rhetorical questions):

Dex! Por coi fet si grant folie  
et por coi ne se blece mains?  
Por coi detort ses beles mains,  
et fiert son piz et esgratine?

The compassionate grief of a character or characters at the sight of another's grief has emerged in this study as a not uncommon motif, and in the romance it is sometimes accompanied by the suggestion that susceptibility to the sight of another's grief is a mark of personal nobility. This is expressed in the cliché that even the lowest man would have grieved at the sight of the grief being described, as in Thèbes:<sup>9</sup>

N'a si felon houme soz ciel,  
.....  
qui ne plorast de la doulor  
et du plour que cil font des lor.

Thèbes 1962..65-6

Thus Yvain's own nobility and fitness to be the lady's suitor are demonstrated in his reactions to the sorrowing Laudine. The depiction of Laudine's grief is therefore not only part and parcel of the theme of the sorrowing widow finding consolation in a new love (Chrétien's handling of this theme, which occurs also in Thèbes, has been too well documented to require more comment here)<sup>10</sup> but the placing of the grief depiction in Yvain's mouth itself contributes to the development of the love intrigue.

### **Yvain's madness**

The early action of the romance (to line 2478) culminates in the marriage of Yvain and Laudine and the joyful reception of Arthur after Yvain's successful defence of the fountain. Now a new crisis begins to emerge when Gauvain persuades Yvain, in the name of chivalry, to leave Laudine temporarily and accompany him on knightly pursuits. Laudine grants Yvain permission to be absent for one year. The period which Yvain and Gauvain spend winning glory at tournaments is briefly

sketched (2672-82). The year's deadline passes unnoticed by Yvain. While he and Gauvain are playing host to Arthur in their own tent - an indication of their hubris (2685-95) - Yvain remembers the promise he had made to Laudine to return when a year was up. The memory comes to him through the action of 'panser'. The connotations of grief which this verb often carries<sup>11</sup> are confirmed here by the reference to the tears which Yvain manages to hold back:

Entr'ax seoit li rois Artus,  
quant Yvains tant encomança  
a panser, que des lors en ça  
que a sa dame ot conglé pris,  
ne fu tant de panser surpris  
con de celui, car bien savoit,  
que covant manti li avoit  
et trespassez estoit li termes.  
A grant poinne tenoit ses lermes,  
mes honte li feisoit tenir.

2696-705

This is the moment at which a messenger from Laudine appears, castigates Yvain for his failure to keep his promise and, on Laudine's behalf, demands the return of the ring she had given him. Yvain's mind is thrown into such a turmoil by this development that he loses control of his senses. There follows the episode of his wanderings in the forest, hungry and naked and dependent on the ministrations of a hermit (2783-883). In these circumstances he is found asleep by two maidens and is cured of his madness by a magic ointment (2884-3015).

Yvain's period of madness lends itself to far-reaching symbolic interpretation. Sargent sees in it

une sorte de suicide symbolique<sup>12</sup>

after which Yvain acquires a new identity as 'le chevalier au lion', and Topsfield speaks of it as

an allegory of man's isolation, his sudden awareness of this and the need of a rock to which to cling.<sup>13</sup>

But at the most immediate level it is a supremely dramatic expression of his deep and disabling grief on realising that, through his

carelessness, he has lost Laudine's love; and from a rhetorical point of view his madness is a bold actualisation of the common and even banal formula, whereby a character is said to go out of his mind through grief, e.g.

Si grant doel ad, par poi qu'il n'est desvét  
Roland 2789

Si grant duel a e si grant ire  
Que por un poi le sen ne pert  
Troie 15356-57

Certainly the maidens who find him interpret his madness as the result of grief:

espoir, aucun duel a eü  
qui le fet ensi demener;  
an puet bien de duel forsener.  
2922-4

Yvain's grief at this point of crisis in his relationship with Laudine may be compared with the earlier depiction of his feelings towards her in the episode of their parting. He had wept and sighed when she had stipulated that he should return within a year - the irony of this reaction becomes, retrospectively, very evident, though at the point where it had occurred, the effect conveyed was one of well-bred sentimentality:

Mes sire Yvains pleure et sopire  
si fort qu'a poinnes le pot dire:  
"Dame, cist termes est molt lons.  
Se je pöisse estre colons  
totes les foiz que je vouroie,  
molt sovant avoec vos seroie..."  
2581-6

The same sentimentality coloured the departure itself where the reference to weeping (a banal enough reaction in descriptions of leave-taking) was couched very poetically:

Ne sai que plus doie conter,  
comant mes sire Yvains s'en part,  
ne des beisiers qu'an li depart,  
qui furent de lermes semé  
et de dolçor anbaussemé.  
2626-30



Chrétien used a form of occupatio ('Ne sai que plus doie conter') at the beginning of this description of congié, and extended it to the account of the leave-taking between Laudine and the king in the lines following:

Et del roi que vos conteroie,  
comant la dame le convoie  
et ses puceles avoec li  
et tuit li chevalier ausi?  
Trop i feroie de demore.

2631-5

In this way attention was drawn to the 'set piece' nature of the episode of the sorrowful parting.<sup>14</sup> Because Yvain's grief at parting from Laudine was depicted in a conventionalised way, the suggestion was that it was rather superficial; and the impression we received of it was in any case diluted by the reference to Laudine's sadness at the departure of the king (2636-40). Such grief fades into insignificance when contrasted with the emotion he experiences when his failure to return to Laudine within the agreed time leads to the crisis of madness. These contrasting instances of grief are not only a demonstration of Chrétien's ability to depict a 'stock' emotion in widely differing ways; the contrast reflects a significant disjunction between the events described. A not dissimilar contrast was found in Erec, a romance often compared with Yvain. Enide's maidenly grieving for Erec as he joins combat with Yder in the sparrow-hawk contest shortly after they have become acquainted, bears no relation to the altogether more agonised grief she experiences as she watches him in combat with Guivret at a point in the romance where shared hardships have forged strong links between them.<sup>15</sup> In Yvain the contrast vividly reinforces the impression that, once Yvain has taken full cognizance of his fault, the action shifts away from the courtly playfulness of the first section and on to a new plane.

### Patterns of grief after Yvain's recovery from madness

Hard on the heels of Yvain's recovery from madness and his related, quid pro quo defence of the Dame de Noroison comes his meeting with the lion, which he saves from the attack of the serpent (3337-407). The lion's grateful devotion to Yvain is established in the lines describing how it hunts for him (3408-78). Yvain is next depicted arriving by chance at Laudine's fountain. The sight of this place, with its associations, causes him to faint from grief:

Las! par po ne se reforsena  
mes sire Yvains, cele foiee,  
quant la fontainne a aprochiee,  
et le perron, et la chapele;  
mil foiz las et dolanz s'apele,  
et chiet pasmez, tant fu dolanz.  
3486-91

His falling in a faint, a reaction from which recovery is usually automatic and instantaneous in stereotyped descriptions of grief, has unforeseen consequences of a highly accidental and unstereotyped nature:

et s'espee, qui ert colanz  
chiet del fuerre, si li apointe  
es mailles del hauberc la pointe  
enprés le col, pres de la joe;  
n'i a maille qui ne descloie,  
et l'espee del col li tranche  
la pel desoz la maille blanche,  
si qu'il an fist le sanc cheoir.  
3492-9

The lion has already been depicted shedding tears of humble gratitude when being rescued by Yvain (3396-7) therefore its grief on thinking that Yvain is dead does not appear as quite so preposterous as might otherwise have been the case:

Li lyons cuide mort veoir  
son compaignon et son seignor;  
einz de rien n'ot ire graignor,  
qu'il comança tel duel a fere,  
n'of tel conter ne retrere,  
qu'il se detuert et grate et crie  
et s'a talant que il s'ocie  
de l'espee, qu'il li est vis  
qui ait son boen seignor ocis.  
3500-8

His attempt to kill himself with Yvain's sword is described in the kind of mechanistic detail which parallels that of the description of Yvain's accident with the same sword a few lines previously:

A ses danz l'espee li oste  
e sor un fust gisant l'acoste  
et derriers a un tronc l'apuie  
qu'il a peor qu'el ne s'an fuie  
qant il i hurtera del piz.

3509-13

Only Yvain's return to consciousness prevents the lion from attempting to kill itself:

Ja fust ses voloirs aconpliz  
qant cil de pasmeisons revint;  
et li lyons son cors retint  
qui a la mort toz escorsez  
coroit come pors forsenez  
qui ne prant garde ou il se fiere.

3514-9

The lion's grief must be classified with those other instances of mourning in Erec, Cligés and the Charrete which are given a particularly ironic twist by the fact that the character being mourned is not really dead. Its grief can thus be likened to Enide's grief for Erec, the Greeks' grief for Alexander and his comrades, the grief of the townspeople and Cligés for Fénice, and the grief of Lancelot for Guenevere and Guenevere for Lancelot. Particular comparisons have been drawn between the lion and Enide, since, like her, it has been depicted watching over its master at night (3475-6) and, in its grief at its master's supposed death, tries to kill itself with its master's sword.<sup>16</sup> But the differences in presentation between its grief and Enide's seem more striking than the similarities. Enide's grief is set apart from all the other instances listed above because, in all but her case, it is made amply clear to the audience that the grief being described is mistaken, and in all but her case it is possible to argue for humorous intent in the depiction. So with the lion's grief: that Yvain is not dead is conveyed clearly enough in

lines 3500-1, where we are told that the lion thought he was dead. As for the question of humour, that is not in doubt. Haidu has summed up that aspect of the incident by pointing to the comic absurdity of substituting a lion in a situation where, conventionally, a young lover would weep over a dead knight, and by pointing also to what he calls the 'surprécision' with which the lion's method of preparing for suicide is described:

l'attention au détail, l'analyse géométrique des mouvements possibles de l'épée, la prévoyance qui jurerait toute seule avec l'impulsion passionnée que Chrétien vient de décrire.<sup>17</sup>

The lion's grief may be seen as a comic interlude. It may well also have a parodic aspect: Frappier noted that the episode of which it is a part shares several motifs with the Ovidian tale of Piramus et Tisbé.<sup>18</sup> But its comic and parodic aspects do not, of course, preclude the possibility of serious intent and the lion's grief is far from being gratuitous, and should not be looked at in isolation from Yvain's grief, with which it forms a kind of diptych in this scene. The similarity of detail between the description of Yvain's accident with the sword (3492-9) and the lion's manoeuvres with it (3509-13) has been mentioned above. Together the account of Yvain's grief and his accident with the sword amount to fourteen lines (3486-99), as does the account of the lion's grief and attempted suicide immediately following (3500-13). The former account is divided 6:8 between the description of grief and the references to the sword, and the latter is divided, with notable symmetry, 6:8, along the same lines. In this scene the structural linkage between Yvain's grief and the lion's strengthens the process whereby Yvain and the lion become identified with one another, a process begun when Yvain sided with the lion against the serpent (3337-407), furthered when the lion was depicted hunting for his new master (3408-50) and brought to a climax when Yvain assumes the title 'chevalier au lion' (4285).

The lion's grief should be seen, too, in a wider context. Hunt suggests that the lion's

radical degree of compassion may be felt to echo or reciprocate its master's earlier demonstration of pitié<sup>19</sup>

that is, when Yvain fought for it against the serpent. However, in the lament which Yvain utters on recovering from his faint, a different link is posited between his behaviour and the lion's. His lament begins with a series of rhetorical questions in which he asks himself how, in the circumstances, he can bear to remain alive (3525-33). Since his own 'mesfet' has brought about his plight, why should he not kill himself (3534-41)? He considers the example of the lion who was prepared to kill itself to escape its grief; what is there to stop him doing likewise, all the more since he is himself responsible for the loss he has incurred?

Donc n'ai je ce lyon veü  
qui por moi a si grant duel fet  
qu'il se volt m'espee antreset  
par mi le cors el piz boter?  
Et je doi la mort redoter  
qui ai ma joie a duel changiee?  
3542-7

Having envisaged the possibility of death, Yvain moves on abruptly, however, to reject the idea:

De moi s'est leesce estrangiee  
et tuit solaz. N'en dirai plus;  
que ce ne porroit dire nus,  
s'ai demandee grant oiseuse.  
3548-51

Lefay-Toury interprets Yvain's rejection of self-destruction as a refusal by Chrétien to envisage the extremes to which courtly love may sometimes lead, and as a vindication of human reason:

Que l'amour soit un moyen propice à faire prendre à l'homme  
sa mesure, à reconnaître ses torts, ses manques, qu'il puisse  
le rendre très malheureux, soit, mais qu'il le conduise au  
suicide, non; c'est bon pour un lion qui lui, et pour cause,  
ne raisonne pas.<sup>20</sup>

This implies a very different view of the grieving lion to that suggested, in passing, by Julian Harris:

The despair of the lion and his attempt at self-destruction ... may be an allusion - a very crude one, to be sure - to the biblical theme that Christ, the Good Shepherd, etc., lays down his life for mankind.<sup>21</sup>

Certainly, in the light of the action that follows, it becomes clear that the lion's surrender to grief is in no way exemplary and that Yvain would have been wrong to emulate it. The problem that is set forth so vividly, indeed almost schematically, in his encounter with the maiden imprisoned in the nearby tower is whether his concern for others will finally deflect him from the contemplation of his own grief.

The dialogue with the maiden in the tower, initiated by her when she overhears his lamentations, is an important pivot in the action, in that it is the first real test of his concern and compassion for others since his recovery from madness. True, he fought on behalf of the Dame de Noroison (in return for her having cured him); he was also moved by pity to defend the lion against the serpent. What sharply distinguishes his response to the maiden in the tower is that he has just previously come face to face with his own despair again on returning to the fountain, and must choose either to continue in it, or deliberately eschew it in order to dispel the grief of another. Their conversation offers the possibility of a first step in the process of detachment from grief, since it swiftly becomes a debate about whose grief is the more justified:

-Je sui, fet ele, une cheitive  
la plus dolante riens qui vive."  
Cil li respont: "Tes, fole riens!  
Tex diax est joie! Tex est biens  
envers les max don ge lenguis.  
Tant con li hom a plus apris  
a delit et a joie vivre,  
plus le desvoie et plus l'enivre  
de quan qu'il a que un autre home;  
Li foibles hom porte la some

par us et par acostumance,  
 c'uns autres de plus grant puissance  
 ne porteroit por nule rien.  
 -Par foi, fet ele, jel sai bien  
 que c'est parole tote voire;  
 mes por ce ne fet mie a croire,  
 que vos aiez plus mal de moi..."

3567-83

This exchange leads to the revelation that the maiden is Lunete, who has been imprisoned for her part in the match-making between Laudine and the now discredited Yvain, and that unless she can find a champion she will be burnt at the stake. Yvain decides to help her because he is conscious of having been the cause of her grief, and conscious that she helped him when he was in the throes of grief at being trapped in Laudine's castle (as she is now trapped in the tower):

Je meismes cil Yvain sui  
 por cui vos estes an esfroi;  
 et vos estes cele, ce croi,  
 qui en la sale me gardastes;  
 ma vie et mon cors m'i salvastes  
 entre les deus portes colanz  
 ou ge fui pensis et dolanz  
 et angoisseus et antrepris.

3628-35

The eschewal of his own grief now in order to help her contrasts strikingly with his previous descent into madness. Then, out of grief at having broken an obligation, he surrendered to irrationality. Here, in an atmosphere of conscious deliberation and weighing-up of obligations, he lays personal grief to one side in order to heal the grief of another.

The idea of not surrendering to the impulses of grief has already found expression earlier in the romance where the highly rational Lunete dissuaded Yvain from rushing to be at the side of the grief-stricken Laudine - an impulse which would surely have been his undoing! There (though in a somewhat different configuration) the themes of compassion and of reasonableness versus spontaneity received their first expression, in an altogether more playful vein:

A molt grant poinne se retient  
mes sire Yveins, a que qu'il tort,  
que les mains tenir ne li cort.  
Mes la dameisele li prie,  
et loe, et comande, et chastie,  
come gentix et deboneire,  
qu'il se gart de folie feire

1302-8

From the point at which Yvain lays aside personal considerations in order to help Lunete, there follows a series of episodes in which it is possible to identify two strands of grief - the grief of those he meets and helps, and the expression of his own grief in reaction to theirs (as, in the earlier part of the romance, the expression of his grief was developed alongside the grief of Laudine that provoked it). In the episode which intervenes between his encounter with Lunete and his championing of her, he comes to a castle inhabited by relatives of Gauvain who are under threat from the giant, Harpin de la Montaingne. The fact that he is now open to the grief of others is clearly expressed in his reply to the lord of the castle who is unwilling to share with him the reason for the inhabitants' grief. Yvain expresses the view that he expects to grieve with them and must therefore be told the cause of their grief:

-Ce ne porroit estre a nul fuer  
que je duel feire vos veſse  
ne rien a mon cuer n'an meſse;  
einz le desir molt a savoir  
quelque duel que j'en doie avoir.

3840-4

When he discovers the reason for their grief he is moved to express his own sorrow for them:

"Sire, fet il, de vostre enui  
molt iriez et molt dolanz sui"

3897-98

and to sigh:

Mes sire Yvains onques ne fine  
de sopirer, quant ce antant  
de la pitié que il l'en prant;  
li respont: "Biax dolz sire chiers,



je m'an metroie volentiers  
 en l'aventure et el peril,  
 se li jaianz et vostre fil  
 venoient demain a tele ore  
 que n'i face trop grant demore,  
 que je serai aillors que ci  
 demain a ore de midi,  
 si con je l'ai acreanté.

3934-45

His compassion for them, however, as the above quotation shows, is tempered by the rational calculation that he has an obligation (and deadline) to fulfil in the championing of Lunete. Indeed, as time ebbs away and the Giant does not appear, Yvain feels that he can delay no longer at the castle. Now the daughter of the lord (who had already previously been depicted with her mother in a touching little vignette in which they had come to meet him with their heads lowered and swathed in their cloaks to hide their tears)<sup>22</sup> utters a tearful prayer in which she begs him to stay in the name of the Virgin, of God and of Gauvain, her uncle (4057-63). Such an appeal cannot fail to inspire Yvain with 'pitié' (4064-9). He is, however, depicted as being bitterly torn between his desire to be of service to the people of the castle, and his sense of duty to Lunete; and the image of him torn, not between grief for himself and grief for another this time, but between conflicting grief on behalf of two sets of people, is a striking illustration of the fact that compassion for others has completely replaced self-pity:

D'angoisse a un sopir gité  
 que pot le rēaume de Carse  
 ne voldroit que cele fust arse  
 que il avoit aseñree;  
 sa vie avroit corte duree  
ou il istroit toz vis del sens  
 s'il n'i pooit venir a tens;  
 et d'autre part, autre destrece  
 le retient, la granz gentillece  
 mon seignor Gauvain son ami,  
 que par po ne li part par mi  
li cuers, quant demorer ne puet.

4070-81

The next group of events in the series consists of Yvain's championing of Lunete, her release from the stake and her reinstatement in the affections of Laudine. Yvain's susceptibility to the grief of others again receives prominence, as in the previous episode. However, in this second episode, his grief receives somewhat different expression, and the emphasis is on discretion rather than the spontaneous expression of his feelings. A simile, unusual in descriptions of grief, conveys the effort required by him to restrain his emotion at the sight of Lunete (it is like holding back a straining horse) and the simile is coupled with a factual account of the containment of his sighs:

as ialz la quiert tant qu'il la trueve,  
et met son cuer an tel esprueve  
qu'il le retient, et si l'afreinne  
si com an retient a grant painne  
au fort frain son cheval tirant.  
Et ne por quant an sopirant  
la regarde molt volantiers,  
mes ne fet mie si antiers  
ses sopirs que l'an les conuisse,  
einz les retranche a grant angoisse.  
4341-50

He again witnesses the grief of others when the 'povres dames' (4353) lengthily lament the fate of Lunete, whose death will deprive them of a generous friend at court. In this instance their grief, and the sight of the hapless Lunete, have the effect of of spurring him to action rather than of causing him to grieve outwardly himself:

Ensi se demantoient celes;  
et mes sire Yvains ert antr'eles,  
s'ot bien oïes lor complaints  
qui n'estoient fauses ne faintes,  
et vit Lunete agenoilliee  
en sa chemise despoilliee,  
et sa confesse avoit ja prise,  
a Deu de ses pechiez requise  
merci, et sa corpe clamee;  
et cil qui molt l'avoit amee  
vient vers li, si l'en lieve a mont  
et dit: "Ma demeisele, ou sont  
cil qui vos blasment et ancusent?"  
4379-91

The championing of Lunete leads to a meeting between Laudine and Yvain. When his earlier return to the fountain had reminded Yvain of the crisis in his relationship with Laudine, he had succumbed to grief and despair. After his meeting with her now (in which he does not reveal his identity, presumably out of a sense of unworthiness) he goes on his way 'a grant angoisse' (4629), but it is significant that the reference to his personal anguish is brief, and is shortly superseded by a reference to his grief for the wounded lion:

Si s'an vet pansis et destroiz  
por son lyon qu'il li estuet  
porter que siudre ne le puet  
4646-8

Two major episodes conclude Yvain's adventures, the championing of the Younger Sister, and, inserted within that, the episode at the Castle of Pesme Aventure. In both of these, as before, Yvain responds to the plight of others in need. But whereas, before, he had been depicted grieving, either openly or with discretion, in neither case now is any specific reference made to his grief when confronted by the sufferings of those whom he subsequently helps. This is particularly striking in the episode of Pesme Aventure, where he encounters the extreme plight of the three hundred maidens working as sweated labour for the lord of the place. After a description of their wretched clothing and poor physical state comes an account of their tears when they see Yvain take an interest in them:

Il les voit, et eles le voient,  
si s'anbrunchent totes et plorent;  
et une grant piece demorent  
qu'eles n'attendent a rien feire,  
ne lor ialz ne pueent retreire  
de terre, tant sont acorees.  
5200-5

Yvain's immediate reaction is to question the door-keeper about their plight, and when no satisfactory answer is obtained, he returns to the

weeping maidens themselves:

si les salte ansamble totes;  
et si lor voit cheoir les gotes  
des lermes qui lor decoroient  
des ialz, si con eles ploroient.

5237-40

He responds to this spectacle, not by grieving himself, but by commending them and their grief to God:

Et il lor dit: "Dex, s'il li plect,  
cest duel que ne sai don vos nest,  
vos ost del cuer et tort a joie."

5241-43

Likewise, after hearing the long explanation of their woe, and learning that many knights like himself have fought in vain against the two miscreants responsible for their fate, he responds by committing himself and them to God's will and, with what appears as almost comic nonchalance, taking leave of them:

-Dex, li voirs rois esperitables,  
fet mes sire Yvains, m'an desfande,  
et vos enor et joie rande,  
se il a volenté li vient!  
Des or mes aler m'an covient  
et veoir genz qui leanz sont,  
savoir quel chiere il me feront.

5332-38

Unable to do anything else, and having placed the situation in God's hands, Yvain is justified in his nonchalance. But it is not to last long, since he himself is to be the instrument of the help he has asked God to send for the maidens. Significantly it is after mass the next morning that he learns of the imminent arrival of the miscreants, and finds the role of their challenger thrust upon him:

Mes sire Yvains après la messe  
of novele felenesse  
quant il cuida qu'il s'an deüst  
aler, que rien ne li neüst;  
mes ne pot mie estre a son chois.

5451-5

(There follows the news from the lord of the castle that the miscreants are coming, and the suggestion that he should fight them).

It was in a similar way he found himself committed to helping the Younger Sister. Prevented by 'duel' (4816) from continuing in her quest to find a champion in the dispute with her sister, she had been helped by 'une autre pucele' (4824) who had taken up the search for her and finally caught up with Yvain, whose first words to her were a courtesy which she was only too quick to seize upon:

"Dex vos saut, bele, et si vos ost  
de cusançon et de pesance!"  
-Et vos, sire, ou j'ai esperance  
que bien m'an porrfez oster!"  
5046-9

When he had heard the tale of the Younger Sister he agreed immediately to champion her cause. No reference to compassionate grief on his part was involved. The fact that her need was laid before him was enough. As in the subsequent episode at Pesme Aventure, he committed the undertaking to God, with words that suggested an understanding of his activities as forming part of an overall providential design:<sup>23</sup>

or me doint Dex et cuer et grace  
que je, par sa boene aventure,  
puisse desresnier sa droiture!  
5098-100

While it is clear that compassion is a key motivating factor for Yvain in the two sets of episodes following his decisive encounter with the lamenting Lunete, it is possible now also to see a certain pattern in the expression of that compassion. The first two of the four episodes involved are the championing of Lunete and the defence of Gauvain's relatives, the latter episode being inserted in the former. Here Yvain is depicted as being emotionally affected by the plight, and, indeed, the visible grief of others (and not just because he has personal connections with them - he grieves for Gauvain's relatives before knowing who they are). His meeting with Laudine after the release of Lunete can be seen as separating the two sets of

episodes. This meeting is noteworthy in that it does not throw him into a turmoil of personal grief in the way that his accidental return to the fountain had. The second two of the four episodes are paired as the first two were, by being inserted one into the other. Yvain is again confronted by the distress of others - dramatically so in the case of the three hundred silk-workers. In both these episodes his reaction to the plight of others is dispassionate - he is not affected by grief at the plight of those he is to help, but takes on their defence in an almost automatic way. He not only recognises but has interiorised the recognition that it is the duty of the kind of knight he has become to place his prowess at the disposal of those in need. The reaction of grief, a stage between observing the plight of others and taking up their defence, has become superfluous.

Elsewhere in the romance depictions of grief are distributed in a way that invites us to see Yvain in a new light as the account of his adventures unfolds. This will emerge in the final section of this study of the role and depiction of grief in Le Chevalier au lion , dealing with contrasts of grief and joy in the romance.

## Contrasts of grief and joy in Le Chevalier au lion

Grief is a much more commonly depicted emotion in Le Chevalier au lion than its opposite, joy. However, as in Le Chevalier de la Charrete, the two emotions are quite frequently contrasted, and sometimes juxtaposed. For example, near the beginning of the romance, when the court has heard Calogrenant's story, the general joy at the prospect of Arthur's knights challenging the Knight of the Fountain is contrasted to Yvain's chagrin at the thought of not being able to carry off the honour himself. His individualistic outlook is underscored by the 'joianz / dolanz' rhyme:

Mes qui qu'an soit liez et joianz,  
mes sire Yvains an fu dolanz,  
qu'il i cuidoit aler toz seus;  
si fu destroiz et angoisseus  
del roi, qui aler i devoit.

677-81

Of much greater interest than such momentary contrasts, however, is the creation of a tension between joy and grief on an episodic level, where a whole scene of grief may be transmuted by the action into a scene of joyfulness. When Yvain and Laudine have been married, and after Yvain has successfully defended the fountain against K y, King Arthur is given a rich and rapturous welcome into Laudine's castle (2331-60). Amidst the jubilation, Laudine herself steps forward to greet him, not 'irree', Chr tien tells us, but 'gaie et riant':

Et la dame rest fors issue,  
d'un drap emperfal vestue,  
robe d'ermine tote fresche,  
an son chief une garlendesche  
tote de rubiz atirree;  
ne n'ot mie la chiere irree.  
einz l'ot si gaie et si riant  
qu'ele estoit. au mien esclant.  
plus bele que nule contesse.

2361-9

The linking of her joyfulness and her beauty (in the last four lines

of the quotation) coupled with the statement that she was far from being grief-stricken (2366) encourages us to see this description as providing a counterpoint to her previous lengthily depicted grief. It marks the actualisation of Yvain's earlier hypothesis that since she was beautiful in grief, she would be even more wonderful to look at if she were joyful:

Don ne fust ce mervoille fine  
a esgarder, s'ele fust liee  
quant ele est or si bele iriee  
1492-4

Thus the description of her joyfulness, with its reminder of her previous grief, signals that the early part of the story has run its course, the initial problems surrounding the Lady and the Fountain having been satisfactorily resolved.

The same movement from grief to joy is evident at the end of the romance. After many vicissitudes, Yvain is reunited with his lady, and Laudine's earlier prayer (uttered on his behalf when she did not know who he was) -

-Ore alez donc a Deu, biaux sire,  
qui vostre pesance et vostre ire,  
se lui plest, vos atort a joie!  
4621-3 -

receives literal fulfilment, with the tension between joy and grief being expressed again by the 'liez / iriez' rhyme (as it had been at the end of the first part of the romance (see lines 1492-4, quoted above) when her own grief had given way to joy):

Or a mes sire Yvains sa pes;  
et poez croire c'onques mes  
ne fu de nule rien si liez,  
comant qu'il ait esté iriez.  
Molt an est a boen chief venuz  
qu'il est amez et chier tenuz  
de sa dame, et ele de lui.  
Ne li sovient or de nelui  
que par la joie l'antroblie  
que il a de sa dolce amie.  
6789-9



Foerster gives a significantly different reading of the last three lines of this quotation:

Ne li sovient de nul enui;  
Que par la joie les oblie,  
Qu'il a de sa tres cheire amie.  
Foerster 6806-9

While both readings seem acceptable, what is interesting about Foerster's is that it provides quite a close echo of an aphorism uttered by Calogrenant:

Et quant je vi l'air cler et pur,  
de joie fui toz asseür;  
que joie, s'onques la conui.  
fet tot oblier grant enui.  
455-8

This aphorism was uttered as part of Calogrenant's description of what had happened at the fountain after he had activated the storm. His distress at the tempest he had unleashed had been quickly dissipated when the sun came out. All of nature, indeed, had been filled with joy at the calming of the storm, according to Calogrenant's lengthy account of the joyful chorus of birds that had followed (459-77). The repetition of the same aphorism at the end of the romance links the first and the last time in the action when the storm is activated. Here, finally, when Yvain has returned to the fountain and worked the magic, the end result is not bird chorus, but the definitive, complete joy of the lovers. The sense of finality is conveyed by the categoric way in which the one clear-cut emotion, joy, is shown to replace the equally intense and unambiguous emotion of grief (as it did, though in a less categoric way, at the end of the earlier part of the story, where the image of the joyful Laudine replaced the sorrowing one).

It can be seen, then, that the joy/grief contrast provides a valuable form of signposting at the climactic moments of the action. There are a number of other 'interim' occurrences of the joy/grief contrast in the course of Yvain's adventures after his recovery from

madness. In these instances the balance is never allowed to tip completely on the side of joy, this being reserved for the conclusion. When Yvain defends the interests of the Dame de Noroison, her joy at what he has done for her is alluded to briefly, but only in relation to her equal measure of grief when he insists on departing:

Or se mist a la voie arriere  
et leissa molt la dame irree  
que il avoit molt faite liee.  
Et con plus liee l'avoit faite,  
plus li poise et plus se desheite,  
quant il ne vialt plus demorer.

3320-5

Then comes his meeting with the lion, his grief on returning to the Fountain, and the incident with Lunete where he eschews his own grief to relieve hers. Leaving Lunete with the promise that he will champion her, he comes upon a castle belonging to Gauvain's relatives and is faced there with the spectacle of the inhabitants in the throes of joy and grief simultaneously:

A grant joie et a grant enor  
des le plus haut jusqu'au menor  
li font joie et formant s'an painnent;  
a grant joie a l'ostel l'en mainnent  
et tant grant joie li ont faite.  
Une dolors qui les desheite  
lor refet la joie obliër;  
si recomencent a criër,  
et plorent, et si s'esgratinent.  
Ensi molt longuemant ne finent  
de joie feire et de plorer:  
.....  
Mes sire Yvains s'esbaïssoit  
de ce que si sovant chanjoient  
que duel et joie demenoient

3807-17..3824-6

The lord of the castle explains the mixed emotions of his people. They are grief-stricken for fear of a giant who threatens to kill his four sons or carry off his daughter, but the joyfulness they adopt at the same time is to honour Yvain, their guest (3872-8). When Yvain promises to defend them against the giant they stop grieving (4007-9), though when it looks as though his duty to Lunete will force him to

leave them without fulfilling his promise, grief surfaces again in the tears of the daughter, who begs him to stay (4054-63). When Yvain defeats the giant, a brief reference is made to the joy of the sons -

ore ont joie li quatre frere  
qui molt avoient mal sofert

4254-5 -

but otherwise there is no description of either rejoicing at the defeat, or of grief at Yvain's parting, although they press him to stay. Instead, the narrative moves on briskly to an account of Yvain's arrival on the scene of Lunete's judgment, suggesting that the episode with Gauvain's relations is to be seen merely as incidental in the unfolding of Yvain's adventures. The ending of the Lunete episode is not dissimilar: there is a reference to her joy (4570-1), and the general joy (4572-3), at her reinstatement, but this is brief in comparison to the earlier depiction of her grief and the grief of her ladies, and the emphasis is on Laudine's regret that the unknown knight cannot stay.

Moving on from the challenges where he felt some personal responsibility (the rescue of Lunete, the defence of Gauvain's relatives) Yvain encounters other challenges which the nature of true chivalry itself obliges him to meet. Correspondingly, in these latter episodes, somewhat greater emphasis is laid on his role as a bringer of joy, and his image in the eyes of the audience is thereby enhanced. When the miscreants have been defeated in the episode at Pesme Aventure, the joy described is two-fold. Firstly the lord and lady of the castle, along with the rest of the inhabitants, rejoice:

Tantost vienent grant aleüre  
totes les genz environ lui;  
et li sire et la dame andui  
li font grant joie, et si l'acolent,  
et de lor fille li parolent

5688-92

Interest quickly shifts, however, to the lord's offer, and Yvain's

refusal, of the daughter's hand (5693-764). Next the three hundred silk-workers, whose grief had been so strikingly portrayed, are depicted in a state of new-found joy which Yvain has brought about for them. Their joy, and the fact that Yvain has brought it about, are thrown into relief by the use of an extraordinarily bold simile: they approach Yvain more joyfully than they would approach God himself if he were to descend from Heaven:

devant lui, deus et deus s'an issent;  
ne ne cuit pas qu'eles feüssent  
tel joie come eles li font  
a celui qui fist tot le mont,  
s'il fust venuz de ciel an terre.

5773-7

All those who had previously cast scorn on Yvain's ability to fight the miscreants ask his forgiveness and rejoice at receiving it (5778-88). So Yvain takes his leave amid joyfulness, all the more striking because grief is the normal accompaniment of farewells, and striking too in that it provides a contrast with the earlier portrayal of the maidens' plight. The depiction of their joyfulness is, however, tempered by the impression that Yvain finds it a little irksome, and is chafing to get away:

Cil sont molt lié de ce qu'il oent,  
et sa corteisie molt loent.  
Or le comandent a Deu tuit,  
que grant piece l'orent conduit;  
et les dameiseles li ront  
congié demandé, si s'an vont;  
au partir totes li anclinent,  
et si li orent et destinent  
que Dex li doint joie et santé  
et venir a sa volanté  
en quelque leu qu'il onques aut.  
Et cil respont, que Dex les saut,  
cui la demore molt enuie:  
"Alez, fet il, Dex vos conduie  
en voz pafs saines et liees."  
Maintenant se sont avoiees;  
si s'an vont grant joie menant.

5787-803

In the space of a very few lines Yvain has reached the Younger Sister whose cause he had promised to champion, and the contrast is drawn between her joy at his arrival and her earlier grief:

Et mes sire Yvains maintenant  
de l'autre part se rachemine.  
D'errer a grant exploit ne fine  
trestoz les jorz de la semaine,  
si con la pucele l'en mainne  
qui la voie molt bien savoit,  
et le recet ou ele avoit  
lessiee la desheritee,  
desheitiee, et desconfortee.  
Mes quant ele oï la novele  
de la venue a la pucele  
et del Chevalier au lyon;  
ne fu joie se cele non  
que ele en ot dedanz son cuer;  
.....  
De la joie parler n'estuet  
qui la nuit fu a l'ostel faite:  
ja parole n'en iert retreite  
que trop i avroit a conter.

5804-17..5830-3

Here again, although her grief is turned to joy at his arrival, joy is qualified by the fact that it is anticipatory, not definitive, since her cause must still be defended. Nevertheless, the interweaving of the episode at Pesme Aventure with that of the Younger Sister has the particular effect of bringing together the joy of the silk-workers and the Younger Sister's joy on learning that Yvain will champion her. Thus the role of Yvain as a joy-bringer is doubly stressed. In the eyes of the audience, if not in his own, he has shown himself more than worthy to reclaim Laudine. With the couple's reconciliation, as already noted, joy finally banishes grief:

Ore a mes sire Yvains sa pes,  
Si poez croire, qu'onques mes  
Ne fu de nule rien si liez,  
Comant qu'il ot esté iriez.  
.....  
Ne li sovient de nul enui;  
Que par la joie les oblie,  
Qu'il a de sa tres chiere amie.

Foerster 6797-82..6806-8

Haidu says of the ending of the romance:

The modest reunion which concludes Yvain is a triumph of psychological realism over heroic satisfaction.<sup>24</sup>

His observation is clearly not intended to devalue the outcome of the romance - on the contrary. But the 'modest' aspect of the reunion must not be overemphasised. Because the two emotions of joy and grief have been depicted in frequent tension throughout, the simple unqualified displacement of the one by the other at the end makes a greater impact than its mere formulation would suggest, and what the joyfulness of the reunion lacks in scale, it makes up for in intimacy and intensity.

## NOTES

- 1 Except where stated otherwise, all quotations from Yvain are taken from Mario Roques' edition in the CFMA series (15).
2. See page 91-2 above.
3. see 1604-15; 1658-1710. Lancelot's lament for Guenevere, although set within a traditional framework, had a similarly functional element. See page 262 above.
4. Early instances are found in Alexis where the citizens of Rome echo and surpass the family of Alexis in grief at the saint's death (see page 51 above) and in Roland, where Charlemagne's grief over the body of Roland is accompanied by that of his troops:

Cent milie Francs s'en pasment cuntre tere  
Roland 2932

5. Foerster provides an alternative reading here:

Et ce me par a acoré,  
Que je li voi sa gorge estraindre.  
Certes, ele ne se set faindre,  
Qu'au pis, qu'ele puet, ne se face.

(Foerster 1478-81, corresponding to Roques 1482-5)

Alice Colby, in The Portrait in Twelfth-Century French Literature (63) argues for the acceptance of Foerster's reading because 'it makes the comparison in lines 1486-87 refer to the lady's throat, which is definitely being mistreated, rather than to the skin as a whole, which is not. In the rest of the portrait, attention is paid only to the mistreated areas.' (p.159 n.2).

6. See C. Luttrell, The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance (121) pp. 1-13.
7. Colby, op.cit., (63) p.4. Colby analyses Laudine's portrait on pps. 159-64.
8. In Thèbes beauty and grief are likewise linked in the person of Salemandre:

Char blanche, plaine, tendre et mole,  
simple vout et douce parole,  
eulz vers rianz et amorous:  
grant deul est quant il sont plorous!  
.....  
De plorer ot mouillié le vis,  
son pleur vaut d'autre fame ris.

8005-8..19-20

9. The same cliché is found in Ille et Galeran:

Il n'a el mont si roubeeur  
Qui ne plourast s'il le veïst.

Ille et Galeran (ed. Lðseth, Paris, 1890) 3891-2

10. See F.Whitehead, "Yvain's Wooing" (176).

11. See above, p. 238 note 7.

12. B. Sargent, "'L'autre' chez Chrétien de Troyes" (153) p. 204.

13. L. Topsfield, Chrétien de Troyes (167) p.186.

14. By using a similar formulation he is able to pass over quickly the grief of the Dame de Noroison's maiden on finding Yvain, since nothing in her grief needs to be specially highlighted:

Ne sai qu'alasse demorant  
a conter le duel qu'ele an fist  
2914-5

With regard to the scene of departure under discussion, it is within the romances of Chrétien himself, of course, that scenes of sorrowful parting have become impressive 'set pieces'.

15. See pp. 186-7 above. The contrasting scenes of grief in Yvain are much closer together than those in Erec.
16. See Erec, 3090-5; 4632-3. It is certainly interesting to place the lines describing the sleeping Erec and wakeful Enide alongside those describing Yvain and the lion:

a son chief a mis son escu,  
et la dame son mantel prant,  
sor lui de chief an chief l'estant;  
cil dormi, et cele veillea,  
onques la nuit ne someilla;  
chascun cheval tint an sa main  
Erec 3090-5

et il tint son chief an repos  
tote la nuit sor son escu,  
a tel repos come ce fu;  
et li lions ot tant de sens  
qu'il veillea et fu an espens  
del cheval garder, qui pessoit  
l'erbe qui petit l'engressoit.  
Yvain 3472-8



17. P.Haidu, Lion-Queue-Coupée (88) p.66.
18. J. Frappier, Etude sur Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion (78) p.78.  
See also Faith Lyons, "La Fausse Mort dans le Cligés de Chrétien de Troyes" (122) pp.167-77, especially pp.173-4.
19. Tony Hunt, "The Lion and Yvain" (98) p.90.
20. Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury, La tentation du suicide dans le roman français du XIIe siècle (111) p.120.
21. Julian Harris, "The Rôle of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain (90) p.1149, note 20.

22. A tant vint d'une chanbre fors  
la pucele gente de cors  
et de façon bele et pleisanz.  
Molt vint simple et mue et teisanz  
c'onques ses diax ne prenoit fin,  
vers terre tint le chief anclin;  
et sa mere revint decoste  
que mostrer lor voloit lor oste  
li sires, qui les ot mandees;  
en lor mantiax anvelopées  
vindrent, por lor lermes covrir.

23. It may be that the phrase 'par sa boene aventure' is charged with more significance than might first appear. In Yvain's lament at his first return to the fountain he expressed despair at the prospect of ever enjoying 'boene aventure' again:

Des joies fu la plus joieuse  
celes qui m'ert aseñree;  
mes molt ot petite duree.  
Et qui ce pert par son mesfet  
n'est droiz que boene aventure et.

Later, when he comes to the castle of Gauvain's relatives, the lord of the castle bids his grieving wife and daughter to cheer up, because

..un franc home molt deboneire  
nos a Dex et boene aventure  
ceanz doné

The phrase 'Dex et boene aventure' certainly imposes the idea of

providential leadings. J. Laidlaw also notes the repetition of the phrase 'boene aventure' in his article "Shame Appeased: on the structure and the sen of the Chevalier au Lion" (107), when discussing patterns of verbal and thematic repetition.

24. Peter Haidu, Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes (87), p.257.

## Chapter Eight

### LE CONTE DU GRAAL

#### The Grief of Perceval's Mother

An analysis of Chrétien's first four romances has established that grief occurs usually, not as a purely conventional response, or, in extended descriptions, as mere embellishment, but that it is more often in some way integral to the romance in question. In Le Conte du Graal also, instances of grief are woven into the fabric of the romance and may be said to contribute to the outworking of Chrétien's overall purpose, as far as we can gauge it in this unfinished and ultimately enigmatic work.<sup>1</sup>

Of more than forty instances where grief is described either briefly or at length in the course of the romance, the majority reflect upon the presentation of Perceval himself, depicting his response, or, more often, lack of response, to the grief of others. The first of a series of characters with whose grief Perceval is confronted is his mother. His excursion into the forest at the beginning of the romance has caused her great distress, forcibly conveyed in the narration, where it is brought out by enjambement and inversion (366-7) and by the joy/grief antithesis (366-70), as well as in her own words, where enjambement (374-5) and inversion (376) also add emphasis:

Et li vallés ne s'est pas fains  
De retorner a son manoir,  
Ou sa mere dolant et noir  
Avoit le cuer por sa demore.  
Grant joie a en meisme l'ore  
Qu'ele le voit, ne pas ne peut  
Celer la joie que ele eut,  
Car come mere qui molt l'aime  
Cort contre lui et si le claime  
"Biax fix, biax fix" plus de cent fois:

"Biax fix, molt a esté destrois  
Mes cuers por vostre demoree.  
De doel ai esté acoree,  
Si que par poi morte ne sui.  
Ou avez vos tant esté hui?"

Her state of mind is conveyed thus by the supple use of a stock formulation. The lines

Ou sa mere dolant et noir  
Avoit le cuer por sa demore

show a flexible use of the common formula '..ot le cuer dolant' as in

Li quens Guillaumes ot molt le cuer dolant  
Aliscans 693

Sovent en a le cuer dolent  
Troie 10194

and 'cuer' then is played on in her opening words:

"Biax fix, molt a esté detrois  
Mes cuers por vostre demoree.  
De doel ai esté acoree".

The mood Chrétien creates contrasts with the initially joyous and then comic atmosphere at the beginning of the romance, and curiosity is aroused as to why she should be so stricken simply because her son has been absent in the forest. On learning that Perceval has seen knights in the forest she falls in a faint, and the motif of fainting and recovery functions as a means of highlighting the speech in which she reveals the sad family history, explaining why she dreads any contact he might have with the world of knighthood:

La mere se pasme a cest mot,  
Que chevalier n'ot li ot;  
Et quant ele fu redrechiee,  
Dist come feme correchiee:  
"Ha! lasse! com sui malbaillie!  
Biax dols fix, de chevalerie  
Vos quidoie si bien garder  
Que ja n'en oïssiez parler  
Ne que ja nul n'en veïssiez.."

403-11

She reveals that his father, a knight, was wounded and then isolated and impoverished in the days following the death of King Uterpandragon

(412-54), and that he finally died from grief when his two sons were vanquished and killed in arms (455-81). Thus Perceval's mother explains her devotion to him and her desire above all to keep him from knighthood, since it has caused the death of her husband and elder sons.

The sad tale of Perceval's mother, recounting as it does her own grief and that of his father, evokes no appropriate response from her son, who merely asks her brusquely for food (491) and affirms his decision to become a knight - "cui qu'il em poist" (495). His lack of sympathy finds its culminating expression when he fails to turn back on seeing her faint from grief

Com s'ele fust cheüe morte.

625

This failure to respond to his mother's grief, recounted so early in the work, is to assume importance in several ways as the romance unfolds: it will twice provide direction when an obscure sense of remorse causes him to attempt to return home and see what has become of her (1579-92; 2952-9); it is put forward by the Hermit as the reason for his failure to ask the vital question in the Grail Castle (6392-402); and now, at the outset of the action, it epitomises his moral deficiencies as he embarks on his journey towards knighthood.

### **The Maiden in the Tent**

Perceval's failure to respond to his mother's grief is echoed in his very next encounter, with the Maiden in the Tent. Thinking he is correctly following his mother's recommendations about behaviour towards damsels, he kisses the Maiden and takes her ring, and then turns to eat, while she grieves at being treated thus (681-781). Aspects of this episode provide striking similarities with the

previous one. Both mother and Maiden are depicted appealing to him in a grief-stricken state, each applying the word 'malbaillie' to herself:

La mere se pasme a cest mot,  
Que chevalier nomer li ot;  
Et quant ele fu redrechiee,  
Dist come feme correchiee:  
"Ha! lasse! com sui malbaillie!...

403-7

Et cele pleure et dist "Vallet,  
N'en porte pas mon anelet,  
Que j'en seroie malbaillie...

729-31

His partaking of food in the tent against the background of the Maiden's weeping (756, 759, 773) recalls the fact that he responded to his mother's speech of woe by demanding food (489-91).

### Arthur's Court

Hard on the heels of Perceval's encounter with the Maiden in the Tent comes his arrival at the court of Arthur, '[i]e] roi qui fait les chevaliers' (494). He is directed there by a charcoal-burner who describes Arthur as being in a paradoxical mood, both joyful and sad:

Le roi Artu, biax dols amis,  
Lié et dolant i troveras  
A che chastel se tu i vas.

844-6

Arthur, he explains, is joyful at having won a victory over Rion of the Isles, but sad that his knights have left him to go back to their own domains:

Li rois des illes fu vencus,  
Et de c'est li rois Artus liez,  
Et de ses compaignons iriez  
Qui as chastiax se departirent.

852-5

Perceval is just as indifferent to the charcoal-burner's information about the king's mood as he has been to the grief of his mother and the Maiden in the Tent:

Li vallés ne prise un denier  
Les noveles au charbonier  
859-60

As well as reinforcing the depiction of Perceval as a youth devoid of feeling for others, the reference to the fact that the king's happiness is not undiluted, in spite of his recent victory, suggests a wider theme: success in feats of arms is in itself no guarantee of perfect joy (a theme to be writ large in the romance as it unfolds)<sup>2</sup> and the king's mood indicates that within his court all is not well. In fact, when Perceval arrives at Arthur's court, the king is no longer 'lié et dolant' but exclusively melancholy, because he has just been insulted by the Scarlet Knight who has stolen his cup and upset his queen. His mood of gloom is emphasised by the repetition of 'pensis' and by the use of chiasmus to point the contrast between his mood and the levity of those around him:<sup>3</sup>

Et li rois Artus ert assis  
Au chief de la table pensis,  
Et tuit li chevalier rioient  
Et li un as autres gaboient  
Fors il, qui pensis fu et mus.  
907-11

His preoccupied state of melancholy is stressed further<sup>4</sup> when Perceval addresses him:

Et cil tantost vers lui ala,  
Sel salua si come il sot.  
Li rois pensa et ne dist mot,  
Et cil autre fois l'araisone;  
Li rois fort pense et mot ne sone.  
922-6

Only when Perceval accidentally knocks off the king's head-gear on turning his horse to leave does he evoke a response from Arthur. This takes the form of a quite lengthy explanation of the king's woes (941-67) which meets with Perceval's by now customary indifference:

Li vallés ne prise une chive  
Quanques li rois li dist et conte  
Ne de son dol ne de sa honte,  
De sa feme ne li chaut il.  
968-71 (compare 859-60).

Although this failure to sympathise with Arthur is an indication of Perceval's lack of moral refinement, Arthur's knights too are oblivious to the king's mood as they make merry in his presence (909-11, quoted above). In coming to Arthur's court Perceval has not come to a haven of courtly behaviour and values. This emerges even more clearly in the incident when he greets one of the maidens of the court who responds by laughing and predicting that he will be a great knight (1034-44). The maiden has not laughed for six years (1045-6). The joyous response that he evokes from her, and the prediction she makes, are the first indications that he has a destiny beyond any seemingly reserved for such a boorish youth. Kay strikes the maiden out of annoyance at her prediction, and kicks a jester who had foretold that she would laugh when she saw an exceptional knight (1048-62). Although Perceval is so much implicated in this fracas, he does not wait to repair any of the suffering brought upon the maiden or the jester:

Einsi cil crie et cele pleure  
 Et li vallés plus ne demeure  
 1063-4

The rhyme in this couplet underlines this further failure of sympathy on his part, and the situation recalls the one in which he abandoned his mother to her grief. Again, a desire to pursue knighthood - in this case by literally pursuing the Scarlet Knight - motivates his departure. But when he has killed the aggressive Scarlet Knight and appropriated his armour - a first imperfect step along the road to chivalry - the glimmer of a more altruistic attitude is evident in his sending the king's cup back to court with word too that he will at some unspecified future date -

..se je puis, ains que je muire  
 1201

-



seek to avenge the Maiden who Laughed (1192-203).

The episode at court ends as it began, with references to Arthur's grief. Learning that Perceval has assumed the Scarlet Knight's arms, the king fears for the youth's safety and his fear is conveyed in terms of grief:<sup>5</sup>

Einsi li rois plaint et regrate  
Le vallet et fait chiere mate,  
Mais il n'i puet rien conquerer,  
Si laisse la parole ester.

1301-4

As before, his grief reflects against him, since it serves to convey his powerlessness to act.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Perceval's encounters with Gornemant and Blancheflor**

Perceval's next two encounters, with Gornemant de Gorhaut and with Blancheflor, are of significance in his evolution. Gornemant provides him with instruction in the practices of knighthood, while with Blancheflor he tastes love for the first time. His attitude to the grief of others comes into play in both episodes. It is when Gornemant has instructed him in feats of arms and clothed him as a knight that he suffers his first pangs of conscience with regard to his mother, making reference to the grief she has suffered on his account and expressing a desire to return to her (1580-92). This is the first time, apart from his fleeting exchanges with the Maiden who Laughed, that he has shown any care for the misfortunes of others, and his concern for his mother is all the more significant since he has been the cause of her grief. Although this concern is of obvious significance, however, it is only quite briefly delineated. In the following episode, set in the castle of Belrepeire, there takes place a fully-fledged incident in which he is confronted with another's

grief, the grief of his hostess Blancheflor.

In the needy and desolated fortress of Belrepeire, Perceval is received by two 'preudomes' and a maiden. Sadness mars the otherwise striking impression created by the 'preudomes':

De bel eage atot lor sanc  
Et atoute lor force fuissent,  
Se doel et pesance n'eüssent.

1792-4

Alongside the reference to these melancholy attendants, however, and in the context of the stricken town, the description of the maiden (1795-829) stresses her beauty and vivacity. She is likened in grace and elegance to a sparrowhawk or a parrot (1795-7); her eyes are 'vair et riant' (1821). Those who see her with Perceval think how well-matched they would be (1862-74). In introducing Blancheflor by the type of description which Colby has shown to be an example of the portrait topos, Chrétien appears to be alerting his audience to the likelihood of love-interest,<sup>7</sup> love being something necessary to every young knight in the course of his development. But the portrait, with its references to the maiden's charming and happy appearance, as well as to the richness of her attire (1798-804) and the description of the lively and positive way in which she subsequently converses with Perceval (1882-917) seem to sit rather uneasily with what follows, since at night she visits him in his bed and tearfully expresses her intention of ending her life the next day (1945 et seq). At first sight it seems curious that what is the first extended description of grief in Le Conte du Graal should be devoted to a character who has just been presented as an engaging damsel in lively mood. The indications are that Blancheflor's grief may be less than heartfelt, a view confirmed by various elements in the description of that grief.

The depiction of Blancheflor in grief is prefaced by an account of her unsettled state that night in her bedchamber as she tosses and

turns before putting on her scarlet silk coat and venturing to Perceval's bedside (1945-65). The first emotion ascribed to her is fear, which causes her to tremble and sweat as she leaves her chamber, and a reference to her weeping on leaving the chamber runs parallel to this and introduces the theme of her grief:

Lors s'est de son lit departie  
Et issue est fors de la chambre  
A tel paor que tuit li membre  
Li trambloient, li cors li sue.  
Plorant est de la chambre issue  
Et vient au lit ou il se dort,  
Et plaint et sozpire molt fort,  
Si s'ancline, si s'ajenoille  
Et pleure si qu'ele li moille  
De ses lermes tote la face.  
1960-9

As Enide's tears fell on the sleeping Erec, so Blancheflor's tears fall on Perceval. However, unlike Enide, who wakes Erec inadvertently with her involuntary exclamation of grief,<sup>8</sup> it is clear that Blancheflor weeps over Perceval with the intention of waking him and arousing his compassion. There is a strong element of calculation in her grief. This is suggested at the outset by the way in which her coming to him is depicted as a deliberate and thought-out act:

... se porpense qu'ele ira  
A son hoste et si li dira  
De son pensé une partie.  
1957-9

The depiction of the grief itself also contains indications that it is assumed. As noted, it is presented as running parallel to her fear, and while it might be argued that her weeping is a genuine symptom of her fear, a series of suggestive rhymes in the grief description itself (1960-9 quoted above) gives rise to the impression that it is contrived. The rhyming of 'dort' and 'fort' in the couplet

Et vient au lit ou il se dort  
Et plaint et sozpire molt fort  
1965-6

hints that she sighs loudly in order to wake him; the rhyming of

's'ajenoille' and 'moille' -

Si s'acline, si s'ajenoille  
Et pleure si qu'ele li moille  
De ses lermes tote la face

1967-9 -

echoed a few lines later at the point where Perceval wakes -

Si s'esbahist molt et merveille  
De sa face qu'il sent moillie,  
Si voit celi ajenoillie

1972-4 -

suggests that she has placed herself in the best position for her tears to fall on his face. The line

N'a hardement que plus en face  
1970

is linked by an identical rhyme to the reference to her weeping -

Et pleure si qu'ele li moille  
De ses lermes tote la face

1968-9 -

and this link is revealing: boldness (not genuine overwhelming grief) has impelled her thus far.

Her tears have the desired effect. Perceval wakes and sees her kneeling at his bedside:

Si voit celi ajenoillie  
Devant son lit, qui le tenoit  
Par le col embrachié estroit

1974-6

His surprise at finding her with her arms tightly around his neck is shared by the audience, since this aspect of her posture has not been mentioned before, and adds to the undeniable humour of the incident, all the more since it was stressed at the very point at which Perceval went to bed that he was innocent in all matters of love (1941-2). In this context of calculated effect on the part of Blancheflor, we might well view sceptically her repeated assertions to Perceval (1995-8, 2026-7, 2029-34) that she intends to end her life the next day rather than fall victim to her enemies.<sup>9</sup> Indeed the

narrator underlines the irony of the situation by commenting that Blancheflor came to weep over Perceval precisely with the purpose of getting him to champion her:

..onques cele por autre chose  
Ne vint plorer desor sa face,  
Que que ele entendant li face  
Fors por che qu'ele li meïst  
En corage qu'il empreïst  
La bataille..

2040-5

Once again, as was so often the case in the previous romances, we see grief depiction used by Chrétien in a strongly ironic vein, and also here as a means of motivating action and as a contribution to the characterization of Blancheflor, who is thus seen to be an active and resourceful heroine, worthy of joining that band of spirited female characters, notably Fénice, Laudine and Lunete, already created by Chrétien.

The theme of Perceval's evolution is, however, of greater significance in this episode than the characterization of Blancheflor, since here he is shown responding sympathetically for the first time to another's grief. He draws her towards him (1977-9) and, when he has heard her tale of woe, speaks words of comfort to her and takes her into his bed:

Et il li dist:"Amie chiere,  
Faites anuit mais bele chiere.  
Confortez vos, ne ploiez plus,  
Si vos traiez lez moi ça sus,  
S'ostez les lermes de vos oex.  
Dix, se lui plaist, vos fera mix  
Demain que vos m'avez dit.  
Lez moi vos traiez en cest lit,  
Qu'il est assez lez a oex nous;  
Hui mais ne me laisserez vos."

2047-56

Such a response is unmistakably an advance in his evolution when compared to his attitude to the distress and sorrow of others in previous incidents. It does not represent a turning-point in itself,

but reflects the progress he has made under the aegis of Gornemant.<sup>10</sup> His compassion for Blancheflor is not, or does not remain, totally disinterested, since the following morning he requests her favour ('drüerie' 2104) as a reward for his championing her (2103-5). When he defeats her enemy Engygeron, his merciful treatment of him is not disinterested either, for he seems to respond to the latter's argument that in sparing him he will ensure that his victory will be noised abroad (2243-68). But he does respond to Engygeron's request not be handed over to Blancheflor (2276-91) and he is concerned that Engygeron should bear a kindly message from him to the Maiden who Laughed (2313-23). Thus it can be said at least that a more civilised Perceval is emerging and such a view seems to receive confirmation in the description of the grief of Blancheflor and of the inhabitants of Belrepeire, when ultimately he receives a challenge from Clamadeus to a further single combat (2586-99). Great stress is laid on the theme of the grief aroused by his setting forth. The reactions of Blancheflor and of the inhabitants are given equal weight, and the universality of grief is emphasised by the repetition of the phrase 'totes et tuit' (2607) ('toutes et toz' - 2645; 'toz et toutes' - 2646):

Quant la pucele ot cele chose  
 Qui a son ami est nonchie,  
 S'en est dolante et correchie;  
 Que cil encontre li remande  
 Que il l'avra, des qu'il le mande,  
 La bataille, coment qu'il praigne.  
 Lors enforce molt et engraigne  
 Li doels que la pucele en fait,  
 Mais ja por doel que ele en ait  
 Ne remandra noient, ce cuit.  
 Molt li pr'ent totes et tuit  
 Que combatre a celui ne s'aille.

2600-11

A lui armer molt grant dol ot,  
 Car toutes et toz lor pesa,  
 Et il toz et toutes les a  
 Comandeas al roi des rois,  
 Si monte en son cheval norois  
 Que l'en li avoit amené;

Puis n'a gaires entr'ax esté.  
Quant il s'en parti maintenant,  
Si les laisse grant doel menant.  
2644-52

Not only is Perceval perceived here by Blancheflor and the townspeople to be a subject worthy of their grief as he prepares to leave for single combat, but his repeated refusal to be thus deflected implies valour and single-mindedness on his part. It is paradoxical that his setting his face against the grief of others is not here, as hitherto, an indication of his boorishness, but of his worth. Nor does he leave the inhabitants to grieve without first commending them to God (2646-7). He then rides out to join combat with Clamadeus and duly defeats him (2653-83).

Perceval by now has attained the status of a knight, has acquitted himself honourably as such in the defeat of both Engygeron and Clamadeus, and has won the love of Blancheflor and the admiration and gratitude of the people of Belrepeire. It is at this point that his conscience is stirred by the memory of the mother whom he has abandoned, and he decides to leave Belrepeire to go and find her (2910-32). Grief figures prominently in the departure scene. This time, however, the grief of Blancheflor and the ordinary inhabitants of Belrepeire is given only cursory mention:

Si laisse s'amie la gente  
Molt correchie et molt dolente  
Et toz les autres autresi.  
2935-7

It is, unexpectedly, the monks and nuns of Belrepeire whose grief receives prominence as he now takes his leave. Their appearance here must be seen as pointing to the Christian orientation of the romance, already a recognizable strand,<sup>11</sup> and soon to become more evident in the episode in the Grail Castle (according at least to one widespread interpretation). The monks and nuns form a procession as they would on Ascension Day (2939-40) - the day commemorating the departure of

Christ himself; they address Perceval as one who has brought them out of exile and give voice to their grief for him in emphatic terms:

Et disoient celes et cil:  
"Sire, qui nos as trait d'escil  
Et ramenez en nos maisons,  
N'est merveille se doel faisons,  
Quant tu si tost laissier nos vels.  
Molt doit estre grans nostre doels,  
Si est il tant que plus ne puet."  
2945-51

There is a variation in the manuscript tradition concerning the opening lines of Perceval's speech of reply (2952 et seq.) and this will be discussed presently. The bulk of his speech presents no textual problem, however, though Paule le Rider has raised objections to it concerning vraisemblance, since it contains, in her words, 'des propos de chrétien cultivé' which she maintains Perceval would not have been capable of uttering<sup>12</sup>:

Ne quidiez vos que ce soit bien  
Se je ma mere veoir vois,  
Que je laissai soule en ce bois  
Qui la Gaste Forest a non?  
Je revenrai, weille ele ou non,  
Que ja por rien nel laisserai;  
Et s'ele est vive, j'en ferai  
Nonain velee en vostre eglise;  
Et s'ele est morte, le servise  
Ferois por s'ame chascun an,  
Que Diex el sain Saint Abrahan  
Le mete avec les pives ames...  
2956-67

In my view, if Perceval seems to speak out of character here, it is because we are being vouchsafed a glimpse of him as an elect figure, a glimpse which may not come in logical sequence with what has gone before, but which is a foreshadowing of his spiritual destiny. This interpretation is strengthened by the variant reading of the opening of his speech, though found in only four out of the fifteen manuscripts (including T, which Roach takes for his edition). Here Perceval's measured tones are actually more than a little reminiscent of Christ's words to his disciples before his death (and his



subsequent Ascension - Perceval is leaving on Ascension Day):

Et il lor dist: "Ne vos estuet  
Pas or plorer plus longuement.  
Je revenrai, se Diex m'ament,  
Que duels a faire est nule rien."  
2952-5

Compare:

Non turbetur cor vestrum....iterum venio  
John 14. 1..3

The equivalent reading for these four lines in all other versions including the Guiot copy (A, used by Lecoy for his edition) is:

Et il lor dit: "Ne vos estuet  
doter, ce sachiez, nule rien."  
2948-9

But although the scriptural echo is less pronounced, this reading does not detract from the Christ-like image in which Perceval seems to be clothed at this point. It may seem inappropriate that Perceval, who has only recently been depicted as an uncouth figure, should depart in this aura on Ascension Day. A comment by Lacy with reference to Yvain seems applicable here:

In the case of Yvain we find numerous details which suggest that he himself becomes like Christ - but the key figure here is "like": he is Christ-like, but he is not Christ; he is a figure, not a symbol, of Christ. This figuring effect, instead of bestowing divinity on him, simply enhances his stature as a devoted knight and servant.<sup>13</sup>

The variant reading of T just discussed provides a link between the presentation of Perceval and the presentation of Erec in the scene of his departure with Enide from Lac's court, since Erec comforts those lamenting his departure in very similar terms:<sup>14</sup>

Et il lor dist por reconfort:  
"Seignor, por coi plorez si fort?  
je ne sui pris ne mahaingnez.  
an cest duel rien ne gahaingnez.  
Se je m'an vois, je revanrai  
quant Deu pleira et je porrai."

Erec 2749-54

This is only one of a number of similarities between the two

situations. For both Erec and Perceval, the need for departure has come from within them in the midst of amorous dalliance: when controversy arises between them one morning, Erec and Enide are depicted together

la ou il jurent an un lit,  
qu'il orent eñ maint delit  
Erec 2471-2

Similarly Perceval is enjoying the love of Blancheflor when the memory of his mother intervenes;

Delez li\* se jue et delite.                      \*Blancheflor  
2913

Although Erec's departure is not depicted immediately after the scene of dalliance, as Perceval's is, there is still an underlying parallel. In each instance the protagonist takes his leave amid collective expressions of grief, to which he reacts with a measured response. (The detail of Erec's commending the inhabitants of Carnant to God - Erec 2760 - has already been paralleled by Perceval's commending the inhabitants of Belrepeire to God when he leaves them to fight Clamadeus, 2646-7).

The parallels between these departure scenes in Erec and Perceval, which immediately precede Erec and Enide's quest and Perceval's visit to the Grail Castle respectively, strengthen the interpretation, as it is expressed by D.D.R.Owen, that at the end of the Belrepeire episode a very significant point in the romance has been reached:

In both Erec and Yvain the fatal turning-point in the hero's career had occurred at much the same stage - after something approaching three thousand lines of triumphant progress. It seems that our poet decided to cast Perceval's biography in much the same mould.<sup>15</sup>

D.G.Hoggan has contested this view, concurring with Frappier in the opinion that the true pivot of Perceval's experiences is to be found in the later episode of the Loathly Lady (4603-740). He chooses to

call the end of the Belrepeire episode 'un faux apogée', in that a number of issues remain unresolved.<sup>16</sup> But the comparison between Erec and Perceval is significant at least as a measure of the progress achieved by Perceval. That Perceval's departure from Belrepeire should present such a parallel with that of Erec's departure from Carnant (against the background of a tradition where sorrowful scenes of departure are somewhat uncommon)<sup>17</sup> can only enhance our image of Perceval at this point. He has started out as a boorish and untutored youth, but now we are encouraged to see him as being on a par with Erec, whom Enide referred to, at a comparable point in the earlier romance, as

.....li miaudres chevaliers,  
li plus hardiz et li plus fiers,  
qui onques fust ne cuens ne rois  
Erec 2495-7

But in spite of his attainments, and although the scene of sorrowful farewell greatly enhanced his image, Erec had still much progress to make in the moral sphere; and in the next episode of Le Conte du Graal, the episode in the Grail Castle, it becomes clear that Perceval is sadly lacking still in certain essential moral attributes.

### **The Grail Castle**

It is understandable that, in a work that Chrétien himself should have called Le Conte du Graal, the scene in the Grail Castle should have led to more critical comment than any other single scene in his romances, though recent scholarship has tended to place less emphasis on it.<sup>18</sup> In the context of this present study it is not of capital importance, since it contains little material of direct relevance to the depiction of grief. However, Perceval's failure to ask the question about the Grail procession, which, as he later learns, was a

literally vital question (4669-83), may be seen as another instance of the self-centredness that underlay his lack of concern and compassion for others in previous episodes, a fundamental self-centredness that his experiences at Belrepeire and his advance in knightliness have not eradicated. At three points in the central section of the episode (3202-12; 3243-53; 3290-303) the narrator comments that Perceval fails to ask the meaning of the Grail procession because he has in mind the advice of Gornemant against speaking too much. Having explained this for the third time, however, Chrétien then informs us that Perceval does resolve to ask the question (so that, to that extent, he goes beyond the advice of Gornemant) but that he is deflected from doing so there and then by his involvement in the sumptuous meal being served for him:

Einsi la chose a respitie,  
 S'enten[t] al boire et al mengier.  
 3310-1

The parallel with the early scene in his mother's house and with the encounter in the Tent is clear, since on these occasions his desire for food similarly overrode other considerations. In demeanour he may now be less boorish, but the values of the natural man (represented by his desire for food, in preference, in this instance, to understanding) are still operative within him.

In the Grail episode Perceval's fundamental egocentricity is contrasted with the concern and hospitality shown to him by his infirm host, who apologises for not rising to greet him. The apology contrasts strongly with the cavalier tone of Perceval's reply:

Et dist "Amis, ne vos soit grief  
 Se encontre vos ne me lief,  
 Que je n'en sui mie aesiez."  
 -"Por Dieu, sire, or vos en taisiez,  
 Fait cil, qu'il ne me grieve point,  
 Se Diex joie et santé me doint."  
 3107-12

There is a certain urbane politeness in Perceval's reply, but undermined by the reference to his own joy and health (3112), which is ironic in the light of the need of his host for 'santé'. He shows little concern for the infirmity of his host, yet his host shows concern for him, and tries to rise for him, doubtless perceiving in him one who is spiritually infirm:<sup>19</sup>

Li preudome tant por lui se grieve  
Que tant que il puet se sozlieve...

3113-4

Perceval's lack of sensitivity to the condition of his host (the Fisher King) echoes his lack of interest in King Arthur's state of mind earlier in his travels (see pages 320-2 above), and this echo suggests that, for all his intervening experiences, he has not undergone any radical and permanent transformation on the moral plane.

### **The Sorrowing Maiden**

The theme which has provided a focus for much of the foregoing comment, namely, Perceval's failure to show concern for others in their grief and sorrowfulness, receives striking expression in the episode following that at the Grail Castle. Perceval comes upon a maiden who is in the throes of lamentation for a cause not immediately stated. A triad of verbs introduces the lament of this maiden

Qui pleure et crie et se desraisme  
Come chaitive dolerouse

3432-3

It is the first lament for the dead to be found in Le Conte du Graal. Its single theme is the maiden's disdain for her own life now that the one she loves is dead, and in the course of its nineteen lines<sup>20</sup> this theme is played on in a variety of ways to produce a lament which is stylistically very elaborate, as analysis will show.

After the opening exclamation

Lasse! fait el, maledrouse!  
3434

the accursedness of her life is expressed, again by exclamation, rendered even more forceful by the use of the word 'pute', and the idea is repeated through the device of interpretatio:

Con de pute heure je fui nee!  
L'heure que je fui engendree  
Soit maldite et que je nasqui  
3435-7

In the next two lines :

Qu' ainc mais voir tant ne m'irasqui  
De rien qui poist avenir  
3438-9

the reinforced form 'ainc mais' strengthened by 'voir' and linked with 'tant' gives resounding expression to her declaration that she has never grieved so much before, as does the inclusion of the absolute 'rien'. In these lines the concept of grieving is focussed in the little-used verb 'm'irasqui', in an end-of-line position, providing a rime riche with 'nasqui'. Enjambement over a broken couplet throws into relief the cause of her anguish (of which the audience has hitherto been ignorant):

Je ne deüsse pas tenir  
Mon ami mort, se Dieu pleüst...  
3440-1

God is castigated for what he has allowed to happen, and the idea of the maiden preferring her own death to that of her lover is highlighted by the use of antithesis:

...Qu'assez miex exploitié eüst,  
S'il fust vis et je fusse morte.  
3442-3

In a rhetorical question, Death becomes the next object of her criticism:

La mors qui si me desconforte,  
 Por coi prist s'ame ainz que la moie?  
 Quant la rien que je plus amoie  
 Voi morte, vie que me vaut?

3444-7

Here again enjambement (3446-7) gives emphasis to the cause of her grief and lays stress on the same word ('morte') as the previous instance of enjambement did ('mort' 3441) echoing the rhyme-word of four lines previously ('morte' 3443) and the reference to Death itself ('La mors' 3444). The word 'morte' is then strikingly juxtaposed to 'vie' (3447).

Death and life are again brought into proximity and contrasted in the next three lines, where enjambement and a displaced caesura contribute to emphasising 'vie' and 'Mors' respectively:

Aprés lui certes ne me chaut  
 De ma vie ne de mon cors.  
 Mors, cor en giete l'ame fors!

3448-50

The lament ends with a plea to Death to release her soul so that it may be company for the soul of her dead lover, a bold idea expressed in 'chamberiere' and 'compaigne':

Si soit chamberiere et compaigne  
 A la soe, se ele daigne.

3451-2

The lament is an intense expression of the maiden's grief, conveyed by stark effects, unsoftened, for example, by eulogy of the person being lamented. Apart from the line introducing the lament, no reference is made to the signs of grief: the lament receives emphasis by standing alone. In the line immediately following, a link between the grief and its cause is made by the brutally direct revelation that she is holding in her arms the body of a man, and that he is headless:

Einsi cele son dol menoit  
 D'un chevalier qu'ele tenoit,  
 Qui avoit trenchie la teste

3453-5

The Sorrowing Maiden has been recognised as having an important and complex function in the story.<sup>21</sup> In asking Perceval's name, she will stimulate him to a realization of what that name is, thereby awakening within him a new consciousness of his individual identity. She will also explain that his unconcern has been the cause of his mother's death, and that this in turn is the reason for his having failed to ask at the Grail Castle a question which would have been liberating and salutary to others. Furthermore, her own state of grief, conveyed so strikingly in her lament, is far from being a mere narrative device used to lead Perceval to her as he rides through the forest, but gives rise to a dramatic restatement of Perceval's insensitivity to the suffering of his fellows. Firstly, her grief for her dead knight contrasts strikingly with his nonchalance when she tells him of his mother's death:

- "Or ait Diex de s'ame merchi,  
Fait Perchevax, par sa bonté.  
Felon conte m'avez conté.  
Et des que ele est mise en terre,  
Que iroie jou avant querre?  
Kar por rien nule n'i aloie  
Fors por li que veoir voloie;  
Autre voie m'estuet tenir."  
3618-25

Secondly, Perceval's suggestion that the maiden should accompany him on his travels, leaving the dead body of her lover behind him, is insensitive, as is the casual and even disparaging way in which he refers to the knight's body:

Et se vos vollez venir  
Avec moi, jel vold[r]oie bien;  
Que cis ne vos voldra mais rien  
Qui chi gist mors, jel vos plevis.  
Les mors as mors, les vis as vis;  
Alons ent moi et vos ensamble.  
De vos grant folie me samble,  
Qu'isi seule gaitiez cest mort;  
Mais sivons celui qui l'a mort,  
Et je vos pramet et creant:  
Ou il me fera recreant  
Ou je lui, se jel puis ataindre.  
3626-37



Although he now resolves to pursue the knight's murderer, this is clearly just a convenient replacement for his previous aim of returning to his mother. The grief-stricken maiden has no wish to accompany him (3638-43). In the account of their parting, Perceval's nonchalance is brought out by the unadorned 'Lors s'en va', contrasting with the longer reference to the maiden, still absorbed in her grief:

Lors s'en va et cele remaint,  
Qui del cors partir ne se velt.  
De la qui mort li cuers li doelt.  
3688-90

### **The Wretched Lady**

Coming immediately after the encounter with the Sorrowing Maiden is Perceval's meeting with the Wretched Lady. These two episodes are linked by much more than proximity. The latter woman, like the former, is depicted in grief. Her grief is but one aspect of her general wretchedness, so pictorially described, though attention is drawn to her weeping by a particularly developed form of the motif of flowing tears:

Desliee et desaffublee  
Estoit, si li paroît la face,  
Ou il ot mainte laide trache,  
Que ses lermes sanz prendre fin  
I avoient fait maint chemin,  
Et jusqu'el sain li avaloient  
Et par desoz sa roube aloient  
Jusques sor les jenols colant.  
3730-7

Now it is revealed in the dialogue between Perceval and this lady that he has been the cause of her grief and that of the Sorrowing Maiden. The Wretched Lady is the Damsel in the Tent who is being punished by L'Orgueilleus de la Lande because of what he thinks transpired between

herself and Perceval much earlier. The Sorrowing Maiden has lost her 'ami' because L'Orgueilleus has killed him for going to the help of the Wretched Lady. A further link between the two encounters lies in their joint outcome: Perceval challenges and defeats L'Orgueilleus de la Lande, thereby, to some extent, making reparation for his behaviour to the Damsel in the Tent and its consequences.

Some parallels can be seen between the double encounter with the Sorrowing Maiden and the Wretched Lady on the one hand, and the Belrepeire episode on the other. In the Belrepeire episode, as in the double encounter, Perceval is confronted by grieving ladies, to whom he gives aid. In neither the Belrepeire incident, however, nor in the double encounter, does his aid-giving represent truly altruistic behaviour. His helping of Blancheflor is not disinterested (see page 328 above); his offer to go in pursuit of the killer of the headless knight is not accompanied by genuine compassion (see page 339 above); and his combat with L'Orgueilleus is undertaken without much choice, since L'Orgueilleus catches up with him and threatens him (3831-9).

That is not to say that no credit may be attributed to him in these episodes. In both the Belrepeire episode and the double encounter he shows mercy to those he defeats (Clamadeus, Engygeron, L'Orgueilleus), and sends them to Arthur's court with messages for the Maiden who Laughed. It is clear in the sorrowful farewell he is accorded at the end of the Belrepeire episode that, in it, he has consolidated his status as a knight, while, in the course of the double encounter, in guessing his name he is shown to have gained a sense of personal identity. But neither of these changes has made a new man of him in the spiritual sense.

It is immediately after the double encounter, when he unknowingly comes into proximity with Arthur's court, that the drops of blood on the snow cause his thoughts to turn in love to Blancheflor (4194-212).

Frappier sees in his contemplation of the drops on the snow

le premier signe chez lui d'un comportement subjectif, d'une  
vie intérieure.<sup>22</sup>

It is indeed the first time he is depicted in contemplative mood (as  
Frappier says elsewhere of this episode:

Perceval dépasse pour la première fois le monde des  
apparences sensibles - ce dont il était incapable en voyant  
le cortège du Graal.)<sup>23</sup>

But it is possible to over-estimate the significance of Perceval's  
contemplation of the drops of blood on the snow as an indication of  
his inner development. Perceval had after all promised to return to  
Belrepeire when he had discovered the fate of his mother, and it could  
be argued that he should not therefore have required the drops of  
blood on the snow to remind him of Blancheflor.

Grief plays a part in Perceval's encounter with Arthur's court at  
this point, but these instances may be more usefully dealt with as  
part of the discussion of the section in which the parts of the  
romance dealing with Perceval and those dealing with Gauvain overlap  
(see pages 345-8 below). What may, however, be noted here is that  
when Perceval decides to pursue the mystery of the Grail (4727-40) he  
conveniently forgets his promise to return to Belrepeire. Twice in  
the romance, on quitting his mother and on leaving Belrepeire, he has  
left behind him the parting grief of another person/ other persons,  
and has not been unduly dismayed when circumstances have prevented him  
from returning to repair that grief.

## The Hermit Episode

Grief - the grief of people whom Perceval has encountered and his own lack of grief when that emotion would seem an appropriate response - has provided important markers along the road of Perceval's experiences. The culmination of his experiences, insofar as the unfinished nature of the romance allows us to see it as a culmination, is the episode with the Hermit on Good Friday. In view of all that has gone before, it is of the utmost significance that in this episode Perceval should be depicted weeping. His tears and, in one instance, his sighs, are the direct result of hearing the Easter message, with its hope of forgiveness explained to him in unambiguous terms by the group of penitents that he meets. His tears are caused first by a sense of sin which their explanations give rise to within him and which cause him to seek out the Hermit:

Ce que Perchevax oi ot  
Le fait plorer, et si li plot  
Que al pseudome alast parler.  
6315-7

Et cil en son chemin s'en entre,  
Qui sozpiroit del cuer del ventre  
Por che que mesfais se sentoit  
Vers Dieu, dont molt se repentoit;  
Plorant s'en va tot le boschage.  
6333-7

Perchevax se met a jenous  
Tantost qu'il entre en la chapele,  
Et li buens hom a l[u]i l'apele,  
Qui molt le vit simple et plorant,  
Qui dusques el menton colant  
L'eve des oex li degoutoit.  
6348-53

When he has confessed and when the Hermit has counselled him, his tears denote repentance for his sins:

Après le service aoura  
La crois et ses pechiez plora.  
6495-6

In the Hermit episode, then, Perceval weeps, persistently and abundantly.<sup>24</sup> He weeps nowhere else in the romance. Payen has shown that in the context of the Contritionist movement of the twelfth century tears were considered to be the touchstone of repentance.<sup>25</sup> Perceval repents 'dans les formes'. In the context of the romance itself, he who has been so singularly lacking in sensitivity now demonstrates in unique fashion that he has an inner spiritual life and is capable of making a spiritual response.

The question as to whether the Hermit episode, isolated as it is from the body of incidents concerning Perceval, is a later addition to the original text has been discussed notably by Owen<sup>26</sup> and Hoggan.<sup>27</sup> From a study of grief in Le Conte du Graal it is possible to view Perceval's grief in this episode not as a pious interlude grafted on by a later hand, but falling into place in a whole pattern of episodes concerned with grief, beginning with his mother's grief and his reaction to it. It is part of the pattern that the mother's grief should be evoked by the Hermit:

Et dist: "Frere, molt t'a neü  
Uns pechiez dont tu ne sez mot:  
Ce fut li doels que ta mere ot  
De toi quant departis de li,  
Que pasmee a terre chaf  
Al chief del pont devant la porte,  
Et de cel doel fu ele morte."<sup>4</sup>

6392-8

Hoggan has argued that in disregarding his mother's grief, Perceval has put himself in a state of mortal sin.<sup>28</sup> It is this state of sinfulness that has resulted in his failure to pose the vital question at the Grail Castle (6399-402). And if his unconcern for his mother's grief has had grave repercussions, her concern for him (which the Hermit saw in her commending him to God, but which must also surely be seen in her grief over him) has had beneficial repercussions for him:

Por le pechié que tu en as  
 T'avient que rien n'en demandas  
 De la lance ne del graal,  
 Si t'en sont avenu maint mal;  
 Ne n'eüsses pas tant duré,  
 S'ele ne t'eüst comandé  
 A Damedieu, ce saches tu.  
 Mais sa parole ot tel vertu  
 Que Diex por li t'a regardé,  
 De mort et de prison gardé.

6399-408

True compassion (as opposed, for example, to the not disinterested courtliness he showed to the resourceful Blancheflor) has been lacking in all Perceval's encounters with those in need. The tracing of his progress as a knight serves only to underline the fact that achievement in the knightly sphere has not affected the state of his soul. This is highlighted by the fact that the five years he has spent in the pursuit of knightly adventure before meeting the Hermit have brought him no inner satisfaction or understanding, as he admits:

"Sire, chiez le Roi Pescheor  
 Fui une fois et vi la lance  
 Dont li fers saine sanz dotance,  
 Et de cele goutte de sanc  
 Que a le pointe del fer blanc  
 Vi pendre, rien n'en demandai.  
 Onques puis, certes, n'amendai.  
 Et del graal que je i vi  
 Ne sai pas cui on en servi,  
 Si ai puis eü si grant doel  
 Que mors eüsse esté mon wel,  
 Que Damedieu en obl'ai,  
 Ne puis merchi ne li cr'ai  
 Ne ne fis rien, que je seüsse,  
 Por coi jamais merchi eüsse."

6372-86

In the Hermit episode, for the first time, Perceval expresses grief on his own account. Never having expressed grief for himself before, it is perhaps not surprising that he has not been able to empathise with others in their grief. Before he has been reconciled with God, he has not truly been able to show love for his neighbour. This, in my view, is the theme which arises from a study of the pattern of grief in the Perceval section of the romance.

## The Role of Grief in the Depiction of Arthur

Mention has been made above (pages 320-3) of Arthur's sorrowful mood on Perceval's arrival at his court. In what forms a lengthy overlap section between the adventures of Perceval and those of Gauvain (4002-815) grief is again a feature of events at Arthur's court, in one instance confirming yet again Perceval's imperviousness to the grief of others, in another instance contributing to the characterization of Arthur.

When Arthur and his court chance upon Perceval in contemplative mood and Kay approaches him in characteristically tactless style, Perceval unhorses Kay and causes him to dislocate his shoulder, from which injury he faints (4294-319). Kay has emerged earlier in the romance as a spiteful and vindictive character (see page 322 above) but he is an established member of the court, and his fainting causes grief and consternation among the knights and ladies, who think he is dead. Grief for one thought mistakenly to be dead is, as has been amply documented, a favoured theme of Chrétien, often treated at length, not infrequently with humorous or ironic intent.<sup>29</sup> No such elaboration is found in this instance, however, but the depiction of the court's mistaken grief is still not gratuitous. The fact that they think he is dead is given as a reason for the strength of their grief, which, because it does not distract Perceval from his amorous contemplation, emphasises in parentheses the extent to which he is preoccupied:

..Et dames et chevalier muevent,  
Qui le seneschal pasmé troevent,  
Si quident bien que il soit mors.  
Lors comencha uns doels si fors  
Que sor lui firent tot et totes.  
Et Perchevax sor les trois gouttes  
Se rapuie desor sa lance.

4323-9

The rhymes here are suggestive.<sup>30</sup> Not only does 'mors' rhyme with 'fors', linking cause and effect, but, more notably, the breaking of the couplet and the rhyming of 'totes' and 'goutes' emphasise that two sets of preoccupations exist side by side, without the former (the collective grief, as signified by 'tot et totes') impinging upon the latter, Perceval's contemplation of the blood on the snow.

But it is Arthur, not Perceval, who now becomes the main focus of interest. Arthur shares the general grief for Kay, and, as in the scene in which he first appeared in the romance, his image is not enhanced by his being depicted in grief. Rather, a certain dependence is suggested, since twice he requires reassurance from others that Kay will recover:

Mais li rois ot molt grant pesance  
Del seneschal qui est blechiez;  
Dolens en est et correchiez  
Tant qu'en li dist qu'il ne s'esmait,  
Qu'il garra bien, mais que il ait  
Mire qui s'en sache entremetre  
De canole en son liu remetre..  
..Puis l'ont au tref le roi porté,  
Si l'en ont molt reconforté,<sup>31</sup>  
Qu'il li d'fent qu'il garra bien,  
Ja ne s'en desconfort de rien.  
4330-6..4345-8

Arthur is to be depicted once more as a figure of grief in the Conte du Graal, this time at the very end of the poem, where it lies unfinished in the course of the Gauvain section. It seems not unlikely that Chrétien was intending shortly to draw his poem to a close at that point, since the action seems to be moving in the direction of a combat in Arthur's court between Gauvain and his accuser Guiromelant which might well have provided a climax to the action. In that case, Arthur and his court would have figured near the beginning of the poem (at the outset of Perceval's adventures), in the episode of the blood on the snow where Perceval and Gauvain are seen together, and towards the end of the romance; and in each of



these strategically-placed appearances the great king is prey to grief, depressed at the departure of his best knights and at the insults of the Scarlet Knight in the first instance, then fearful for the fate of Kay and, finally, in what may have been intended as the closing scenes, sorrowful because Gauvain is absent from the court. In that last instance, which it seems useful to consider briefly now, Arthur's sorrowful mood receives emphasis in exactly the same way as it did in the early episode involving Perceval, by being foretold. When Gauvain instructs his servant to go to Arthur's court on his behalf to make arrangements for a combat, he says that the servant will find Arthur sad:

Quant tu venras devant le roi,  
Molt correcié le troveras  
9106-7

(Compare the words of the charcoal-burner to Perceval:

Le roi Artu, biax dols ami,  
Lié et dolant i troveras  
844-5).

As Gauvain's servant approaches Arthur's court (at present established in Orcanie) onlookers again predict what he will find:

Molt trovera ja mu et sort  
Le roi, tel chose puet il dire,  
Qu'il est molt plains de doel et d'ire.  
9198-200

When Gauvain's servant reaches the palace, it is to find the king seated amidst a great company among whom he is looking for Gauvain. Not finding him among them, Arthur falls into a faint:

Li rois fu mornes et pensis  
Quant il voit sa grant baronnie  
Ne de son neveu ne voit mie,  
Et chiet pasmez de la detrece.  
Au relever fu sanz perece  
Cil qui premiers i pot venir,  
Que tot le corent sostenir.  
9220-6

Here Chrétien uses the motif of fainting through grief and being helped up<sup>32</sup> - giving a slightly original twist to the conventional

expression of the 'helping-up' part of the motif: all vied to be first to help Arthur up. But apart from this detail, the impression is consolidated of a passive king, dependent on those around him, and at the mercy of events. Such a portrayal of '[le] roi qui les chevaliers fait' (333) is consonant with the spirit of a romance in which chivalry seems repeatedly to appear in a dubious light. All is not well in Arthur's court. Might not the restoration of wholeness to the Arthurian court have been intended as a fitting climax to the romance? Justification for such a surmise may emerge in a discussion of the Gauvain section.

#### **Grief in the Gauvain section of Le Conte du Graal**

The critique of worldly chivalric values finds expression not only in the Perceval section, where Perceval's accession to knighthood is seen to leave untouched the inner man, but also, though differently, in the Gauvain section. Although one group of critics<sup>33</sup> view the Gauvain section as not belonging to the Conte du Graal at all, others have argued strongly for the integrality of the romance as it has come down to us. Ribard points to the

jeu de correspondances qu'il est facile d'établir entre les  
deux séries d'aventures<sup>34</sup>

as an indication of the authenticity of the Gauvain section, and indeed the question of how the Gauvain section relates to what has gone before is an important one. Are the adventures of Gauvain intended to provide a comic counterpart to those of Perceval (as Frappier suggests when he refers to Gauvain as being

moins quôteur que touriste de la prouesse mondaine')<sup>35</sup>

or do we see in the fortunes of both characters an expression of

la diversité des destinées ployées sous la menace commune du péché

in Paule le Rider's words?<sup>36</sup> Both Perceval and Gauvain labour under a fault committed - Perceval in having caused his mother's death while answering the call of chivalry, Gauvain in having killed the King of Escavalon in the course of knightly exploits. In the same vein Ribard argues that although Perceval and Gauvain start out in the romance from very different points of experience, both are ultimately drawn to transcendental experiences which call into question the worldly values of the chivalric class:

Alors que Perceval, le nice, parti de la forêt instinctuelle de son enfance, avait dû se faire peu à peu avant de se défaire dans le raccourci saisissant de la scène de l'ermitage, mon seigneur Gauvain, comme l'appelle toujours Chrétien de Troyes, nous sera présenté, lui, comme d'emblée auréolé de gloire, mais d'une gloire toute "mondaine" dont précisément on le verra, au fil des épisodes et non sans souffrances, se dégager laborieusement pour accéder, ou du moins pour tendre, à une forme de perfection supérieure.<sup>37</sup>

Whereas depictions of grief in the Perceval section can mostly be interpreted as illustrating Perceval's lack of pity for others, in the Gauvain section several of the references to grief illustrate the high repute enjoyed by Gauvain. Near the beginning of each section the protagonist sets forth amidst grief: Perceval's departure from the Waste Land is accompanied by the grief of his mother, a solitary figure fainting on a bridge. When Gauvain leaves Arthur's court with the aim of pursuing his defence against an accusation of treachery, he does so amidst an impressive show of communal grief:

Set escuiers maine avec lui  
Et set chevax et deus escus.  
Ainz que il fust de cort meüs,  
Ot aprez lui molt grant doel fait,  
Maint pis batu, maint chaveil trait  
Et mainte face esgratinee;  
Ainc n'i ot dame si senee  
Qui por lui grant doel ne demaint.  
Grant dol en font maintes et maint,  
Et mesire Gauvains s'en va.

4804-13

In the episode already referred to from the end of the poem, where Arthur grieves because of Gauvain's continued absence, the people of the town where Arthur's court is currently established lament his absence too, not recognising the messenger he has sent as coming from him:

- "Di va! font il, a vos qu'afiert  
A parler des conseus le roi?  
Vos deüssiez estre en effroi  
Et esmaié et esperdu,  
Quant nous celui avons perdu  
Qui toz por Dieu nos sostenoit  
Et dont toz li biens nos venoit  
Par amour et par charité."  
Einsi trestot par la cité  
Monseignor Gavain regretoient  
Les povres gens qui molt l'amoient.

9204-14

The grief of the 'povres gens' is juxtaposed to that of Arthur himself, showing how universally loved Gauvain is. It is tempting to surmise that, had the romance been finished, Gauvain might have been cast in some sense in the specific role of 'joy-bringer' to Arthur's court - a not inappropriate role for one who had pledged to seek the Lance supposed one day to destroy Arthur's kingdom of Logres (6168-71). At the point of making that pledge, Gauvain was for the second time the object of grief in a departure scene. His first departure from Arthur's court had been with a retinue of servants and accompanied by much grief, particularly from the ladies (see lines 4804-13, quoted above, page 349). On the second occasion he is depicted being left by his retainers to journey alone, with but a cursory reference to their grief at parting from him:

Einsi s'en partent li vallet  
De lor seignor, einsi s'en vont.  
Ne d'aus ne del doel que il font  
Rien plus a dire ne me plaist.

6210-13

Insofar as the description of this departure is a reminder of the previous one, it suggests an intensification of the action as Gauvain

sets out alone on a new and difficult mission, this time without the accompaniment of adulatory grief. However, the narrator's stated intention of glossing over the description of grief at this second departure has, as its primary effect, that of directing the audience's attention to the reappearance of Perceval in the Hermit episode:

Ne d'aus ne del doel que il font  
Rien plus a dire ne me plaist.  
De monseignor Gavain se taist  
Ichi li contes a estal,  
Si comenche de Percheval.

6212-6

### **The Grieving Maiden**

When the narrative returns to Gauvain after the Hermit episode, his first encounter is with a maiden weeping over a wounded knight beneath an oak tree. This situation clearly calls to mind the incident where Perceval came upon the maiden and the headless knight (see pages 335-9 above). Some variation is introduced into the situation, common to both episodes, of the passing knight alerted by the grief of a maiden: Perceval chanced upon the maiden weeping and wailing beneath an oak (3428-33); Gauvain sees an oak in the distance and rides towards it for shade, making out more and more of what is beneath it as he approaches (6519-41). The grief of the maiden sitting there is depicted in some detail but much less agonisingly than was the grief of the maiden whom Perceval met:

Atant desoz le chesne esgarde  
Et voit seoir une pucele  
Qui molt li sambla estre bele,  
Se ele eüst joie et leece;  
Mais ele ot ses dois en sa trece  
Fichiez por ses chaveus detraire,  
Si s'esforçoit molt de doel faire.  
Por un chevalier doel faisoit,  
Qui ele molt sovent besoît  
Es oex, el front et en la boche.

6540-9

The motif of grief spoiling loveliness (6541-3)<sup>38</sup> strikes a not unpleasing note; the motif of hair-tearing is presented in an attenuated form (6544-5); and, whereas the previous maiden held in her arms a headless knight, this one is raining kisses on her knight's face. No impassioned lament is uttered by her, as had been uttered by the maiden Perceval met. Thus, while there is an evident parallel between Perceval's encounter with a grieving maiden and Gauvain's, a difference in tone is discernible from the outset. Haidu presents a detailed analysis of the episode ensuing from Gauvain's encounter.<sup>39</sup> Because of Gauvain's insistence on rousing the wounded knight, however gently, and on account also of his failure to succour him, Haidu sees in this episode a failure in charity on Gauvain's part, similar to Perceval's failure in charity in the parallel episode. The point conveyed in Gauvain's case is that courtly manners may mask an egoism as strong as that which emerged more obviously in Perceval's brusque and insensitive reactions to the maiden he met. The tonality of the two encounters is very different (and this difference in tonality is reflected in the distinctive depiction of the grief of each of the two maidens) but the moral failing is the same in each case.

### **Gauvain at the Castle of Marvels**

The most compelling episode in the Gauvain section is Gauvain's visit to the Castle of Marvels. It presents some telling similarities with the episode of the Grail Castle. Reached from across a river and associated with the figure of a cripple (the Fisher King in the Grail Castle and the custodian with the precious artificial leg in the Castle of Marvels) each castle awaits someone who will bring joy

through the performing of an enigmatic act. Perceval unknowingly fails to ask the vital question about the Grail that would have brought joy to many and healing to the Fisher King who, it is to transpire, is his uncle. Gauvain, though similarly unaware of the import of the action that presents itself to him, commits himself to lying on the Marvellous Bed and, having overcome the attacks unleashed upon any knight who lies thereon, brings joy to the inhabitants of the Castle. These inhabitants include the Younger Queen, who, he is to discover, is his mother. (Here the maternal relationship may well stand in parallel to the avuncular one).<sup>40</sup> Hailed by those in the palace as their long-awaited lord, Gauvain is helped to take off his armour and don a splendid mantle, reminiscent of (even though much more briefly described than) that donned by Erec for his coronation.<sup>41</sup> This change of garb suggests that he is acceding to a new role, superior to that which he has fulfilled even as a supposed paragon of knightliness. But a problem remains: for all his new-found lordship, Gauvain is not permitted to leave the Castle, and on learning of this prohibition he is filled with gloom:

Molt correciez et molt pensis  
 Se rest desor le li assis  
 A chiere molt dolente et morne,  
 Tant que la pucele retorne  
 Qui devant esté i avoit.  
 Quant mesire Gavains le voit,  
 Si s'est encontre li dreciez  
 Si come il estoit correchiez,  
 Si l'a maintenant salüee.  
 Et cele voit qu'il a mûe[e]  
 La parole et la contenance,  
 S'aperçoit bien assa samblance  
 Qu'il est iriez d'aucune chose

8035-47

The change of mood, from a sense of achievement and recognition to one of disappointment and gloom, and the fact that Gauvain sits down dejectedly on the bed that had been the very battleground of his recent victory (8035-7) seem to underline a theme which, in my view,

becomes thus more prominent as the romance appears to draw to its climax and close: deeds of heroism and traditional achievements are not enough to usher in the ultimate reign of joy (as they had been in Erec). In his gloom, Gauvain has no heart for eating (8054-60) - the time for feasting is not yet, and this is significant in a romance where references to eating have provided an important motif.

Gauvain's mood of gloom is dispelled by the Old Queen - not, it seems, by any information she gives him, since it is she who asks him questions (about Arthur's court) and he who gives her information. Nor does she give him permission to leave the Castle. His gloom is dispelled by her very presence, and an explicit link made between herself and Guenevere, whom Gauvain eulogises as one who dispels sorrowfulness:

De ma dame partir ne puet  
Nus qui desconseilliez s'en aut.  
Ele set bien que chascuns vaut  
Et qu'ele doit por chascun faire  
Por coi qu'ele li doie plaire.  
Nus hom bien ne honor ne fait  
Qui a ma dame apris ne l'ait;  
Ja nus hom ert si deshaitiez  
Qui de ma dame parte iriez."

8190-98

Now comes the linking:

- "Non ferez vos, sire, de moi."  
- "Dame, fait il, bien vos croi,  
Car ançois que je vos vefsse,  
Ne me chaloit que je fefsse,  
Tant estoie iriez et dolans.  
Or sui toz liez et toz joianz  
Que je ne porroie plus estre."

8199-205

The likening of the Old Queen to Guenevere in this respect is a pointer towards the eventual revelation that the Old Queen has the closest possible links with Arthur's court, being his mother. But this revelation, with its promise of the reintegration of the two courts, is still to come. Gauvain recovers his spirits and feasting



takes place in the room with the magic bed. Gauvain's decision to dine there, rather than upstairs as the Old Queen suggests, is intended to consolidate his victory, as he explains (8218-21). Passing the night in the Magic Bed (this time unassailed) is further proof of his desire to consolidate that victory.

The next morning Gauvain is greeted by both Queens, and returns their greeting, in religious vein. In both greetings the idea of joy is - and this is somewhat unusual in a courtly setting - linked explicitly with things Christian:

"Sire, bien soiez vos levez,  
Font les roines ambesdeus,  
Cist jors vos soit liez et joieus.  
Ce doinst icil glorieus pere  
Qui de sa fille fist sa mere."  
-"Grant joie, dame, vos doinst cil  
Qui en terre tramist son fil  
Por essalchier crestienté.

8296-303

A day begun with such exhortations is to prove auspicious. The Old Queen gives her permission for Gauvain to leave the palace in order to speak to the Male Pucele, whom he sees from a window (8323-347). He promises to return, while making the Queen promise for her part not to ask his name. A scene of revelation (unrealised in Le Conte du Graal as we have it) is doubtless being prepared for. Gauvain vanquishes a knight accompanying the Male Pucele, a knight who has killed many knights; he spares him, and hands him over to the boatman (8411-3). He accepts a challenge from the Male Pucele to undertake a feat which, she says, the vanquished knight often undertook for her (8421-42). Setting off, Gauvain is the object of the grief of the women in the palace, in a scene reminiscent of Erec, where Erec sets out to challenge Maboagrain (Erec 5453-93). In Erec Chrétien reminds us that the maidens now grieving at Erec's departure had recently greeted his arrival with singing:

nes les puceles qui querolent  
lor chant an leissent et retardent  
Erec 5456-7

Similarly, and although the point is not made here explicitly, the maidens who tear their hair and express their horror at Gauvain's departure with the Male Pucele have the previous evening celebrated his presence in the palace with singing and dancing:<sup>42</sup>

Sor le mengier ot molt paroles,  
Et molt ot dances et caroles  
Aprés mengier, ains qu'il couchassent;  
Tot de joie faire se lassent  
Por lor seignor qu'il ont molt chier.  
8253-57

The fact that this instance of grieving for Gauvain parallels grief for Erec in the instance quoted suggests a momentousness in what Gauvain is about to undertake by analogy with Erec's achievement in the Joie de la Cort episode. But the trend of events in Le Conte du Graal from this point differs quite markedly from what happens in Erec. Gauvain takes up the challenge of jumping the Gué Perilleux. He jumps, but his horse falters and has to swim with him to find firm land. The act is therefore not discharged gloriously, but Gauvain seems undeterred, and attends to the well-being of his horse (8524-33). The knight whom he meets, Guiromelant, reveals to him the identity of the Old and Young Queens (the mother of Arthur and Gauvain's mother respectively) and then reveals that Gauvain has killed his, Guiromelant's, father and is his sworn enemy. Gauvain need not presumably at this point have disclosed his identity, but chooses to do so (8833) and offers to make reparation, as far as possible without fighting (8871-8). This offer clearly bespeaks a desire to repudiate feats of arms, which have been seen throughout the romance as a cause of harm and distress. Guiromelant rejects the offer and Gauvain chooses to fight him in Arthur's court (the hero has gained the moral advantage, but it looks as if the audience is not to

be deprived of the spectacle of a heroic combat as part of the climax of the romance!) Doubtless as an indication of his proven moral (as opposed to narrowly chivalric) worth, Gauvain is depicted jumping back across the Gué Perilleux without mishap and showing understanding and forgiveness in his exchanges with the Male Pucele, who explains that disappointment in love has led her to harry knights like himself in the hope of meeting death at their hand.

The return of Gauvain to the palace brings joy in place of grief:

Et les dames venir les voient  
Et les puceles, qui avoient  
Por lui molt grant dol demené.  
De doel estoient forsené  
Trestot li vallet del palais;  
Lors font tel joie c'onques mais  
Ne fu nule si grans emprise.  
Devant le palais ert assise  
La roïne por lui atendre,  
Et ot fait ses puceles prendre  
Main a mains totes por danser  
Et por grant joie demener.  
Contre lui grant joie comencent,  
Chantent et carolent et dancent,  
Et il vient et descent entre eles.  
Les dames et les damoiseles  
Et les deus roïnes l'acolent  
Et de grant joie l'aparolent,  
Si le desarment a grant feste  
Jambes et bras et pis et teste.  
De celi qu'il ot amenee  
Ront molt grant joie demenee,  
Que totes et tot le servirent  
Por lui, que por li rien n'en firent.  
A grant joie el palais s'en vont.

8979-9003

The replacing of grief with joyfulness, elaborately depicted (and again more than a little reminiscent of aspects of the Joie de la Cort episode) is not a merely conventional indication, but is intended here, no doubt, to point forward to an ultimate bringing of joy when Gauvain will return to Arthur's court (see page 350 above) and will succeed (as Spensley has suggested was Chrétien's intention)<sup>43</sup> in reintegrating the palace of the Queens and the Court of Arthur in a grand climax in which identities will be revealed. Thus wholeness and

joy will be restored to a kingdom which, at the beginning of the romance, Perceval's mother had described as being rent apart at the death of the Old Queen's husband and Arthur's father Uterpandragon (442-9).

The view of Gauvain suggested by this partial reading of the second part of Le Conte du Graal is very different from the traditional one which sees him as a charming, accomplished but basically frivolous knight and a womaniser. Paule le Rider's recent detailed analyses have thrown serious doubt on the latter charge particularly.<sup>44</sup> The grief that others experience for him, consistently, when he is absent or in danger, contributes to his depiction as, ultimately, an almost messianic hero, and one on whom depends the joy of two great courts, closely related though separated by circumstances.

At the beginning of Chapter Four of this study it was suggested that one of the features distinguishing Erec et Enide from earlier works studied is the place given in it to depictions of joyfulness and merrymaking. Although Le Conte du Graal is uncompleted, there are strong indications that, had Chrétien finished it, his talent for creating large-scale and memorable scenes of joy would have been once more confirmed. But that remains in the realm of the hypothetical. What is certain, as far as depictions of grief in Le Conte du Graal are concerned, is that Chrétien has woven such depictions into the overall meaning of his work.

## NOTES

1. The four preceding chapters have been based on editions of Chrétien's romances as found in the Guiot copy (Bibl. nat. fr. 794). I have based my study of Le Conte du Graal on Roach's 1959 edition (16). Roach reproduces ms T in preference to the Guiot copy (ms A) (see p.x of his edition). Ms T is somewhat longer than ms A (by 274 lines) and the weight of evidence provided by the other thirteen mss supports most of the lines that ms T contains and ms A omits. Lecoy completed the CFMA edition of the Guiot copy by publishing Le Conte du Graal in two volumes in 1972 and 1975 (17).

In a few instances, detailed in this chapter, ms T provides readings which are slightly more germane to my argument at a particular point than ms A, but none of the variants in ms T or in the other manuscripts (variants which Hilka notes in vol.5 of the Foerster edition) materially affects my analysis of references to grief in the text.

2. This theme has been highlighted by David C. Fowler in Prowess and Charity in the "Perceval" of Chrétien de Troyes (74). In the introduction to his study Fowler states: 'the poet has constructed his narrative so as to reveal the "internal quest" of the hero, Perceval, for a resolution of a conflict of ideals within himself. The ideals in conflict are prowess (proesce) and charity, or the love of God (charité). Taken together, these concepts were the cornerstone of chivalry in the twelfth century. That these two ideals were inimical and that charity must ultimately prevail over prowess together constitute Chrétien's theme.' (p.3).
3. The contrast is implied rather than stressed in ms A, where 'parloient' replaces 'rioient' and 'deduisoient' replaces 'gaboient':

Et li rois Artus s'ert asis  
au chief d'une table pansis;  
et tuit li chevalier parloient,  
li un as autres deduisoient,  
fors il qui fu pansis et muz.  
Lecoy edition 905-9

4. Again the stress on melancholy, dependent in ms T on the repetition of 'penser' (924, 926) is less pronounced in ms A:

Li rois se test et ne dist mot,  
et cil autre foiz l'areisone.  
Li rois panse et mot ne li sone.  
Lecoy edition 922-4

For the associations of grief and melancholy attaching to 'penser' and its cognates, see pp. 238 note 7 above.

5. See pp. 83-6 above.
6. Arthur is depicted in a similar mood in Le Chevalier de la Charrete. See pp. 243-4 above.
7. With the exception of Guenevere in Le Chevalier de la Charrete, Chrétien's heroines are each accorded a conventional portrait at the outset of the development of the love-interest involving them. See Erec et Enide 397 - 441 (Enide); Cligès 762 -852 (Soredamors); 2675 - 705 (Fénice); Yvain 1465-510 (Laudine). Colby discusses the portrait of Blancheflor in The Portrait in Twelfth-Century French Literature (63) pp. 164-8.
8. Erec et Enide 2503-9. See pp. 180-1 above.
9. Blancheflor's threat of suicide is discussed by Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury in La tentation du suicide dans le roman français du XIIe siècle (111) pp.103-5 and 120-3. Her conclusion is that the theme carries little weight here. Even so, Mme Lefay-Toury seems to accord credence to Blancheflor's threat: 'Elle n'aspire en rien à la mort, mais c'est la seule solution qui lui reste, puisque la situation est désespérée' (p.121). I am inclined to see Blancheflor's threat as evidence of her calculating spirit in the episode. Her attempts the following morning to dissuade Perceval from carrying out his promise to defend her are likewise a calculation on her part to increase his resolve - as Chrétien states: see 2135-7.
10. As Paule Le Rider says: 'Perceval avait quitté la cour d'Arthur déguisé en chevalier; du château de Gornemant, il repart chevalier' (Le Chevalier dans le Conte du Graal de Chrétien de Troyes (113) p.169).
11. Cf. the comment by Jean-Charles Payen: 'Le Conte du Graal .. peut apparaître comme le roman d'une rédemption spirituelle (ce que n'étaient ni Erec ni Yvain). Mais point n'est besoin de recourir à une explication symbolique du récit pour dégager cette intention religieuse: elle apparaît avec une netteté suffisante à travers la lettre même du roman.' (Le Motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale (142) p.392).
12. Le Rider, op.cit., p. 34.
13. Norris J. Lacy, The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes (106) p.22.
14. see pp. 175-6 above.
15. D.D.R.Owen, The Evolution of the Grail Legend (136) pp.148-9.

16. D.G.Hoggan, "Le Pêché de Perceval: pour l'authenticité de l'épisode de l'ermite dans le Conte du graal de Chrétien de Troyes" (95) p.68. See also Jean Frappier, Chrétien de Troves: l'homme et l'oeuvre (77) p.182.
  
17. See pp. 76-9 and 159-60 above.
  
18. See, for example, Paule Le Rider, op.cit. (113) p.88: '..la réussite poétique du passage ne doit pas dissimuler le fait qu'il n'est dans l'histoire de Perceval qu'un épisode'. Also, earlier, Hoggan, op.cit. (95) p.68: 'Admettons...qu'il y a apogée et crise aux environs du passage de Perceval au Château du Graal mais gardons-nous d'y voir la véritable charnière de l'oeuvre.'
  
19. The point is Peter Haidu's, in Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troves (87) p.174. See also p.170.
  
20. The lament is seventeen lines long in ms A, with the most marked variations occurring in the opening lines:

"Lasse, fet el, maleüreuse,  
 com je fui de male ore nee,  
 qui si ai male destinee!  
 Pis ne me pot il avenir!"  
 Lecoy edition 3422-5.

Compare ms T (Roach edition) 3434-9 (see p. 336 above).

21. See Fowler, op.cit. (74) pp.35-40.
  
22. Frappier op. cit. (77) p.181.
  
23. Jean Frappier, Chrétien de Troves et le mythe du graal (80): p.140.
  
24. After the couplet

Après le service aoura  
 La crois et ses pechiez plora  
 Roach edition 6495-6

five mss (but not T) include a couplet which in ms A reads

et se repanti humblemant  
 et fu ensi mout longuement.  
 Lecoy edition 6275-6

25. Payen op.cit. (142) p.54: 'Le contritionnisme est une doctrine de la pénitence selon laquelle la rémission des péchés s'opère de la manière suivante: le pécheur consent à l'infusion de la grâce divine, qui suscite chez lui des larmes de repentir..' and p. 396 (with reference to Perceval's tears on speaking with the penitents): 'Le passage est .. résolument contritionniste.'
  
26. Owen, "From Grail to Holy Grail" (137) pp. 31-7.
  
27. Hoggan, op. cit. (95) pp. 52-64. Recent studies tend to maintain the authenticity of the episode; see L.T. Topsfield, The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes (167) p. 219 et seq. and Le Rider, op.cit., (113) p.20 passim.
  
28. Hoggan, op. cit. (95) p.244 et seq.
  
29. See above p.293.
  
30. The somewhat different reading in ms A -
 

..et dames et chevalier muevent.  
 Qant le seneschal pasmé truevent,  
 si cuident tuit que il soit morz.  
 Li rois en a granz desconforz  
 et por lui font duel tuit et totes,  
 et Percevox sor les trois gotes  
 se rapoia de sor sa lance

Lecoy edition 4299-305 -

lays stress on the grief of the king.
  
31. The personal pronoun le in this line (4346) must refer to Arthur, and not to Kay (who is, confusingly, referred to in the le of the previous line). It is clearly Arthur whom Gauvain turns to address in 4349, as some mss make explicit (see Hilka's variants to that line in the Foerster edition).
  
32. See above pp. 91-2.
  
33. Owen is the chief exponent of this view, in The Evolution of the Grail Legend (136) pp.157-64.
  
34. Jacques Ribard, in the Avant-propos of his translation of Le Conte del Graal (148) p.8.
  
35. Frappier, Chrétien de Troyes, l'homme et l'oeuvre, (77) p.209.



36. Le Rider, op. cit. (113) p.365.
37. Ribard, op.cit. (148) pp.8-9.
38. In Le Roman de Thèbes the daughter of Daire is depicted as lovely, even in grief (Thèbes 8019-20), and so is Laudine:
- Don ne fust ce mervoille fine  
a esgarder, s'ele fust liee,  
quant ele est or si bele iriee?  
Yvain 1492-4
39. Haidu, op.cit. (87) pp.231-35.
40. See G. Fenwick Jones The Ethos of the Song of Roland (100) pp. 110-4.
41. Erec 6671-747.
42. Ms A (and ms B) omit the reference to singing and dancing, though they maintain the reference to joie (Lecoy edition 8002).
43. R.M.Spensley, "Gauvain's Castle of Marvels Adventure in the Conte del graal", (163).
44. Le Rider, op. cit. (113) p. 237 et seq.

36. Le Rider, op. cit. (113) p.365.
37. Ribard, op.cit. (148) pp.8-9.
38. In Le Roman de Thèbes the daughter of Daire is depicted as lovely, even in grief (Thèbes 8019-20), and so is Laudine:
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43. R.M.Spensley, "Gauvain's Castle of Marvels Adventure in the Conte del graal", (163).
44. Le Rider, op. cit. (113) p. 237 et seq.

## CONCLUSION

An examination of the texts and groups of texts in this study - chosen for their significance in the development of twelfth-century French verse narrative - has shown how frequently grief was depicted, how elaborate such depictions could be, and how distinctive the body of conventions and motifs attaching to them was.

The extent to which the phraseology of grief-depiction in the Vie de Saint Alexis is shared by the epics (see pages 10, 16, 32, 37, 38-9, 58 above) points to a common early-established repertoire, while a few circumstantial echoes of Alexis in scenes of grief in other works (see pages 108-9, 120-1, 156, 157, 206, 278) suggest that the poem cast a specific influence in this context. Otherwise, the portrayal of grief in Alexis is remarkable for the artistry lavished upon it (see pages 8-16, 31-51) and for the way in which it eclipses the poem's essentially religious theme.

In epic, grief-stricken reactions, though depicted frequently, do not occupy a privileged position, but figure as part of the wider mosaic of brusque and vigorous emotions and actions. The significance of the planctus is guaranteed by a relatively small number of instances where the planctus motif, often duplicated for the one prominent individual, forms the nucleus of a quite highly developed situation (see pages 67-72). But, with these memorable exceptions, grief in the epic is presented as a narrative fact, and, as such, its depiction is not usually a source of great affectivity.

It is the authors of the romans antiques, be they initiating or responding to a new taste for sentimentality, who exploit the affective potential of extended grief depictions, by highlighting the role of grieving women (see pages 120-43) and by pursuing the theme of mourning for fallen warriors to what must represent its rhetorical

limits (see pages 143-5, 149-65). Occasionally, depictions of grief are seen to function as part of the action (see pages 122-5, 131, 141-2) or are presented with an element of detachment (see pages 139-40, 145-9) but these instances do not substantially affect the conclusion that portrayals of grief in the romans antiques provide, above all, rhetorical embellishment.

When an analysis of grief-depiction in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes is carried out against the background of earlier works, it becomes abundantly clear that Chrétien was thoroughly familiar with the conventions of grief-depiction developed by his predecessors. In his romances are to be found instances of the traditional planctus (in Erec, see page 191; in Yvain, see page 283) portrayals of women grieving in the grand manner (in Erec, see pages 186, 189; in Yvain see pages 278-80) and frequent use of the joy / grief antithesis, a motif which he can handle cleverly on a small scale (in Cligés, see page 215; in the Charrete, see pages 266-9), which he can charge with a new intensity (in Yvain, see pages 305-12) or which he can amplify to the level of a theme (potentially, at least, in Perceval, see page 357).

In retaining the commonplaces of grief-depiction, Chrétien makes highly imaginative use of them, often enshrining them at important junctures in his romances, as in the case of the motif of flowing tears (in Erec, see pages 180, 202, 207; in Perceval, see page 342), the motif of fainting (in Yvain, see page 292; in Perceval, see page 319), the motif of madness (in Cligés, see pages 236-7; in Yvain, see page 288-90), the joy / grief motif (in Yvain, see page 307). Grief at departure occurs at important pivots in Erec, (see pages 172-9) and in Cligés (see page 219-21). The role of the sympathetic bystander is greatly enhanced in Yvain (see pages 287-8) and made a source of

humour in Cligés (see pages 213-4; 217-8) and in the Charrete (see pages 248-9, 260). The motif of flowing tears is a minor source of humour in Cligés (see pages 209-10) and in Perceval (see pages 325-6). The idea that grief should be channelled into worthwhile action (expressed sporadically in the epics and the romans antiques) becomes a traceable theme in Erec (see pages 203) and the theme of grief (or lack of it) for the sufferings of others is an important component of both Yvain and Perceval.

Chrétien's ironising tendencies come into full play in a number of instances where grief is portrayed in his romances. Irony is not a significant element in the depictions of grief of his predecessors, but with Chrétien it is often the keynote. The theme of mistaken grief receives great prominence in all his romances except Perceval (see page 293), and is a rich source of humour in Cligés, the Charrete and Yvain. The minor themes of concealed grief (in Erec, see page 188; in Cligés, see pages 218 and 220), feigned grief (in Cligés, see page 224), and the conflict between real and assumed grief (in Cligés, see pages 223-4; in the Charrete, see pages 251-2; 268) are further products of an incorrigibly ironic vision.

A striking feature of Chrétien's use of grief-depiction is the number of grief-episodes in his romances which lend themselves to being considered in pairs. Such pairs seem to be created with a definite purpose in mind, beyond that simply of variation on a theme. Rapprochement between such episodes often provides the means of illuminating character, by measuring the differing reactions of an individual character at different stages in his or her development, or by contrasting two characters. Parallel instances are found within individual works - Enide's grief for the combatting Erec before she is his wife and later, during the quest (see pages 186-7) - as well as

her mastery of grief during his culminating engagement (see page 198-9); Soredamors' grief for the fallen Alexander and Fénice's for the fallen Cligés (see pages 217-8); Lancelot's grief for the supposedly dead Guenevere and Guenevere's for the supposedly dead Lancelot (see pages 251-64); Yvain's superficial grief on first leaving Laudine and his wild distraction on realising that he has lost her (see pages 290-1); the episodes of Perceval's encounter with a lamenting maiden and Gauvain's encounter with a lamenting maiden (see page 351-2) and episodes of departure involving Perceval and Gauvain (see page 349). Episodes of grief depiction may also be compared between, as well as within, romances: Enide's weeping over the sleeping Erec finds echo in Blancheflor's weeping over the sleeping Perceval (see page 325) and her grief for the supposedly dead Erec may be compared (and contrasted) to Guenevere's for Lancelot (see pages 255-7) and compared to the lion's for Yvain (see pages 293-4). Departure scenes accompanied by grief in Perceval are illuminated by comparison with similar scenes in Erec (see pages 331-3, 355-6).

Chrétien's meaningful use of paired episodes is one facet of a wider, more important feature - his success in integrating grief-portrayal in the fabric of the individual romance. Clearly, on the evidence of the works of his predecessors, contemporary audiences found the depiction of grief to be a compelling and unfailing source of interest. But in La Vie de Saint Alexis the portrayal of grief seems to be at odds with the overall thrust of the poem; in the mourning scenes in epic, and in the romans antiques, elaborated descriptions of grief serve for the most part as embellishment, providing affective interludes. It is significant that depictions of grief in Chrétien's romances cannot be discussed without reference to the wider issues raised by each romance. Chrétien not only refurbishes the conventions of grief depiction in isolated instances, by stylistic

ploys, careful placing, humour and irony: he habitually infuses such depictions with a new dynamism by making them part of the action itself, and by linking them to the overall significance of the individual romance. The study of this one specific conventional topic - grief - and the way Chrétien manipulates it suggests that his ability to reanimate the traditional elements of early French vernacular literature was an important aspect of his multi-faceted genius.

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There is a key to abbreviations used in this bibliography on page iv above.

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