Cătălina-Maria Veber

SORROW IN TWELFTH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE
THE CASE OF CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

M.A. Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

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Cătălina-Maria Veber

(Romania)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

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Thesis Supervisor

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I, the undersigned, **Cătălina-Maria Veber,** candidate for the M.A. degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 1 June 2003

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Signature

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Chapter I:
Introduction

In the romance of *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion*, Chrétien de Troyes recounts an episode in which a noble woman, Laudine, grieves for her husband, who had recently been murdered. The poet describes in detail the sorrow of the lady, who is on the point of taking her life:

> … and yet she was so crazed with grief / that she was on the point of taking her life./ All at once she cried out at the top of her voice, / and then fell prostrate in a swoon./ And when she had been picked up / she began to claw herself and tear her hair, / like a woman who had lost her mind./ She tears her hair and rips her dress, / and faints at every step she takes;/ nor can anything comfort her / when she sees her husband borne along lifeless in the bier; / for her happiness is at an end, / and so she made her loud lament.[1]

The narrative tells of sorrow in a very dramatic way, insisting on the frenzy of gestures and on the woman's screams. This is a scheme which is often present in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes whenever there is a noble woman mourning the loss of her partner, be it husband or lover. The descriptive markers used by the poet can be identified as we browse through the romances and observe the cases of mourning women. Furthermore, although less frequently, Chrétien also portrays men in extremes of grief.

The texts bear, no doubt, the trace of certain composition devices which could probably explain the recurrence of the image quoted above in other episodes describing sorrow. Still, there are reasons to look at these literary representations of sorrow with eyes more attuned to the specific contexts in which they occur and to the

[1] See *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion* in Chrétien de Troyes, *Oeuvres Complètes,* ed. Daniel Poirion, Anne Berthelot, Peter F. Dembovski, Sylvie Lefèvre, Karl D. Uitti and Philippe Walter (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1994): Vv. 1148 – Vv. 1163: "Mais de duel faire estoit si fole / C'a poi qu'ele ne s'ochioit. /A la feye s'escrioit / Si haut qu'ele ne pooit plus, / Si recheoit pasmee jus; / Et quant ele estoit relevee, / Aussi conme fenme desvee, / Si conmenchoit a deschirer / Et ses chaveus a detirer; / Ses chaveus tire et ront ses dras, / Et se repasme a chascun pas, / Ne riens ne le puet conforter, / Que son seigneur en voit porter / Devant li, en la biere, mort,/ Dont ja ne quide avoir confort; / Por ce crioit a haute

diversity of meanings that each particular case opens for investigation. Debate is possible on why Chrétien favors certain means of expression, on how he uses sorrow in the emotional framework he creates, on how he evaluates the display of sorrow he describes. The evaluation of the emotional manifestations supplied by the text (directly, by the poet's own comments, or indirectly, by other people's comments) often allows us to observe the modes of emotional expression that people expect, accept or reject. Last but not least, the literary text can provide information on the nature of the affective bonds which could be recognized by the people in the romances.[2]

This study aims to focus on the social use of sorrow in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Its scope is to observe at the level of the literary representations the way in which the displays of sorrow were constructed within the society in which they were meant to operate. In order to gain more depth in the proposed enterprise, I have selected a corpus of texts which deal mainly with the sorrow caused by the loss of a partner. I shall take into account in the following order several cases of sorrow display in the romances of *Érec et Énide*, *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion, Lancelot ou le chevalier de la charette*.[3]

Most important, for our purposes of exploring the record of sorrow are the time and the cultural milieu in which the texts were produced. The romances were

voiz,"367. All English translations of this text are from http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/Yvain. Accessed on March 15.

[2] See Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 843: "Given this fact, let me suggest a historical approach to the emotions that takes into account the new non-hydraulic theories of emotions, focuses on more than power and politics, and recognizes the complexity of emotional life. People lived – and live – in what I propose to call "emotional communities." These are precisely the same as social communities – families, neighborhoods, parliaments, guilds, monasteries, parish church memberships – but the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful for them; the evaluations that they make about others' emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate and deplore."

[3] In Chrétien, *Oeuvres Complètes*. Henceforth *Érec*, *Yvain*, *Lancelot*.

written approximately during the decade between 1170 and 1181.[4] Chronologically speaking, *Érec* is the earliest one. *Yvain* and *Lancelot* followed later on and were written apparently during the same period, towards the end of the decade. Based on chronological considerations and on the composition of the two romances, the critics generally agree on treating the two as "twin romances."[5] Still, both structurally and thematically there are important distinctions to be made, as I shall argue further on.

The information related to the life of the poet is very scarce and parsimonious. All that is known about him comes mainly from his work.[6] The indications[7] in the opening part of two of the texts relate his social position and writing activity to the courts of Champagne and Flanders. Scholarly works[8] have agreed on his presence at the aristocratic courts of the late twelfth century where he was writing upon request and "in the praise" of courtly life. Thus, although it may be argued that the displays of sorrow we are dealing with are simply fictitious, we may assume that the romances contain attitudes towards emotions that were familiar at least for the twelfth-century aristocratic public.

This study owes a great deal to the most recent works which were written in the research field of the history of emotions.[9] The possibility of my working in this

[4] The chronology of the romances cannot be established with certainty. In this analysis I consider as valid the chronology indicated by Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: L'homme et l'oeuvre* (Paris: Hatier-Boivin, 1957). According to Frappier, *Érec* was written in 1170, *Cligès* around 1176; it is generally believed that Chrétien worked on *Yvain* and *Lancelot* between 1177 and 1179 or 1181. The dating of the texts was also made depending on the patrons that some of the texts mention: Marie de Champagne and Philippe d'Alsace.

[5] See the following: Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Yvain, Lancelot, la charette et le lion* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992); Karl Uitti with Michelle A. Freeman. *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Z. P. Zaddy, *Chrétien Studies. Problems of Form and Meaning in Erec, Yvain, Cligès and the Charrette* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973).

[6] See Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes. L'homme et l'oeuvre*.

[7] The motto of Lancelot mentions the countess Marie de Champagne whom the poet calls "ma dame de Champagne." The other mention related to Chrétien's patrons is made in the prologue of *Perceval* which mentions Philippe of Alsace, count of Flanders.

[8] See Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes. L'homme et l'oeuvre*, or Uitti and Freeman, *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited*.

[9] See Peter N. Stearns, "History of Emotions: Issues of Change and Impact," in *Handbook of Emotions*, ed. Michael Lewis and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000), 16: "The

research area, and of understanding the blanks that still have to be filled in, was greatly facilitated by the significant work which was recently done in the field.[10]

The need to study the emotions of the past was felt and expressed as early as the 1940s by Lucien Febvre in his famous article[11] on the emotional life of the past, which proclaimed the irrationality of emotions. This perspective, paralleled by that of the supposedly childlike nature[12] of the medieval emotional life, lasted without being questioned until approximately two decades ago.

Recent studies argue against this approach. Barbara H. Rosenwein qualified it as the "grand narrative"[13] approach towards the emotions. Included in her critique was also the Elias[14] paradigm, which brought in a Freudian approach to the emotions of the past, understanding them in terms of compulsion and self-restraint. Elias's perception of the emotional life of the Middle Ages was similar to the model

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principal focus of the history of emotions deals with processes of change in emotional standards and emotional experience, or, somewhat more complexly, with emotional continuities amidst changing contexts. Historians may also be interested in a third focus – seeking to grasp the characteristic emotional styles of a particular period, in and of themselves, as a means of enriching the portrayal of the past time and launching the process of comparing one previous period to another."

[10] I will only mention several studies which were very close to me during the period of my research: Tracy Adams, *The Anthropology of Love in Twelfth Century Romance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Piroska Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2000); Barbara Rosenwein, ed., *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude and Experience in Twelfth Century France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[11] Lucien Febvre, "Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past," in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre,* ed. Peter Burke, tr. K. Folca (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 12-26.

[12] Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, tr. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996).

[13] Barbara H. Rosenwein defines the term "grand narrative" to characterize a tradition which dominated emotions scholarship aiming to even the perception of the emotional past and to relate it mainly on the notion of progressive self-restraint: "the history of the West is the history of increasing emotional restraint." She vehemently questions this approach and proposes new methods of investigation. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 827.

[14] The approach introduced by Norbert Elias with the *Civilizing Process* applies to the emotional past an oversimplifying scheme which generalized while focusing mainly on the elite that progress in the civilizing process is only a result of controlling emotions. It becomes important for the present study to emphasize Elias's explanation of the courtly behavior as an example of a civilizing phenomena. According to him in a generally violent and irrational emotional landscape the court was the only place where "within a restricted circle, the lords adopted a more peaceful form of conduct became obligatory." Norbert Elias, *Civilizing Process*, vol. 1, tr. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 324.

previously proposed by Huizinga, but now explained as a result of the lack of constraint.[15]

The publication in 1985 of the article of Peter and Carol Stearns introduced, by using a new *terminus technicus* – "emotionology" – new research guidelines in the history of emotions, focusing on the attitudes or standards that a particular society maintained toward basic emotions and their expression.[16] Today, the validity of the approach is being questioned[17] for the canons it imposes in establishing the "emotional standards" of a society and therefore for not being able to account for the whole of its emotional life.[18]

The new trend has been followed by several historians[19] who correct the uniformity of perception towards feelings in the Middle Ages, dominated by the normative discourse. What they propose instead is, in the first place, the recognition of the complexity of the emotional life.[20] The new focus is set on uncovering the multiplicity of the emotional discourse which translates the "interactions and transformations of communities holding various values and ideas, practicing various forms of sociability, and privileging various emotions and styles of expression."[21]

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[15] "People are wild, cruel, prone to violent outbreaks and abandoned to the joy of the moment. They can afford to be. There is little in their situation to compel them to impose restraint upon themselves. Little in their conditioning forces them to develop hat might be called a strict and stable super-ego, as a function of dependence and compulsions stemming from others transformed into self-restraints." *Ibid*., 319.

[16] See Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *American Historical Review* 90 (October, 1985): 813: "Emotionology refers to the attitude or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression and ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct."

[17] Rosenwein argues against their relying too much on popular advice manuals. The historian points out the flaw in the methodology of the Stearnses in their own analysis on anger; Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 825.

[18] The Stearns used an example which is directly related to the concern of this study. They explicitly ruled out courtly love literature from the research interests of emotionology because "it simply did not penetrate far enough into popular culture or into institutional arrangements." *Ibid*., 25.

[19] See the contributions of Catherine Peyroux, "Gertrude's *Furor*: Reading Anger In Early Medieval Saint's Life," and Gerd Althoff, "*Ira Regis*: Prolegomena To a History of Royal Anger," in *Anger's Past*, 36-55 and 59-73.

[20] Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 843.

[21] *Ibid*., 845.

The present study is focused on revealing the multiplicity of the discourse of sorrow within a given "emotional community": that of the knights and the ladies of the twelfth-century French aristocracy as they appear in their literary representation. This is both the object of portrayal and the sociopolitical source of the texts.

The main feature of the situation of the nobility in this period was the threat to its political and economic dominance. The threat was represented both by the growing centralization of political authority in the hands of the Capetian monarchy and a growth of a money economy and a bourgeois class, which undermined the economic superiority of the nobility. Therefore, it is important to read the romances as an imaginative response to this situation.[22]

The period with which we are concerned is characterized by significant changes both in the male and female identity. The rise of courtly love and the birth of the romance gave women a prominence which was not found before.[23] Romances show women as romantic objects situating them as a key figure in the development of the hero. The attainment of the woman by the hero is a difficult, sometimes impossible, task, through which the hero's identity is forged. The task is very difficult because allegiance to one's female love and allegiance to one's male world of battles and prowess are in opposition to each other. The tension provoked by this conflict is sometimes resolved through much effort[24] but sometimes it is irresolvable and ends in tragedy.[25] The romance image of women is thus an ambivalent one,[26] bounded by both desire and anxiety. The male principle is characterized by a refinement[27] of

[22] See Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin*, 39.
[23] *Ibid*., 19-42. She makes a good comparison between the image of women in the *chanson de geste* and the image of women in the romances.
[24] As is the case with *Yvain* or *Partonopeu of Blois.*
[25] As is the case with *Tristan* or *Death of King Arthur.*
[26] See Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin*, 38.
[27] See Georges Duby, *The Three Orders. Feudal Society Imagined*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

knightly values which become a *raison de vivre.*[28] Eric Köhler explains this new identity by situating adventure at its center, as an endless quest for identity.[29] Reality and ideal are combined and the romances function as a "handbook" of social values.

I propose to undertake a multi-layered analysis of the emotion which integrates it first in the textual context in which it occurs, then observe the significance it acquires in the economy of the whole text, and last but not least in the context given by the culture it interprets and represents. I have intentionally omitted from my short list the first thing I have looked at when I started my investigation, namely the words used by the poet for "sorrow."

My first reason in doing that is that first of all I consider that this research path deserves more attention that I had paid to it, due to the limited space reserved for this study. The second reason is one that has been formulated by neo-structuralists with the warning that words are just a means of categorizing and they do not represent "real" entities,[30] as is our case, and this would somehow go against my interest in observing individual emotions. It is the basic premise of this thesis that sorrow is indeed a real phenomenon which provokes certain behavioral patterns, and that thus the words to denote it do indeed point to understandable, occasionally observable reality.

Nevertheless, I shall say that the vocabulary of sorrow used by Chrétien represented an important starting point for my investigation. Making just a brief overview, I will say that the most frequent term used by Chrétien for "sorrow" is *duel*, which retains the meaning of the Latin word from which it originated, *dolor:* "sorrow." To this I should add the adjectives derived from the same root: *dolanz,*

[28] See Marc Bloch, *La société féodale* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1994), 15.
[29] Eric Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque: Idéal et réalité dans les romans courtois: Études sur la forme des plus anciens poèmes d'Arthur et du Graal,* tr. Eliane Kaufholz (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 96.
[30] Carol Barr-Zisowitz, "Sadness – Is There Such a Thing?" in *Handbook of Emotions*, 607.

adolez, dolante. Other Old French terms for "sorrow" are *enui*, *mesaventure*, *esmai*. These words enlarge not only the semantic field of "sorrow" but also the significance of the emotion, which may thus also be referred to by: 'pain,' 'misfortune,' 'torment.' We will only suggest here a possibility of demarcation at the linguistic level, saying that while in all the analyzed cases people may experience *duel*, the two terms *mesaventure* and *esmai* describe only female representations of sorrow, and *enui* specifies the kind of sorrow which brings madness, as is the case of Yvain. The study of the language would certainly bring more details, as other studies[31] have already proved, but our focus is to reveal differences or interferences describing the social component of sorrow.

In what follows, I will carry out a comparative reading of the texts, focusing on the quality of communication that the emotion may acquire in the text. I shall focus on the interference or differentiation between the feminine and masculine registers of sorrow in terms of reactions to sorrow and means of expression. The concluding chapter will undertake a mapping of the main possibilities of delineation between male and female sorrow, summing up the social uses of this emotion within the framework of literary representations.

[31] See Stephen D. White, "The Politics of Anger," in *Anger's Past,* 128-152. Emphasizing how many different words were used to express common "sadness" and "anger" in the early medieval literature, White has argued that the appropriate choice was defined by cultural norms.

Chapter II:
Gendered Sorrow

The first step that we need to take in exploring the record of sorrow is to look at the textual construct itself and to observe the way in which the author makes use of it in the different contexts. There are two main reasons which justify this choice: one is the fact that this will allow us to observe the emergence of several patterns of emotions; the other is the intention of showing that the literary text does not only play with means of expression and recurrent representations, as just a passive reflector of cultural data, but also represents a voice in a dialogue which speaks both of and to the very culture which produced it. [32]

A comparative reading seemed to serve best the scope of this enterprise. For the sake of a clearer analysis two main coordinates will lead us throughout this perusal: the first one is gender-related and will deal with sorrow as experienced by both men and women (pointing out the gender-specific nuances of each kind of sorrow), and the second one is context-related and will focus on the different factors which act as a regulator of this emotional display.

Female Sorrow. Case 1: The Ritual of Mourning.

The first case focuses on the sorrow of Énide, who grieves over the presumed death of her husband Érec. I particularly chose this case because it can introduce the basic elements which describe the literary representation of the grieving woman as it appears in the romances.

[32] See the contributions of Peyroux "Gertrude's *Furor*": "The texts, far from being transparent and invisible windows onto the events they depict, are in themselves a form of social act and as such shape, refract, and thereby alter the meaning they convey." Rosenwein, ed., *Anger's Past*, 44. This has been also one of the main concerns of several other studies which use as primary sources literary texts. Gold in her investigation **on** *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude and Experience in Twelfth Century France* which deals with the construction of the image of women in the secular literature of the twelfth

During one of his adventures the knight Érec meets Énide; he wins her heart and they get married. Érec becomes so thoroughly immersed in the pleasures of married life that he forgets about his reputation. This brings about a quarrel between the spouses and results in an expedition during which the knight recovers his lost prowess. This not only reshapes the narrative, leading it towards a new series of adventures, but also reveals a conflict in the life of the knight between the love for his wife and his duties as a *chevalier*.

What becomes of interest for the argument of this study is Énide's submissive attitude[33] towards Érec throughout the romance and especially throughout the adventures which precede their reconciliation. It is important to recall the fact that Érec forbids Énide to speak to him during all of this time. Her behavior towards him, however, is that of a completely devoted wife. Devotion, I would argue, becomes a significant detail in understanding the display of her sorrow next to her husband's lying body. Sorrow has to be understood within the framework of the general development of her character. Énide learns to conduct herself in the better service of the husband.

The first signs of Énide's sorrow are the external ones: gestures. Firstly, there comes a series of self-destructive gestures which approximate to the condition of madness: she is wringing her hands, tearing up her dress, pulling her hair and lacerating her face:

century. The same methodological concern is expressed by Adams in her study *The Anthropology of Love in Twelfth Century Romance*.

[33] There has been debate in scholarly works on whether Érec is concerned with Énide's submission or rather with her love and devotion. For a summary of the scholarly controversy on the motivation of the journey of Érec and Énide, see Z. P. Zaddy, "Pourquoi Érec se décide-t-il de partir en voyage avec Énide?" *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 7 (1964): 179, 182. A more recent survey discussing the relationship between Erec and Enide is the article of Barbara Nelson Sargent-Baur, "Érec's Énide: sa femme ou s'amie?" *Romance Philology* 33 (1980): 373.

> Watching him tumble down was a terrible sight: she ran to him, not hiding her sorrow, shrieking, wringing her hands, ripping away her dress and bearing her breast, tearing out her hair, clawing bloody lines along her tender face.[34]

She invokes death and then faints repeatedly over her husband's body:

> "God!" she cried, "Oh, sweet good lord!"/ How can you let me live?/ Oh Death, come, kill me, I'm yours!"[35]

Her lament also includes the *laudatio* of the deceased, which recalls his qualities as knight and as husband. This is voiced in a humble pose in which she kneels next to her *seigneur*:

> And sitting next to her lord, / she laid her head on her knees / and began her lament once more.[36]

Ultimately, a self-condemnation is voiced: the woman considers herself to be guilty for having brought her husband to the adventure which caused his death. The wish to die is resumed not only in words but also in the gesture of pulling out the sword in the attempt at committing suicide:[37]

> She drew out his sword, then sat, / staring at the blade.[38]

Énide's grieving for her husband appears in a peak episode in which the woman goes through a trial situation again, already after a series of tests, when she is

[34] Vv. 4608 – Vv. 4622: "Lors comanca li diax si forz' / Qant Enyde cheü le vit; / Mout li poise quant ele vit, / Et cort vers li si come cele / Qui sa dolor mie ne cele. / An haut s'escrie et tort ses poinz; De robe ne li remest poinz; / Devant le piz a dessirier; / Ses chevox prist a arachier / Et sa tandre face desire." *Érec*, 113. English translation by Raffel Burton, *Erec and Enide* (London: Yale University Press, 1997).

[35] Vv. 4617 – Vv.4621: "Ha! Dex, fet ele, biax dolz Sire, / Por coi ma leisses tu tant vivre? / Morz, car m'oci, si t'an delivre./ A cest mot sor le corps se pasme." *Ibid*., 113.

[36] Vv. 4634 – Vv. 4636: "Devant son seigneur s'est assise, / Et met sor ses genouz son chief; / Son duel comance de rechief." *Ibid*., 113.

[37] She is, however, prevented from this gesture by the count of Limors. Literary critics have argued that the fact that her gesture is not completed might appear hilarious and that Chrétien deals with the theme of death in a relaxed manner, as if playing a game: "Chrétien joue, pour son compte personnel, avec le thème de la mort. Il lui donne un caractère à demi ludique en l'altérant par la méprise ou l'illusion – puisque la mort n'est pas réelle – et par une volonté de suicide empêchée au dernier instant." Jean Frappier, "La douleur et la mort dans la littérature française des XII^{e} et XIII^{e} siècles," *Histoires, mythes et symboles. Études de littérature française* (Geneva: Droz, 1976), 96-97.

[38] Vv. 4670 – Vv. 4671: "L'espee hors del fuerre atrait, / Si la comance a esgarder." *Érec*, 114.

forced to marry the count of Limors immediately after the presumed death of Érec. The marriage proposal made by the count appears as an element with a coercive value which reveals the functioning of the social code as a regulator of the emotional display. The wedding ceremony is performed right away against the woman's will. Since she has become his wife, the mourning should be put aside: "The moment I took you in marriage you should have been grateful, and rejoiced."[39]

On the one hand, Énide is a widow who is still in mourning.[40] On the other, she can still be considered an eligible woman. Limors's reply to her reads: "Your beauty is a thing of wonder and will bring you fortune, for I'll make you my wife, you'll be a noble lady, a countess."[41] These are two important parts attributed to the woman according to two different social registers. Énide is first the embodiment of the woman who is properly grieving for her husband, the illustration of a very praised model *à l'époque*: the devoted wife.[42] Secondly, she is a newly wedded woman who has responsibilities to observe in the relationship with her husband.[43]

In the twelfth century, the rite of marriage is one of the important rites which functioned as a barrier against disorder. Within this framework, the display of her sorrow appears as a positively valued one. Nevertheless, as the rite of marriage replaces the rite of burial, the woman should display the expected emotional reaction:

[39] Vv. 4810 – Vv. 4811: "Quant je espousee vos ai, / Mout vos devez esleescier." *Ibid*., 118.
[40] It is established by ritual that the grieving person should take a certain period for mourning. Limor does not take this into account; moreover, he is more concerned with the fulfilling of the other ritual which would bring him a ascension on the social scale: Vv. 4760 – Vv. 4761: "Je ne serai ja de li pire, Eincois an cuit mout amander." *Ibid*., 116.
[41] Vv. 4699 – Vv. 4705: "Qu'ancor porroiz asez valoir. / Vostre biautez, qui tant est fine, Bone avanture vos destine,/ que je vos recevrai a fame, / De vos ferai contesse et dame: / Ce vos doit mout reconforter." *Ibid*., 115.
[42] See Georges Duby, *A History of Women*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 112: "The aristocratic marital model which posed marriage as an institution which demanded to the woman obedience, chastity and devotion."
[43] Let us compare with the clerical ideology which survived from the period the romances deal with: "Having acquired a wife, a man must learn to rule her. On one plane alone were husband and wife equal, and that was the plane of marital duties. The husband must respond to his wife's requests; but it was in his duty to exercise ultimate control." Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 212.

she should be happy for the new husband. Her emotional display is connected as well to the idea of social rank. The loss of the husband has also occasioned a loss of status and the new matrimonial agreement should bring her joy, since she was rescued from a degrading return to the status of *povre fille de vavasseur*.[44]

Enide's emotional display is shaped at the meeting point between the requirements of two essential rites during that period: mourning and marriage. Under the given circumstances there is a point in which they collide. Limors recognizes her mourning for the loss of the husband as a legitimate one: "Do you think I find it strange, /your mourning and grief ?[45] Nevertheless, his understanding of her sorrow functions with a definite limit. Limors acknowledges her distress only within the limits of the mourning ritual. As the code changes, the emotional behavior is expected to change.

Énide's emotional display does not comply with its social construction . Although she is wedded to the new husband, she is still in deep distress.[46] As the count hits her because of her refusal to speak and to enjoy the dinner prepared for the occasion, Énide persists in her distress and she defends it: "Hah! Why should I care, /whatever you say or do. / I am not afraid of your threats or your blows. / Hit me, beat me as much as you like! / I'll never be so afraid / that I'll do what you want, / even if here and now you put out my eyes / or chop me to little pieces!"[47]

[44] Engl.: "the poor daughter of a vavasseur"; Vv.4799 – Vv. 4801: "Sovaigne vos de quel poverte / Vos est granz richesce aoverte / povre estiez, or estes riche." *Érec.,* 117.
[45] Vv. 4805 – Vv. 4807: "Voir est que morz est vostre sire, / Se vos en avez duel et ire, / cuidiez vos que je m'en mervoil?" *Ibid*., 118.
[46] Vv. 4780 – Vv. 4781: "Estoit Enyde an grant esmai, / Onques ses diax ne recessoit." *Ibid*., 117.
[47] Vv. 4846 – Vv. 4852: "Ne criem te cos ne tes menaces / Asez me bat, asez me fier: / Ja tant ne te troverai fier / Que por toi face plus ne mains, me devoies les ialz sachier / Ou tote vive deranchier." *Ibid*., 119.

The end of her sorrow is imposed, no doubt, by the need of social order.[48] Her forced marriage appears as a firm enforcement of social regulations on individual behavior. As the rite of marriage trespasses on the space allotted to the one of mourning, her emotional display of sorrow does not find its expected social location anymore.

Female Sorrow. Case 2: Social Responsibility.

Laudine is mourning the death of her husband Esclados le Roux. A brief recapitulation of the story will suffice here. Adventure brings the knight Yvain to the magic fountain in the forest of Brocéliande. In order to access the castle of the magic fountain the knight has to face in battle the guardian of the fountain: Esclados le Roux. The knight fights Esclados and kills him. Soon afterwards, Yvain falls in love with the widow, Laudine, who is still in mourning for her husband.

Chrétien narrates sorrow in a similar way to the one in which he recounts Énide's reaction to the apparent death of Érec. What changes, and this could be of interest for our argumentation, is the context in which the display of grief is placed. Several details in the narrative are worthy of attention. Firstly, we should note a detail in the plot which appears to be odd[49] for the courtly setting in which we are placed: the knight kills the husband and marries the widow.

[48] See Duby, with his study of the shaping of the institution of marriage in the twelfth century. Duby considers marriage, like dubbing a rite serving the preservation of social order: "a bulwark for public peace." Duby, *The Knight,* 215.

[49] This is what Frappier has qualified as an anti-courtly detail. Courtly love is by definition the game of friendship. It is not common that the knight should kill the husband and marry the widow in a very short time after this. However, this does not prevent the text from achieving its prescriptive scope, as it is. As Frappier notes, "… Chrétien a joué la diffficulté, en choisissant d'abord une donnée singulière et apparemment anticourtoise – celle d'un meurtrier amoureux de la femme de celui qu'il a tué et celle de la veuve vite consolée – en acceptant ensuite d'illustrer une théorie et des points de doctrine par la conduite de ses personnages." Jean Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain, ou le chevalier au lion de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Société d'Edition D'Enseignement Supérieur, 1969), 149.

Immediately after recovering from her sorrow, Laudine is thinking over the possibility of marrying the knight who killed her husband, provided he is capable of defending the fountain. Her sorrow appears mainly as a marker of the ritual of burial. She does not persist in her distress longer than after the return from the funeral, when she is supposed to continue grieving after everybody else has dispersed. It appears that there is a pre-established limit regulating her display of sorrow, which is confirmed by her servant when she asks Yvain to wait before approaching her until the mourning ends. Is this a request motivated by a genuine need for closure , or is it purely determined by the codes of protocol and etiquette? Either interpretation might be valid.

Laudine's worldly concerns are all connected with defending a reputation and with appearing in front of a public which always governs through moral sanction. On considering the possibility of marrying the knight Yvain, she evaluates the decision in terms of social rank: the knight should be *de bon lignage* and then she would agree to make him lord both of her fiefs and over herself.[50] As she agrees to marry Yvain she expresses another major concern: people should not know that she is marrying the murderer of her husband. Remarrying is not only a matter of defending herself (as a woman she needs the protection of a man) but also a matter of reputation.[51]

[50] According to Duby, the woman had a moral obligation to find a replacement for the master of the fountain land. This was part of the social status of a woman. The historian notes that widows had to re-marry. It was very unusual for the period for a widow not to make a new marriage agreement, unless she took the veil. The obligation to re-marry also tells of the women's role at the time. The woman was defined as an object, and a carefully guarded one for the advantages that could be obtained through her. Women's utility was especially seen within the framework of the marriage institution. For further details see Duby, *The Knight*, *passim*.

[51] Reputation and public image are a specific theme in the individual's assessment on the social map. For a good discussion on the concept of appearance, see the article of Jacques Le Goff, "Lévi-Strauss in Brocéliande," in *idem*, *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 155-187.

Further notes should be made as we look at the actual display. The specific gestures used in the description of sorrow are all there: she rips her dress, tears her hair, and goes into repeated swoons:

> …… and yet she was so crazed with grief / that she was on the point of taking her life./ All at once she cried out at the top of her voice, / and then fell prostrate in a swoon./ And when she had been picked up / she began to claw herself and tear her hair, / like a woman who had lost her mind./ She tears her hair and rips her dress, / and faints at every step she takes;/ nor can anything comfort her / when she sees her husband borne along lifeless in the bier; / for her happiness is at an end, / and so she made her loud lament.[52]

She clutches at her throat and wrings her hands:

> She alone remains behind, /often clutching at her throat, / wringing her hands, / and beating her palms (as she reads her psalms in her gilt-lettered Psalter).[53]

Chrétien gives us several instantiations of her sorrow. Firstly, we see her grieving while her husband is borne along lifeless in a bier. Then, the poet focuses on her reactions after the burial, when all the people had dispersed and she continues her mourning in private space. The account of her display of sorrow is made by Yvain, who is watching her surreptitiously:

> I grieve for her fair tresses, / surpassing gold in their radiance; / I feel the pangs of anguish and torment / when I see her tear and cut them, / nor can her tears e'er be dried / which I see falling from her eyes; / by all these things I am distressed. / Although they are full of ceaseless, ever-flowing tears, / yet never were there such lovely eves. / The sight of her weeping causes me agony, / but nothing pains me so much / as the sight of her face, / which she lacerates / without its having merited such treatment. / I never saw such a face so perfectly formed, / nor so fresh and delicately colored./ And then it has pierced my heart to see her clutch her throat./ Surely, it is all too true that she is doing the worst she can. / And yet no crystal nor any mirror is so bright and smooth./

[52] Vv. 1148 – Vv. 1163: "Mais de duel faire estoit si fole / C'a poi qu'ele ne s'ochioit. / A la feye s'escrioit / Si haut qu'ele ne pooit plus, / Si recheoit pasmee jus; / Et quant ele estoit relevee, / Aussi conme fenme desvee, / Si conmenchoit a deschirer / Et ses chaveus a detirer; / Ses chaveus tire et ront ses dras, / Et se repasme a chascun pas, / Ne riens ne le puet conforter, / Que son seigneur en voit porter / Devant li, en la biere, mort,/ Dont ja ne quide avoir confort; / Por ce crioit a haute voiz." *Yvain*, 367.
[53] Vv. 1413 – Vv. 1417: "Mes iqui remest tote sole / Et sovant se prant a al gole, / Et sort ses poinz, et bat ses paumes, / et list en un sautier, ses saumes, / Anlumine a letres d'or." *Ibid*., 373.

> God! why is she thus possessed, /and why does she not spare herself?/ Why does she wring her lovely hands / and beat and tear her breast?[54]

Laudine's sorrow should be understood in connection with her social location, as a woman who defines herself through marriage. The loss of her husband will therefore mean a loss a loss of identity and loss of the element through which she defines herself with the social framework.

The display of her sorrow is integrated as part of the social regulations implied by the loss of a husband. Emotional enacting follows social expectations. Her grieving is legitimized by the text as part of the ritual of mourning.[55] Her emotional display is also regulated by the second code of social responsibility: The grieving ends when obligation comes in: the fountain needs a protector and the widow has to marry.

Female Sorrow. Case 3: The Royal Image

Guinevere slips into deep sorrow when she receives the (false) news of Lancelot's death. A brief account of the story will suffice here. Queen Guinevere kindles the flames of love in the heart of the knight Lancelot, who undergoes a series of trial adventures in order to rescue her from the land of Gorre. After a long series of knightly deeds, Lancelot confronts the abductor and obtains provisional[56] liberty for the queen. In spite of the knight's proof of devotion, the queen rebuffs him as

[54] Vv. 1463 – Vv. 1489: "Grant duel ai de ses biaux chevax, / Qui fin or passent, tant reluisent. / D'ire m'esprennent et aguisent / Quant je li voi rompre et trenchier; /C'onques ne se puet estanchier / Les larmes qui des iex li chïent. / Toutes ches choses me dessïent! / Atout che qu'il sont plain de lermes, / Si que che n'est ne fins ne termes, / Ne furent onques si bel oeil. / De che qu'ele pleure me doeil / Ne de riens n'ai si grant destreche / Conme de son vis qu'ele bleche, Que ne l'eüst pas deservi: / C'onques si bele taille ne vi / Ne si fres ne si coulouré; / Et che me par a acouré. / Et je li voi sa gorge estraindre! / Chertes, ele ne se set faindre / C'au pis qu'ele puet ne se faiche, / Ne nus cristaus ne nule glache / N'est si bele ne si polie / Que se gorge est ne si onnie. / Dix! Pourquoi ne se bleche mains? / Pourquoi detort ses blanches mains / Et fiert son pis et esgratine? / Dont ne fust che merveilles fine / A esgarder, s'ele fust lie, / Quant ele est si tres bele irie?" *Ibid*., 374-375.

[55] See Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 143: "the ritual of mourning lasted the length of the vigil, or sometimes the length of the burial. A month at the most, in extreme cases."

punishment for having hesitated to get on the cart driven by a surly churl while he was searching for her.[57] Later on, the queen receives the news that Lancelot was killed during one of his adventures, and grieves for his death as she supposes the news to be true.

The text offers us significant details which describe the circumstances in which the feeling occurs. The news reaches Guinevere when she is surrounded by courtiers. In the presence of the court Guinevere does not allow the full expression of her sorrow; for the public she only utters a neutral lament as she is trying to hide her dismay:

> The news of this spread / until it reached the Queen, / who was sitting at meat./ She almost killed herself / on hearing the false report about Lancelot, / but she supposes it to be true, / and therefore she is in such dismay / that she almost loses the power to speak; / but, because of those present, / she forces herself to say**: /** "In truth, I am sorry for his death, / and it is no wonder that I grieve, / for he came into this country for my sake, / and therefore I should mourn for him.[58]

As the public release of her emotion is made, Chrétien moves on to the description of the unrestrained manifestation of her sorrow, which is displayed in a private space, away from the public.

> Then she says to herself, / so that the others should not hear, / that no one need ask her to drink or eat, / if it is true that he is dead, / in whose life she found her own. / Then grieving she rises from the table, / and makes her lament, / but so that no one hears or notices her. / She is so beside herself / that she repeatedly grasps her throat / with the desire to kill herself; / but first she confesses to herself, / and repents with self-reproach, / blaming and censuring

[56] The queen is free to return to Logres, but the fight will be resumed and finalized at a later date at Arthur's court.

[57] Getting on the cart, which was reserved for common criminals, was a test for Lancelot, who had the chance to show his determination in finding and rescuing Guinevere. His hesitation gave the queen the opportunity to remind the knight that he was after all a vassal. Guinevere's punishment of Lancelot, by her despising look, emphasizes her status and the privileged position she assumed in their love affair.

[58] Vv. 4175 – Vv. 4188: "Ceste novele par tot va / Tant que la reïne trova, / Qui au mangier estoit assise. / A po qu'ele ne s'est ocise / Maintenant que de Lancelot / La mançonge et la novele ot;/ Mes ele la cuide veraie / Et tant duremant s'an 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 païs por moi: / Por ce pesance avoir an doi." *Lancelot*, 611. English translation from the Charette Project, Uitti and Foulet critical edition. Accessed at: http://www.princeton.edu/%7Elancelot/L-6U.html.

> herself / for the wrong she had done him, / who, as she knew, / had always been hers, / and would still be hers, / if he were alive. / She is so distressed at the thought of her cruelty, / that her beauty is seriously impaired. / Her cruelty and meanness affected her / and marred her beauty more than all the vigils / and fasting with which she afflicted herself.[59]

Her interior torment is expressed in the form of an extended monologue:

> When all her sins rise up before her, / she gathers them together, / and as she reviews them, / she repeatedly exclaims: / "Alas! of what was I thinking / when my lover stood before me / and I should have welcomed him, / that I would not listen to his words? / Was I not a fool, / when I refused to look at or speak to him? / Foolish indeed? Rather was I base and cruel, / so help me God. / I intended it as a jest, / but he did not take it so, / and has not pardoned me. / I am sure it was no one but me / who gave him his death-blow.[60]

The passages describing Guinevere's sorrow present the opportunity to explore one important aspect which regulates the emotional behavior of the people in the romances: the public. The public is always an authority which sets the rules and sanctions the proper or improper manifestations. The presence or the absence of that public does not necessarily shape the way of feeling – just as Chrétien seems to suggest – but it certainly regulates the way of displaying it.

A closer look at the way in which the character of the queen is constructed by the text will bring us a better understanding of the display of her sorrow. As Douglas

[59] Vv. 4189 – Vv. 421: "Puis dit a li meïsme an bas, / Por ce que l'en ne l'oïst 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; / Mes ainz se confesse a li sole, / Si se repant et bat sa colpe 4202 Et molt se blasme et molt s'ancolpe / Del pechié qu'ele fet avoit 4204 Vers celui don ele savoit/ 4205 Qu'il suens avoit esté toz dis 4206 Et fust ancor se il fust vis. 4207 Tel duel a de sa crualté 4208 Que molt an pert de sa biauté. 4209 Sa crualté, sa felenie / 4210 L'ont fet molt tainte et molt nercie, 4211 Et ce qu'ele voille et geüne." *Ibid*., 611.

[60] Vv. 4200 – Vv. 4217: "Toz ses mesfez ansanble aune, / Et tuit le reviennent devant / toz le recorde et dit sovant: / "Ha! Lasse! De coi ne sovint, / Quant mes amis devant mois vint / Que je nel degnai conjoir / Ne ne le vos onques oir? / Quant mon esgart et ma parole / Ne fit je que fole? / Que fole! Ainz fis, si m'aist Dex, / Que felenesse et que cruex; / Et sel cuidai ge feire a gas / Mes ensi nel cuida il pas, / Se nel m'a mie pardonne / Nus fors moi ne li a donne / le mortel cop, mien esciant." *Ibid*., 610.

Kelly has pointed out, Guinevere's character is revealed in the romance in several stages.[61] Let us recall her previous appearances and observe their specificity.

Chrétien especially insists on her cold reception of Lancelot, after the knight has rescued her. After the fight, the king of Gorre recommends the knight to the queen as her liberator.[62] Guinevere not only does not show her gratitude but also rebuffs him and leaves without a word. Her mistake is to act out in public what should remain a private matter between herself and the man who has acted under the sole impetus of love for her. This will lead Lancelot, as she acknowledges in her monologue at his presumed death, to a confused understanding of her behavior and to his attempted suicide.

Most of the queen's public gestures towards the knight are characterized by a very reduced emotional display.[63] As noted by other studies, when in public, the queen usually displays an attitude of passivity.[64] This is visible not only in her emotional behavior towards Lancelot but also if we compare this one with the one of the other noble women who appear in the romances and who often have disruptive emotional reactions in public.

In the description of Guinevere's display of sorrow the poet uses several markers which explain and qualify her emotional behavior. Firstly, Chrétien insists on the official character of the regret she expresses when she receives the news during

[61] F. D. Kelly, "*Sens*" *and* "*Conjointure*" *in the* "*Chevalier de la charrette*" (The Hague: Mouton, 1966).
[62] Vv. 3945 – Vv. 3972: "Quant la reine voit le roi / Qui tient Lancelot par le doi, / Si s'est contre le roi dreciee / Et fet sanblant de correciee; / Si s'anbruncha et ne dist mot." *Lancelot*, 604.
[63] She shows no emotional behavior when she assists at the tournaments in which her lover fights her abductor, Méléagant. Guinevere represents the highest-ranked presence at the tournament who is presiding a public assembly in which two knights fight for her. The poet describes her as a cold authority who is only being there as a royal representative. As the fight reaches its peak King Bademagu is the only one who reacts, asking for her clemency in order to stop the fight and save the life of his son, Méléagant. Guinevere grants the king this favor with an affirmative sentence, but this is the only gesture that she allows herself to show in public.
[64] See Marie-Noelle Lefay-Toury, "Roman breton et mythes courtois. L'évolution du personnage féminin dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 15 (1972): 193-204 and 283-293.

the royal dinner. There are two significant details which should be noted here: one is the physical, functional and symbolic context (the royal dinner) and the second is the necessity implied by the text that she should voice her royal suffering as queen who has lost a devoted vassal and her liberator:

> … because of those present, / she forces herself to say**:** / "In truth, I am sorry for his death, / and it is no wonder that I grieve, / for he came into this country for my sake, / and therefore I should mourn for him." [65]

He also insists on the fact that immediately she rises from the table and "she makes her lament so that no one hears and sees her."[66]

The poet also insists on her cruelty: "she is so distressed at the thought of her cruelty."[67] Moreover, Guinevere herself chooses to expiate for her cruelty:

> It is wrong for a woman to wish to die / rather than to suffer for her lover's sake. / It is certainly sweet for me / to mourn him long. / I would rather be beaten alive / than die and be at rest.[68]

Guinevere's sorrow should mainly be understood in terms of this opposition between public and private. As queen she has to perform a role which imposes upon her a controlled expression of the feelings. Her relationship with Lancelot is described in the text by means of a variation between public and private. While in public their contact is indirect, channeled through the mediation of performed messages and role-playing, in private both the queen and the knight confirm the commitment each had made to each other. This is marked in the text by the displaced repetition of their night of love.[69]

[65] Vv. 4174 - Vv. 4178: "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 païs por moi: / Por ce pesance avoir an doi." *Lancelot*, 611.
[66] Vv. 4187: "Si que nus ne l'ot ne escoute." *Ibid.,* 612.
[67] Vv.4207: " Tel duel a de sa crualté." *Ibid.,* 610.
[68] Vv. 4257 – Vv. 4263: "Malveise est qui mialz vialt morir / Que mal por son ami sofrir. / Mes certes il m'est molt pleisant / Que j'en aille lonc duel feisant. / Mialz voel vivre et sofrir les cos / Que morir et estre an repos." *Ibid*., 611.
[69]See Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Shaping Romance. Interpretation, Truth and Closure in Twelfth Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 81.

The display of her sorrow marks very clearly the same opposition. The public display is a cold, official one and it is justified in terms of the relationship between overlord and vassal; the private display of her sorrow is built on guilt, remorse and a highly moral species of regret. Guinevere chooses to expiate by suffering. Significantly enough, once she sees the effects of her mistake at the tournament, she is never again represented in the romance as trespassing the bounds set up by her public role as a queen.

Whatever the intensity of her grief, Guinevere contains these feelings without interrupting the smooth flow of her public function. While a certain amount of feeling positive or negative, as circumstance requires is shown for the knight who has done so much on her behalf, theses feelings are released as part of her public role as queen, disconnected from any private passion.[70]

Male Sorrow. Case 1:Personal Self and Social Self.

The poet describes in detail the circumstances in which Yvain experiences sorrow. Let us recall them briefly. A short while after his marriage to Laudine, Yvain is urged by Gauvain to follow the king in a new series of tournaments. Yvain wishes to leave, to follow the way of knightly prowess; his wife accepts his departure on the condition that he should return in not more than a year, eight days after the feast of St. John. Caught up in the excitement of knightly adventure, the knight forgets the return at the end of the year and his wife breaks their union. Rejected by Laudine, Yvain goes mad.

It is important to note the fact that sorrow supervenes in a moment of crisis which precedes the knight's departure from the world of moral obligation and marks a turning point in his subsequent development. In what follows, Yvain experiences

[70] The redefinition of the queen's role within the framework of her public appearances is discussed by Bruckner, *Shaping Romance.*

madness and then is brought back to his sanity by the application of a magic ointment. Then he achieves a series of good deeds and fights several battles by means of which he reestablishes himself at the Arthur's court. Eventually, the knight goes back to the magic fountain where the cycle of his transformation is completed by his repairing of the relationship with Laudine.

Sorrow marks the setting in of a conflict that the hero experiences between the call of love – identified with a specific woman – and the call of adventure – identified with men.[71] Yvain must deal with a conflict of loyalty to his lover, and loyalty to a male warrior ethic.[72] This represents the major theme of the poem. Although many critics have discussed the conflict between love and adventure, very few have examined the implications for the role on sorrow that this conflict holds. First of all, before looking at the feeling one has to look at the self. Yvain is a knight and defends the specific values of his class.[73]

The knightly values described in the romances are to be understood as part of an ideal code of behavior which appeared as an invention of this literary genre and presumably occasioned a refinement of the chivalric values in which the initial meaning of military profession was effaced.[74] The refinement of social and behavioral

[71] The best treatment of this theme is in Robert W. Hanning, "The Social Significance of Twelfth Century Chivalric Romance," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 3 (1972): 3-29. Some other critics discussing this theme are: Reto Bezzola, *Le sens de l'aventure et de l'amour* (Paris: Le Jeune Parque, 1947); Joan M. Ferrante, *The Conflict of Love and Honor: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany and Italy* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); Alfred Adler, "Militia et Amor in the Roman de Troie," *Romanische Forschungen* 72 (1960): 14-29; Eugene Vance, "Signs of the City: Medieval Poetry as Detour," *New Literary History*, 4 (1973): 557- 574; Eugene Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); Emilie Kostoroski, "Quest and Query and the Chastelaine de Vergy," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 3 (1972): 179

[72] This is also the case with Érec, Lancelot, Tristan. For further details see Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin.*

[73] I am quoting these values as they appear in the study of Eric Köhler: *chevalerie, leautée, justise, honor, usage, foi, coustume, don, largesce*; Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque*, 15.

[74] According to Duby, with each of the romances of Chretien de Troyes, the concept of "knighthood" acquired a new meaning. A refinement of these values was brought in by the emergence of the courtly culture. The assessment of the class on the social map was made progressively. First society officially recognized a superiority connected not with specialization in the military art but rather with birth; the next important step was the ritualizing of the act of being a knight by the dubbing ceremony and by its

codes noticeable in the literary representations makes the analysis of the representation of feeling within this context even more important, since sorrow is often present in the romances in the description of the social development of the individual. Eric Köhler[75] explained that the romances were building a "creed" of knighthood in an ideal form which he explains by the necessity of giving a moral content to the warrior and adventurer life. The representation of emotions that we read in the romances should be understood in a similar way, as part of a process in its making which presumably shaped individual behavior.

In the case of Yvain the representation of sorrow is associated with the impossibility of the knight of coping with dual or divided moral obligation, on the one hand towards the beloved and on the other towards chivalric duties. Moreover, once he has broken one code of social behavior, by breaking the vow to his lady, Yvain's sorrow is extrapolated and transferred to his entire system of values: "…and his sorrow grew on him so that all he hears and he sees bothers him."[76]

The knight first experiences sorrow as a state related both to longing and to the acknowledgment of the broken vow and anticipation of the parting that was to follow. Still, his emotion does not only link to his parting with the beloved. Sorrow marks his exit from the world of moral obligation. This is very tellingly marked at the level of the text by the knight's subsequent madness and his escape from the civilized world. Under the form of madness, this crisis brings for him the abolition[77] of social values and his passage to a realm in which his social self does not have relevance, validity or operation.

subsequent sacralization under the influence of Christianity. The values with which we are concerned appeared only after the 1160s of the twelfth century with the emergence of the new trend in fashionable circles in northern France. See Duby, *The Three Orders, passim.*

[75] See Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque*.

[76] Vv. 2783 - Vv. 2784: "Et ses anuis tousjours li croist /Et quanque il voit li enuie." *Yvain*, 406.

Within the social code of knightly values Yvain could not and did not publicly show his emotional distress. When he first experiences sorrow Yvain feels like weeping[78] but he represses his tears out of shame Here emerges a particularly telling opposition, one familiar from anthropology of cultures much earlier than this courtly one: the antithetical relationship, or supervenience of one upon the other, or society's emergence from one and embracing of the other: shame and guilt.[79] Yvain may well feel guilt for his actions, just as Guinevere does in the example cited above – and this itself is a notable step forwards in the acknowledgment of internal ethical compulsion and judgment, as well as the internalization of emotion (whether in narrative or in everyday application of psychology) for which Chrétien is famed, but it is still not entirely a matter of conscience.

It is important to note the fact that the knight experiences sorrow mainly as a state related to the world of chivalric values. Significantly enough, Yvain suffers a similar fit of madness after his recovery, when chance brings him to the fountain of the pine-tree again:

> Adventure brought him again / close to the pine-tree. / Yvain, almost spilled into madness again / when they approached the fountain / and the edge and the fountain. / He started lamenting / that he was so doleful / and he fell into a deep swoon.[80]

His first experience of sorrow was connected to the recalling of his life in the castle of the magic fountain. The return to the fountain makes him experience the same: deep sorrow and madness. The resurgence of his madness at the return to the

[77] For an extensive discussion of his distancing from the civilized world, see Le Goff "Lévi-Strauss in Brocéliande."
[78] Vv. 2704 – Vv. 2705: "A grant poinne tenoit ses lermes, Mes honte li fesoit tenir." *Yvain,* 405.
[79] The concepts of shame and guilt are discussed in John F. Benton, "Consciousness of the Self and Perceptions of Individuality," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century,* ed. Robert L. Benson, Giles Constable and Carol D. Lanham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
80 Vv. 3490 – Vv. 3497: "Tant c'aventure a le fontaine / Deseur le pin les amena. / La par poi ne se forsena / Mesire Yvains, autre feïe, / Quant le fontaine ot aprochie / Et le perron et le chapele. / Mil fois las et dolent se claime / Et chiet pasmés, tant fu dolans." *Yvain,* 423.

magic fountain recalls the beginning of his crisis and his impossibility to cope with the conflicting social ideals associated to it. It is important to note the fact that before his actual return to the civilized world Yvain contemplates the idea of suicide. In experiencing madness or contemplating suicide, Yvain is either way in a state of denial of his social self,[81] which he has to face again at the return of the magic fountain. The reestablishment of his relationship with Laudine represents the final realization of his return to the world of moral obligation and of the completion of a re-identifying of his social self.

Several patterns emerge from the description of sorrow in this case. The first one is represented in the opposition between personal and social self: sorrow is the outcome of a conflict between the two. Secondly, sorrow is described within the opposition between the public and the private display, which is visible in Yvain's repression of his tears in the presence of the members of the court. Ultimately, there is the opposition between the civilized and the savage world, which is paralleled by the opposition between presence and absence of sorrow. Sorrow can only operate with a civilized context, and yet sorrow can remove an individual from that context.

Male Sorrow. Case 2: Self-Abnegation

A quick summary of the circumstances will help in situating the analysis of this sorrow representation in the context. Lancelot receives the false news of Guinevere's death after the queen has publicly rebuked him at the tournament. It is important to recall also the fact that Lancelot had then acknowledged the queen's rejection but without knowing what his crime was. This becomes important, as I will show, in the understanding of his lament.

[81] See Johathan Dollimore, *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

The conflict the knight has to deal with is a conflict of loyalty. Lancelot must respect a vow of loyalty both to his beloved and to his king. His love for Guinevere is fundamentally incompatible to his loyalty to Arthur. The contradiction emerges from the double relationship of vasselage established both to the queen and the king.[82]

Lancelot's sorrow, I would argue, is both a matter of abnegation and abjuration of social values. The knight does not feel sorrow only as a *chagrin d'amour*. The presumed physical loss of Guinevere makes him recall her loss as a token of his love and courtesy at the moment when she rebuked him. By failing in serving Guinevere, Lancelot fails in keeping his vow of loyalty, and his commitment to a key element in his system of values.[83]

The question of Lancelot's identity should be considered through the prism of the multiplicity of views that the romance gives us upon him.[84] His protean character throughout the romance appears as a means of perpetuation of the idea of a search for identity. Lancelot's display of sorrow appears as a climax of his experience of the world of multiple identities. Confronted with the loss of the beloved, one of the elements of stability in his world, the knight is overwhelmed with grief:

> I am undone, / and yet I feel no pain / except the grief within my heart. / This is a terrible mortal grief. / I am willing that it should be so, / and if God will, I shall die of it.[85]

[82] This is a specific type of social relationship in the late twelfth century. Georges Duby explains: "It was a friendship- based relationship whose natural setting was kinship. In this framework, the woman's role was to help in the knight's education. As a teacher, and also because she was older than he, not much, but always to some extent she was in a position of superiority. So, she was the "lord" to his "vassal" ; this inverted the hierarchy of the sexes: Eve was above Adam and bore the responsibility for his sin." See Duby, *The Knight,* 222.

[83] Köhler argues that loyalty was one the main values at the basis of the vasselage relationship. See Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque.*

[84] First of all his identity is only revealed at the half of the romance; throughout the romance he gives himself or he is given a series of new identities which allow him to play different roles.

[85] Vv. 4273 – Vv. 4277: "Desheitiez sui, ne mal ne sant / Fors del duel qu'au cuer me descent. / Cist diax est max, voire mortex. / Ce voel je bien que il soit tex / Et, se Deu plest, je an morrai." *Lancelot,* 612. English translation from the same source.

Lancelot's lament is the expression of a torment emerging from the interference of conflicting values: loyalty, honor, prowess. His sorrow appears as a mark of his failure in this system of values.

Lancelot, like Yvain, is throughout the romance on a quest for identity which includes love for a woman as well as loyalty to men. "Identity" will not be understood, in this context, with the modern connotation of a consciousness of one's unique individual personality,[86] but rather as a search for the perfection and the harmony of the self's desires.[87] Sorrow signifies his impossibility to achieve this harmonizing within himself.

In this particular representation of sorrow, Chrétien insists mainly on the hero's lament, which is focused on the loss of chivalric values and on the failure in responding to social expectations. The poet does not describe any outward display of sorrow. On the contrary, when the news reaches Lancelot we are only told that he was overcome with grief to the point of detesting his life.[88] Chrétien includes in the description one single radical gesture, which he describes in detail: that of attempted suicide. This appears, as madness in the case of Yvain, as a gesture of escape from conflicting social values.

> Then he delays and hesitates no longer, / but adjusts his head within the noose / until it rests about his neck; / and in order that he may not fail to harm himself, / he fastens the end of the belt tightly / about the saddle-bow, / without attracting the attention of any one. / Then he let himself slide to earth,/ intending his horse to drag him / until he was lifeless, / for he disdains to live another hour.[89]

[86] Caroline Bynum Walker, "Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?" in *Jesus as a Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 82-109. Bynum Walker's argument was based on the observation of the religious texts of the twelfth century, but it also characterizes secular literature very well.

[87] The expression belongs to Robert Hanning. Cited in Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin*, 28.

[88] Vv. 4268 – Vv. 4275: " A Lancelot vient la novele / Que morte est sa dame et s'amie. / Molt l'en pesa, n'en dotez mie; / Bien pueent savoir totes genz / Qu'il fu molt iriez et dolanz / Por voir il fu si adolez, / S'oïr et savoir le volez / Que sa vie en ot an despit." *Lancelot*, 611. English translation from the same source.

[89] Vv. 4292 – Vv. 4302: "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'arcon de sa sele estroit, Ainsi

The pattern emerging here is comparable to the one noted in the previous case, that of Yvain. Sorrow marks the moment of a crisis, in which the hero is confronted with the loss of identity – or at least the proof of a failure on the hero's part to live up to the expectations concomitant upon the assuming of any particular identity. The experience of sorrow signifies a turning point in the evolution of the hero on the social map of the romance world. It is in the experience of sorrow that Lancelot acknowledges the fact that he was feeling guilt but he actually ignored the nature of the fault, that when he got in the cart, acting in the service of the queen he subjected himself to public infamy and he damaged his honor. His sorrow, as in the case of Yvain is about the impossibility of acting in one register without trespassing the rules of the other.

que nus ne l'aperçoit / Puis se let vers terre cliner: / Si se vost feire trainer / A son cheval, tant qu'ilestaigne; / une ore plus vivre ne daigne." *Ibid*., 612.

Chapter III:
Displayed Sorrow

What is particularly important for this study is to see what the product of the emotion is in the actions of the subject who is acting them out. Firstly, this will allow us to observe both the author's attitude towards the particular emotion; secondly, this is tightly connected to the quality of communication[90] that the emotion acquires in the cultural and social context in which the poet describes it as such.

The present chapter will carry out an analytic reading of the particular means of expression of sorrow, in an attempt to propose their possible cultural understanding.[91] I do not wish to adopt here a radical constructionist[92] point of view, which makes the social function of the emotion a condition *sine qua non* for its existence. My intention is rather to show that emotions have a social component in that their display is regulated by social norms. The comparative reading of the selected case-studies has pointed out the emergence of several favored means of expression which give a certain degree of specificity to the feminine and masculine displays of sorrow.

Loss of Beauty and Disruptive Gestures

The beauty of the women in the romances is not simply outward charm but also the expression of noble blood and lineage, whose goodness is reflected and verified in one's physical identity. Chrétien uses beauty as an element which specifies feminine identity, and brings it out by the fact that the concept does not find a male

[90] See Peyroux, "Gertrude's *Furor*," 43.
[91] This analysis can always be subject to misinterpretation, due both to the individual nature of the emotion and to its features as an act of communication and to the possibility of cultural misunderstanding.

correspondent, as we could see from the analyzed cases of male sorrow. The gender perspective at work in the romance reminds us that it is normally female beauty that causes all the stir and male prowess that (after being provoked by it) serves it:

> Women are contemplated and men usually choose them to enjoy their beauty. Men are loved for what they do not for how they look, even in the cases when the hero's looks generally support the favorable impression of his prowess.[93]

It is important to note the fact that sorrow deprives women of this inborn power with which they are usually depicted.[94] The text operates with a neat association between sorrow and impaired beauty. To make the opposition clearer Chrétien uses the loss of beauty in pair with its restoration to mark respectively sorrow and joy. Given the pattern, we may notice how the emotional state changes at the level of the outer appearance. It becomes very interesting to observe the game that the poet is playing at the level of the emotional display associated with sorrow. The "disappearance" of beauty parallels the absence of the beloved, who in the romance milieu gives the woman her *raison d'être*.

Sorrow, the emotion inducing the loss of beauty, is defined mainly by the opposition to its counterpart, joy. The study of John Baldwin[95] interprets the antynomic couple *dolor-joi* in terms of the presence or absence of worldly pleasures in the personal development of the romance heroes. Sorrow is thus identified as the

[92] See Claire Armon-Jones for a good discussion of the differences between radical and weak social constructionists. Claire Armon-Jones, " The Social Functions of Emotions," in *The Social Construction of Emotions*, ed. Rom Harré (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 61.

[93] See Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, 132.

[94] See *Érec*, 13: Vv.421 – Vv.433: "De ceste tesmoingne nature / C'onques si bele creature / Ne fu veue an tot le monde. / Por voir vos di qu'Isolz la blonde / Not le crins tant sors nes luisanz, / Que a cesti ne fust neanz. / Plus ot que n'est la flors de lis / Cler et blanc le front et le vis; / Sor la blanchor par grant mervoille, / D'une fresche color mervoille / Que Nature li ot donee, / Estoit sa face enluminee. / Si oel si grant clarte randoient / Que deus estoiles ressanbloient;" *Yvain*, 375: Vv. 1146 – Vv.1147: "De si tres bele crestiene / Ne fu onques plez ne parole."

[95] See John Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

emotion which supervenes at the point of the loss of earthly happiness.[96] In all the sorrow instantiations under investigation here, the grieving people lament the loss of their happiness. The attachment to *joi* appears to be a general characteristic of the heroes and heroines in the romances, who seem to follow, in sorrow as in love, the flow of feelings and the beauty of transitory things.[97]

Chrétien also uses the loss of beauty as a means of sanctioning, when he insists expressly on the persistence of physical ugliness, as is the case with Guinevere, when she experiences sorrow. The poet might have followed in this sense influences coming from the theological writings of the twelfth century, which sustained the notion that one's outer appearance reflects one's inner being, and accordingly considered beauty as a sign of inner goodness.[98] The dichotomy becomes relevant if we compare the cases of female sorrow and observe that Guinevere is the only one in whom the loss of beauty still persists, whereas Énide and Laudine, although grief-stricken, are still, to some extent, beautiful. The effect obtained thereby is that of a differentiation between the heroines and the evaluation of their grieving: the suffering of the first one appears to be negatively evaluated; the latter receive a positive contextual evaluation which is marked by the persistence of their beauty.

Naturally, we could simplify and explain the physical ugliness as a result of the violent, destructive gestures that women inflict upon themselves when they experience sorrow. The explanation, however, cannot stand, since we are told in two

[96] See Adams, *The Anthropology of Love in Twelfth Century Romance*, 86: "Love in the romances serves to draw the romance hero and heroine's attention away from the religious values of twelfth century society; through its insistence on the helplessness of the individual before the power of love, the early verse romance creates a new esthetic where the folly of rejoicing in earthly pleasure prevails over the rationality of seeing in earthly beauty a pale imitation of the divine."

[97] See *ibid*., 86: "The surrender of reason to delirium, the knowledge that he or she is choosing the mutable thing of the earth over the spiritual things of heaven, is the central characteristic of the romance lover."

[98] See *ibid*., 86: "Predicated on a harmonious relationship with the body serving the spirit, his writings describe the two aspects of the human being attaining mutual perfection in parallel, each in their own

of the previously analyzed cases[99] that even when grieving women can still keep their beauty. We should also note the fact that in both cases it is in the presence of a man that female beauty "re-appears." Chrétien seems to suggest that in this way the cycle of social life is being continued and the woman moves towards the re-attainment of her status within the perspective of a new marriage agreement.

Female Frenzy and Male Madness

Chrétien often brings in the female descriptions of sorrow disruptive gestures which are depicted as symptoms of madness: they wring their hands, tear their dress, pull their hair; they cry out at the top of their voices, clutch their throats and lacerate their faces. An additional element is the change in the color of their complexion.[100]

However, although in such descriptions Chrétien utilizes several clear *signa* of madness, women do not reach the actual loss of reason.[101] The *femineus furor* is a recurrent *topos* in the hagiographic and clerical literature at the time.[102] Still, as has been pointed out, the scenes in the romances offer a softer image of female madness and describe only symptoms of insanity. Thus, a parallelism has been made between the silence of the romances on female madness and the silence of the gesta on the male warrior madness.[103]

domain. Restoration of similitude to God must be carried out in two realms: the physical and the spiritual. The two paths parallel one another."

[99] See Female Sorrow, Case 1 and Female Sorrow, Case 2.

[100] The gestures displayed by the grieving women are all specific gestures of madness. See Muriel Laharie, *La folie au Moyen Âge. XI^e – XIII^e siècles* (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1991), 153-160.

[101] See Jean-Marie Fritz, *Le discours du fou au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 87: "Dans la littérature médiévale, cette topique de la féminité en folie est loin d'être absente, mais, curieusement, dans les romans arthuriens, la femme semble échapper à jamais à l'épreuve de la folie; toute "Folie Yseut" ou "Folie Guenievre" et impensable, comme si la folie était condamnée à se dire au masculin."

[102] See *Les Coutumes de Beauvaisis de Philippe de Beaumanoir*, vol. 2, ed. A. Salmon (Paris, 1900); *Le Roman de Fauvel*, ed. A. Langfors (Paris, 1914-1919); Albert le Grand, *De Animalibus*, IX, ~ 22, ed. H. Stadler (Munster, 1916-1920); P. Saintyves, *L'astrologie populaire et l'influence de la lune* (Paris, 1937).

[103] *Ibid*., 91.

In the female display of sorrow, the repeated display of violent gestures entails a different kind of response to fury: the swoon.[104] The swoon is a classical gesture of sorrow, which is often repeated in the representation of this emotion also in earlier texts than the romances. In the *chanson de geste* the swoon appears as a frequent gesture in the manifestation of mourning: Roland faints at the death of his friend Oliver, Charlemagne loses consciousness when he discovers his nephew lying dead on the battlefield of Roncevaux.[105] Although Chrétien uses this gesture especially in the case of women, we have to underline the fact that it does not function as a gender distinction. The swoon is present also in the male sorrow manifestations, as is the case with Yvain, who loses consciousness at his return to Brocéliande.

While women only approximate towards the state of madness, men can experience it fully. Yvain's madness[106] is important for the argument of this study because it reveals a particular way of experiencing and acting out sorrow.

To my mind, a clear distinction should be made between the two moments which are marked respectively by his loss of senses and loss of reason. The distinction is also marked at the level of the language used by the poet to describe the two different states experienced by the hero: '*enui*'[107] and '*folie.*'[108] The two states are described by the poet by reference to the two main connectors of the individual to the world: '*sans'* and *'san'*. The text creates a parallelism between the descriptions of the

[104] Laharie speaks of this state as of "pâmoison-duel," a state specific to feminine figures. See Laharie, *La folie au Moyen Âge*, 158.
[105] For further comparison, see Ariès, *The Hour of our Death,* 142.
[106] Male madness is a *topos* which is frequently associated with the failure in coping with social expectations. A clear example following in the same pattern can be found in a later romance, *The Death of King Arthur*, in which the knight Lancelot experiences a triple failure: failure of love, failure of loyalty, failure of friendship. The important thing to underline here is that madness refers rather to a change in the social taxonomy than to a precise state. To become mad is to wander, to be errant in a much less positive sense than that of the "knight errant," in fact, to err, and persist in erring. and this appears to be an important paradigm on the social map. The *fou* is deprived of status as he is deprived of stability. For further details, see R. Mohl, *The Three Estates in Mediaeval and Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1933), 331-340.
[107] In Old French: "torment."
[108] In Old French: "madness."

two states which supervene, both under the form of an disruptive movement.[109] Sorrow is marked in the text as a peculiar state which is introduced by the literal loss of senses[110]and described as an increasing, overwhelming torment: "And his sorrow grows on him: he feels oppressed by what he hears, and is tormented by what he sees."[111] Sorrow is here described as a prologue to madness.

In spite of their disruptive, mad-like gestures, women appear to succeed in maintaining a better balance between reason and feeling. Men seem to tend towards an avoidance of the actual experience of sorrow, an evasion which is facilitated by slipping into another state, which is either madness or death.

> Le rapport que la femme entretient avec la folie ne reproduit donc pas celui de l'homme: la dame surmonte le duel et la multiplication des cris et des gestes dans "l'anesthésie" de la pâmoison ou le désir de la mort; le chevalier y parvient dans une aliénation d'abord spatiale, puis dans la perte du sens et dans la mort de tout désir. Féminité de l*'a-mentia* (être privé de sens et de sensation), masculinité de la *de-mentia* (faire sécession, être loin et hors du sens).[112]

The Wish for Death and the Attempted Suicide

The wish for death appears as a continuation of the ritual gesture of the mourners who expressed this in order to show the regret for the departed. Although repeated in the manner of customary obligations, the wish for death is not presented as a rite, but as the expression of personal feelings and acquires a specific value depending on the individual who experiences it.[113]

In the feminine instantiations of sorrow, the heroines invoke death, but this is never achieved. Sometimes, death is not an option at all. In different contexts, this may acquire much or less significance, showing a different degree of determination

[109] Vv. 2783: "Et ses enuiz tot ades croist" and Vv.2806: "Lors le si monte uns torbeilllons," *Yvain*, 406 and 407.
[110] Vv. 2776 – Vv. 2777: "Yvain respondre ne li puet, / Que sans et parole li faut." *Ibid*., 406.
[111] Vv. 2783 – Vv. 2784: "Et ses enuiz tot ades croist / Et quanque il voit li en croist." *Ibid.*, 406.
[112] Fritz, *Le discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, 95.

on the part of the heroine. In either of the feminine displays of sorrow discussed above, women show an "assumed" way of dealing with the emotion: they confront it, they inflict punishments upon themselves, and they overcome it. This does not necessarily mean that they have a rational, completely guided attitude in experiencing emotion. The sameness in the representation of their sorrow rather suggests their having acquired a normative frame of reference to their emotion. They all invoke death, but they deal with it in a different way, individually. Thus, Laudine mentions the idea of death but only in a very hypothetical form, as she persists in her distress after the return from the funeral. Énide contemplates the idea of suicide, and even acts in this sense. However, her suicide remains not only an aborted attempt but also a feeble one. We are to note, however, the contained intensity with which women express the wish for death. The expression of personal feelings still bears the trace of the ritual gesture of the ancient mourners.

The male wish for death is voiced with more determination, and the gestures that men undertake in this sense are more radical. The wish for death is placed within the framework of moral obligation and it is expressed under a more imperative form: "The one who loses joy and happiness by his own mistake, ought to hate himself to death! He ought to hate and kill himself."[114] Or it is reinforced by immediate actions to make death an achievement: the attempted suicide. The knight who resolves to die does not wish to be prevented from it, and therefore seeks privacy in order to avoid interference.[115] It has been argued that the descriptions of suicide in secular literature are pure fiction. Still, they are supposed to observe a kind of realism, which comes

[113] See Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, 143.
[114] Vv. 3540 – Vv. 3545: "Et mout blasmer et mout despire / Me doit, voir, mout, et je li fas. / Qui pert la joie et le soulas / Par son meffait et par son tort / Mout se doit bien haïr de mort. / Haïr et ochirre se doit." *Yvain*, 424-425.

from the assumption that the function of fiction is to describe recognizable situations.[116] Fictitious or not, the resolution to die is depicted as inherent in the case of suffering men.

The wish for death and the attempted suicide are to be seen as the appropriate gesture within the code of manly values. As the social self is confronted with the imperative of death, the personal self experiences sanctioning emotions and the compulsion of punishment. The statement "I wish no more to live" that they express recalls the ones voiced on the battlefields in the *chanson de geste,* in which we can recognize a reminiscence of a ritual gesture of mourners. Still this is not expressed in the same rigid way. The poet insists on the spontaneity of the resolution to die and on the regrets and laments which appear to fully justify it.

The behavioral repertoire shows an opposition between the passive response of women, who lament but do not act (or fail to act), and the active response of men, for whom the wish for death equates the compulsion towards punishment.

Guilt and its Social Construction

Guilt is often present in the representations of sorrow in the romances. Its presence may well reinforce the code-defined value of the emotional display of sorrow. From the constructionist point of view, guilt would appear as the result of a social requirement which is imposed within the romance society because it reflects and endorses its system and moral values.[117] This requirement is supported by the fact that the capacity of an agent to "feel guilty" depends on his or her having an ethical (as opposed to pragmatic or instrumental) conception of notions of right and wrong, and

[115] See Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 27. He argues that this can be either a simple tactical attempt to avoid interference or a measure so that no one would ever know of the act.
[116] *Ibid*., 25.
[117] See Jones, "The Social Functions of the Emotions." 59.

presumably these ethics are not a private language but are shared by and inform the community in which they arise. However, it has been argued that guilt – unlike shame, which is entirely public – need not be regarded as a social requirement because it arises inevitably from one's private perception of one's act as wrong.[118]

From the male perspective (as in the cases of Yvain and Lancelot), guilt should be understood within the framework and the moral code of knightly values. The experience of sorrow brings in guilt as the heroes acknowledge their failure in respecting this code. Guilt appears as a reinforcement of the idea that the emotional display of sorrow is shaped by social requirements. It is still not merely shame, as it is indeed felt privately (and sincerely, not for any pragmatic reason). However, it is externally inspired. The main value at work here is loyalty. Guilt can be provoked by the failure to observe the vow of loyalty either to the beloved or to the lord. Very often, the two appear as conflicting values, as is the case with Lancelot. His sense of guilt functions irrespectively of the nature of his fault, which he ignores. This shows a previously acquired normative value of the emotion. The moral context in which he acts as agent who acknowledges the sense of guilt is the devotion to the beloved.

The register of expression of guilt is different in the cases of female sorrow. For women both guilt and remorse find their motivation within a private code of values in which they evaluate themselves. The feeling of guilt does not relate exclusively to the circumstances that caused the loss but also to a retrospective examining of the self which proceeds from them. The woman will define guilt within the personal realm in which she defines herself and therefore judges herself. This presupposes, as in the case of men, the existence of a prerequisite of the emotion, but one which is shaped in a different moral context. Guilt triggers the desire for self-

[118] *Ibid*., 59.

punishment, which is manifested either through the wish for death or, on the contrary, the choice of living and expiating through suffering. The sense of duty and moral obligation functions as in the case of men. Their suffering refers, as we have pointed out, to a set of values in which guilt is associated to the woman's role in the social context. The female sense of guilt relates to a failure in the moral obligation as wife (as is the case with Énide) or *amie* (as is the case with Guinevere).

Interfering Displays

At the end of this review, one might conclude that feminine and masculine displays of sorrow unfold within different registers of expression which sometimes interfere with each other. However, the recurrent motifs are not exploited similarly in both registers, a fact which shows – at least at this level of interpretation – the different emotional configuration of the two poles: feminine and masculine. The inventory of the recurrent motifs used by the text enables us to see the different responses of the two genders when experiencing the emotion.

The physical enactment of sorrow is to be pointed out as a specific element of the female displays of sorrow. When compared to the male instantiations of sorrow, which display less but proceed with more determination, the enactment of sorrow in terms of gestures illustrates an opposition between the passive female wish for relief – in death – on the one hand, and the active male attempt at obtaining it, on the other.

Generally speaking, in the description of female sorrow the poet insists more on the frantic display of gestures, whereas in the case of men he focuses on the inner torment of the subjects experiencing the feeling. Female frenzy suggests a more "assumed" way of dealing with the feeling. Men seem to tend towards an avoidance of the actual experience of sorrow, an evasion which is facilitated by slipping into another state, which is either madness or death. Although with less outward display,

male sorrow urges men to more radical gestures. Ethical compulsion is also described as a manly value. The principal opposition used in the description of the male and female displays of sorrow is the opposition outward vs. inward. There is another important opposition underlying it, which shows the poet's perception of men and women: the male is spirit, the female is body.

Chapter IV: Conclusion
Emotions in Context

The task of this chapter is to sum up the patterns which shape the emotional display of sorrow based on the arguments revealed by my textual analysis. Its ultimate scope is to observe to what extent these patterns can be considered to suggest that medieval emotions and their literary representations were informed by the social and cultural contexts in which they operate and which they then – textually at least – represent.[119] Thus my final question will not be "What is sorrow?"[120] but rather "What can provoke sorrow?" and "What can sorrow provoke?" – on the part of either the one experiencing it (the protagonists), the ones observing it within the text (either the author or other characters), and those reading about it (the audience).

My analysis showed that emotions have to be understood as exhibiting special functions in exemplifying and thus sustaining social values.[121] The patterns revealed by the textual construal of the emotion are a good argument for this, since many of them appear to have a common denominator and to refer to the same accepted social codes of twelfth-century culture. One certainly also has to bear in mind what Gabrielle Spiegel has called the social logic of the text,[122] which assumes that the social and historical experiences of contemporaries can be reconstructed by the

[119]This is not a social or anthropological study but an analysis based on a text. Still, within this framework this analysis is focused on revealing the social and cultural component of sorrow as it represented in the literary text.

[120] Such a question would be too broad: it would encompass theories both behavioristic and phenomenologist, both functionalistic and mentalistic. Even within textual studies, the only work to fully address the subject, within the broader view of melancholy, is Julia Kristeva's *Soleil Noir: Depression et melancholie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), and an MA thesis allows neither the time nor the space for such an approach.

[121] Most of the theoretical background of this analysis comes mainly from the social constructivist theory. For an outline of its major concerns, see Jones, "The Thesis of Constructionism" and "The Social Functions of Emotions," in *The Social Construction of Emotions*. For arguments against it, see William M. Reddy, "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions," *Current Anthropology* 38 (1997): 327-351. These are, however, combined with more recent notions which have emerged after the social constructivist ones.

[122] See Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 1-9.

analysis of the literature they wrote or read. This is to say that, to some extent, the representation of sorrow that the poet used in the text was close to what the audience he was writing for expected to hear. This remains true even in the case of an influential poet such as Chrétien de Troyes, who is often credited with the invention or at least the dissemination of a new code of chivalric values, especially in gender relations. I do not want to claim that, therefore, the representations of sorrow in the literary text can offer the "truth" about the twelfth-century sorrows of noble society;[123] still, their representation is certainly anchored in the mentality of the period: the text creates, interprets and evaluates "literary reality," which reaches out to its public.[124]

The people in the "textual community"[125] of Chrétien's romances experienced sorrow as a negative emotion, certainly. However, there were oppositions other than pleasure and pain at work. Sorrow was determined by indispensable patterns of contrast: male vs. female, private vs. public, body vs. spirit, outward vs. inward, frenzy vs. madness (which is to say the external embodiment of acute emotion – or shock – vs. internal chronic melancholy and eventual delusion), appropriate vs. inappropriate, passive vs. active, and so on. At the same time, the romance heroes always react vehemently in a comparable fashion, both on the external and the internal levels of expression. It is the task of this thesis to discern nuances of

[123] Piroska Nagy insists on the limitations which force us to confine our ambitions and to focus more on the available configurations which allow to transcribe what can be perceived of past sensibilities: "Bien qu'on veuille saisir un au-delà du discours, ce n'est qu' à partir du discours que nous pouvons procéder, de sorte qu'il s'agit, avant tout, de comprendre le sens même des mots. Pour cela, on doit viser à reconstiruer et à comprendre la structuration du réel à travers la construction des modèles, avant de pouvoir effleurer l'experience personnelle en grande partie inaccesible et qui n'affleure que dans les fractures du mur du modèle." *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge*, 28.

[124] Duby says that "Reality at some point breaks through in the romances," explaining that indeed the the triangle in the game called courtly love reflected reality in that, at the time, many young knights were not allowed to marry because of the inheritance strategies and they were "educated" at the courts of the *grands seigneurs*, enjoying the company and affection of the lady of the court, who was being offered. See Duby, *The Knight*, 215.

[125] I have built the expression by parallelism with the term used by Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History."

differentiation – sometimes broad but sometimes very fine – between instantiations of sorrow in different contexts.

The male-female opposition in the romances is based on the different manner of social assessment of men and women. Women do not pursue the achievement of personal goals in the public community, represented in the world of romance by Arthur's court. Female identity is defined by beauty and by the appurtenance to a man. Accordingly, the female sorrow caused by the loss of the beloved is described in terms of deprivation of that *valor* which was attained by beauty and marriage. An additional distinction within the framework of female sorrow is the one imposed by the social hierarchy. Frantic display of sorrow is possible in the case of ordinary noblewomen. But, at the top of the hierarchy the literary display of sorrow follows clear limitations which relate to the public space of royalty. Female sorrow is not described on a conflictual background but on one which refers strictly to the perception of roles in the social context. Male identity is defined within the search for public renown in the world of men, which always appears in conflict with the attainment of a private goal, involving commitment to a woman (as is particularly clear in the diametrically opposed cases of the early uxorious Érec an the earlier irresponsible Yvain). Male identity determines male sorrow. Men experience sorrow when they have to act outside a social, that is, public, context, or within a contradictory one. They assess themselves by the active pursue of private goals. Male sorrow emerges at the meeting point between personal and social concerns, from the impossibility of coping with contradictory values. . However, it must be noted that there is a flipside to this apparently privileged position – male remorse can be triggered by recognition (whether public or private) of any abnegation or abrogation

of responsibility which is hardly an issue for women, who are accorded less of a social role in this regard.

The display of sorrow at the level of outer appearance points out further distinctions between male and female sorrow. There, the male vs. female pattern corresponds to the body vs. spirit and the outward vs. inward patterns. The poet uses one paradigm to stress this essential distinction: male sorrow is spirit and female sorrow is body, not in an exclusive proportion, but in a predominant one. Male sorrow is extensively described in terms of inner torment – a state with distinct elements of self-accusation and eventual self-abnegation – while female sorrow is focused on the manifestation in outer appearance. Paradoxical, perhaps, given what has been said above regarding notions of masculine responsibility in a social context. Yet true, if (male) activity brings with it awareness of duty then (female) passivity brings with it external manifestation.

* * *

The construct "sorrow" appears like a composite. It is acknowledged as emotion of loss and defined in connection with its germane feelings: anger, shame, culpability, hatred. The radius of meanings is completed by the definition in pair with its antonym, joy. In the ethically significant context of the romances sorrow appears as a prescribed emotion. The display of sorrow implies that the emotion is socially and culturally shaped to respond the expectations of the milieu in which it operates. This study only carried out a mapping of several instantiations of sorrow occurring in a similar context. The analysis revealed that each emotional representation has its own construction, and that each individual experiences sorrow differently. The analysis was, however, limited to the textual construct and to the sociocultural marks in it. A more thorough investigation could proceed from this one and address the wider social

context in which the texts have emerged, and observe the possible roots of the emotional representations. A sweeping survey on the emotions of the romances could not have been done within the limits of an MA thesis. For this scope, certainly, other texts would need analysis – not only Chrétien de Troyes, not only romance, not only literature. Such work would require an overview as lengthy as that of Duby. Further studies on medieval literary texts will support and strengthen this argument. This study should be a modest contribution.

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