Ancuța Iuliana Ilie

GLAMOUR, MONEY, AND LOVE AFFAIRS

JEHAN DE SAINTRÉ AND THE DECLINE OF CHIVALRIC CULTURE

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2009

Glamour, Money and Love Affairs
***Jehan de Saintré* and the Decline of Chivalric Culture**

by

Ancuța Iuliana Ilie

Romania

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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I, the undersigned, **Ancuța Iuliana Ilie**, candidate for the MA 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, 25 May 2009

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Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Jean-Marie Fritz, without whom this thesis would have never existed. My sincere thanks to Marianne Sághy, Gerhard Jaritz and Niels Gaul for guidance and support throughout the writing of this thesis. I am grateful to Judith Rasson for careful reading and valuable feedback. I would also like to thank my family for moral support.

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INTRODUCTION
A Personal Recollection

My interest in chivalric literature and in *Jehan de Saintré* began a couple of years ago in a library. I remember it was a year of extensive readings, spending day after day in the same place, going to courses only if they were worth it. One day, I prepared myself for a seminar on comparative literature, my favourite subject. I was reading in an impersonal manner...George Duby. Suddenly, I got scared. My mind made some connections and I was facing a tremendous upheaval: the book of my childhood, *Don Quixote*, was no longer the same. Reading Duby completely changed it. In few days, I compiled a bibliography and I was reading as much as possible on the subject. The day of the seminar arrived. I don't know what I was expecting, but at the end, my world was collapsing. The seminar was the worst possible, the professor – quite the same. I decided then, that if I wanted to know anything about the knight of Cervantes, I had better return to the knights of the Middle Ages.

This thesis is the result of my quest. The topic of the thesis changed many times and even more often I came up against my own doubts and lack of experience. The vast scholarship concerning *Jehan de Saintré* did not make my way less difficult; on the contrary, it made me question my own approach. In 2006, Sylvie Lefèvre published a thick book on Antoine de la Sale and his works, reconsidering his talent as a writer.[1] Starting with a detailed analysis of the manuscripts of Antoine de la Sale's works, Lefèvre draws a parallel between the houses of Luxembourg and Anjou and she dedicates one section to the analysis of *Traité des anciens et des nouveaux tournois*. Lefèvre concludes by saying that the work of Antoine de la Sale has been underestimated and is still understudied.

[1] Sylvie Lefèvre, *Antoine de la Sale, la fabrique de l'œuvre et de l'écrivain suivi de l'édition critique du Traité des anciens et des nouveaux tournois,* (Geneva: Droz, 2006).

It is difficult to claim that *Jehan de Saintré* is an understudied work. This romance has been discussed and analyzed piece by piece in specialized journals and publications. Roger Dubuis translated it into Modern French and wrote a long introduction.[2] This is not her unique contribution.[3] Dubuis emphasizes the anachronism of Antoine de la Sale's characters. The courtly lady and the valiant knight are characters of an "Arthurian universe." In her opinion, Antoine de la Sale writes nostalgically about a remote past.

Madeleine Jeay and Jane H. M. Taylor do not emphasize the role of the courtly love in this romance so much, but give more attention to the chivalric exercises and chivalric behavior in general.[4] In their view, this romance is "a chivalric biography." On the contrary, Elisabeth Gaucher, who wrote a book on chivalric biographies from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, does not include *Jehan de Saintré* among the representatives of this genre.[5] Gaucher excluded *Jehan de Saintré* because of the author's irony towards his character. Michelle Szkilnik opposes both Gaucher and Roger Dubuis. In her interpretation, the story of Jehan de Saintré not only resembles chivalric biographies, but it is the archetype of the modern fashionable knight and dandy *avant la lettre*.[6]

In such a rich territory of interpretations, I felt restricted. I have tried to subject *Jehan de Saintré* to a different perspective of reading. At the base of my approach stands Huizinga

[2] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan de Saintré* (Paris: H. Champion, 1995), (translation into Modern French by Roger Dubuis).
[3] See Roger Dubuis, "Le Moi, le Monde et l'Autre dans *Saintré*" in *Les représentations de l'Autre du Moyen Âge au XVII^e siècle. Mélanges Kazimierz Kupisz*, (Saint-Étienne: Presses universitaires de Saint-Étienne, 1995) 203-214 and "*Saintré* ou les illusions perdues de Lancelot" in *L'œuvre de Chrétien de Troyes dans la littérature française. Réminiscences, résurgences et réécritures*, (Lyon, 1997) 187-196.
[4] Madeleine Jeay, "Les éléments didactiques et descriptifs de *Jehan de Saintré*. Des lourdeurs à reconsidérer" *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 19, 1992, 85-100 and Jane H. M. Taylor, "La fonction de la croisade dans *Jehan de Saintré*," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales*, 1, 1996 193-204.
[5] Elisabeth Gaucher, *La bibliographie chevaleresque. Typologie d'un genre (XIII^e - XV^e siècle)* (Paris: Champion, 1994).
[6] Michelle Szkilnik, *Jehan de Saintré, une carrière chevaleresque au XV^e siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2003), 13 (hereafter Szkilnik, *Une carrière chevaleresque*).

with his observations on the preponderance of the visual in the end of the Middle Ages[7] and Michel Stanesco with his observations on the similarities and differences between the flamboyant Gothic aesthetics and the Baroque.[8] In Stanesco's opinion, their common feature is the permanent wish to exhibit, to become and to make visible, to show off, which Stanesco calls *monstration*. In my analysis, although starting from this common feature, I will focus mainly on the differences between the two as they are reflected in the romance of Antoine de la Sale. Stanesco claims that the role of the *monstration* in the flamboyant Gothic is that of revealing, as opposed to the Baroque ostentation that veils. "Medieval man" is characterized by transparency, while "Baroque man" wears a masque, in a continuous process of dissimulation, of change and inconstancy.[9] Taking the example of the glamorous attire common both for the flamboyant and Baroque spirit, Stanesco asserts that for the flamboyant Middle Ages clothes revealed the identity of the wearer, while the aim of Baroque attire was the effect in itself.[10]

Antoine de la Sale's fictitious world contradicts Stanesco. This is the main direction that I follow in my thesis. Clothes and other adornments do not reveal identities, but hide or create masks. Ostentation and luxury are the undeniable coordinates of the world described by Antoine de la Sale, but the value of this luxurious display is questionable. The close reading that I employed led me to a textual analysis in which I focus my attention on the incompatibilities and the contradictions of a world showing off perfection. The distance

[7] Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) (hereafter Huizinga, *The Autumn*).

[8] Michel Stanesco, *Jeux d'errance du chevalier médiéval, aspects ludiques de la fonction guerrière dans la littérature du moyen âge flamboyant* (Leiden: Brill, 1988) (hereafter Stanesco, *Jeux d'errance*).

[9] Ibid., Stanesco, *Jeux*, 221-222. "L'homme médiéval est tenu à se manifester dans la remarquable transparence de son être...l'homme baroque est en métamorphose permanent, en pérpetuel devenir, en quete chronique du changement, de l'inconstance..."

[10] Ibid., 222. "Le but de monstration est d'indiquer sans médiation la qualité normative et vrai. La splendeur des modes vestimentaires, par exemple, à l'époque du Moyen Age flamboyant doit révéler au regard la réalité de celui qui les porte...Par contre, la variété infinie de la mode vestimentaire baroque à la cour de France met en evidence les subtiles alliances de broderies, de passementeries, et de joailleries, dont l'unique but est la recherche de l'effet à tout prix."

between projection and accomplishment, between surface and depth, can not be covered by glamour. My thesis follows the delicate structure of this fictitious world in an attempt to offer an interpretation.

For my primary source I have used *Jehan de Saintré* in the edition of Joël Blanchard, and translation into modern French by Michel Quereuil, from 1995.[11] I have chosen to use the Old French version of the quotations in the body of the thesis while for the translation into English, I have used the 1931 edition Irvine Gray.[12]

[11] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan de Saintré*, (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1995) (hereafter Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*).
[12] Antoine de la Sale, Little John of Saintré, (London: Routledge, 1931).

Chapter 1

Antoine de la Sale and the chivalric literature of his time

Introduction

Antoine de la Sale (1385-1460) spent his life at the Burgundian court, at the Angevin court, and in his last years served Louis, Count of Saint-Pol from the House of Luxembourg. He witnessed a chivalry which was slowly dying away, but still not without glamour. As a writer, he offered his view of this phenomenon in a number of books, such as *La Salade*, written between 1438 and 1442, *La Salle* (1451), *Réconfort de Madame du Fresne* (1458) or *Des anciens tournois et faictz d'armes* (1459). Antoine de la Sale rose to literary fame with his chivalric romance *L'Hystoire et plaisante cronicque du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune dame des Belles-Cousines sans aultre nom nommer* (1456), which is today known under the title *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* or simply as *Jehan de Saintré.*

The purpose of this chapter is to place *Jehan de Saintré* in the general context of the chivalric literature of the late Middle Ages. In order to understand the amplitude of the literature on chivalric topics, I shall quickly review the literatures of neighboring Spain and Italy, bringing examples of other chivalric works (*Amadis de Gaula*, *Palmerin de Oliva* and *Orlando Innamorato*). The next step will consist of presenting some prevailing ideas of knighthood at the courts of Burgundy and Provence, where Antoine de la Sale spent most of his life and where chivalric way of life was idealized and preserved as such. Tournaments, *emprises*, *pas d'armes* were the key-words of the day, not only in literature, but also in the glamour of the courtly life. A parallel will be drawn between the tournament as a literary topos and the tournament as a *mise en scène* in the numerous feats from the courts mentioned. To avoid the false impression that only the chivalric universe was important in courtly life or in the literature of the time, I will briefly consider the *pastourelle,* the literary form appreciated at

the court of René d'Anjou. It is interesting that, just like the tournament, which was present not only in books but also in the spectacles at the court, the *pastourelle* too became the subject of a *pas d'armes* organized by René d'Anjou. The last part of the chapter will address the question of how to reconcile the flourishing and glamorous image of chivalry in the literary descriptions and courtly feasts with the failures of chivalry as an institution. In order to find out what is behind this surface, two Baroque features will be discussed: metamorphosis and ostentation. Could these two features lead to an understanding of disjuncture in the chivalric system?

The *longue durée* of chivalric literature

In 1456, when *Jehan de Saintré* appeared, chivalric literature was far from being a distant memory. With a history of at least two centuries, considering Chrétien de Troyes as the father of the chivalric romance[13] and extending it another century ahead, Antoine de la Sale produced another work on the shelf of medieval chivalric literature. The secret of the longevity of chivalric romances must have been the fictitious world of these romances, which made everything possible, but also their openness towards reality: the knights, protagonists of these stories, were also a living proof of those times. Idealization is a normal process of literature, and when a certain situation is represented in a more positive light this is not conceived as a discrepancy, and this was true in the fifteenth century as well.[14]

[13] By speaking of Chrétien de Troyes as of the father of chivalric romance I only acknowledge his role as a key figure in the literary history of romance. Simon Gaunt considers Chrétien rather as "a part of a process of textual production" saying that "in many respects his work continues an engagement with issues already of concern in texts like the Enéas and he is just part of a new trend towards Arthurian material, not necessarily its initiator, as the work of Wace and Thomas of Britain indicates." Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 92 (hereafter: Gaunt, *Gender*).

[14] See Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) (hereafter Morse, *Truth*). The book deals with the relationship of facts and representations in medieval literature.

At the beginning of the chivalric histories, Arthurian literature projected the ideal image of a court and its king. Arthur was the keg on which an entire fictional world could be pinned. Knights gathered at his court and from there they left in search of adventures and glory. As Erich Köhler observes, the Arthurian court was presented in the Arthurian literature as the center of the world.[15] The main characteristics of King Arthur's court were justice and peace. This is one reason for which the court functioned, not only for departure point but also for a return. On the other hand, the image of the Round Table surrounded by knights was considered an ideal representation of the feudal relationships between the king and his vassals.[16] Hence, the literature of that time derived its value from establishing and promoting certain images.

In their "History of the European medieval novel," Michel Stanesco and Michel Zink find that the two defining features of the character of a chivalric novel are youth and the power of dreaming.[17] These features led the knights to set out on long voyages, to seek adventures, to fight not only on battlefields but also for certain beliefs, setting models of behavior and values by their own example. Voyage into the unknown helped a knight to define himself, to gain his own individuality, and to distinguish himself from other knights. This could be one of the reasons that explain the enthusiastic audience for chivalric novels and also their success. If, in the case of a *novella*, for example, the character corresponded to a type and his behavior was predictable, the novel offered a greater number of possibilities for shaping its characters. Therefore, the reader, or rather, the listener, was able to "breathe" together with the hero of the story and to dream of an adventurous existence just like the characters had.

Little by little, the fictional universe of the first chivalric romances underwent a series of transformations. The image of King Arthur started to fade away and gradually disappeared.

[15] Erich Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 6.
[16] Ibid., 7.

In spite of his importance, the removal of his presence from the narratives did not affect later structures. He was not replaced by another mighty figure, but the narrative accent moved to different aspects. The structure of the romances grew more complex, the number of characters was greater, the geographical area covered by the knights was much larger, and the concatenation of events was not always easily reported. A short glance at the flourishing phenomenon of the chivalric literature in Spain and Italy from the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century indicates how fashionable these romances became.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, two literary trends developed in the Italian and Spanish territories: the Italian *romanzi* of the Orlandian cycle and the cycle of *Amadis de Gaula* that belongs to the series of *libros de caballerias* with an incontestable representative status. The emergence of literary cycles compared to past chivalric romances represented a novelty. The answer to the medieval reader's thirst for adventure was embodied in the cycle of adventures of one main character and his descendants. Structurally, each cycle follows the same recipe: an errant knight leads an adventurous existence and participates in tournaments, jousts or any other situation allowing demonstrating his valiant character. In the end, he must be victorious, as he fights for love and for his lady. A change compared with the first chivalric romances was that those from the late Middle Ages lost their tragic component, the end turning rather to a satisfactory solution.[18] It would be too simplistic to think that only the happy ending made these romances so popular.

In Spain, *Amadis de Gaula* reached high popularity. From 1508 until 1546, eight romances followed one after another telling the story of the descendants of Amadis de Gaula. The cycle was reprinted thirty times in Spain alone between 1508 and 1587.[19] The translations into French, where *Amadis* had a great impact, into German, where a continuation was even

[17] Michel Stanesco and Michel Zink, *Histoire européenne du roman médiéval: esquisse et perspectives* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992) (hereafter, Stanesco, Zink, *Histoire*).

issued, Italian, and the number of translations does not stop here, raise the question of whether this highly popular chivalric literature stood for a chivalric component of real life which was slowly vanishing. Parallel with the circulation of *Amadis de Gaula* and emulating it, another chivalric literary cycle saw the light of day: *Palmerin de Oliva* (1511).

Orlando Innamorato was as popular in Italy as *Amadis de Gaula* in Spain. Boiardo's *Orlando* was first published in 1495; it had no less than sixteen editions[20], and later, in 1520, it was continued by Ludovico Ariosto. He kept the name of the protagonist and described him in another phase of his existence: *Orlando furioso,* meaning Orlando in a frenzied stage of love. This glance at the neighboring literary manifestations demonstrates that, at the time when Antoine de la Sale published his *Jehan de Saintré*, the atmosphere was favorable to such chivalric writings and the literature which was animated by chivalric ideas or by the chivalric *topos* was still held in great esteem.

Representing the chivalric court or: A variety of images

Usually the chivalric romances are regarded as "courtly mass culture," how could we explain otherwise their popularity? This is true, but only partially. To demonstrate the opposite I shall present the situation of the Burgundian and Angevin courts.

Already Kilgour recognized that the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 gave a severe blow to the prestige of French chivalry.[21] The catastrophe of French knights has been traditionally considered a decisive moment in the decay of chivalry. In order to avoid the collapse of the institution, a revival of chivalry in terms of both rituls and celebrations, was promoted. The most important initiatives took place at the court of Burgundy. The chivalric spirit reigned at

[18] Stanesco, Zink, *Histoire*, 137.
[19] Ibid., 138.
[20] Ibid., 146.

the Burgundian court with the enthusiasm which usually characterizes the beginning of a phenomenon, with the difference that the fifteenth century was far from being the beginning of chivalry from any point of view.

Literature played a significant role in the promotion of chivalric values. The feasts held at the court, jousts and tournaments as purely knightly manifestations increasingly followed bookish scenarios.[22] A process of "literaturization" of life was taking place at the Burgundian court. R. L. Kilgour even speaks of the "theatrical nature of the Burgundian conception of knighthood" because the exercises of joust and tournament in Burgundy reached a peak of splendor which astonished Europe.[23]

Literary preferences of the court can be discovered by casting a look at the ducal libraries. Philip the Good, following the example of his father and grandfather, collected a number of manuscripts on chivalric subjects in his library. In his effort to give fresh breath to chivalric culture he encouraged a return in time by reading early chivalric works and also *chansons de geste*. R. L. Kilgour claims that "Philippe the Good made every effort to instill a taste for chivalrous literature in his courtiers, while he himself was an assiduous reader of such works, often reading until late into the night."[24]

Fondeness for chivalric literature has not always been approved by medieval people nor by literary historians. For example, Philippe de Mézières (1327-1405) -- a French knight and a fervent upholder of the crusading spirit in a period when such a position was at least nostalgic one-- recommended his pupil, the future Charles VI, to read "authentic" histories

[21] Raymond Lincoln Kilgour, *The Decline of Chivalry as Shown in the French Literature of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), 227 (hereafter Kilgour, *The Decline*).
[22] See Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 30 (hereafter Mazo Karras, *From Boys.*). "The lives of late medieval knights, as written by biographers and chroniclers, show a strong resemblance to the lives of knights in literature – in part, no doubt, because their biographers were steeped in that literature, in part because, in behavior at court, people imitated models they knew from literature."
[23] Kilgour, *The Decline.*
[24] Ibid., 243.

and leave aside the fantasies of Arthurian literature.[25] Léon Gautier, a 19th –century French literary historian, manifests the same attitude towards the chivalric romances of the beginning, claiming that the decay of the golden age of chivalry started with the romances of the Round Table, which perverted the chivalric ideal so much that the disaster of the Hundred Years' War was the consequence.[26]

***

Antoine de la Sale served for almost forty years the Angevin dynasty: he started in 1402 as a page, serving Louis II, then Louis III and in 1434, René d'Anjou made Antoine de la Sale tutor of his son, John II, Duke of Calabria.[27] *Jehan de Saintré* was probably composed during his stay at René's court and the book was dedicated to John of Calabria, although at the time of publication Antoine de la Sale was no longer working for the Angevin court. A short survey of the atmosphere at René d'Anjou's court will be helpful before I start analyzing the romance.

To summarize the achievements of a personality as important as René d'Anjou is no easy task. Like his Burgundian counterparts, René d'Anjou was a supporter of the chivalric culture and often the tournaments and *pas d'armes* organized at the Angevin court competed in glamour with the Burgundian chivalric events. The chivalric manifestations at René's court showed his passion for everything which was connected with chivalry and his writings prove

[25] Stanesco, *Lire le Moyen Age* (Paris: Dunod, 1998), 145.
[26] Léon Gautier, La Chevalerie (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1884), 32, cited in Michel Stanesco, *Jeux d'errance du chevalier médiéval, aspects ludiques de la fonction guerrière dans la littérature du moyen âge flamboyant (*Leiden: Brill, 1988), 28-29. "On ne saura jamais combien le cycle de la Table Ronde nous a fait du mal...C'est à cette littérature charmante et dangereuse que nous devrons un jour cette chevalerie de théâtre, vantarde et téméraire, qui nous a été si fatale durant la guerre de Cent ans."
[27] Fernard Desonay, *Antoine de la Sale aventureux et pedagogue* (Geneva: Droz, 1940). Antoine de la Sale left the house of Anjou in 1448 when his pupil was twenty years old. He continued his work as tutor for the sons of Louis de Luxemburg.

the same; he authored a treatise about tournaments (*Traité des tournois – King René's Tournament Book*)[28] and also a chivalric romance (*Livre du Coeur d'Amours espris*).

What distinguished René d'Anjou's interests from other chivalric courts was the propensity of Italian culture and humanism.[29] A return to the culture of antiquity took place at the court of Anjou. An important number of books in Greek and Latin as well as the attempt to bring to court philosophers and poets who were attached to Italian courts demonstrate the existence of a diffusion of ideas and preoccupations which were common in neighboring territories.[30]

Literary historians have emphasized the playful spirit of late medieval man manifested during tournaments, *pas d'armes* and *emprises.*[31] As the dukes of Burgundy and the good King René made a tradition of organizing these chivalric manifestations the following paragraph of this chapter is dedicated to the tournament and its dual existence: one in literature as a literary topos specific to the chivalric romances and one in the life of the court as a chivalric ritual. Michel Stanesco offers an excellent definition of the tournament:

> Le tournoi chevaleresque est le lieu priviégié d'un délicat équilibre: c'est en lui que convergent l'exploit guerrier et le regard féminin, la violence du corps et la douleur du coeur, la révélation de la gloire et le secret du désir. Il ne serait pas aisé de trouver dans l'histoire de l'humanité une manifestation culturelle d'une plus évidente union des contraires: fureur épique et tension érotique, frénésie disciplinée et passion exaltée.[32]

[28] A possible path to follow would be the investigation of both René d'Anjou's *Traité des tournois* and *Des anciens tournois et faictz d'armes* written by Antoine de la Sale. Written in less than a decade, René d'Anjou's treaty – 1451/1452 and de la Sale's – 1458, represent a proof for the manifest interest towards tournament shown in the fifteenth century not only as a real representation but also as a literary topos.

[29] Françoise Robin, *La cour d'Anjou-Provence. La vie artistique sous la règne de René* (Paris: Picard, 1985) (hereafter, Robin, *La cour d'Anjou*), 44.

[30] Ibid., 44.

[31] Michelle Szkilnik, *Jean de Saintré. Une carrière chevaleresque au XV^e siècle*, draws a parallel between tournament and what she considers as chivalric rituals which appeared in the fifteenth century: "emprise" and "pas". "Emprise" was the act of wearing a precious object as a symbol of love for a lady for a defined period of time and the knight who was wearing this symbol had to search for other knights against whom he fought and defended the "emprise". The "pas" was a more "static" ritual in which a knight was settled down somewhere waiting for other knights who would come to fight against him. Szkilnik, *Une carrière chevaleresque*), 72-73.

[32] Stanesco, *Jeux d'errance*, "The chivalric tournament is the privileged place of a fragile equilibrium: war exploits meet with the feminine glance, the violence of the body meets the pain of the heart, the revelation of glory meets the secret of the desire. It is not easy to find in the history of humanity another cultural

Stanesco grasps the aspects of the tournament well and gives such an exhaustive definition of it that one could hardly add anything more for a better understanding of the role of tournament in literature. It is the place where an author proves his mastership: the hero fights fiercely and the reader feels the beats of the ladies' hearts in the same time with the clash of arms of their favorite knights.

Much ink has been used by historians and writers to describe the values of the tournament in the life of the courts in the medieval period. The complexity of this phenomenon has been debated in specialized studies and here I will try to sketch only the most important traits. The elementary aspect of the tournament as training for war is commonly known. In time, the tournament gained other significance and the rudimentary content was left far behind. What happened in Provence and in Burgundy in the fifteenth century is an example of this. The tournament was not only a way of emphasizing the magnificence of a court but it had social and political implications, too.

Of interest here is the tournament as *mise en scène*, as representation, with a special emphasis on the theatrality of life at the end of the Middle Ages. The court of René d'Anjou in the period between 1445 and 1450 is considered one of the richest in such celebrations, but the Burgundian court did not drag much behind. To the disintegration of chivalry as an institution in the fifteenth century, R. L. Kilgour sees the revival of chivalry in the rituals and other ceremonies held by Philippe the Good and Charles the Bold in Burgundy as misguided. The tournament was a constant component in both chivalric romances and the life of the court. The question that may arise is whether life was an emulation of literature when it came to tournaments or the other way round, tournaments in courtly celebrations by far excelled the literary representations.

manifestation in which the contraries could unify better: narrative fury with the erotic tension, tidy frenzy with the passion. ” Translation mine.

Kilgour claims that the chivalric ideal lost its meaning behind the beautiful image of a well organized tournament. He considers that courtly ceremonies were nothing but forms which had no content and affirms the "the theatrical nature of the Burgundian conception of knighthood:"

> It was a pageant with carefully trained actors who enjoyed their acting and strove continually to convince themselves of its seriousness. Chivalry was fundamentally the imitation of the ideal hero, and imitation was certainly the order of the day in Burgundy... Burgundian imitation had more the appearance of a child's game, where costume and speech are imitated, but where no real sincerity is possible.[33]

In the present study this opinion will be regarded with caution and although it may contain a grain of truth, this extreme view brings an important prejudice to a view of chivalry. It is hard to believe that an imitation could last for a century being nothing more than an imitation. I would like to contrast Kilgour's opinion with another which does justice to courtly chivalric feasts. Françoise Robin looks beyond these courtly spectacles and speaks about an entire apparatus which was needed in order to bring to life the tournaments, the jousts and all the other manifestations. Often, these spectacles left such a profound impression that they were represented in tapestries and embroideries and were sources of inspiration for paintings, for decorations, and for life in general.[34]

Michel Stanesco makes an interesting association of ideas thinking of these visual representations as specific for the Late Middle Ages. The need to make something to be seen, to receive in a way a materialization, was embodied not only in the plastic arts, tapestries or

[33] Kilgour, *The Decline*, 227-228.

[34] Robin, *La cour d'Anjou*, 55. "Représentation continuelle, la vie de cour offre bien d'innombrables spectacles, familiers ou somptueux, reflets d'une politique, de modes et d'une culture. Comme les oeuvres littéraires, la fête, par ses manifestations privées ou publiques, inspire et guide vers des choix, à la fois source et occasion. Les fêtes profanes suscitent de véritables créations artistiques, créations éphémères certes mais auxquelles travaillent les artistes du roi; le peintre, le tapissier, l'architecte même fabriquent pour ces occasions fastueuses des décors, peut-être repris par des enlumineurs, des brodeurs et peintres de cartons de tapisseries, par des bâtisseurs d'édifices et de châteaux en pierre; de tout façon elles fournissent des thèmes, des modèles nouveaux pour les oeuvres peintes et pour les décors , pour le cadre de la vie."

embroideries, but this need was also felt in literature. He thinks that a writer becomes successful in his pursuit when he expresses himself through images.[35] This is the turning point of my thesis, the puzzle that will be solved below. Was the knightly romance trying to "replace" a society which was fading away by offering images that the audience was pining for? To compensate a hopeless situation, for example, one may resort to a substitute used in excess. Could this be an explanation for the glamorous garment of chivalry in the romances of the fifteenth century? This chain of questions could continue, but each question will be addressed in the development of the next chapter.

So far I have emphasized the popularity of the chivalric romance. It was a very flourishing genre in Italy and Spain, at the courts of Burgundy and Provence, at the court of René d'Anjou. I have underlined the presence of tournaments not only as a component of the chivalric literature but also as rituals in courtly feasts. Chivalric literature, however, was not the only, and not even the dominant, literature of the late Middle Ages. Therefore, from the court of René d'Anjou I chose another literary form to present in comparison with the chivalric romances and their universe: from the pastoral universe -- the *pastourelle*.

The *pastourelle* was an enjoyable piece of literature held in high esteem at the Angevin court. With a tradition going back in time to the late twelfth century and with widespread interest at the courts of northern France, the *pastourelle* was first associated with the poetry of troubadours and trouvères.[36] As a general schema of the *pastourelle* one can decipher the following: the narrator meets a shepherdess whom he attempts to seduce using either persuasion or force. The story oscillates in a series of ups and downs. Some connections and resemblances can be established between a chivalric romance and a *pastourelle*. The

[35] "Dire une belle histoire, c'est réusir à sensibiliser le lecteur par une image." Stanesco, *Jeux d'errance*, 181.
[36] William Powell Jones, *The Pastourelle: a Study of the Origins and Tradition of a Lyric Type, (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931). William D. Padden, *The Medieval Pastourelle (*New York: Garland Publishing, 1987). Geri L. Smith: *The Medieval French Pastourelle Tradition: Poetic Motivations and Generic Transformations*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009).

pastourelle was often written by a member of the court, usually a knight. At the beginning, the audience of the *pastourelle,* just like in the case of the chivalric romance, was the court. There was a certain fascination for life outside the court, for the rustic aspects of country life. To the polished discourse of the knight which preserved a courtly "taste," the shepherdess often answered with mockery. This brought a "vulgarization" of the genre; it was a reversal in comparison with the pattern displayed in courtly romances. The feminine character was not of noble origin and she also lacked the manners of a courtly lady.

In a milieu where many people enjoyed the *pastourelle*, there is a poem -- *Regnault et Jehanneton* -- displaying the characters and the characteristics of the *pastourelle*. This poem has long been thought to have been written by René d'Anjou. Composed after 1457 and dedicated to René d'Anjou and Jeanne de Laval, *Regnault et Jehanneton* transposes into a bucolic atmosphere a scene which would mostly happen at court or at least the tone and even the subject of the discourse are specific for a court.

The mistake of attributing this *pastourelle* to King René is easy to understand if one keeps in mind that René himself appreciated this genre and, more than that, the interest of the court in the *pastourelle* was not limited to only to a literary manifestation; it also became a theatrical representation. In 1447, René d'Anjou organized a "Pas de la Pastourelle" in Tarascon.[37] Although what happened at Tarascon when presenting the *pastourelle* did not have the same glamour as a tournament used to have, still, this feast played a role in the economy of courtly life.[38] The boundaries between literary manifestations and their transposition into lively representations were once again transgressed and this time an element

[37] Robin, *La cour d'Anjou*, 50.

[38] Ibid., 50. According to Françoise Robin, the Tarascon's "Pas de la Pastourelle" was held for six days and the jousts lasted only three days. The protagonist of the Pas was a shepherdess who was keeping her flock under a tree during the entire period. In the tree were hanging the arms of the two shepherds, a sword in black and one in white, signs of sadness and happiness. Two shepherds were fighting for the heart of their beloved shepherdess.

specific for a chivalric romance was not displayed, namely a tournament, but a *pastourelle* with all its traits.

A tendency towards celebrations and festivities is often underlined by literary historians with regard to a flamboyant spirit that existed in the fifteenth century which led the way towards Baroque manifestations. Huizinga sees the culture of late medieval times in the light of "the beautification of aristocratic life with the forms of the ideal – the artistic light of the chivalric romanticism spread over life, with the world costumed in the garb of the round table. The tension between the forms of life and reality is extremely high; the light is false and overdone."[39] Jacques Le Goff speaks about a "délire gothique"at the moment when the Gothic becomes the flamboyant Baroque.[40] Stanesco acknowledges the long exiting association between a Flamboyant Middle Ages and the Baroque.[41] Georges Doutrepont claims that the amusement and the poetical fantasies at the ducal courts in the Middle Ages announce the ballet and the masquerade of the sixteenth and seventeenth century.[42]

Jehan de Saintré can be read in the light of two main Baroque features: metamorphosis and ostentation. The Swiss literary critic who used these two concepts as applied to the literary Baroque established the time span between 1580 and 1670.[43] It is the time span and the same literary movement to which Georges Doutrepont was also referring when talking about the ballet and the masquerade of these centuries. Johannes Jahn in his *Wörterbuch der Kunst,* although places the temporal limits of the Baroque to the already mentioned sixteenth and seventeenth century, recognizes that essential Baroque features can

[39] Huizinga, *The autumn*, 39.
[40] Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de L'Occident Médiéval*, 446, cited in Stanesco, *Jeux*, 215.
[41] Stanesco; Jeux, 214.
[42] Georges Doutrepont, La littérature française, 361, cited in Stanesco, Jeux, 214. "Le divertissement de cour à fantaisies poétique dans les hôtels des ducs annonce le ballet et la mascarade à la façon du XVIe et du XVIIe siècle."
[43] Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France. Circe et le Paon* (Paris: Corti, 1953).

be traced even earlier, in the Gothic of the fifteenth century[44]. In general, he claims that it can be considered as Baroque the end period of any stylistic movement. The Romanian literary critic Edgar Papu published in 1978 *The Baroque -- A Way of Life*, a study with profound insights into problems of the Baroque.[45] In the analysis of this phenomenon he used the concepts of form, idea, and emotion. From their conjunction Papu offered a different definition for Baroque. He identifies as Baroque features in this sense the alteration of patterns, a feeling of decadence and derived from the two the need to find a substitute.

In the next chapter, having in mind all these theories and the delicate border between the Flamboyant Gothic and the Baroque, I will argue the remains of the chivalric universe as described by Antoine de la Sale: vainglory, a taste for luxury, extravagant clothes, and ranks bought with money.

[44] See Johannes Jahn, *Wörterbuch der Kunst*, (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1979).
[45] Edgar Papu, *Barocul ca tip de existență* (The Baroque – A Way of Life) (Bucharest: Minerva, 1978) (hereafter: Papu, *Barocul*).

Chapter 2

Jehan de Saintré

The characters entering the stage

Criticism of *Jehan de Saintré* has mainly regarded the first part of the romance as an educational treatise.[46] Dame des Belles Cousines, the feminine character of the book, dedicates her entire will and energy to transform the little thirteen-year-old Jehan into a famous knight. Thus, the plot of the romance can be divided into two strands: the process of initiation in becoming a knight, in which Jehan de Saintré is nothing but material easy to shape in the hands of his lady, and the second part, in which the edifice built by Belles Cousines starts to disintegrate: Jehan disobeys her by making a decision of his own, and afterwards little by little everything is questioned and often ridiculed. The *fabliau* scene from the final part of the romance represents a powerful example of how the concept of chivalry embodied in Jehan is taken to pieces by being mocked and ridiculed. This chapter will consist of an analysis of the first part of the romance paying attention to the methods of creating an image of chivalry, to the way in which the relationship between the male individual and the feminine character are shaped, and to the role played by the narrator in the story.

The beginning of the chronicle of *Jehan de Saintré*,[47] although clearly defined in time and space (the court of France, during the reign of John of France), keeps in its tone the resonances of a fairy-tale:

[46] See Desonay's opinion in *Antoine de la Sale aventureux et pedagogue* and on the same topic Madeleine Jeay, "Les éléments didactiques et descriptifs de *Jehan de Saintré*. Des lourdeurs à reconsidérer," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 19, 1992, 85-100.

[47] The word chronicle was part of the original title of the book (*L'Hystoire et plaisante cronicque du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune dame des Belles-Cousines sans aultre nom nommer*), indicating the authorial will to anchor the book in reality.

> Au temps du roy Jehan de France, filz aisné du roy Philipe de Vallois, estoit en sa court le seigneur de Pouilly en Thouraine, qui en son hostel avoit ung tresdebonnaire et gracieux josvencel nommé Jehan, et aisné filz aîné au seigneur de Saintré, aussy en Thoraine.[48]

The introduction in the narrative of the one who will become the protagonist of the story is already done. He is described as young man, thirteen years old, who is a page in the service of the king. By his manners, by his special care in serving the ladies, the little Jehan distinguishes himself among other pages. Thus, all the courtiers together with the king and the queen surround him with love and consider him a young man with a promising future.

One of the characteristics of romances is the presence of women and their role in helping complete the visions of chivalry and love. Following the pattern, there is no knight without a lady, no glory if there is no one to make it flourish and it is acknowledged that "the masculine subject in romance acquires his identity through a relationship with a woman."[49] Therefore, Antoine de la Sale introduces the feminine character of his romance: la dame de Belles Cousines.

The essential information concerning Belles Cousines is her young age associated with her widowhood. The narrator does not mention anything about her place in the hierarchy of the court, nor does he precise her name. Although he promises not to go into details concerning her status as a widow, still he allows himself a small digression. This is part of an entire process in which the narrator will come to life into the story and in which he will act almost as an independent character, supplying different if not ambiguous perspectives on the other characters.

The author starts by presenting several examples of what was thought of as "good" widows, those who chose to remain chaste and pure by never remarrying after the death of

[48]Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 36. "In the time of King John of France, that was eldest son to King Philip of Valois, there was at his Court the lord of Pouilly in Touraine, who in his household had a passing gentle and courteous lad, called John, and first-born son to the lord of Saintré, in Touraine likewise."
[49] Gaunt, *Gender*, 91.

their husbands. Thus, he presents the case of the Roman widows, and without limiting his examples only to what could be considered historical information,[50] de la Sale also brings examples both from profane and sacred literature; for the lay literature he uses the story of *Aeneid*[51] and for the sacred literature he quotes Apostle Paul[52] and Saint Jerome. Invoking authorities was a common technique in the period. Cervantes poked fun on this method in the prologue of *Don Quixote,* when the narrator complains that he cannot publish his book without having referred to antique writers, as was the custom.[53] However, by quoting authorities, Antoine de la Sale not only situates his work in the heritage of the past,[54] but in a way also manages to build up a reliable, trustworthy image of himself in the eyes of his readers: there was a need for a common background in order to get to a better understanding of a work. Thus, Antoine de la Sale relied on the fact that the name of Saint Jerome or the words of the Apostle Paul were already known by his readers as a part of the process of "learning to read."[55]

[50] The Roman laws condemned the idea of a second marriage. On this subject see Jean Jolly, *Étude historique sur la législation des seconds et subséquents mariages,* (Paris: Rousseau, 1896) and Michel Humbert, *Le remariage à Rome. Étude d'histoire juridique et sociale,* (Milano: A. Giuffrè, 1972). For a profound insight on the matter of widowhood see Emmanuelle Santinelli, *Des femmes éplorées? Les veuves dans la société aristocratique du haut Moyen Âge,* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2003).

[51] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan,* 38: *sy comme dist Virgilles, ou quart livre de Ennee; lequel Ennee tant ama Dido que il en moroit; mais Dido de s'amour ne tenoit compte, car tant avoit amé et encoreson mary tout mort, qu'elle ne le povoit oblier.* "Even as Virgil saith in the fourth book of Eneas, which Eneas so loved Dido that he was he was like to die of it; yet Dido recked nothing of his love, for so had she loved her husband and yet did love him being dead, that she might not forget him."

[52] Ibid., 39*:L'Appostre en sa premiere Epiltre ad Thimoteum etc., et ou .v^e. Chappiltre:"Honneure les vesves."* "Of this the Apostle saith, in his first Epistle *ad Timotheum*, in the fifth chapter: «Honour widows.»"

[53] Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (London: Glocester Crescent, 2006), 10. "…the public will say when it sees me now, after all these years I have been sleeping in the silence of oblivion, come out with all my years on my back, with a tale as dry as a rush, barren of invention, devoid of style, poor in wit and lacking in all learnings and instructions, without quotations in the margins or notes at the end of the book, whereas I see other works, never mind how fabulous or profane, so full of sentences from Aristotle, Plato and the whole herd of philosophers, as to impress their readers and get their authors a reputation for wide reading, erudition and eloquence."

[54] Ruth Morse expressed the idea of the interrelations which always existed in literature: "Writers never stopped looking over their shoulder. There is something Janus-faced in the way they look back to situate their work, while their additions look forward transforming the inherited stock of literature". See Morse, *Truth*, 18.

[55] Ibid., 4. Morse takes into consideration the existence of a "familiarity with a complex system of signs (or conventions) whose contents and methods were acquired initially as part of a process of learning to read".

In his attempt to act as an objective narrator, after presenting several positive visions of widowhood, de la Sale introduces the anecdote of the widow who buried twenty-two husbands. He is an objective narrator, but casts a shadow of doubt on his feminine character. The medieval reader might have asked himself whether Belles Cousines was one of the "good" widows or not. To what extent one can speak of the narrator's misogynist attitudes towards Belles Cousines is also an important matter. Still, reiterating the pattern of other romances, power and choice are attributed in *Jehan de Saintré* to the feminine character[56]. It is Belles Cousines who chooses Saintré as her protégé:

> Elle voulloit en ce monde faire d'aucun josne chevalier ou escuyer ung renommé homme; et en celle pensee s'arresta totallement, sy regarda par plusieurs jours, ça et la, les bonnes meurs et condicions de tous les josnes gentilz hommes et enffans de la court, pour en choisir ung le plus a son gré; mais a la parffin sur le petit Saintré se arresta.[57]

From the moment of her choice, Belles Cousines directs all her energy to transforming the little Saintré into a famous knight. According to the first lines of the romance, at the end of his life Saintré was considered the most valuable knight: "a son trespassement de ce monde, il fut tenu des chevaliers le plus vaillant."[58] The contribution of his lady, Belles Cousines, to Saintré's successful career, will be the subject of the following chapter.

Text and subtext: Belles Cousines, a courtly lady or not?

The beginning of the relationship between Belles Cousines and Jehan de Saintré takes place under the sign of the game and spectacle. Belles Cousines has to find the most appropriate way to approach the little page, if not by obeying a policy of "courtly" behavior, at least by

[56] Simon Gaunt discusses the attribution in romance of power and choice to women in relation with the idea of misogyny. See Gaunt, *Gender*.

[57] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 42. "She pondered how she would gladly make of some young knight or squire a man of renown; and on this design she fixed. And for the space of a few days, she took note everywhere of the manners and bearing of all the young gentle men and pages at Court, to choose the one that should be most to her liking; and at the last her choice fell upon little Saintré."

using a method which would keep any unpleasant rumors away from her. Therefore, initiating her actions in the mood of an innocent game, Belles Cousines protects her image not only in the eyes of the others but also in her own. At the end of the game, when it becomes obvious that the game has lost its innocent content, or at least the results were slightly different from what she expected, Belles Cousines finds herself unmasked and changed. She plays with the young Saintré, but she is also being played with. The rhetoric of this game has shadows and lights:

> Mais que soyons a la chambre, nous rirons!
> Lors dist dame Jehanne:
> -De quoy? Dist Madame, vous verrez tantost la battaille du petit Saintré et de moy.[59]

Two important words are worth being emphasized in this passage: *le rire* (the laugh) and *la bataille* (the fight). These words play a role in the economy of the future development of the plot. The laugh accompanies many of the actions in this romance, with usages on a large scale, from a mild smile to an ironic one. The meaning of the word *bataille*, should be perceived as figurative speech. "Real" fights take place only with a formative value, during the process of initiation, and most of them have a symbolic value, as part of chivalric rituals and deeds. This time, the fight announced by Belles Cousines represents her first contact with the little Jehan. It is a fight only in the sense that she tries to give a certain shape and direction to her relationship with Jehan. She is trying to impose herself on the innocent Jehan, who at the beginning is far from understanding her intentions. As any *mise en scène* her game has its audience: Belles Cousines's friends, Jeanne, Catherine, and Isabelle.

The idea of spectacle is displayed during the entire development of the plot. Although *Jehan de Saintré* is not a drama, spectacle and theatrality are inner components of the work.

[58] Ibid, 36. "At his passing from this world he was accounted the most valiant of knights."
[59] Ibid., 44. "Do you but wait until we are in my chamber; then shall we have mirth." – "Why, Madam," said Dame Joan, "Whereof?" "Whereof?" said My Lady; "ye shall see a battle anon betwixt little Saintré and me."

Thus, Belles Cousines continues her plans under the eyes of the other courtly ladies and the young and inexperienced Saintré is subjected to a lengthy interrogation. The information sought in this interrogation is the name of the lady who governs Saintré's heart. As if he expects an unpleasant situation, Saintré exclaims after promising to answer any question he is asked with only the truth: "Las! Et que ay je fait? Ne que sera ce cy?"[60] Seeing Saintré blushing and unable to answer, the ladies who witness the spectacle laugh and enjoy the show just the way Belles Cousines was expecting them to do. Saintré forces himself to find a way out of this situation and yet he is too young to understand the meaning of what Belles Cousines describes as *bien-aimée,* the one he loves most; he answers that the most important woman for him is his mother and immediately after her, his sister. This was not what Belles Cousines was expecting of him. Therefore she asks him to exclude the members of his family from his answer and in a last attempt to escape from this interrogation, which has become a true torture, Saintré confesses that there is no other woman to play the role she describes: "De celles qui riens ne me sont? Sur ma foy, madame, je n'en ayme nulle."[61] This was the triumph long-sought by Belles Cousines. It is the moment when she finds that she can play the role that she wishes in Saintré's life. She does not miss the occasion to humiliate him, however, by reproaching him his ignorance and opacity in understanding the importance of a noble lady in the becoming of a future knight. It seems that she places all the indignation she is capable of into a speech in which Saintré is the victim and women are described as goddesses of the destiny of every true knight:

> N'en amez vous nulle?A! failli gentil homme. Et dittes vous que n'en amez nulle? Ad ce cop congnoiz je bien que jamais ne vauldrez riens. Et, failli coeur que vous estes! Dont sont venues les grans vaillances, les grans emprinses et les chevalereux fais de Lancelot, de Gauvain, de Tristram, de Guron le courtois, et les autres preux de la Table Ronde, aussi de Ponthus et de tant d'aultres sy tresvaillans chevaliers et escuiers de ce royaume et aultres sans nombre, que je

[60] Ibid., 44. "Alack, what have I done? And what shall become of me?"
[61] Ibid., 48. "Them that are nothing sib to me? By my faith, Ma'am, I love none."

> bien nommeroye se je avoye temps, sy non pour le service d'amours acquerir et eulx entretenir en la grace de leurs tres desirees dames; dont j'en cognoiz aucuns, qui, pour estre vrais amoureux, et de bien servir lealment leurs dames, sont venus en sy hault honneur, que a tousjours mais en sera nouvelle; et se ilz ne le eussent esté, de eulx ne seroit plus de compte que d'un simple compaignon. [62]

The literary craftsmanship of Antoine de la Sale is worth noticing in how he creates and develops tension and records the transformation of his characters. Little by little, Jehan feels tears in his eyes, his face grows pale, and he is struck dumb in the face of Belles Cousines's tirade. Belles Cousines's speech is part of love casuistry and at the same time it resembles to modern feminine discourse. Her inflamatory tone is meant to silence Jehan and more than that, to make him realize the *absurdity* of his situation. She begins to introduce the ideology of courtly love, in which the woman plays an essential role. She speaks of the women as the basis of any knightly formative act. The relationship in courtly love is hierarchical[63] just the way Belles Cousines describes it. Women are superior to men as the source of the value of any knight. Knights dedicate all their efforts to women recognizing their unique importance and, reciprocally, women guarantee the knights' prowess. Later, when Saintré gives the name of Matheline de Courcy as his beloved lady, Belles Cousines eliminates this possibility, Matheline being too young and unable to be the aim and the support of a would-be famous knight. Belles Cousines asks in a hopeless tone what good, what profit, what honor, what kind of support, what advantage, what encouragement, what kind of help and what advices Saintré could expect from Matheline in his wish to become a knight. This implies that the beloved lady should be capable of all that.

[62] Ibid., 48. "You love none? O recreant knight! Say you that you love none? By this I know well that you shall never be a man of worship. Why, faint-heart that ye be! Whence are come the high prowess, the mighty enterprises and knightly deeds of Lancelot, of Gawain, of Tristram, of Giron the courteous, and the other warriors of the Table Round, and likewise those of Ponthus and so many other passing valiant knights and squires of this kingdom and others beyond number(that I could well rehearse an I had time) if it were not from seeking to serve Love and to uphold them in the favor of their most beloved ladies; and I wot of some that by being true lovers and right loyally serving their ladies, are come to such great honor that men shall ever tell of their deeds; and save they had been so, they would be of no more account than a simple commoner."

Simon Gaunt, in his analysis of Chrètien de Troyes's *Chevalier de la Charette,* distinguishes between two parts of the text according to the moment at which Lancelot is only a knight, *li chevaliers* or *li chevaliers de la charrete*, and the moment at which he receives an identity, being named Lancelot by the queen. Naming is an essential act of individualization and it derives from a woman.[64] In the same way, Belles Cousines tries to describe the process in which a woman is "a prerequisite of masculine individuation."[65] In *Jehan de Saintré* the process of individuation is more complex. It does not start with naming, as in the case of Lancelot, but with the speech of Belles Cousines giving a theoretical frame for the plot. While women were the goddesses in the life of famous knights such as Lancelot, Gauvain, and Tristan, love was the feeling which guaranteed immortality. Love separated them from common mortals and made them exemplary models. In any case, this is the ideal promoted by Belles Cousines concerning courtly love.

Prisoner of this passionate discourse, Saintré escapes from Belles Cousines with the help of the courtly ladies who were watching the show. Acknowledging that Belles Cousines's staging is a good joke ("Lesquelles paroles par Madame dittes en sousriant, les dames congnurent bien que, combien que fussent vrayes, que n'estoient que pour farser"[66]), but one which made Saintré cry, the ladies plead for Saintré's cause and ask Belles Cousines to give him few more days in order to think and find an answer to her question: "Dittes-moy tout premier combien il y a que ne veistes vostre dame par amours."[67]

The second meeting between Belles Cousines and Saintré takes place in similar circumstances as the first one and has the same signs of laughing and mockery: "Or, laissiez

[63] See Michel Sot, *Histoire culturelle de la France*, (Paris: Seuil, 2005).
[64] See Gaunt, *Gender,* 95.
[65] Ibid., 95.
[66] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan,* 50. "My Lady smiling as she spake these words, her gentlewomen well perceived that they were but in jest, albeit they were true."
[67] Ibid., "Tell me first of all, when was it you saw last your lady-love?"

moy faire, dist Madame, encores en rirons nous plus avant."[68] Saintré is once more humiliated and the scene has all the ingredients of a spectacle: he falls to his knees, begs for her forgiveness, once again his eyes are full of tears and his flushed face is sweating. On the other side, Belles Cousines successfully plays her role of tyrant, exhibiting a sadistic pleasure in torturing him:

> Madame, qui de tout ce estoit tresayse, et tant plus quant le veoit sy humable et innocent, l'amoit trop mieulz, penssant que se elle povoit par bonne façon en son service le conquerre, que elle le metteroit bien a son ploy et le feroit tel que elle vouldroit.[69]

The spectacle goes on. Jehan is nothing but a ball, passed from one player to another. Not only does Belles Cousines act as inquisitor, but her friends also get involved playing her game. Their pretended intentions to help Belles Cousines decide Jehan's faith only prolong his agony. Isabelle, the oldest among the participants, although speaking more wisely ("Madame, pardonnez moy, que il a bien a pensser, le cuer d'un nouvel amant deliberé de loyalment servir, comme le scien est, de bien choisir, et soy du tout asservir aux entiers commandemens de sa dame, s'il n'est d'Amours tresgrandement amy"[70]), does not save little Saintré from giving embarrassing answers: "Par ma foy, Ysabel ma mere, oncques je ne parlay a lui, ne le vey!"[71]

Love curing every sin

After separating from her friends, Belles Cousines and the little Saintré find themselves alone for the first time. She uses her time well and delivers a discourse about love. Antoine de la Sale could not have avoided developing this theme, considering the long tradition existing before him. The fact that it is turned into a parody, that Belles Cousines's words are nothing

[68] Ibid., 52. "Now let be, then shall we make disport of him again."
[69] Ibid., 54. "My Lady, well pleased with all this and loving him the better when she beheld him so humble and so innocent, thought that could she by no means win him to her service, she might well shape him to her design."
[70] Ibid., 56. "By your leave, Madam, the heart of a young lover (that is resolved, as he is, loyally to serve) hath much perplexity in choosing well and in obeying in all things his Lady's behest, if he had not well acquainted with Love."

but a projection, an imitation, is part of rhetoric of writing that distinguished Antoine de la Sale among the writers of fifteenth-century France. The author seems to be in search of models, of patterns to reproduce, and this seems to be valid for his characters, too. He keeps a reverent tone toward courtly love and its ideals and also toward knightly prowess.[72] To reinforce this impression, he has the right example which draws on literary tradition. Names of antique writers are mentioned along with philosophers or quotations from the Bible. Ruth Morse calls this method a "tradition of creative imitation and cross-reference,"[73] a gift of educated authors who knew how to do this. In the case of Antoine de la Sale's work, this tradition seems to have existed and he made use of it in a successful way in spite of his more practical orientation.[74] His characters are made of the same material, imitative behavior is one of their features: Belles Cousines lives under the influence of twelfth-century romances, she wants to be one of the heroines of those romances and she would like Saintré to be a Lancelot, a Gauvain or a Tristan. She feeds her desires by engaging herself in the process of educating Saintré and in this process she serves as a mentor, but also as a mistress. The two roles often intermingle and, surprisingly if one thinks of the young age of Saintré, the first teachings are those about love. For a long time, however, love represented a customary component in education because it imparted moral and ethical values[75]. Belles Cousines takes care to present the love between a knight and the lady that he chooses to serve, full of Christian virtues. Her discourse on love is: "Et premier, au regard du pechié d'orgueil, l'amant,

[71] Ibid., 56. "Yea, on my faith, Mother Isabel, I never spake with him, nor did behold him."
[72] See the introduction of Joël Blanchard to the volume *Jehan de Saintré*, (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1995) (hereafter: Blanchard, *Jehan*).
[73] Ruth Morse, *Truth*, 8.
[74] Blanchard claims that Antoine de la Sale had more a pragmatic formation than an inclination towards writerly activities. Blanchard, *Jehan*, 14.
[75] Albrecht Classen, *Discourses on Love, Marriage and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaisance Studies, 2004), 1.

pour acquerir la tresdesiree grace de sa dame, se efforcera de estre doulz, humables, courtois et gracieux, adfin que nul deshonneste parler ne puist estre dit de luy."[76]

Belles Cousines promotes an image of love which could help a possible lover to avoid sin and thus to develop and mature in terms of religion. The lover would acquire the virtue of humility, which would save his soul: "dont par ainsy banira ce tresdesplaisant et abhominable pechié d'orgueil et toutes ses circunstances, et se acompaignera de la tresdoulce vertu de humilité; dont par ainssy il sera de ce pechié quitte et salvé."[77] To supports this opinion, Belles Cousines quotes from Thales and Socrates – and claims that there are others, too, who could assert this. It is interesting to note that her eulogy for love is a testimony to a dichotomous thinking. This is why she fails in her attempt to educate Saintré and her own words turn against her. She is not capable of perceiving the nuances and she will loose Saintré.[78]

Another sin that displeases God, as Belles Cousines says, is anger. Condemned by Saint Augustine, by the Apostle Paul and even in the words of the Gospel, love can cure anger, but only if one is a real lover who wants to conquer the heart of his lady and also the salvation of his soul:

> Dont par ainssy je dis que tous vrais amoureux, que, pour acquerir la tresdesiree grace de leurs tresbelles dames, fuyent a tout povoir ce tresdesplaisant a Dieu et au monde pechiet de ire, et se acompaigne[nt] de celle tresamoureuse vertu de pacience; dont par ainssy sont de ce tresdesplaisant et enuieux pechié de ire quittes et saulvez.[79]

[76] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 62. "And firstly touching the sin of Pride, the lover that he may win his Lady's most desired favor, shall strive to be gentle, humble, courteous and gracious, to the end that naught may be said to his dishonor."

[77] Ibid., 64. "and so shall he cast from him this very hateful and abominable sin of Pride, with all the appurtenances thereof, and shall take for his companion the lovely virtue of humility; whereby he shall be quit and saved from this sin."

[78] See for example Andrei Pleşu's opinion about binary thinking expressed in *On Angels* (*Despre îngeri*), (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2003), 19. Pleşu asserts that binary thinking can be applied successfully to logic for example there where A=A and A# non-A. The identity of an individual can not be placed into such equation, his identity being the sum of all temporal stages he has passed through, evolving, revising and surpassing himself. This is what happens with Saintré, but Belles Cousines never foresees it.

[79] Antoine de la Salle, *Jehan*, 66. "Wherefore I say, let all true lovers, to win their fair Ladies' most desired favor, flee with all their might from this sin of Choler, which is most hateful to God and to Man, and take their companion the very lovely virtue of Patience; whereby they shall be quit and saved from this passing hateful and envious sin of Choler."

The third sin is envy. Here, Belle Cousines varies her discourse to some extent, admitting that this feeling could be also inspired by a woman, but if this happens, she, for certain, is not a noble lady. The nobility of the soul and the origin of the lady assure us that we are on the ground of a courtly code. Envy is accepted only with regard to the wish for self-improvement: "Car oncques dame d'onneur ne peut amer homme envieux, se ne fust sur les bonnes vertus, pour en estre le meilleur."[80] The counterbalance of envy is love for one's fellow creatures, a fundamental rule of conduct in Christianity. Thus, Belles Cousines continues her pleading in favor of love, but supports it with the favorable and more secure ground of religion. One should not neglect the sexual component of the courtly love, however, because it was not conceived as "Platonic" love.[81] This is only the component which Belles Cousines avoids at the beginning. Was it to protect the innocent Saintré or to make it more attractive by presenting it in an almost ascetic light?

The fourth sin condemned by Belles Cousines and by all those whom she quotes in a marathon of exhibiting her knowledge is avarice. Belles Cousines claims that there can-not be enough room for love and avarice at the same time and in the same place: "certainement avarice ne vraies amours ne puent logier en ung coeur enssemble."[82] Avarice in a relationship is like a rival who disorients the lover from the one who should be his only preoccupation – his lady. It is here that Belles Cousines introduces a delicate point: the proper manifestations of a knight towards his lady. If avarice does not rule his mind, then a knight will dedicate his time to choosing the clothes for him and his entourage without exceeding his means: "L'amoureux véritable et sincère, lui, n'aura qu'un souci: honorer sa dame et l'amour de ses

[80] Ibid., 66. "For never may honorable lady love one that is envious, unless he be envious of good virtues, to win therein the most worship."
[81] See Francis X. Neuman, ed., , *The Meaning of Courtly Love* – Selected Papers Presented at the 1st Annual Conference – Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, (Albany: State University of New York, 1969), vii. "Courtly love is a doctrine of paradoxes, a love at once illicit and morally elevating, passionate and disciplined, humiliating and exalting, human and transcendent".

services, sans lésiner, en choisissant soigneusement ses vêtements, sa monture, ainsi que ceux de ses gens, sans excéder les moyens de son état." It is a matter of pondering his behavior, compared to avarice, which is seen as an imbalanced manifestation. At the same time, it is known that in order to maintain his position, a knight needs proper funds.[83] Deeds of arms also implied some expenses, and not only courage and prowess. Money is the second gift Belles Cousines offers to Saintré, after those valuable advices. Having him spend money was one of the tests to which Saintré was subjected (more on this topic bellow).

Under the same commandment of avoiding avarice, Belles Cousines introduces an essential concept in the education of a knight: contrary to avarice –*largesse*. Described as lavish, conspicuous giving, *largesse* occupies an important place in medieval scholarship. The material extravagance was a customary feature of the courts described in the literary texts of twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Jane E. Burns even speaks of a "cultural economy of *largesse*".[84] Belles Cousines takes this concept and introduces it to Saintré, suggesting him an imitative behavior. She never mentions other advantages or effects of this *largesse* than those which imply a duty connected to religion: "qui de leurs biens donnent pour Dieu aux plus necessiteux lieux."[85] How God reacted to Saintré's *largesse* is hard to say, but in any case in the hierarchy of the court, his employment of the code of *largesse* had obvious effects.

About the fifth sin that Saintré should avoid, sloth, Belles Cousines has nothing special to add beside the opinions of Epicuros, Saint Bernard and Seneca. She only hopes that these examples are powerful enough so that Saintré will obey their words and become a friend of diligence:

> Et pour ce, mon ami, que les vrais amoureux, telz que je diz, sont par telles vertus saulvez, habandonnent ce tresvil et malleureux pechié de [paresse], pour

[82] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 68. "Certainly Avarice and true love cannot lodge together in one heart."
[83] Mazo Karras, *From Boys*, 33.
[84] See Jane E. Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading through Clothes in Medieval French Culture*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) (hereafter Burns, *Reading through Clothes*), 25.
[85] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 70. "give of their goods to the most needy."

> eulz acompaignier avec la tresresplendissant vertu de dilligece, vous prie que soiez de ceulx, et lors serez (quittes) de ce tresmalleureux pechié de paresse saulvé et quittes.[86]

The last two sins are the sins of the flesh: gluttony and lust. Belles Cousines follows the same schema, quoting important writers who condemned these sins. It is ironic to notice that her conception of love is spiritual enough to assert that the lover will keep himself away from the sin of lust by merely knowing that the thought of such a sin would estrange his lady from him: "En quant au .vij. Pechié, qui est de luxure, vrayement, mon ami, ce pechié est au coeur du vray amant bien estaint, car tant sont grandes les doubtes que sa dame ne en prende desplaisir, que ung seul desoneste pensser n'en est en luy."[87] When she meets the abbot all her teachings fade away, or maybe these were meant only for the innocent Saintré. Her theoretical and didactic teaching, however, does not stop here. She presents love as a shield against the capital sins, but the perfect lover, the future knight, must know other precious information: he must be aware of the practical dimensions of knighthood. Thus, Belles Cousines speaks about the deeds of arms as an essential component of a knightly existence: "le vray amoureux gentil homme, qui n'est point ordonné ne disposé aux estudes des tresprudentes et saintes sciences de theologie, des decrez de loys, ne aultres estudes de science, fors que a la tresnoble et illustre science et mestier des armes."[88] Beside living according to ethical principles, a knight should prove his bravery and implicit loyalty towards his lady: "pour acquerir honneur et la tresdesideree grace de sa tresbelle dame, quant il est, ce est cellui qui se monstre et qui se presente le premier, et fait tant, que entre les aultres il est nouvelle de lui" or "pour l'amour de

[86] Ibid., 74. "And forasmuch, fair son, as true Lovers (such as I do conceive them) are saved by such virtues, forsaking this very vile and miserable sin of Idleness to dwell in company with the glorious virtue of industry, therefore I pray you that you be of their number; and so shell you be quit and saved from this passing shameful sin of Idleness."

[87] Ibid., 76. "And as for the seventh sin, which is Lechery; verily fair son, that sin is altogether dead in the true Lover's heart. For so great his fear is lest his Ldy should take displeasure thereat, that there is never any dishonorable thought in him."

sa dame, fera armes a cheval et a pié."[89] Belles Cousines is even capable of entering into more details, she knows the rules established by the Church and also the lay regulation with regard to any chivalric activity: "Mais jasoit que ces gaiges de bataille soient ainssy deffendus et reservé pour les clauses que l'Esglise et decrez ont ordonné, les ungs pour les pechiez de tempter Dieu, et les aultres de vanitez."[90] Belles Cousines represents the paradigmatic image of a courtly lady. She has the knowledge to guide and introduce Saintré into chivalric ideology. She is what Tracy Adams calls a "clever courtly lady,"[91] but this image is valid only for the first part of the romance. It is not only modern literary criticism that juxtaposes this image of "courtly" lady against the so-called *fabliau* lady. Antoine de la Sale puts these two antagonistic images together in one character and in one literary work. Belles Cousines is the courtly lady, but becomes the *fabliau* lady in the second half of the story. The narrator, in his ambivalent attitude towards his characters, allows his readers to see the evolution of the characters. Belles Cousines's speech is beautiful and attractive, she can gain respect in the eyes of little Saintré (and she does) and also in those of the reader, unless she unveils her deceitful intentions. Her rhetoric is magnificent; after offering so much advice in her didactic speeches – "Ores, mon amy, je vous ay remonstré et dit beaucop de choses"[92] – Belles Cousines does not forget to remind Saintré to be thankful to those who help him in any way: "a tous ceulz qui bien lui ont fait ou feroient, fust en conseillier, en chastoy ou en dons."[93] Gratitude is a normal attitude and, in a way, this last point has its place in the economy of her speech. The only inconvenient item is that for the first time in her faultless discourse, she chooses a less

[88] Ibid., 80. "The true gentleman and Lover, that is neither ordained nor disposed to the study of the right virtuous and blessed sciences of theology, of Canon Law nor of Civil Law, nor any other study of science, saving only the most noble and illustrious science and profession of arms."
[89] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 81. "he shall be ever the best arrayed and so beareth him, that there is good report of him among the rest" and "for the love of his Lady he shall joust a-horseback and afoot."
[90] Ibid., 84. "Though indeed men might say that his deeds of arms are compounded of vanity and by Holy Church forbidden as it is written in the canons."
[91] Tracy Adams, "Crossing Generic Boundaries: The Clever Courtly Lady" *Essays in Medieval Studies* 21 (2004).

appropriate quotation to back up her position: “aux dieux, aux parens – est entendu que a Dieu, aux peres, meres et aultres de son sang – et amis de doctrine, jamais ne porroient rendre l'equivallent des biensqu'ilz nous ont fais.”[94] This quotation would place Saintré in a servile position. As an apprentice, this position is normal one, but only temporarily, as part of a life stage. The evolution of the plot proves that this was not what Belles Cousines was thinking of. When Saintré makes the decision to organize an *emprise* without being advised by Belles Cousines, she feels that she is loosing her humble servant. She feels deeply offended and resorts to the desperate gesture of leaving the court and finding her *peace* in the arms of the abbot.

The narrative of the romance is often presented under the sign of playing. There is always the game of double meaning and of double reading. An atmosphere of doubt hovers above the characters of the book, as if one is in the middle of a deconstructivist experiment.

Oui, Madame, je ferai tout ce que vous me commandez

Saintré listens to Belles Cousines with the astonishment of a child having a revelation and remains silent: “Saintré, que comme enffant et tout esprins de tant de belles doctrines, ne respondoit rien.”[95] For a complete victory, Saintré should have been able to read Belles Cousines' mind. She expected him to fall on his knees in front of her and ask her to be the lady of his life. This would have been the normal evolution of their relationship. The rule was that the knight chooses the lady he wanted to serve and not the other way round. Belles Cousines knows this and she even mentions it in her discourse: “Vous, sire, devez choisir dame qui soit

[92] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 86. “Now, fair son, I have shewn and declared unto you many things.”
[93] Ibid., 86. “All that have done him or do him good service, whether by counsel, by reproof or by gifts.”
[94] Ibid., 86. Belles Cousines was quoting Aristotle here : *Diis, parentibus et doctoribus non possumus reddere aequivalens*. “To the gods and to parents (which signifieth «to God, to fathers, mothers and others of our blood») and to men of learning, we are not ever able to make equal return for the benefits that they have done us.”

de haut et noble sang..."[96] The reader assists in a reversal of the pattern. Belles Cousines not only that chooses Saintré (this was part of her plan), but she even offers herself to him:[97] "or ça, Saintré, se je estoie celle que vous ay dit, et vous vaulsisse, pour moy loyalment servir, vous faire des biens et a grant honneur parvenir, me vouldriez vous obeir?"[98] It is the first sign of a discrepancy existing in Belles Cousines' system. It is clear that she promotes an idealistic vision of love according to the principles that she quotes, but she herself is not able to act and live in accordance with them. Was this proof of an anachronism or was it just a failure of Belles Cousines? Her entire behavior is artificial and to a certain extent she imposes the same enacting to Saintré, too. They are posing in front of the others: "lors, comme par couroux lui dist"[99] or "lors tout asseuré, comme elle lui avoit dit faisant un peu l'esbahy..."[100] It is true that "secrecy is a strategy for love's preservation, and it is also a necessary condition for love,"[101] but in *Jehan de Saintré*, the secrecy is rather a platform for hiding and deceiving.

However, Saintré accepts to be her servant, her future knight. She promises him God's friendship and people's respect, he promises her to obey her rules. In this equal agreement, Belles Cousines is the first to unbalance it: she offers him money, she buys his services even before he would have done any:

> Madame, je vous en remercie; ne vous deplaise, je n'en prenderay riens, car je ne le vous ay pas deservy.
> -Deservy? dist Madame, bien say que ne le m'avez pas servy, mais vous le me servirez, se Dieux plaist. Sy vueil et vous commande que la prenez.[102]

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[95] Ibid., 88. "Saintré, young that he was and much admiring all this fair doctrine, answered nothing."
[96] Ibid., 60. "It behoveth you, messire, to choose you a lady that is come of high and noble blood."
[97] This idea is also commented on by Michelle Szkilnik in her study dedicated to this literary work. See Szkilnik,, *Une Carrière chevaleresque*, 64.
[98] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 90. "Now Saintré, suppose that I were she whereof I have spoken, and suppose that I were minded, in recompense for loyal service, to do you much good and bring you to high honor, would you serve me?"
[99] Ibid., 110. "Said onto him on a sudden, as if in anger... "
[100] Ibid., 110. "Then well assured, yet feigning somewhat as he were affrighted, as she had bid him..."
[101] See Katherine Kong's argument about the role of secrecy in courtly love in "The Ethics of Secrecy in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*" *Symposium* 61 (2007): 138.
[102] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 112. "Ma'am, I thank you, but may't please you, I had liever not take it, for I have in no wise earned it. Earned? Quoth My Lady, I wot well that you have not earned it; but with God's grace earn it you shall. This my will and commandment that you take it."

Belles Cousines is in search of power, she wants to rule over the innocent Saintré, which is not that difficult considering his young age and she even speaks the truth, announcing to the other ladies that he is not mature enough to choose a lady: "il n'a point encores tant de sens que il entende d'avoir dame." The choice was not his, but hers and this makes her happy for a time. She was able to decide Saintré's behavior and to lead him according to her own will. The first thing that Saintré must do is to dress himself according to her desires:[103]

> Mon ami, je vous donne ceste boursette, telle qu'elle est, et .xij. escus qui sont dedens, sy vueil que les coulleurs dont elle est faitte et les lettres entrelasseez d'ores en avant pour l'amour de moy vous portez. Et des .xij. ecus, vous les emploirez en ung pourpoint de damas ou de saptin cramoisy, et deux paires de fines chausses, les unes de fine escarlatte et les autres de fine brunette de Saint Lo, qui seront toutes brodees du long et par dehors des coulleurs et devise que la bourse est. Et sy en aurez .iiij. Paires de draps linges et .iiij. Queuvrechiez bien deliez, des sollers et des pattins qui soient bien fais: et que je vous voye bien joly dimence prochain.[104]

The quotation above marked the beginning of a new stage in the evolution of Saintré. After offering him a long list of pieces of religious advice, Belles Cousines becomes the promoter of a religion of clothes. She knows that she can give Saintré a new identity by making him wear certain attire and at the same time he becomes her by wearing her tokens. It is interesting to note how important the question of clothing is in the economy of the entire book. Put next to the almost ascetic teachings Belles Cousines gives to Saintré, the luxurious display of clothing which follows these teachings seem at least unsuitable. This can be regarded as another evidence of a dysfunction, something which does not fit to the rest. In this context, the

[103] See Madelaine Lazard, "Le costume dans *Jehan de Saintré*: valeur sociale et symbolique," *Studi francesi* 26 (1982): 457-464.

[104] Ibid., 110-112. "Fair son, I give unto you this little purse, such as it is, and XII crowns that are therein. And I desire you from henceforth, for love of me, to wear the colors whereof it is made and these letters interlaced: ans as for the XII crowns, you shall buy you a doublet of crimson damask or satin therewithal, and two pair of good hose, the one of fine Scarlet, and the other of fine Saint-Lô brunet, which shall be broidered all down the outward side with the colors and device of the purse; and you shall have also four pair of fine linen shirts, and four seemly kerchiefs; shoes likewise, and pattens, fairly made; and next Sunday let me see you in goodly array."

material extravagance and its ostentatious display may represent traceable baroque features. Glamour is regarded by Edgar Papu as an anesthetic for inner wounds, for tormented consciousness.[105] Belles Cousines is not far from this kind of inner conflict. Her attempt to educate Saintré is also meant to give meaning to her own life, to define herself and let her be the lady of the ideal knight – Saintré. The collision between her intentions and the results of these intentions gave birth to conflicts. It is impossible to trace psychological manifestations of Belles Cousines' struggle to adjust her own reality to the reality she lived in, but her small failures up to the largest (abandonment of the moral principles that she tried to inculcate to Saintré, too, along with her affair with the abbot) were the manifest results of it.

Returning to Saintré, he was about to listen to Belles Cousines' recommendations concerning the money he received. He even goes to the tailor of the king to have his clothes made. Clothes do confer social status. In the words of Jane Burns, "clothing effects substantive alterations in the body being clothed."[106] The examples she furnishes in her study are eloquent in this sense. She extracts from *Histoire du costume en France*[107] one particular moment: Joan of Navarre, on entering Bruges together with her husband, Philip the Fair, exclaimed angrily: "I thought I was the queen here, but now I see there are hundreds of them." The reasons for such a reaction were the opulent clothes of the other ladies, which made them look just like her, just like a queen. To avoid these kinds of moments, special laws were introduced in the medieval legislation. Sumptuary laws were supposed to regulate any form of consumption like clothing or food and to maintain clearly defined borders among existing taxonomies. Jane Burns' study gives a description of a royal ordinance from 1294, issued by Philip the Fair, and one can find out that dukes, counts, and barons were allowed to have no

[105] See Papu, *Barocul*, 39.
[106] Burns, *Reading through Clothes*, 22.
[107] Jules Quicherat, *Histoire du costume en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1877), 205, cited in Burns, *Reading through Clothes*, 37.

more than four suits of clothes, while knights only two per year.[108] Thus, the social status was meant to be protected by these laws, but this was decided by taking personal wealth into consideration. Saintré was not a wealthy person, but he became one as soon as he was sponsored by his lady. An army of purveyors are ready to serve him:

> Au dimence matin, que a la chambre de Jacques Martel, premier escuier d'escuierie du roy, ou le petit Saintré et les aultres paiges du roy dormoient, vindrent Perrin de Solle, tailleur, Jehan de Busse, chausseteur, Françoiz de Nantes, brodeur, et Guillaume Soldam, cordouanier, tous du roy, qui portoient le pourpoint, les chausses, brodees, sollers et patins, tous a un cop pour le petit Saintré.[109]

The richness of his attires roused people's admiration at the court. The king smiled and asked the reason why Saintré was wearing such elegant clothes, expressing his regret for Saintré's young age at the same time. He would have been promoted if he were few years older: "Je vourroye qu'il eust plus .iij. Ou .iiij. De mes ans: il seroit mon varlet trenchant."[110] If people's attitude towards Saintré improved immediately when he wore different clothes, then to avoid saying that clothes make the man one can claim that clothes determine the opinions of the others towards the one who wears them. Saintré is certainly not just a piece of clothing with nothing behind it, but in his evolution towards becoming a knight the attire he wears, together with the money which makes this possible play an essential role. He becomes visible in the crowd of other pages and distinguishes himself, his clothes being part of his new identity.

This stage lasted for three years. During this period, Saintré, just like the hero of a fairy-tale, grew in the eyes of his lady and those of the court: "tant plus le regardoit, et tant

[108] See Burns, *Reading through Clothes*, 34.
[109] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 116. "..the Sunday morning, when to the chamber of Jacques Martel, the King's first groom of the stables (wherein little Saintré and the King's other pages were wont to sleep) there came all together Perkin de Solle, the tailor, John de Busse, the hosier, Francis de Nantes, the broider, and William Soldam, the cordwainer, all purveyors to the King; bearing one the doublet, another the broidered hose, another the shoes and pattens."
[110] Ibid., 120. "I would he had three or four of my years, he should be my carving squire."

plus il lui plaisoit, que en la court n'avoit cellui ne celle qui ne le jugast une fois homme de bien."[111] To satisfy her vanity, but also to keep her affair with Saintré secret, Belles Cousines continued to play her role. She enjoys seeing the others admiring Saintré as well as she enjoys knowing that all the others are fulled by her acting. In front of the others she tries to extort the secret name of the lady whose love tokens are being wore by Saintré, but inside she rejoices knowing that she is his lady. She is afraid that her relationship may be discovered and to keep it secret Belles Cousines maintains the same dialectic of laughing and ridicule. She knows that there are two pages at the court to avoid because they spread any news or information, but she chooses them on purpose and the results are as expected:

> Et lors ilz commencerent a rire, et sur ce fust leur deppartir, qui puis a Madame et a toutes ilz le dirent, dont entre elles en fut grant ris. Sy ne tarda gaires que les parolles de Madame et de elles toutes avec le petit Saintré par eulz en pluiseurs lieux furent semees, tout ainsy que Madame cuidoit bien qu'ilz le feroient, et de aultres choses, se ilz l'eussent sceu, dont en fust bien ris.[112]

Hidden behind these thick plaits which veil and unveil at the same time, the two – Belles Cousines and Saintré –develop a non-verbal way of communication which once again protects them from the indiscreet glances of the others and, at the same time, shows a closer degree of intimacy: "quant je voulray parler a vous, ou vous a moy, je furgeray mes dens de une espingle, et vous, quant le aperceverez, froterez vostre droit oeul, et ainssy serons l'un de l'autre, quant vouldrons ensemble parler."[113] The narrator subtly places an item of information which could easily get lost between the lines, but it does catch the attention; it has almost a similar function with that of a middle chart in a fairy tale and at the same time it plays the role

[111] Ibid., 122. "For the more she beheld him, the more did he please her; and there was none in the court but esteemed him worthy."

[112] Ibid., 136. "At that they fell all to laughing, and anon went their several ways: and all all this they told afterward to My Lady and to them all; and had great merriment thereat among them. And it was not long before My Lady's converse, and her gentlewomen, with little Saintré, were reported bz the squires in divers quarters, as My Lady had intended, and there was much merriment thereat."

[113] Ibid., 136. "When I desire to speak unto you , or you unto me let us make our two signals, as we have devised: when you see me pick my teeth with a pin , that shell be for a sign that I would speak to you; and then shall you rub your right eye, and by that I shall know that you have understood me." For an analysis of the

of a prolepsis foreshadowing a change in the evolution of the relationship between Belles Cousines and Saintré: “Et par ainssy demoura ceste amour ainssy secrete jusques ad ce que Fortune, par la variableté de Madame, l'en voult le dos tourner, ainssy que aprés s'enssieut.”[114]

In *Jehan de Saintré* a repetitive structure and a certain degree of predictability prevail. The reader can assume the dominance of the same leit-motif in the existence of Belles Cousines and Saintré, she offering him money and him becoming more appreciated at the court: “Que vous diroye? Ains qu'il fust ung moins acomply, il eut varles et fut monté, luy et ses varlez et chevaulz bien habilliez. Lors plus que oncques mais le roy l'ama et le tint chier, sy fist la royne tant qu'il leva bruit.”[115] After three years, Belles Cousines decided that Saintré was prepared to move to a different stage: “Madame se appensa que il estoit ja assez grant pour estre hors de paige.”[116] Belles Cousines is the one who pulls the strings for him to be promoted; he becomes the trencher squire of the king. She continues to be in charge of his wealth and to support him financially. He, Saintré, has to lie and ascribe his wealthy condition to the generosity of the king:

> Le roy, de sa grace, m'a osté de paige et me fist hier trenchier devant lui et m'a mis en l'ordonnance de trois chevaulz et de deux varlez, et puis tout secretement par ung de sa chambre m'a fait donner .c. et .lx. escus pour moy monter et habillier, moy et mes varlez, et que je me tiengne bien en point, moy deffendant que nul ne le saiche, pour l'envye que on porroit avoir.[117]

Before going to the next step in the analysis of the plot, there is one more feature in Belles Cousines's behavior which should not ignored. As good as her intentions might have been,

manifestations which replaced verbal communication and their importance, see J. A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[114] Ibid., 136. “And thus was this true love kept a secret, until that Fortune in her fickleness turned her back upon them, as shall afterward appear.”

[115] Ibid., 148. “What more shall I say? Ere that a month was passed, he had varlets and was well horsed; and he and his varlets well bedight. And the King loved him and cherished him more than ever before, and the Queen also, so that there was much, talk thereof.”

[116] Ibid., 138. “My Lady bethought her that he was now old enough to be free of page's service.”

[117] Ibid., 146. “The King, of his bounty, hath taken me out of page's service, and caused me to carve before him yesterday, and hath assigned me three horses and two varlets; and afterward, all privily, hath sent me by one of his chamberlains an hundred and sixty crowns to mount and array me and varlets, and to keep me in good point; charging me to tell no man, by cause of the envy that someone might have.”

Belles Cousines subordinates the courtly virtue of *largesse* to her mercantile politics. She believes that in the same way that Saintré bought horses with her money, in the same way he could buy people's friendship:

> Mon ami et mon coeur, je apperçoy que Monseigneur vous a, Dieu mercy, bien en sa grace et Madame aussy. Il nous fault pensser que vous vous y puissiez bien entretenir, laquelle chose est en court tresfort par le faulx parler des envieux, se n'est pour acquerir amis, les plus prouchains de entour eulx: les ungs par dons et les autres par promesses, que on ne puet suppler a tout, lesquelles a temps et a lieu se doivent aaccomplir: a l'un le cheval ou haquenee, et a l'autre la robe, et aux officiers les robes de livree, affin que tous soient pour vous.[118]

The chivalric career

The external aspect, money and clothes, had an essential role in Saintré's advancement, but Belles Cousines knows that it is not enough to become a knight. Saintré had to add another ingredient to his impeccable behavior: the deeds of arms. It was not enough to gain admiration or respect only by wearing elaborate adornments and by displaying a courtly manner with the people of the court. Physical prowess was a compulsory requirement in a chivalric career. Thus, Belles Cousines, the censor and promoter of any of Saintré's actions, decides that it is time for him to demonstrate his manliness and skills for knighthood: “je me suis appenssee que vous estes des ores mais assez homme pour faire en armes nommees quelque bien, affin qu'il soit en ce royaume et dehors quelques nouvelles de vous.”[119] Belles Cousines is a Christine de Pizan at a fictional level. She is capable of advising Saintré not only in religious and ethical

[118] Ibid., 148. “My love and my heart, I do perceive how My Lord and My Lady also, God be thanked, hold you in high favor. Now must we consider how best you may keep it, which is a passing hard thing at Court by reason of the slanderous talk of the envious, unless you make friends among them that be nearest to the King: some by presents and others by promises, since we cannot give unto all; the which promises must be fulfilled as time and occasion serve; to one an horse or an hackney, to another a gown. For gifts and promises, when they can be fulfilled, with honors and good cheer to every man according to his station, do so bind, beguile, and make captive men's hearts, that all are yours.”

[119] Ibid., 160. “You are henceforth man enow to do some notable deed in arms, by challenge, that there may be good report of you, as well in this realm as beyond it.”

matters, but also in the art of warfare. She devises Saintré's deeds of arms to the last detail in an attempt to prevent and organize even the unpredictable.

The first test of Saintré's physical strength and skill is wearing an *emprise*. This gives the opportunity for another manifestation of the tyranny of the visual: starting from the *emprise* in itself, which consisted of a gold bracelet set with diamonds, rubies and pearls up to the entire ceremonial of the *emprise*, everything is designed to impress by showing off: clothes, horses, and other luxury goods. A dialogue between Belles Cousines and Saintré offers a sample of the dimensions reached by such vain concerns:

> Et, mon, ami, de quoi sont voz paramens?
> Madame, je en ay trois, qui sont assez riches, don't l'un est de damas cramoisy tresrichement brochié d'argent, qui est bordé [et] sera fourré de martres sebelines, et s'en ay ung aultre de saptin bleu, losengié de orphaverie a nos lettres branlans, qui sera bordé de lettices, et sy en ay ung aultre de damas noir, dont l'ouvraige est tout pourfillé de fil d'argent, et le champ tout emply de houppettes couchees de plumes d'ostrisse, verdes, vyolettes et grises, a voz coulleurs, bordé de houppettes blanches d'ostrisse, mouchettees de houppettes noires, ainssy que ermines.[120]

Generally, jousts and tournaments represented occasions for ostentatious display of costly garments, a possibility to see and be seen. When Saintré departs from the court of France going to Aragon to confront Enguerrand, this procession looks very like a parade. It is worth noting the *mise en scène*, with the perfect distribution of the participants and their garments:

> Et quant ilz orent tous disné, et les chevaulz bridez et tous troussez, la furent chevalierset escuiers de la court du roy, de la royne, et de mesdiz seigneurs, et pluiseurs aultres, au nombrede entour mille chevaulz, tous venuspour le convoier. Lors il fait partir, tous les premiers, ses deux fourriers, ses queux et son chappellain, quatre trompettes, portans les banyeres de ses armes, et puis ses ses troiz heraulx, et aprés ses trois chevaliers et .ix. Escuiers, deux et deux, et tous leurs gens; aprés, vestus de sa livree, ses cincq sommiers, couvers de tappiz a ses armes, menez par deux varlez a piet, et puis ses tambourins, et aprés, ses quatre destriers, couvers de paremens de fin taffetas de Florence, gris, vert et violet, a granslettres d'argent a sa devise, et sur leurs testes,

[120] Ibid., 178. "Now, dear Love, what apparel have you? Lady, I have three caparisons, and passing rich; whereof one is of crimson, damask very richly woven with silver, and bordured with sable marten; and I have another of blue satin, bespangled with our device lozengewise in gold, and bordured with white fur; and another also of black damask, whereof the edge is all purfled with silver thread and the middle sewn with flat clusters of ostrich feathers of your colors, green, purple and grey, bordured with tufts as it were ermine."

> chascun son tresbel chanffrain d'achier, bien garny de tresbelles plumes d'ostrisse faittes de broderie et bien emplies de branlans d'argent, et sur leurs chiefz, chascum son tresbel chappel de plumes a ses coulleurs, et aprés les destriers venoient lesdeux pallefreniers et puis le mareschal.... [121]

This gorgeous display is a constant feature in Saintré's actions. His glamour defines him and people value him according to his appearance: "...dont tout ce soir et pluiseurs jours aprés ne cessa le deviser de la beaulté et gracieuseté de Saintré et de tous les sciens."[122] He proves his abilities as a jouster and defeats Enguerrand in Aragon. Saintré participated in a number of jousts, *pas d'armes,* and *emprises* that need not be described here; once the pattern is built all further developments follow the same path. After returning victorious from Spain, Saintré returns victorious from all the other knightly undertakings, which are all designed by the same Belles Cousines. Thus, Saintré has as opponent after Enguerrand, a Polish knight, Loisselench. Here, the author creates a parallel with the previous scene: again, an *emprise*, but this time the roles are inverted. Saintré is no longer the one who keeps the *emprise*, but he is the combatant of Loisselench, playing the analogous role of Enguerand.

With each new victory in the deeds of arms, Saintré's reputation increases and also his legitimacy as a hero at the court of France. For example, after the victory against the Polish knight "Madame et les aultres dames et damoiselles firent, et aussi le roy et toute la court, et aussi par toute la ville, tout ce jour et celle nuit, qu'il n'estoit cellui ne celle que taire se pueust

[121] Ibid., 194. "And when they had all dined, and the horses were all bridled and girt, there came knights and squires of the King's household, of the Queen's, and of the Dukes' aforementioned, and many more, to the number of near a thousand horse, all come to set him on his way. Then bade he set forth, first of all his two foragers, his cooks and his chaplain, four trumpeters bearing banners of his arms, and then three heralds; and after, his three knights and IX squires, two and two, with all their people following, clad in his liveries; his five sumpter-horses, trapped with clothes of his arms, led by two varlets on foot; and then his tabors; and next his four coursers, dight with caparisons of fine Florence taffetas, grey, green, and violet, with his device in great silver letters, and on their heads, each a fair head-piece of steel, all garnished with fair ostrich-feathers made out of broidery and all bespangled with silver; and on the coursers four gentle pages clad in his livery, all their sleeves charged with silver spangles, and on their heads each a passing fair cap with feathers of his colors; and after the coursers there followed the two grooms and then the marshal."

[122] Ibid., 210. "All that evening and many days after, ceased not from telling off the fair and gracious demeanour of Saintré and all his following."

de loer Saintré."[123] After almost one year, Belles Cousines established the need for other knightly ventures. Thus, Saintré jousts against English knights in a *pas d'armes*, then against two Italian knights, and finally, as a crowning achievement of his career up to that moment, Saintré participated in an expedition against the infidels in Prussia.

Belles Cousines remains the silent observer and stage director in Saintré's actions. She hides her feelings behind an impenetrable image. Even when she needs no excuses to show her feelings, Belles Cousines denies them. All the ladies are crying ("qui est le coeur de femme qui se porroit tenir de plourer a veoir cest enffant qui va en sy grant peril"[124]) seeing the young Saintré leaving for his first *emprise*, but only Belles Cousines feels the need to give another reason for her tears, that: "Jamais pour dueil ne pour regret que [je aye jamais je ne porroye plourer], sy non quant je voy les aultres plourer."[125]

The expedition to Prussia is the triumph of Antoine de la Sale as a writer. The description of this moment, boring as it may seem for a reader because of its extensive dimensions, offered Antoine de la Sale the occasion to exhibit his knowledge of heraldry, applying his practical insights to literary matter.[126] It is the moment when his performance as a writer meets his *lay* position at the court: that of squire. However, this expedition has a particular significance in the economy of the plot. It is the moment in which Saintré achieves the status of knight. The reason is, of course, his great prowess showed in the battle against the Saracens, Saintré being the one who kills the *Grand Turc*. Having returned home, the same ritual occurs; the fame and glory is all his, together with Belles Cousines. This peaceful

[123] Ibid., 302. "My Lady, and the other ladies and damosels, and the King likewise and all the Court, and all the Town also, all that day and night; for there was neither man nor woman but spake praise of Saintré."
[124] Ibid., 194. "What heart of woman might keep from weeping, to see this youth go forth to such great peril."
[125] Ibid., 194. "Whatsoever grief or affliction I might have, I shed never a tear, except only when I behold others weep."
[126] See Jean-Bernard de Vaivre, "L'héraldique dans le roman du *Petit Jehan de Saintré* d'Antoine de la Sale," *Cahiers d'héraldique* 3 (1977): 65-83.

atmosphere lasts for fifteen months when Saintré decides that he wants to be the initiator of his own deeds of arms:

> Madame, dist il, du temps qu'ila que je suis vostre treshumable cerf et loyal serviteur, et oncques en moy ne eust tant de bien que pour l'amour de vous je eusse nul fait d'armes entrepris, mais tous ceulx que j'ay fais et ou je me suis trouvé ont esté par voz commandemenz, par voz conssaulx et par voz advis.[127]

Is this Saintré's declaration of independence? Is this a rebellion against the tutelage of Belles Cousines? Is it an attempt to set the things right? How can Saintré's initiative and Belles Cousines's reaction to it be understood? I will try to answer these questions in the following chapter and also to offer insight into a chivalric world which was changing its coordinates.

Courtliness undressed

> Hélas! Povre de sens, povre d'avis et povre de tous biensque tu es! Oncques par toy aucun bien d'armes ne fut emprins que ta tresnoble et doulce deese ne te y ait mis! Ores vraiement je me concluz et deslibere que pour l'amour d'elle je vueil faire aucum bien.[128]

Saintré reproaches himself a lack of initiative and for the first time in his relationship with Belles Cousines he proudly decides to organize an *emprise* for his renown and for the love of his lady. In spite of his noble intention, Saintré makes a mistake. The reactions of the others are far from what he would have expected. Was Saintré's decision immature? Or was it a failed exercise in thinking? In any case, Saintré did not take into consideration all the possibilities of such an initiative, and although he was able to organize the *emprise* in all its details, he did not demonstrate a courtly attitude in his undertaking. He presents *a fait accompli*. On one hand,

[127] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 404. "Lady, in the time that I have been your most humble bondman and loyal servitor, there had never been so much worth in me an I had not, for love of you, undertaken sundry deeds of arms. But all those deeds that I have done or wherein I have shared have been at your bidding, by your counsel and by your suggestion."

Belles Cousines is shocked and angry at hearing his plans. She is furious with him for organising an *emprise* without her consent: "Avez-vous levé emprise et deppartie ça et la sans mon sceu et sans congié? Jamais, tant que je vive, de bon coeur ne vous ameray!"[129] On the other hand, the king himself is against the project, telling him in a reproachful tone:

> Saintré, qui vous a esmeu de ceste entreprinse fere sans mon congié? Ou sont les seellez des promesses de Fortune, qui tant a esté pour vous, que elle ne vous puist revocquier? Et d'autre part ne creingniez vous pas la ire de Nostre Seigneur qui nous deffend telles choses vaines? Et se Il vous en a par tant de foiz enrichy, de tant lui en estes vous plus atenu, et vous devez garder de plus le offendre, se vous estes bon crestien! Ores que ceste chose est sy publiee que ne se puet retourner, pour ceste foiz je m'en contente, vous deffendant que n'y retournez plus.[130]

The king tends to accuse Saintré of being in search of vain glory, but interestingly nobody had mentioned this aspect as long as these undertakings were made under the protection of Belles Cousines. Was it because she knew the politics of the court and she always prepared for any of Saintré's departures in advance? In any case, Saintré's action was regarded as a negative behavior, and even became a negative example in spite of his previous positive image: "C'est a tous chose mal faitte de entreprendre, et priz, de executer sans licence de son seigneur ou de cellui qui a sa charge. Et qui vouldroit regarder a la rigeur, quelque bien qu'il en veinsist, il en devroit bien estre pugny!"[131]

[128] Ibid., 396. "Alas, poor that thou art in sense, in mind, and in all good qualities! Never hast thou undertaken any deed of arms save at the bidding of thy most sweet and noble goddess! Now verily, I do conclude and resolve that for love of her I will do some deed of mine own accord."

[129] Ibid., 406. "What, have you taken upon you Emprises and journeys, hither and thither, without my knowledge or my leave?"

[130] Ibid., 414. "Saintré, who hath persuaded you to take upon you this Emprise without my leave? Hath Fortune sealed you her promise that because she hath so long been for you, she cannot forsake you? Fear you not, moreover, the wrath of Our Lord, who forbiddeth us such vanities? And if He hath so oft given you advancement thereby, you are so much the more beholden to Him, and ought to take heed not to offend Him more, if you are a good Christian! Yet, sith this thing hath so been made public that there is no turning back, for this once I am willing; but I forbid you ever again to do it. "

[131] Ibid., 412. "Tis ill done of any man to undertake a thing, and worse to perform it, without leave of his lord or of of him that hath authority over him. And strictly considering, whatsoever good might come of it, he ought to be well punished."

In a study dedicated to the relationship between lay writer and royal authorities in late medieval France, Joël Blanchard and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler describe the regulations concerning tournaments, jousts, *pas d'armes* and other chivalric activities. The chivalric adventure in the fifteenth century was no longer a virgin land which surrounded and challenged the knight. It became more and more predictable and it needed the consent of the authorities and this is what led to the emergence of conflicts between knighthood and kingship.[132]

This is the case described by Antoine de la Sale here, with the difference that he adds some ethical concerns to this conflict. Saintré was already a knight, respected and admired by everyone. His undertakings were motivated up to the moment he achieved the status of knight. Afterwards, his actions were no longer acts of valor, but acts of vanity. The second part of the romance, the *fabliau* part, is built around this matter. The nicely arranged puzzle of chivalry from the first half of the romance is torn to pieces in the second half. The abbot, without any restraint, speaks about the futility of knighthood and generally, the second part of the book represents a critique of the social order and its internal hierarchies. Thus, one important contribution of Antoine de la Sale consists of his ability not only to describe and idealize, but also to criticize.

The reader can see Saintré leaving for his *emprise*, after obtaining permission to do so, with difficulty, and BelleS Cousines, more pale each day, attracts the Queen's attention:

> La royne, qui la voist ainssy morne, palle et penssive, plusieurs fois lui a demandé que elle avoit...Belles Cousines, dittes nous que vous avez et ou cest

[132] See Joël Blanchard and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, *Écriture et pouvoir à l'aube des temps modernes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), 90. “Les auteurs de chroniques de faits et gestes se plaisent à mettre en scène ces conflits d'intérêt entre royauté et chevalerie. L'aventure chevaleresque n'est plus cette terre vierge qui entoure et provoque le héros. Elle devient de plus en plus prévisibles, et elle doit même être autorisée par le pouvoir. Les valeurs sont bien lisibles, mais le monde qui les recèle est un monde de l'interdit juridique et social.”

> mal vous tient, et, se nous vous y povons aidier, par Dieu, Belle Cousine, vous devez estre certaine que de tresbon coeur nous y emploierons.[133]

The queen, worried, sends for the doctor and he wisely speaks to Belles Cousines: "Madame, au regard de vostre corps, je le troeuve tresbien disposé, maiz vostre cuer ne l'est pas, qui a en soy aucune grant dolleur secrete, que, se pourveu n'y est, et briefvement, vous tumberez en aucun grant langueur, tresforte d'en garir."[134] Belles Cousines continues to believe that she can buy health and implicitly her happiness with money, and, ironically, she succeeds:

> Maistre Hues, lasse moy! Je n'ay doulleur en mon coeur que une, en laquelle de vostre parolle seulement vous me pourriez bien aider, et par ma foy, se ainssy vous plaisoit, je vous en seroie a tousjours mais bien atenue, et oultre ce, je vous donrroye ung mantel de la plus fine escarlatte qui se porra trouver.[135]

She manages to arrange with the doctor her departure from the court to the countryside for a period of two to three months until her health recovers entirely. The spectacle played at the court continues in the countryside: Belle Cousines is no longer the director of the show, but she is an actress in the play of the abbot. As for the abbot, he is the novel addition to the range of the characters in the book, Antoine de la Sale introducing him magnificently in just a few lines:

> De l'aaige de .xxv. ans estoit, grant de corps, fort et deslivre; luittier, saillir, geter barre, pierre et a la paulme jouer, ne trouvoit moisne, chevalier, escuier ne bourgoiz, quant estoit en son privé, qui avensist a lui. Que vous diroye? En toutes joyeusettez se emploioit, adfin qu'il ne fust trouvé oyseux; et d'aultre part estoit larges et liberal de tous ses biens, dont estoit moult amé et prisié des compagnons.[136]

[133] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 418. "The Queen, beholding her thus mournful, pale, and pensive, many times asked of her what ailed her... but in good earnest, Fair Cousin, tell Us what aileth you and where is the seat of this malady; and if We are able to aid you, perdy, Fair Cousin, you may be assured that We shall thereto right willingly apply Ourselves."

[134] Ibid., 418. "Madame, as for your body, I find it very well disposed; but your heart is not, for it hath within it some great secret dolour, which if it be not healed and that speedily, you will fall into some grievous decline, most hard to cure."

[135] Ibid., 420. "Woe is mine, Master Hugh, I have no pain in mine heart save one, wherein you can indeed help me, but only with words; and on mine oath, if you were pleased so to do, I should be evermore beholden to you; and moreover I would give you a good cloak of the finest Scarlet that is to be found."

[136] "...was of the age of five-and-twenty years, stout of body, strong and lusty; at wrestling, leaping, tossing the bar or the weight, or playing at tennis, in his leisure time, there was neither monk, knight, squire nor townsman that could match him. What more shall I tell you? Lest he be thought idle, he employed his time in

Friendly as the tone which describes the abbot may seem, one feels the irony and the critique behind the lines. Once more the importance of money is brought into the discussion. If in the advancement of Saintré on the social scale money played a role, in the case of the abbot, the narrator makes the reader aware that the abbot is an abbot as a direct consequence of his father's money and nothing more: "Damps Abbés, qui pour lors estoit, fust ja filz d'un tresriche bourgoiz de la ville, qui par dons et par priers de seigneurs, aussy des amis de court de Romme, donna tant que son filz en fust abbez."[137] The lack of any trace of piety from the abbot may be reasonably excused. The ambivalent attitude of the narrator reappears here: Does he sympathize with the abbot or not? In any case, he does not leave out any detail which could complete the picture: the abbot is loved by the people around him, and his generosity contributes to this. The entire fictional world seems to move around money, as Michel Zink says "l'argent appelle l'argent"[138] (money attracts money) in this romance.

What follows concerning the evolution of the plot confirms, but also surpasses any expectations in the process of reading. On one hand, the reader is prepared for such an evolution (involution?) of the characters; he witnesses their becoming, but the extent to which Antoine de la Sale turns this world in a huge comedy, a bitter one, is somewhat unpredictable. The abbot, finding out that Belles Cousines will come to Mass, prepared the abbey as for the coming of a high prelate. He exhibits the relics to meet the spiritual needs of his guest, but he does not neglect the worldly ones: salmon, lampreys ordered for this special occasion. Little by little Belles Cousines forgets her suffering and the abbot helps her. He is always a step ahead in fulfilling her wishes. The result?

all manner of gaiety; and for the rest, he was free and bounteous of all his goods, wherefore he was well loved and esteemed of all good fellows."

[137] Ibid., 424. "The Lord Abbot of that time was son to a rich burgess of the city, who by gifts and petitionsunto lords, and besides by friends at the Court of Rome, contrived that his son was made Abbot."
[138] Michel Zink, *La littérature française du Moyen Age*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 338.

> ...leurs yeulx, archiers des cuers, peu a peu se commencerent l'un cuer a l'autre traire, et tellement que les piez, couvers de la treslarge touaille jusques a terre, s'encommencerent de peu a peu l'un a l'autre touchier, et puis l'un sur l'autre marchier. Alors ce tresenfflamé dart d'amours fiert le cuer de l'un, et puis de l'autre, tellement qu'ilz ont perdu le mengier.[139]

Belles Cousines is the first to abdicate moral principles. To ask how did the little Saintré disappear from her heart is probably less important than to ask what happened to the endless lessons, to the beautiful and idealistic principles served to Saintré? Were those unidirectional principles, valid only for Saintré? Whatever the answer may be Belles Cousines is far from showing any trace of regret or remorse. She does not seem to be aware of any inconsistency between her teachings and her behavior. For her, the life she lived at the court seems never to have existed. The queen is the one who reminds her about it, writing her letters and asking her to return. Belles Cousines almost cuts any connections with the court. Any attempt to discuss her manners would be superfluous. The messenger of the court, who used to be a friend of hers, is sent back as quickly as possible, with a banal "Adieu, maître Julien!" She promises the abbot not to leave him as long she is not forced to do so: "Mon seul ami, tant que je porray fuir a laissier vostre tresdesiree compagnie, soyez certain que jamais ne vous abandonneray"[140] and she even offers him a ring: "Mon cuer, ma seulle pensee et mon vray desir, pou mon tout seul ami je vous espouse huy de cest anel."[141] Not only that she uses the same words of love for the abbot as she did for Saintré, but once again she is the one who chooses the man and not the other way round. Saintré was too young and too innocent: "Madame, j'aroye aussi chier morir que de moy offrir et estre reffusé, et puis estre mocquié et farsé..."[142] Madame is

[139]Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 432. "Thei eyes, the heart's archers, little by little began to shoot at one heart and at the other; until their feet, which were covered with the long table-cloth down to the ground, began little by little to touch one another, and then to tread one upon the other. Then pierced the fiery arrow of love through the heart of one and then of the other, so that they lost all lust for eating."

[140] Ibid., 456. "Mine only Love, so long as I am able to abide in your most beloved company, be sure that never shall I forsake you."

[141] Ibid., 442. "My Heart, my one Thought, and my true Desire, with this ring I wed you this day for my only lover."

[142] Ibid., 88. "Madam, I had as lief die as proffer me and be refused, and then be a mock and a jape of, "

not afraid of being mocked and she commits the same mistake twice. She goes from one compromise to another and from bad to worse. As for her retinue of ladies, after praising the abbot's courtly manners (ironically, he possesses courtly manners) and his "belle personne"[143], they find nothing better to say than: "Madame, nul ne doit reffuser le bien, quant d'aventure il luy vient."[144]

Just like in the first part of the romance, a spectacle is played, with each actor wearing his or her own mask. Belles Cousines is the pious lady and she is helped in her role – of course -- by clothes and adornments:

> Madame qui, pour reprendre sa coulleur que des penitances avoit perdue, demoura aucunement, ses dames et damoiselles et tous ses gens qui pour oïr la messe attendoient, tant que le relloige es .xj. heures sonna. Lors Madame appella Jehannette et de son plus simple attour se attourna; et, pour mieulx couvrir sa face, fist mettre son grant quevrechief, et en tel estat, simple et coye, de sa chambrette saillist, les yeulx baissiez, va a la messe en grant devocion.[145]

In front of the other ladies she keeps the same attitude as at court when she was trying to hide her relationship with Saintré, manifesting the same need to preserve a certain image in the eyes of the others:

> Et, au deppartir de la chambrette secrete, damps Abbés donna a Madame une piece de tresfin velloux poir et plain, que puis secretement elle envoia querir. Et lors Madame en la grant chambre de parement, ou tous estoient, revient; et quant ses femmes furent venues, Madame, comme trescouroucee, les tenssa: «Et dont venez vous? Je vous avoye dit et quidoie que me sievissiez; mais vous amez mieulz le feu et bonnes totees que moy.»[146]

[143] Ibid., 436.
[144] Ibid., 440. "Madam, none ought to refuse good things when fortune bringeth them."
[145] Ibid., 444. "My Lady tarried a space to get again her color which she had lost in the fervour of her penitence: her gentlewomen and damosels, and all her household, that were awaiting to hear Mass, abode there until the clock struck eleven. Then My Lady called Jennet, and was arrayed in her plainest gown; and the better to hide her face, put on her biggest kerchief; and in this array, simply and quietly, went forth from the little chamber with eyes cast down, and so to Mass very devoutly."
[146] Ibid., 444 "And at their coming forth from a certain secret chamber, the Lord Abbot gave unto My Lady a piece of fine velvet, plaain black, which she afterward sent for secretly. Then returned My Lady again into the great guest chamber, where they all were; and when her gentlewomen drew nigh, she chid them as though she were exceeding angry: «Whence come ya? I bade you follow me and weened ye had so done; but ye love the fire and the good sops in wine better than ye do me!»"

The act of dissembling is less accentted in the case of the abbot. In his jovial manner, he rejects Belles Cousines's appreciations concerning his competence and dignity, answering her that it is only the cross that he wears which makes her belief this: "Il n'en est cy nul plus digne ne sy souffissant que vous. A! Madame, ce est doncques a cause de la croche, car du surplus je suis le plus ignorant de tous."[147]

The new love story between the abbot and Belles Cousines lasted untroubled for a time. They divided their time between worldly entertainments and Petronian feasts.[148] Saintré returns victorious from his *emprise* and leaves the court again, this time to meet his lady. He is the constant character in the fictional world. Loyal and naive, he is sure that Belles Cousines still suffers from his departure: "Quant le seigneur de Saintré enttend que elle fust ainssi mallade, penssa aux choses que elle lui avoit dit: c'est que jamaiz son coeur n'auroit joye, jusques il seroit revenus."[149] To meet her, he prepares himself intensively: "jour et nuit ne cessa de faire habillier lui, ses gens et ses chevaulz, pour plus amoureusement complaire a celle qui tout son coeur avoit."[150] Glamour accompanies every gesture and represents another constant feature in this fictional world. It creates identities, it gives rise to attitudes and, generally, glamour shapes this world. Saintré's costume recalls baroque splendor *avant la lettre*: "Ouis se mist en point d'un pourpoint de cramoisy brochié de fin or, d'un mantel de velloux figuré, brochié d'or sur or, de chausses d'escarllate, brodees de tresgrosses et fines perles aux coulleurs et devise de Madame, une barrette de tresfine escarlatte."[151]

[147] Ibid., 442. "There is none here wothier than you, nor so competent. – Ah, Madam, 'tis then by reason of my crozier; for else am I the most ignorant of all."
[148] For an analysis of the ostentatious meals see Monique Santucci, "Nourittures et symboles dans le *Banquet du Faisan* et dans *Jehan de Saintré*" in *Manger et boire au Moyen Age*, 1 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984), 429-440.
[149] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan*, 446. "When the Seigneur de Saintré heard how she was thus sick, he thought on that she had said unto him, that is, that never would her heart have any solace until he should return."
[150] Ibid., 468. "He rested not day or night from arraying himself, his men, and his horses, the more amorously to please her that was mistress of all his heart."
[151] Ibid., 468. "Then put he on a doublet of crimson broidered with fine gold, a cloak of figured velvet, broidered with gold upon gold, scarlet hose broidered with passing fine large pearls and with My Lady's colors and badge, and a cap of fine scarlet."

Once removed from the court and from the knightly wanderings to the abbey, the action of the book acquires grotesque accents. There is no place for perfect teachings, for perfect knightly deeds of arms carried on strictly by rules or other idealizations. The nicely aestheticized picture of courtly life dissipates and its glamor starts to cleave under the weight of its own artificiality. The masks fall: the abbot is not an abbot, but a caricature, Belles Cousines is a lady, but not a courtly one, and Saintré may be a knight but still far from fulfilling the illusory image projected at the beginning. As for the narrator, he enjoys peace by peace the end he brings to his characters.

Saintré's arrival at the abbey does not make anyone happy. The idea of an illicit love between Belles Cousines and the abbot appears explicitly in abbot's fear at the arrival of Saintré: "Quant Damps Abbés, qui per a per de Madame estoit, visit ces chevaulz acourir, qui que fust sceur ne fut pas lui! Car il penssa que fussent aucuns parens de Madame, qui fussent advisez de leurs amours, et lui vensissent son abit fourrer."[152] Belles Cousines wishes him a "tresmal venu," which Saintré does not hear and he does not hear or understand Madame for quite a long time. The evolution of events moves from ironic to hilarious tones. Asked about Belles Cousines's behavior, Saintré answers, although still innocent of what was happening in the abbey that "Madame…fait comme dame de tout bien et tout honneur, et qui toujours ama sainte Esglise."[153]

The scene of the dinner is emblematic in the economy of significations of the book. Saintré is trapped in the abbot's discourse and Belles Cousines's encouraging attitude towards the abbot. The mocking tone and the radical position of the abbot condemn the very existence of any chivalric reality: "Monseigneur de Saintré, dist damps Abbées, vous ne sçavez: j'ay plusieurs foiz mise ma penssee se il peut estre que, entre vous, nobles hommes, chevaliers et

escuiers, qui faittes sy souvent armes, et quant trestous reviennent, ilz dient qu'ilz ont gaignié."[154] The abbot's attack continues with the vulgarization of the relationship between a lady and her knight and although Belles Cousines is also the target of this attack she does not contradict the abbot. She enjoys the game played by the abbot and in mutual understanding with him she enjoys seeing Saintré humiliated. Belles Cousines used to play with Saintré's innocence at the court in front of the other ladies, but it was naive play. This time she forgets that Saintré is no longer a child of thirteen years and that, actually, the entire ideology that the abbot is criticizing is exactly what she tried to inculcate in Saintré's behavior for several years. By answering "Quant a nous, nous sommes de l'oppinion de l'Abbé,"[155] Belles Cousines denies her advices and ultimately, she denies herself.

The dimensions of this spectacle reach unthinkable limits: the abbot fights against Saintré and wins the battle. The narrator rejoices in recording the event and finds the most expressive words for it:

> Damps Abbés et le seigneur de Saintré l'un de l'aultre se prinrent et tournerent ung tour ou deux. Lors damps Abbés estent sa jambe, et par dedens la lze a celle de Saintré, puis, tout a cop, se deslye, et par dehors le trousse tellement que les piez du seigneur de Saintré furent assez plus haultz que ne fust la teste...[156]

Both Saintré and the abbot are nothing but puppets in the hands of Belles Cousines. She is the one who makes them fight. In this way the abbot would prove his affection for her: "Feriez? dist tantost Madame, seriez vous bien sy hardis?"[157] while Saintré, refusing to fight in an unfair

[152] Ibid., 470. "When the Lord Abbot, who rode at My Lady's side, saw those horses hasting thitherward, if any man felt assured, 'twas not he; for he weened it had been some kinsmen of My Lady, that were avised of their amours, and were come to dust his jacket for him."
[153] Ibid., 474. "My Lady doeth like a lady of honor and dignity, that hath ever loved holy Holy Church."
[154] Ibid., 478. "I have many times marvelled how it cometh about that of you noble knights and squires, who so oft go forth to joust, all when they return again do say that they have won."
[155] Ibid., 480. "For my part, I am of the Abbot's opinion."
[156] Ibid., 486. "The Lord Abbot and Saintré laid hold one upon the other and made a turn or two. Then the Lord Abbot put forth his leg and crooked it within Saintré's and anon brake loose from him all suddenly, and seized and lifted him up in such fashion that the Seigneur de Saintré's feet were some-deal higher than his head."
[157] Ibid., 482. "Would you so? Quoth My Lady straightway, have you such hardihood?"

contest, has to fight as an answer to Belles Cousines's malicious words: “Hé! Seigneur de Saintré, vous qui estes sy vaillant et avez fait, comme on dist, tant de belles armes, ne oserez vous luittier a l'Abbé?”[158] Belles Cousines is thus the promoter, the judge, and the spectator of this show. She has the power and she makes use of it without scruples. The absurdity of the fight, which has the purpose of establishing who is more loyal between the two, is a *mise en abîme* of all the fights carried on by knights for the sake of fighting. The spectacle becomes grotesque in its unnatural character. At the end, Saintré, defeated, maintains a dignified air and praises the abbot's skills: “Hellas! Madame, et que fust grant dommaige, quant ung sy bel et sy puissant corps de homme comme monseigneur l'Abbé est ne a esté mis aux arms! Car je ne congnoiz deux ne troiz, tant soyent puissans hommes, qu'il ne les eust bien mis a fin.”[159] In spite of the irony behind the lines, the falsity of these words increases the decadent atmosphere of the passage. The letter arriving from the ecclesiastical authorities, in which the abbot is told that he imperils his position by fighting against such a renowned knight as Saintré, contributes to this: “vous estes avancié et ingeré de le avoir requis a luitte, et plusieurs fois abbatu et vous en mocquié...”[160] Interestingly, the letter does not mention the affair between the abbot and Belles Cousines and the emphasis is on how the abbot should retrieve Saintré's goodwill. Thus, the abbot flaunts his fortune in front of Saintré in the already known attempt of any character to buy anything with money: “...et sy ay .iij^{m}. Escus, comme le pappe ou comme le

[158] Ibid., 482. “What, Messire de Saintré, you that are so valiant and have so men say, achieved so many fair feasts of arms, dare you not wrestle with the Abbot?”
[159] Ibid., 490. “Marry, Lady, 'tis great pity that so goodly and puissant a body as My Lord Abbot's hath never been trained to arms; for I wot not of any two nor three, howsoever puissant, that he would not have overthrown.”
[160] Ibid., 492. “You made bold to defy him to a wrestling-bout, and have divers times overthrown him and made mock of him.”

roy, et non plus, sy vous requier, prie et supplie tant que je puis, que l'un, les deux ou les trois de mes offres vous prenez en gré, et que je demeure bien de vous et me pardonnez."[161]

"Vous ne serez pas homme, se vous ne vous en vengiez!"[162] were the words of one of Saintré's people after watching the humiliating show to which Saintré was subjected. And, indeed, Saintré takes his revange. He designs the same spectacle, only that this time, the roles are inverted. He invites Belles Cousines and the abbot to have lunch with him. The abbot is conquered by the beauty of a knight's costume, and, following little by little Saintré's suggestions, he puts the costume on: "Armé? Dist damps Abbés, conques je ne fus armé. Hé! Dieux, dist le seigneur de Saintré, que ce seroit belle chose que de vous veoir armé!"[163] The artificiality occurs once again in this scene: Saintré wants to fight with an equal combatant, but the costume does not make the abbot a knight. More than that, Saintré proves to be a knight just as much the abbot proves to be an abbot. Saintré looses his temper and is on the point of harming Belles Cousines:

> Ores, faulce et desloyalle, telle, telle et telle que vous estes! Je vous ay sy tresloyalment servie que oncques serviteur de dame ne porroit mieulx; et ores pour ung ribault moisne, sy faulcement et malvaisement, vous estes deshonnestee et me avez abandonné! Et a celle fin qu'il vous en souviengne, et a l'exemple de tous aultres...
> Lors la prend par le touppet de son atour, haulce la pasme pour lui donner une coupple de soufflez, mais a cop se retint, ayant memoire des grans biens que ly avoit faiz...[164]

Ironically, this may be an evidence of *courtly* violence. Did Saintré need to organize another *knightly* exercise to prove his physical strength? He was not knight enough and he needed to

[161] Ibid., 494. "And I have three thousands crowns as good as the Pope or the King, and no more. Now I pray, beseech, and entreat of you, as earnestly as may be, that you be pleased to accept my offerings, one, two, and three, and pardon me, and let me abide in your good grace."
[162] Ibid., 490. "You will not be a man, if you take no vengeance for this."
[163] Ibid., 504. "Armour! said the Lord Abbot; nay, I never bore armour. Why, perdy! said Saintré, how fair a thing it were to see you armed!"
[164] Ibid., 508. "Now false, faithless, and such, and such, and such, that you are! I have served you as loyally as ever any Lady was served; and now for the sake of a ribald monk, thus falsely and traitorously, you have forsaken me! And to the end that you may remember this, and as an ensample to all others...With that, he took took her by the top of her wimple, and lifted up his hand for to have dealt her a box or two on the ears; but all at once forbore, remembering what great favors she had shewn him aforetime..."

prove his prowess in front of an abbot? Or was this a way to take revenge? Who won the battle after all? A superficial answer would say that it was Saintré, but this is valid only at first sight.

The end of the romance revives the atmosphere of Arthurian romances: knights return from their wanderings and tell the story of their undertakings. Saintré returns to court and claims that he wants to recount a real story. The story is not his, but he knows it from a letter (a common literary convention): "Seez vous toutes cy, et je vous compteray une vraie nouvelle et merveilleuse ystoire, que l'en m'a de bien loings escript."[165] After astonishing the audience with his story, Saintré asks for opinions. The ladies show their disapproval of the behavior shown by the heroine of the story and even give sentences. Belles Cousines is less harsh in her judgment, but Saintré will be the last and ultimate judge of the story he has told:

> -Voires? Madame, dist le seigneur de Saintré, et n'y savez vous aultre chose, fors que pour avoir de[ch]ainte sa tresfaulce dame de sa bleue [ch]ainture et emportee comme elle tresindigne de telle colleur porter, et dittes que pour ce il fust doncques tresmal gracieux?
> Lors il tira de sa manche la [ch]ainture toute d'or ferree, en lui disant:
> «Madame, je ne vueil plus estre ce tresmal gracieux.»[166]

[165] Ibid., 520. "Sit ye all here, and I will tell you a true tale and a marvellous history, which one hath writ unto me from afar."

[166] Ibid., 526. "Forsooth, Madame! Said Saintré; have you naught else to say, save that for having ungirded that that false Lady of her blue girdle, and borne it away by reason that she was not worthy to wear such a color, you say that he was therefore passing discourteous? Then drew he from his sleeve the girdle all tipped Ibid., 526. "Forsooth, Madame! Said Saintré; have you naught else to say, save that for having ungirded that that false Lady of her blue girdle, and borne it away by reason that she was not worthy to wear such a color, you say that he was therefore passing discourteous? Then drew he from his sleeve the girdle with gold, saying unto her: Madam, I would not be so discourteous."

CONCLUSION

Jehan de Saintré – Parody, Critique, and Moral Concept

Two-thirds of the romance dedicated to Saintré's education would justify the labeling of this work as an instructive treatise which opened the path towards a successful chivalric career. Jane Taylor, Michelle-Noel Magallanez, and Michelle Szkilnik plead for this interpretation. The tombstone at the end of the story seems to support their hypothesis, but in the fictitious world in which Antoine de la Sale casts so many doubts on his characters, in which the equilibrium is so frail, offering a univocal interpretation is as deceiving as the world of the book.

Antoine de la Sale did not like his characters. He punishes them one at a time and he revolts against the paradigms of the past by inverting them. The abbot and Belles Cousines do not even have a proper name and although it may seem that Saintré is the only one saved, he, the protagonist of the story, is the most often exposed to ridicule. In his story De la Sale stages a highly ornate *theatrum mundi*. Attire, adornments, expensive gifts, and money shape the politics of this world. At the same time this excessive glamor leads to questions about the internal values of this world. Once the garments are put on, the person who wears them acquires a new identity in the eyes of the others, but it does not necessarily bring a change in the internal structure of the wearer. The words of the abbot are emblematic in this sense: the cross may make the others think he is an abbot, but this does not make him an abbot in the real sense of the word.

My analysis sought to point out these discrepancies on the explicit and implicit levels of the discourse. None of the characters managed to identify completely with the image they promoted and in the end all the masks fall down, emphasizing once again the idea of artificiality and spectacle. Saintré himself contradicts the image of ideal knight in his last act:

his aggressiveness towards Belles Cousines and the fight with the abbot. The time of Lancelot and Tristan is long-past and Antoine de la Sale knows it. Jean Flori acknowledges the decline of chivalry and its submersion into a mythical past.[167] Still, Antoine de la Sale's characters struggle under the weight of the past's models, covering their imperfection in silk and damask.

In the the world created by Antoine de la Sale, love in its courtly garments seems to be rather an anachronistic phenomenon. What is left from it is nothing but an inefficient crust. The dream of love and that of the lover are completely destroyed. Belles Cousines, in spite of her efforts to create a perfect relationship with Saintré, fails lamentably in the abbot's arms, this time without any ideology. The beautiful and wise advices from the beginning were not worth anything at the end.

Saintré is said to have become a famous knight, but he did not succeed in protecting the chivalric ideology. He is a knight brought up with money. His actions are first directed by what he believes to be the love for his lady, but he soon realizes that this love does not exist. He had dedicated his undertakings to a fabricated ideal and what is left for him now is the search for vainglory. He might have left the abbot bleeding on the floor, but he did not have an appropriate answer for the abbot's accusations. The futility of his fight with the abbot is a slap in the face for chivalry, as it is the entire romance. Ironically, the words of the abbot turn against Antoine de la Sale himself. He creates another victorious knight who returns home and declares: "I won!"

[167] Jean flori, *Chevaliers et cvalerie au Moyen Age*. Paris: Hachette, 1998, 268. "Limage d'un âge d'or de la chevalerie, nous l'avons vue, s'élabore déjà au cours du XII^{e} siècle et repouse plus tôt, dans un passé mythique, la réalité de cette cevalerie que l'on estime déjà perdue."

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