

Female Intercession and the Shaping
of Male Heroism in the *Roman d'Enéas*
and *Le chevalier au lion*

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FOR SOME TIME NOW, feminist literary scholarship has demonstrated how the leading female figures of medieval French romance are often constructed to emphasize the heroism of the male protagonist.¹ While romance challenges the model of male homosociality of the *chanson de geste* by expanding the discourses of heterosexual desire and by recognizing female desire, in particular, women gain prominence in this narrative form because femininity becomes the “metaphor” which male authors newly use to develop male subjectivity.² As Simon Gaunt writes, “romance does not ‘discover’ women, or femininity, or the individual, it constructs models of them.”³

In the anonymous *Roman d'Enéas* and Chrétien de Troyes's *Le chevalier au lion*, the female protagonists Dido and Laudine, respectively, become passive objects upon which male authors effectively define the valor and prowess of male figures. Both of these female figures possess the authority and territory to rule, and yet they transform into helpless victims of love, rendered incapable of wielding rational power. Their violent displays of grief and passion, furthermore, inscribe them within a traditional locus of feminine weakness and give male characters the reason and opportunity to develop into heroes.

If Dido and Laudine are meant to demonstrate their own vulnerability so as to emphasize, by contrast, male ability, it would seem contradictory that these women are accompanied by female counselors whose verbal influence and sense of control over the destiny of the narrative appear not only to surpass the strengths of the ladies they advise but also to counter the idea that women are merely players in developing a “new model of masculine identity.”⁴ Lunete, for one, calls Yvain, the hero of *Le chevalier au lion*, her friend (“mon ami”) and even exhibits

certain unfeminine characteristics, challenging the “strong sense of alterity” which romance often uses to construct masculinity in relation to femininity.⁵ Indeed, these female intercessors ostensibly corroborate a more empowering reading of female romance figures, a view that forbids reducing women to “a cipher, a sign standing for a hidden male-male relationship” and that undermines the conclusion that medieval representations of femininity are the product of male fantasy, suggesting instead that romance can be read, as E. Jane Burns writes, for “something other than the dominant discourse that medieval heroines’ bodies and voices were designed to convey.”⁶ And yet, though both Lunete and Anna, Dido’s advisor, wield influence in a way that distinguishes them from the helpless “heroines” of romance, closer examination suggests that they play a role in constructing instances of female weakness and victimization and, in fact, use their verbal counsel to do so. The following pages will argue that the powerful voices and intercession of the female counselors in both the *Roman d’Enéas* and *Le chevalier au lion* reveal a potential to resist, subvert, or deconstruct the patriarchal systems that dominate these romances, but that their uses of authority enfeeble women and legitimize the male heroism that triumphs by the end of the narrative. First, I will give brief attention to the influence of Anna, who is refigured from Virgil’s text, to examine how her misguided advice to Dido reinforces the patriarchal imagination of the twelfth-century aristocracy. Second, and in greater detail, I will trace the more complicated influence of Lunete, through whom Chrétien possibly rewrites the *Roman d’Enéas*’s Anna. Lunete, who moves from wily servant clerk to female victim to recuperative intercessor, occupies an essential role in the construction of the hero’s journey. As I will show, the recurring manifestations of Lunete’s authority throughout Chrétien’s narrative reflect the increased mobility and dynamism of women in medieval romance, but also the way in which even intercessory women are constructed to reinforce the normative gender ideology of twelfth-century romance and are subsumed within the masculinist programs of the genre.

The *Roman d’Enéas*, a twelfth-century adaptation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* in the tradition of the French *romans antiques*, develops episodes of female subjectivity to mold a more valiant, medievalized Aeneas, an epic hero whose legitimate, exogamous marriage to the proper woman

facilitates his inheritance of a land upon which imperial foundation can occur. Marriage to Lavine, as various scholars have shown, represents a commercial and social transaction in which the woman is a vehicle of exchange, and the important sequence of Lavine and Enéas falling in love is added not simply to satisfy courtly literary conventions and readerly expectations. Enéas's westward movement is inspired by erotic prophecy, and his legal binding to Lavine through an arrangement with her father, Latinus, gives him the keys to his political destiny. As Marilyn Desmond states, historically "the institution of marriage allowed each generation to renegotiate kinship networks and land," and "aristocratic women . . . were the conduit by which the power relationships between noble men . . . were formed and maintained."⁷ Within this context, Lavine becomes the proper "conduit" through which Enéas can become the rightful foundational hero. This ideology of gender is implicit in the framework of feudal thought that transforms the classical *Aeneid* into a narrative that envisions wives as integral to the construction of empire.

The anonymous French poet heightens the drama of the Dido scene, then, to prove that the Carthaginian queen is an inadequate match for Enéas, preventing the hero's journey to a future Rome and thus the Virgilian philosophy of history as *translatio imperii*. By the time Enéas reaches the shores of Carthage, Dido has proved her autonomy and her successful reign over a commercially sophisticated empire *without* the help of a husband. She is an agent of desire and choice rather than the object of feudal exchange, and thus she does not, as Desmond points out, "circulate among men."⁸ Dido's ability to rule even surpasses that of male leaders: "Dame Dydo tint le pays, / miex nel traitast cuenz ne marcis; / onc ne fu mais par une femme / miex maintenu honnor ne regne." (264-67; Lady Dido ruled the country better than any count or marquis would have ruled it. No domain or realm was ever thereafter better governed by a woman.)⁹ The origin story of Dido's power effaces male presence as well. The queen comes to rule not through inheritance, but through her wealth ("sa richece"), her cunning ("son savoir"), and her prowess ("sa prouesce") (290-92). When her husband Sichaeus is killed, Dido flees and soon acquires Carthage, a city protected by its strategic position on the coast of Libya. Her ruse to gain the land in Africa from a prince is an explicit subversion of male power. Even the frequent use of

engin in the description of Dido makes her a match to the male heroes of other Old French romances, such as Floire in *Floire et Blanchefleur*. The term, as Robert Hanning points out, creates an atmosphere of “a city constructed with rare and marvelous artfulness” as it here connotes “wit, readiness to take advantage of a situation, problem solving, manipulation of others, and shaping materials into unusual, effective forms . . . not by force but by the gifts of the mind.”¹⁰

But these qualities make Dido a difficult female figure for the *Roman d'Enéas*'s author to accommodate and one he must ultimately suppress. The elaboration of Dido's love-wound through the Ovidian language of desire and the image of the queen's swooning and collapse emphasize the violence of her passion and the vulnerability of her rulership. To begin with, while material treasures, natural wonders, and architectural complexity make Dido's Carthage spectacular, loyal baronial support for the queen is never established. The mortal poison that incites Dido's love for Enéas and pierces her heart (890; “il li tresperce la corraige”) quickly compromises the qualities representing stable command as the inflamed heart comes to dictate Dido's decision-making. The poet shows the dramatic change in the queen, who becomes ineffectual in displacing autonomous male control. Dido's violent passions and rather uncourtly aggressive pursuit of the hero, as first seen in Virgil's *Aeneid*, are contagious, dangerous, and transgressive of twelfth-century standards of female behavior, particularly because, as Desmond indicates, “the normative role for female characters is to be the object of desire, not to be the desiring agent.”¹¹

The *Roman d'Enéas* represents it as fortunate that Dido has Anna, a still rational and intercessory force, to call upon in her dire state of love-lorn suffering, focusing the scene of Anna's persuasion of Dido toward Enéas on the need to forget the dead. Anna, who has played no role in building the empire that defines Dido's independent success, ignores her sister's proven capacity to live without male support. Oblivious to Venus's magic and to the destructive potential of Dido's new love, Anna constructs reasoned arguments for Dido's pursuit of Enéas. But serving as both sister and *confidante*, Anna blurs matters that relate to the public and private spheres and makes an ill judgment that rationalizes Dido's betrayal of her own city. Even when Dido claims she must die rather than

love Enéas because of her oath to Sichaeus, Anna encourages her sister to resign herself to love, perhaps supporting Dido's passion, but also seeing marriage as a feudal obligation, a necessary contract of exchange that predicates the securing of property. Undermining Dido's established power, she argues that without Enéas the city of Carthage will be unprotected, newly subject to foreign threat:

Qui maintendra vostre cite,
Vostre terre, vostre herité?
Ne puet estre longues par femme
Bien maintenu honnor ne regne;
Poy fait on son commandement
Se n'a autre maintenantment.

(1432-37; Who will preserve your city, your land, your domain? A land or realm cannot well be long maintained by a woman. She accomplished little by her command if it has no other support.)

However, Anna's message that a woman cannot maintain a realm contradicts what the narrator has already shown us, that is, the elaborate mechanisms of defense in the city, the city's political cohesion, and the enormous wealth symbolizing its power. Indeed, at first, the narrator seems to suggest that Carthage might be a place where Enéas could settle. Dido's Carthage approaches the status of a future Rome. The goddess Juno had wished that Carthage would become head of the world: "Touz li mons fu a lui enclin / de son empire ne fust fin." (504-5; She wished it was head of the world, and that all the kingdoms in it would be completely subject to her.) Thus, while Dido has created a land impervious to foreign threat, Anna reimagines her as a female victim. Following Christopher Baswell's thesis in his chapter on "Men in the *Roman d'Enéas*," I take Anna's advice here as a reminder of the patriarchal power that this poem insists is essential to the creation of empire.¹² Anna's wish to unite the foreign Enéas with Dido suggests that she is part of the campaign for male imperial power.

Anna belittles Dido's previous political and social commitments when she brushes aside Dido's oath to Sichaeus and dismisses the dead as unimportant: "Jamais n'avrez nul bien du mort . . . ou mort n'a mais recovrement" (1424-26; Never will you have any good from the dead . . .

in the dead there is never any recovery). But Anna's dismissal of the dead as a means to look to the future places her in opposition to a key catalyst to Enéas's fulfillment of his political destiny and his forward movement: the deceased Anchises, whose prophecy, uncovered in the underworld in Book 4, guides his son to the true marriage and empire. Furthermore, Anna's undercutting of male baronial power leads Dido to face serious consequences; once the barons of Dido's court, who have previously been denied the queen's love, receive word of her transgression from Rumor, they quickly find the opportunity to make a statement about the tenuousness of the female oath and to renounce their allegiance. Their communal denunciation of Dido symbolizes the suppression of feminine power and subjectivity for scenes of male kinship that will continue for the rest of the romance, reinforcing the notion that models of gender in the genre itself are "grounded in compulsory heterosexuality and homosocial desire."¹³

Anna's advice, which substantiates the drive for male political control and territorial expansion, is inseparable from the tragic outcome of Dido's affair. Her intercession provokes Dido's movement toward death, which signifies the complete erasure of singular female power. Dido's epitaph proves Anna's failure to provide a normally competent ruler under a poisonous spell of madness with the proper wisdom that might resurrect her power:

. . . illuec gist
 Dydo qui por amor s'ocist;
 onques ne fu meilleur païene
 s'elle n'eüst amor soutaine,
 mais elle ama trop follement,
 savoirs ne li valut neant.

(2224-29; Here lies Dido, who killed herself for love. There would have been no better pagan if solitary love had not seized her: but she loved too madly and her wisdom availed her nothing.)

Thus, Anna's intercession, even as it appears as a consolation to the "heroine" in Book 4, helps to suppress female rational and ruling power, accommodating the demands of the patriarchal universe represented in the *Roman d'Enéas*. Similarly, the response to Venus's exercise of magic

for her son suggests that female will for desire is regarded as unacceptable. The mother's plan is undermined when Enéas follows the command of the male gods to depart for new adventures. Enéas's regret for his obedience to his mother's authority on the eve of the destruction of Troy symbolizes the general view of female authority as flawed in the narrative: "ma mere me fist retorner / . . . Ainz puis ne finay de mal traire, / puis ay eü moult de contraire." (1274-77; My mother caused me to withdraw . . . since then I have never ceased to suffer evil, and I have had many a great misfortune.) It prophesies the rejection of the wishes of Lavine's mother in the later scenes in which Enéas and Turnus battle for the hand of Lavine and the inheritance of Latium. Mothers, like other intercessory female figures, attempt to intercede in governmental futures, but maternal authority is always forfeited for paternal control of political destiny. The dialogue between Dido and Anna is expanded only to give evidence of the instability of female rule and the limitations of female homosocial bonds and to suggest the promise of male leadership. Indeed, Enéas's eventual arrival upon the shores of Latium signifies the opportunity to rewrite the Dido episode. The courtship between Lavine and Enéas on the surface celebrates mutual love, but their marriage serves to legitimate new political alliances. Their passion appears, as William Burgwinkle puts it, "less than scalding" and "biological urges [prove] more strategic than instinctive" in the context of feudal arrangements through marriage.¹⁴ Furthermore, in the negotiation of marriage between Lavine and Enéas, the paternal figure, Latinus, appears as a reminder that this is an exchange specifically between men. We see here that the narrator employs femininity in a new way but to Virgil's same ends, to establish, according to Baswell, "the Virgilian themes of paternal genealogy and divine destiny to justify the Trojans' imperial claims," while also appealing to particular concerns of the twelfth-century audience. This is why Lavine is "the one female character whose will, once acknowledged, must finally be integrated by the epic."¹⁵

Chrétien de Troyes's *Le chevalier au lion* ostensibly offers a very different model of female intercession. Lunete directs narrative events: she facilitates Yvain's encounter with the female object of desire, Laudine; she induces Laudine to take him as husband, and thus protector of her kingdom; and, after Yvain's process of betrayal and redemption, she

ensures the happy reconciliation of her two advisees. Lunete controls the actions of both men and women, and the scene of harmony with which the romance concludes seems to distinguish her from Anna, whose power over Dido advances the queen to a devastating end.

However, in spite of her profound ability to impel the characters to action, Lunete's success as mediatrix is defined by the extent to which she can facilitate Yvain's heroism, both as lover and as warrior. As courtly adviser, recuperative intercessor, but also, as I will show, abused and meek victim, Lunete becomes a narrative device of chivalric romance that aids in constructing Yvain's masculine identity at the expense of female autonomy.

Lunete legitimizes Yvain's rulership by exaggerating both Laudine's desirability, which is correlatively related to her vulnerability, and by emphasizing the impossibility of female independence. Problematizing the exercise of female authority as soon as she enters the narrative, Lunete forms a shadow world at a critical juncture in the hero's journey. Having just fatally wounded Esclados, Yvain has wound up entrapped in his enemy's court and, even worse, has failed to procure the evidence of his victory, the proof needed to avenge the shame of Calogrenant and to display Yvain's own chivalric honor. While Lunete is tied to the widowed queen incidentally victimized by Yvain's crime, she serves in this scene to promise Yvain's safety and to ensure the protection of his reputation.

Lunete's mission, while representative of the female ability to shape a man's destiny, requires the manipulation of her Lady and the eroticization of the female body for male pleasure. However, first, in the encounter between Lunete and Yvain, we learn that her orchestrating power over Yvain is qualified and even made illusive by the nature of her oath to him. Lunete wishes to repay Yvain out of gratitude for his earlier example of male courtesy in the face of her own inadequacy, an instance that conveniently occurs prior to and beyond the diegetic material of *Le chevalier au lion*. Lunete's inexperience in the ways of courtly conduct opens the door for Yvain to demonstrate, conversely, his own *courtoisie*. Lunete recalls the event:

Espoir ne fui mie si sage,
Si courtoise, ne de tel estre

Comme puchele devoit estre,
Mais onques chevalier n'i ot
Qui a moi degnast parler mot,
Fors vous tout seul, qui estes chi.
Mais vous, la vostre grant merchi,
M'i honerastes et servistes.¹⁶

(1004-9; Perhaps I did not show the courtesy, prudence, or fine behavior a maiden should; yet not a knight there bothered to say a word to me except you alone, who are now here. Out of your deep compassion you honored and served me, and for the honor you paid me, I shall reward you now.)

By predicating Lunete's actions on Yvain's earlier courtly behavior, the narrator suggests Lunete's tenuous sense of command over the male hero.

The invisibility ring Lunete offers Yvain prepares for her semioticization of Yvain's violence into a display of chivalric heroism. According to Eugene Vance, the ring symbolizes the way in which Lunete "disguise[s] and conceal[s] repugnant actions (Yvain's slaying of Esclados) so that their perpetrator may reappear in a new social context, clean, beautiful and useful as potential spouse and protector of Esclados's widow."¹⁷ The ring not only ensures the knight's safety from the foolish knights who search for Esclados's killer; it also allows Lunete to direct Yvain's gaze toward Laudine and thus to facilitate heterosexual desire, but, more importantly, the transaction of marriage between the widow and her husband's enemy that will help him to acquire property and a title. Lunete's meticulous construction of the scenes leading up to marriage weakens the value of *amor* between lovers and suggests the servant's overarching concern for Yvain's heroism in both the private, domestic, and public, militaristic, worlds. Yvain's desire for Laudine dissimulates the desire for proof of honor.

In a place of erotic distance, Lunete understands the rituals of courtly behavior that will help her achieve this reconciliation of sorts for Yvain. She facilitates what Sarah Kay sees as Yvain's perverse desire for the female victim in distress as the ring allows him to fixate his eyes on Laudine unseen.¹⁸ Indeed, Lunete informs Yvain that he will benefit by

following her command: “Se vous contenés a mon sens, / Si com vous devés contenir, / Grans bien vous en porra venir” (1314-16; If you follow the advice I offer you now, you will have much to gain). When Yvain first catches a glimpse of Laudine, having been positioned by the window under Lunete’s direction, she stands out as a figure of distress and grief in a setting of violence and death. The representation of Laudine as hysterical and tormented by sorrow recalls the image of a suicidal Dido: “Mais de duel faire estoit si fole / C’a poi qu’ele en s’ochioit” (1150-51; But she was so distraught with grief that she was, at that moment, on the verge of suicide). Laudine is compared to a madwoman, “aussi comme femme desvee,” tearing at her clothes and hair and fainting with every step she takes (1156). And yet, the intensity of her suffering only increases Yvain’s excitement:

Grant duel ai de ses biax chevax
 qui fin or passent, tant reluisent;
 d’ire m’esprennent et aguisent
 quant je li voi rompre et tranchier
 n’onques ne poent estanchier
 les larmes qui des iex li chiënt.
 Toutes ches choses me dessient.
 Atout che qu’ils sont plain de lermes,
 si che n’est ne fins ne termes,
 ne furent onques si bel oeil.

(1468-75; I lament so deeply her beautiful hair, which shines more brightly than pure gold. I am tormented with anger and rage to see her tear and pull it out. The tears falling from her eyes can never dry. This is not at all to my liking. Although her eyes flow with an endless stream of tears, yet there were never eyes so beautiful.)

Laudine’s physical violence against herself—by clutching her own throat, wringing her hands, and beating her palms (1416-17; “se prent par la gole, / Et tort ses poins, et bat ses paumes”)—is an even more dramatic source of the love that fills Yvain with desire and of the corresponding pain he experiences in not having her: “Mais de son vouloir se despoire, / Car il ne puet quidier ne croire / Que ses voleurs puisse avenir”

(1429-31; But he despaired of his desire, unable to think or believe that it might happen).

Lunete's rational control over the situation strongly contrasts to Laudine's madness, but her decisions, which prevent Laudine's knights from finding Yvain, also exacerbate the Lady's experience of suffering. This episode appears to reflect Lunete's indifference to Laudine's grief and confirms, rather, the narrative's interest in cultivating Yvain's position as male adventurer rather than exploring the dimensions of female subjectivity. The space Laudine occupies is distinguished from the central, operative spaces which Yvain actively traverses. Furthermore, Kay makes the important point that Laudine is actually not named in the majority of the manuscripts containing *Le chevalier au lion*, underscoring "the extent to which she is abstracted from social reality."¹⁹ Considering the significance of naming in Chrétien's romances, and especially in this particular romance, in which "mesire Yvains" (56) later, in his process of heroic redemption, identifies himself as the Knight of the Lion, the frequent absence of the name of the female protagonist lends meaning to the idea that Laudine's identity is static and irrelevant to the progress of the narrative.

While Laudine's female body is encoded with the language of desire and even fetishized, Lunete's speech act removes her body from the realm of desire, from being subjected to male fantasies of female corporeality. This helps Chrétien use Lunete to author Laudine's desirability as her vulnerability. Burns reads Old French romance through Hélène Cixous when she defines "female beauty" as "a product of male erotic fantasy."²⁰ Because her desirability derives largely from the extent to which her body "is eroticized by the male gaze," the illusion of female autonomous authority is exposed and shattered.²¹

After subjugating her Lady's authority by taking interpretive control of Yvain's vision, Lunete next uses verbal manipulation to convince Laudine to marry her husband's murderer, giving Yvain the proof of victory he needs upon returning to Arthur's court. Here, Lunete elicits the misogyny of the romance by echoing Anna in the *Enéas*, reminding Laudine that the widowed woman cannot adequately protect a kingdom and that the male chivalric ethos is essential to the preservation of a land. Laudine is not interested in finding a new husband, just as the vestiges

of Dido's rational and queenly self make her resistant to the idea of a second marriage; but Lunete, Laudine's adviser ("maistre") and attendant ("garde"), is not afraid to remind her of national interests:

Vostre tere qui deffendra
Quant li rois Artus y venra,
Qui doit venir l'autre semaine
Au perron et a la fontaine?

.....

Vous deüssiés or conseil prendre
De vostre fontaine deffendre,
Et vous ne fines de plourer!

(1623-27; Who will defend your land when King Arthur comes here, for he is supposed to arrive at the spring and the stone next week? . . . Now you should be planning the defense of your spring, and yet you don't stop weeping!)

Lunete exploits the profusion of affectivity to arouse Yvain's interest only to call it quickly into check to secure the kingdom's transfer to the hero. And the echoes of Anna continue: the Lady must choose the foreign knight of noble birth over the cowardly suitors already within the court validating exogamy; she must not kill herself with sorrow nor continue to mourn; and she must protect the kingdom by marrying the most able of knights. Of course, the very form of Chrétien's romance requires a result to the courtship between Laudine and Yvain that is different from Dido and Enéas's and that does not circumvent Laudine for another Lavine-type figure. While Lunete repeats several of Anna's arguments, she corrects Anna by examining the best interests of the *male* protagonist, Yvain, who must stay loyal to a male warrior ethic to maintain his masculine identity. And Lunete's validation of marriage as a *feudal* obligation becomes clear when Yvain repeats publicly what Lunete has told the Lady privately, that the arrangement is necessary because a woman cannot rule independently: "Fame ne set porter escu / Ne ne set de la lance ferir; / Molt amender et enchierir / Se puet de prendre .i. bon segnour." (2098-101; A woman is incapable of carrying a shield or striking with a lance. If our lady could marry a fine lord, she would improve and strengthen her position.)

Lunete's attempt to install Yvain as the master of Laudine and the court is successful and implicitly suppresses feminine power, making this section of the romance a necessary respite from the male adventure narrative. Marriage in the twelfth-century narrative, as we saw in the *Enéas*, often reflected a man's acquisition of the right to rule and territory. Historically, as Joseph J. Duggan notes, "marriage tended to be an arrangement through which kin groups could seek to increase their wealth and power."²² Indeed, Laudine becomes fused with the court over which she temporarily presides, her body refigured as property as she is transferred from Esclados to Yvain. As Vance points out, "consumer desire is now a properly heroic sentiment."²³

Kay argues, on the contrary, that while the early plot of the romance is told "through the eyes of male fantasy," a "playful reversal" occurs when Yvain becomes the vulnerable lover of Laudine, leading to a situation in which he occupies "the space of the object upon which designs are made . . . a space in *her* fantasy."²⁴ However, Lunete's control over the scenes leading up to their marriage represents the union as an opportunity to affirm the domestic feudal obligations of the Arthurian knight and to commodify the Lady. Her command helps to construct what Tracy Adams reads as a "fantastic version of the feudal notion of marriage as dynasty building and the way amor can be trained to support the process."²⁵ Supporting my reading of heterosexual love as a false smokescreen for the chivalric achievement signified by marriage, Adams writes, "surely this love is the product of his larger desire to conquer, prove his merit, and establish himself; abduction of his newly dead opponent's wife seems to be the next logical step."²⁶

The subsequent episodes in the romance focus on Yvain's punishment and redemption process, which depend on his quests to serve ladies in distress. Here, instances of female power prove to be short-lived, and even Lunete becomes merely a pawn in an adventure about a knight and his lion. After the marriage, when Gauvain prompts Yvain to demonstrate that he is still equipped for adventure, maintaining and reinvigorating his prowess becomes Yvain's central desire. In *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien shows the consequences for the knight who spends more time in isolation with his new bride than in tournaments and on adventure, and the threat against the hero's public identity posed by domesticity is

once more replayed in *Le chevalier au lion*. Despite Yvain's pledged obedience to Laudine's single condition that he return by a predetermined date, however, "homosocial bonding takes precedence over heterosexual pairing," so much so that Yvain violates his wife's condition.²⁷ He forgets, moreover, his love, suggesting the artificiality of the love between Yvain and Laudine and attesting to Lunete's careful construction of their marriage. It is not until after he has missed his deadline, and thus after Laudine has rejected Yvain's return to her, that the hero once more falls into lovesickness, in which, according to James A. Schultz, "the form of the beloved becomes imprinted on the imagination and memory and becomes the object of pathological obsession."²⁸ The news that he has, as a result of his indulgence in homosocial bonding and his endless quest for adventure, forfeited his wife's love and incurred shame ("honte") resuscitates Yvain's memory of his wife and drives him out into the wilderness. But even in the woods, where it seems he is being punished and corrected for his loss of remembrance of his wife, Yvain undergoes a recuperative project in which he becomes the Knight of the Lion and fosters an even greater sense of heroic masculine identity than before.

Yvain's heroism is nearly always predicated upon the threat of female sacrifice; in particular, the new threat of rape, which Kathryn Gravdal sees as "a romance set-piece to display chivalric prowess," both exploits the image of female helplessness and gives way to Yvain's glorified salvific acts.²⁹ The recurrence of female victimization in the remaining section of the romance produces a cycle of Yvain's heroism. Yvain captures Count Alier, avenges the shame of Gauvain's sister, and frees the young women held captive in the castle of Pesme Avanture.

In the midst of this, Lunete has lost control, and her own victimization once more glaringly represents the illusiveness of female power. She has failed in her scheme to manipulate Laudine, who has accused her of lying and treason. Lunete's goal to marry off Yvain thus has proven to come at the expense of Laudine, as well as herself. The accusation made against Lunete for treason both reflects the narrative's suppression of Lunete's original influence and of empowerment through female-female friendship and provides the context for Yvain's heroism. Lunete's diminishing importance throughout the series of Yvain's rescue missions sheds light on the ambiguous, intermediary place Lunete occupies earlier in

the narrative. Described from the outset as a young woman, Lunete does not circulate as an object of desire in a world in which women who marry become conduits of power. While Laudine's body is eroticized, Lunete's speech act, her "friendship" with Yvain, and her previous distance from the vulnerability that makes Laudine so attractive to Yvain all remove her from the realm of desirability; she is not subjected to Yvain's fantasies of female corporeality, and because her body is not, as Luce Irigaray puts it, "an exchange value among men," she occupies an uncertain position in the court.³⁰

The events leading up to Lunete's execution are among the trials Yvain must endure to become the savior of damsels in distress. Lunete's identity is obscured by her assimilation into a narrative pattern of female victimization. Having proved herself devoid of any feminine desirability in the early scenes of the narrative, she has likewise demonstrated her own disposability. Not even Gauvain, with whom Lunete was temporarily engaged in a courtly romance subplot, will come to her rescue as he is dedicated to finding the queen, who has recently been abducted. In this context, Yvain's rescue of Lunete proves his *valor* rather than Lunete's own *value*. When Yvain sees Lunete, clad only in a shift, dragged out by men to the stake, he is deeply disturbed, proving his ideal courtliness:

Mesire Yvains vient, si le voit
Au fu ou on la deut rüer,
Et che li deut mout anuier.
Courtois ne sages ne seroit
Qui de riens nule en douteroit.

(4320-24; What he beheld disturbed him deeply. A man doubting this would be without courtesy or wisdom.)

Lunete, whose body, fallen into the hands of the violent seneschal and his two brothers, reduces the wily woman to a mere corporeal object, thus serves as another female victim upon whom the image of Yvain's heroism is strengthened. Lunete's kneeling position reinforces her submission to authority, and her acts of confession and contrition signify her newfound humility and a meekness that offers Yvain the occasion to resurrect her by challenging the three men and defending Lunete's honor and righteousness.

Lunete's final role in the narrative suggests the cyclical nature of the romance. The "happy ending" of recuperation between friends and between lovers is tenuous and always will be as long as the male figure properly endures the struggle between preserving his fame and maintaining his obligations in marriage. Reiterating Lunete's early counsel of Laudine, the way in which Lunete facilitates her Lady's forgiveness and the lovers' reconciliation once more entails deception on the part of the female servant. Lunete constructs the same argument to convince Laudine that she must take a husband, threatening the queen with shame: "S'est ore ainsi que vous n'avés / qui deffende vostre fontaine, s/en samblerés fole et vilaine" (6558-60; The situation now is that you have no one to defend your spring, and you will look ridiculous and despicable). Laudine's exoneration of Yvain from contempt for his husbandly disobedience is predicated upon this precise element in the feudal scheme that both an earlier Lunete and Anna in the *Enéas* use to direct women to succumb to their lovers. Chrétien illustrates the outcome as a scenario of mutual satisfaction, but as Laine E. Doggett points out, "the result of the harmony of desires between a man and a woman partially legitimizes the woman's desire, but never entirely so," for, as Irigaray's comment corroborates, "a woman's desire would not be expected to speak the same language as man's."³¹

Reading Chrétien's *Le chevalier au lion* alongside the *Roman d'Enéas* demonstrates how temporary instances of powerful female speech underscore the romance topoi of female vulnerability and male heroism. The female intercessors in both texts become narrative tools, noncirculating figures who can transgress the traditional boundaries of femininity only because they function to impel the hero forward and at the expense of female independence. The insistence upon female leaders' need for male protection, in particular, reflects the twelfth-century vision of marriage as a feudal network in which masculine authority is assumed and negotiated. Both of these texts portray femininity as an ideal created by the male imagination, specifically by the fantasy of genealogical and territorial claims in the *Enéas* and the fantasy of chivalric and noble repute in *Le chevalier au lion*.³² The female counselors represent a shift from the male-male relations that dominate the *chanson de geste*, but their work in the narratives reinforces the traditional trajectory of the

romance genre, which is to exaggerate and engineer heterosexual desire, female victims, and male heroes.

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∞ END NOTES

1. Historically, noblewomen in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries may have played an important role alongside male rulers in spaces of power, and certainly they participated in the patronage and production of literary texts. See Theresa Earenfight, “Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarch in Late Medieval Europe,” *Gender and History* 19, no. 1 (2007): 1-21, and Zrinka Stahuljak, Virginie Greene, Sarah Kay, Sharon Kinoshita, and Peggy McCracken, *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 119.

2. Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 71.

3. *Ibid.*, 72.

4. *Ibid.*, 74.

5. *Ibid.*, 75.

6. Kathy M. Krause, “Reassessing the Heroine: Discourse and Ideology,” in *Reassessing the Heroine in Medieval French Literature*, ed. Kathy M. Krause (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 5; E. Jane Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), xii.

7. Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 99.

8. *Ibid.*, 101.

9. *Le roman d'Enéas: édition critique d'après le manuscrit B.N. fr. 60*, ed. Aimé Petit (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1997). Cited in text by line numbers. All English translations are from John Yunck, trans., *Eneas: A Twelfth-Century French Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

10. Robert W. Hanning, “Engin in Twelfth-Century Romance: an Examination of the *Roman d'Enéas* and Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*,” *Yale French Studies* 51 (1974): 82-101, 89. doi:2307/2929680.

11. *Ibid.*, 100.

12. Christopher Baswell, “Men in the *Roman d'Enéas*,” in *Medieval*

Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 154.

13. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 75.

14. William Burgwinkle, "The Marital and the Sexual," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 231.

15. Baswell, "Men in the *Roman d' Enéas*," 154, 164.

16. Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans*, ed. Michel Zink (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1994). Cited in text by line numbers. All English translations will come from Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, trans. David Staines (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1990).

17. Eugene Vance, "Chrétien's *Yvain* and the Ideologies of Change and Exchange," *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 52. doi:10.2307/2929848.

18. Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 259-75.

19. *Ibid.*, 267.

20. Burns, *Bodytalk*, 110.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 48.

23. Vance, "Chrétien's *Yvain*," 53.

24. Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, 274.

25. Tracy Adams, *Violent Passions: Managing Love in the Old French Verse Romance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 92.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Burgwinkle, "The Marital and the Sexual," 231.

28. James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 70.

29. Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 575.

30. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 31.

31. Laine E. Doggett, *Love Cures: Healing and Love Magic in Old French Romance* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 35; Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 25.

32. Burns, *Bodytalk*, xii.