Chretien de Troyes' Erec et Enide and Cistercian Spirituality

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CHRETIEN DE TROYES' EREC ET ENIDE
AND CISTERCIAN SPIRITUALITY

by
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A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
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Many critics confess to a "vague uneasiness" with the meaning of Chrétien de Troyes' Erec et Enide, especially with the motivation for Erec's adventures. Such critics as D. W. Robertson, E. Talbot Donaldson, and Northrup Frye posit methodological approaches to the meaning and understanding of vernacular romances. However, researching Cistercian monasticism, especially William of St. Thierry, I noted similarities between and parallels in the structure of a spiritual quest for God and a model of the secular quest found in Chrétien de Troyes' Erec et Enide.

Approaching the romance by examining and discussing the parallels in structure and thought between this work and a work of Cistercian spirituality, I shall posit that there exists an interplay in Chrétien's text between the ideals of love and knighthood (secular ethics) and a set of religious ideals espoused by Cistercian spirituality.
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seemed like a monumental task into an achievable goal.

Finally, my family--my husband and children--who have had to compete with this work for my time and attention; their understanding and love have enabled me to taste success.

Patricia Ann Quattrin
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CHRETIEN DE TROYES' "EREC ET ENIDE" AND CISTERCIAN SPIRITUALITY

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CHAPTER I

METHODOLOGY

Chrétien de Troyes, whose love romances initiated a new direction in vernacular literature, continues to baffle critics attempting to discover the "meaning" of his texts, especially his *Erec et Enide*, considered by most to be his first. This apparently simple adventure story concerns Erec, one of King Arthur's knights, who in the opening passages wins worldly fame and the love of a beautiful young girl. His supreme secular happiness is tested, however, when ux­­oriousness, an unacceptable preoccupation with his bride to the exclusion of his duties as a knight, arouses criticism. When Erec overhears Enide grieving because of the reproachful way people are speaking of her husband, he sets forth with Enide on a series of adventures which, while testing his prowess, also involve his wife. Erec's behavior indicates a conflict between the hero's conduct and the values of his society. An enigma surfaces, however, over the purpose of his adventures and his harsh treatment of Enide.

The motivating principle for Erec's behavior has been the subject of many critical studies. Myrra Lot-Borrodine suggests that Erec's wounded pride explains his conduct; he has been humiliated by Enide's reproach. Z. P. Zaddy and

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B. M. Woodbridge think anger is the motivation for Erec's attempts to prove his valor and make Enide admit her reproaches are ill-founded. E. S. Sheldon sees an inconsistency in Erec's character; he thinks Erec doubts Enide's veracity and love. M. Roques suggests that Erec doubts Enide's love because he lacks an understanding of the nature of love; Erec is incapable of any love other than an egotistical and exclusive one.

Many critics describe Erec's adventures as a series of tests. E. Hoepffner views them from the standpoint of Enide's reaction to each one; in each situation she proves anew her love for him. S. Hofer interprets the adventures as a means of testing Enide's love for a "recreant" Erec. A. Adler sees courtly love as the basis for the testing; Erec must earn Enide's love day by day. W. Z. Nitze suggests that the adventures are a two-fold test of Erec's valor and Enide's love, a thesis also supported by Z. P. Zaddy. W. Meyer-Lubke thinks the poem intends to show that woman by her nature must submit to man.

Reviewing much of the criticism, W. S. Woods writes:

It is difficult to believe that Chrestien is incapable of writing clearly, for nothing is more lucid than his explanations. Nothing could be arranged with more care and order than this romance of Erec and Enide. Yet there remains this obscure motivation for the episodes and hence there persists a vague uneasiness about the meaning of the poem.

Wood suggests that Chrétiens wrote on two levels and that the problem of motivation lies with the critics who have
not yet penetrated to the essential theme and purpose of the work. Perhaps influenced by Woods' hypothesis, Emmanuel J. Mickel proposes that the relationship between Erec and Enide during their adventures serves to elucidate the relationship between reason and the senses. Helen C. R. Laurie sees the entire poem in terms of a spiritual journey "strongly imbued with St. Augustine." Robert G. Cook proposes that the series of adventures depicts the moral development of the hero, with each encounter displaying progressively higher qualities in him.

Without a doubt, Erec et Enide has been submitted to intensive and enlightening if contradictory critical analysis. But, as Dom Jean Leclercq points out in his work Monks and Love in Twelfth Century France, we might be more closely akin to Chrétien's frame of mind, and that of his public, if we were to read him more "naively."

Even though some precise texts of Augustine and others on the process of conversion and inner renewal may have been present to Chrétien's mind, it is evident that these two themes belong to the biblical tradition of both the Old and the New Testaments, and they form the basic structure of the whole story.

Leclercq suggests that a more fruitful approach for understanding Chrétien's Erec et Enide would be to compare it with the writings of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, particularly his Sermons on the Song of Songs. These "two greatest poets of the garden of love, Champagne," he claims, wrote
... with a common cultural background, influenced by the Bible, and by more or less numerous elements taken from patristic and liturgical traditions as well as from the classical. It is virtually impossible for Chretien to have ignored Bernard's *Song of Songs*, which had immediate and wide circulation. He must have heard about this work, and he may well have read it in Latin, although it could by then [1164-1170] have been translated into French.7

As Leclercq points out, the region of Champagne from 1120 to circa 1200 was a literary center wherein flourished many types of love literature both sacred and profane. But, it is also interesting to note that in the part of Champagne with which we are concerned, Troyes, located midway between Clairvaux and the Paraclite of Abelard and Heloise, there were nineteen religious houses, six of which were Cistercian.

Troyes was an important center of commerce, politics, literature, and religion.8 Jews and Christians, noblemen and burghers, townspeople and peasants mingled together and exchanged views. The court of Champagne, one of the most prolific literary centers in twelfth-century France, also resided in Troyes. Among its poets and trouvères known to us are Chrétien de Troyes, Nicholas of Clairvaux, later secretary to St. Bernard, Gautier d'Arras, author of two romances, *Eracle* and *Ille et Galeron*, Gace Brule, one of the most prolific poets of his period, and, perhaps, Andreas Capellanus, the author of the treatise *De Arte Honeste Amandi*. Not far from this court of secular love, St. Bernard instructed his monks, and students
flocked to the feet of Abelard. Clearly, a spirit of intellectual inquiry and of literary creativity thrived in Troyes and its neighboring parts and sought expression through both secular and religious writing.

Knowing the environment from which the vernacular romances of Chrétien de Troyes emerged, the question becomes even more clouded but pertinent: how are these texts to be read? D. W. Robertson approaches the medieval text as a code to be understood in spiritual terms. The function of medieval poetry, in his view, is to set forth the Christian scheme of redemption, with charity as the supreme virtue. This methodology attempts to reconcile the doctrines of secular love and the teachings of the Church about charity; for medieval writers "a poem must conduce to Charity in the sense that Scripture does." 9

For Robertson, the fourfold interpretation of Scripture discussed by St. Augustine in De Doctrina Christiana and practiced by the Fathers becomes the basis for examining medieval literature. Citing medieval literary theorists such as Rabanus Maurus, Alan of Lille, and Isidore of Seville, Robertson translates certain words found in medieval texts to support this thesis: cortex, the outer covering of a poem which conveys its superficial meaning and appeal; nucleus, the doctrinal truth in a poem hidden in the cortex (or the sensus); sententia, the doctrinal content of the text, its theme or thesis, the idea intended by
the author, always an aspect of charity in Christian poetry; *conjunctura*, the artificial combination of diverse elements characteristic of poems as distinguished from histories; *pictura*, the bringing together of diverse things, or things not actually combined in nature, the configuration resulting from poetic *conjunctura*; *decor*, the perfection or attractiveness of a poem, arising from a well-made *conjunctura*; *allegoria*, the device of using one word or thing to mean another; *aenigma*, an obscure statement, series of statements, or poem concealing an underlying truth, obscure allegory. Thus, the poetic theory of Chrétien's day, according to Robertson, distinguished the poet from the historian by the fact that [the poet] combined elements not found in nature (*conjunctura*). When this combination was made, there resulted a new configuration (*pictura*), preferably with a certain enjoyable perfection (*decor*). The poem might use one thing to indicate another (*allegoria*), or it might be obscure on the surface (*aenigma*). It had a lying surface meaning (*cortex*) covering an inner truth (*nucleus*). The surface meaning (*cortex* or *sensus*) might be interpreted to reveal a doctrinal truth (*sententia*) which was, in Christian poetry, always an aspect of charity.

An examination of Chrétien's prologues, says Robertson, indicates that he was familiar with this poetic theory and that he suggests his audience read him in this way. Robertson cites for his authority in reading Chrétien this way, the *Didascalicon* of Hugh of St. Victor, a work which the scholar identifies as of enormous influence in the Middle Ages.
In the schools of the twelfth century, the methodological approach to all texts, whether sacred or profane, was triadic. Hugh of St. Victor calls these three ways the \textit{littera}, or grammatical and syntactical construction; the \textit{sensus}, or obvious meaning; and the \textit{sententia}, or deeper insight.\textsuperscript{12} This "higher meaning" was that toward which all interpretation was directed, and in which Robertson places the doctrinal content of the work.

If these remarks indicate that poetry during the Middle Ages was thought of as being allegorical, Robertson would say the observation was a just one. But, he cautions, we must take \textit{allegoria} in the medieval sense, that is, saying one thing to mean another.

Medieval Christian poetry, and by Christian poetry I mean all serious poetry written by Christian authors, even that usually called "secular," is always allegorical when the message of charity or some corollary of it is not evident on the surface.\textsuperscript{13}

The task of the literary critic, then, is to unearth the kernal of truth essential to the meaning of the poem by using the disciplines of the quadrivium, just as the Fathers did when approaching Scripture. It is

\ldots impossible to interpret medieval poems without determining first what the figures and signs in it mean. In this enterprise, the use of surface associations and of one's own knowledge of Scripture is helpful but not sufficient.\textsuperscript{14}

Exegetical works of various kinds must be consulted. Augustine, Bede, Gregory, and Rabanus were standard reference works throughout the Middle Ages and should be examined
before the *sententia* of a work is determined. When this method is applied, Robertson says, "literary works which have heretofore seemed incoherent or meaningless become consistent, meaningful, and aesthetically attractive."¹⁵

In an essay entitled "Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature: The Opposition" found in *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature*, E. Talbot Donaldson takes exception to Robertson's methodology, stating that not all medieval poetry written by Christians uses the allegorical structure of the Fathers, nor must all be approached through patristic exegesis.¹⁶ The patristic influence on medieval poetry seems to me to consist in providing occasional symbols which are called into use naturally by those contexts and are given fresh meaning by them. It is scarcely necessary to reassert the right of a poem to say what it means and mean what it says, and not what any one, before or after its composition, thinks it ought to say or mean.¹⁷

For Donaldson, Robertson's methodology imposes a "categorical imperative" upon the critic to respond in a certain way regardless of how the poem is telling him to respond. The danger in suggesting one predetermined specific meaning is enormous, for

... in his eagerness to find what must be there [the reader] will very likely miss what is there; and in so doing he may miss a meaning arising from the poem that is better than anything that exegesis is able to impose upon it.¹⁸

Donaldson maintains that while charity is the most important of doctrines, it is not the only subject worth writing
about. Furthermore, "many poems may conduce to charity without mentioning it either specifically or allegorically." Donaldson insists that although the fourfold method of scriptural interpretation exerted an influence on secular poets, it should not, therefore, be assumed that all poets wrote with this in mind.

Nor do I think the case is much supported by the fact that in medieval schools reading was taught with attention to those matters, the littera or text, the sensus or narrative statement, and the sententia or theme, since the identification of sententia with an allegory promoting charity is itself no more than an inference. After all, competent poetry has always contained something more than words making a statement, something that might well be called sententia, and I should imagine that Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Jews, and other non-Christians might inevitably teach poetry according to the same system; does the Iliad have no sententia because it is not Christian.

The function of allegory, as Donaldson sees it, is not to conceal, but to reveal. He does not believe that any medieval poet worthy of a literary critic's attention veiled his poems in order to hide their pious message from the unbelieving. What intelligent readers of a poem must do, he says, is put themselves into a position with their wits and faculties ready to spring into activity at the first summons. But, "like hunting dogs, they must not spring before they are summoned; and only those that are summoned must spring; and the summons must come from the poem." To ignore the influence of the patristic tradition on medieval poetry would be foolish, but "to
substitute for the art of the poet the learning or good intentions of the reader" obliterates the meaning and beauty of the poem.

Robertson's method of using material from the exegetical tradition can clarify points in difficult texts and suggest new dimensions of meaning in texts already understood. But, Donaldson's objections to the assumption that the medieval poet cared little for the "husk" of his text while concentrating mainly on the nourishing corn, the allegorical meaning, is well taken. Such an approach confines the medieval author and does not do justice to his creative imagination. Another critical approach must be found which takes into consideration both imaginative structures and Christian beliefs, for the fact remains that these medieval romances contain specific religious allusions and verbal parallels which often obscure the meaning of the text and continue to raise the possibility, even probability, that something more than knightly adventures and courtly love will be found here.

In a recent work entitled *The Secular Scripture*, Northrup Frye explores his thesis that the structure of the Bible provided the outline for a mythological or imaginative universe for European literature.

The Bible is the epic of the Creator, with God as its hero. Romance is the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic
of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest. . . . Is it possible, then to look at secular stories as a whole, and as forming a single integrated vision of the world, parallel to the Christian and biblical vision? This is the question implied in the "secular scripture" of my title.\textsuperscript{23}

Frye suggests that, rather than detaching a literary work such as Chrétien's \textit{Erec et Enide} from its context in romance literature and then discussing it in relation to its historical, social, and biographical affinities, a study of the whole genre of romance would tell us much about the shape of these stories as a whole. Such an understanding would, in turn, begin to give us a glimpse of still larger verbal structures and eventually of the mythological universe as a whole.\textsuperscript{24}

For Frye this mythological universe has two aspects. One is "the verbal part of man's own creation, what I call a secular scripture . . . . The other is, traditionally, a revelation given to man by God or other powers beyond himself."\textsuperscript{25} Each aspect is important to our mythological inheritance. They reflect the two alternating needs of the human condition--the need to experience as part of a community, and the need to experience as a separate individual.

It is quite true that if there is no sense that the mythological universe is a human creation, man can never get free of servile anxieties and superstitions, never surpass himself, in Nietzsche's phrase. But if there is no sense that it is also something uncreated, something coming from elsewhere, man remains a Narcissus staring at his own reflection, equally unable to surpass himself. Somehow or other the created scripture and the revealed scripture, or whatever we call the latter, have to keep fighting each other like
Jacob and the angel.  

It is in the struggle between the spiritually real and the humanly imaginative, then, that we find the quest of the individual, the adventures of an Erec.

Colin Morris has observed that the most important cultural development between 1050 and 1200 was the discovery of the individual. In a number of circles, both secular and religious, the destiny of the individual became the center of attention. An inward search for self-knowledge appeared in texts as diverse as those of monastic spirituality and of lyric poetry. It was thought that self-discovery in some way led to a deepening in understanding of what it meant to be a product of the society at that time, and to be part of the natural order of the physical universe. This search for understanding took many forms. Authors used such themes as longing, alienation, and reconciliation in their attempt to impart a perception of the relationship between the individual and society, and the individual and God.

"In one form or another, the problem of alienation and order was central in the literature of the twelfth century, and the sense of alienation was expressed in one of the most powerful symbols which have been devised for it: pilgrimage." The starting point for Chrétien's Erec et Enede is just such an alienation. The drama of the story lies in the series of adventures, the pilgrimage or quest.
of the hero, which ultimately leads him to reconciliation with those who have rejected him and a new inner awareness not readily understandable to the audience.

If we approach Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* from Frye's critical perspective of secular scripture, we will view it analogously. Erec's quest relates to the genre of chivalric romance as the experiences of Job or of Moses or of David relate to salvation history, to Sacred Scripture. Social acts such as the jousts and tournaments, the centripetal movement of knights into Arthur's court and then out from it into separate quests, the rescued damsels and beloved ladies all form parts of ritualized action that attempts to express that society's vision of its own social function and the acts of protection and responsibility that invokes to justify that function. Like the deeds in Sacred Scripture these actions are symbolic and representative of human life. They are symbols of social cohesion whereby something is consciously being done, and something else unconsciously meant by what is being done.29

But this is not allegory, not as Robertson interprets allegory. Frye prefers to express the sense of what is often called "allegory" in romance as "where more is meant than meets the ear." He finds the use of the term "allegory" too often misleading:

... I should prefer some such phrase as "symbolic spread," the sense that a work of literature is expanding into insights and experiences beyond itself.
The symbolic spread of realism tends to go from the individual work of fiction into the life around it which it reflects: this can be accurately called allegory. The symbolic spread of a romance tends rather to go into its literary context, to other romances that are most like it in the conventions adopted. The sense that more is meant than meets the ear in romance comes very largely from the reverberations that its familiar conventions set up within our literary experience, like a shell that contains the sound of the sea.\textsuperscript{30}

If we adopt Frye's thesis, an understanding of \textit{Erec et Enide} will begin with an understanding of the "secular scripture" of which it is a part. It will include those literary conventions, both secular and spiritual, that impinged upon the experience of an author in twelfth-century Troyes. It will recognize patterns in \textit{Erec et Enide} which are similar and parallel to patterns in other pieces of literature current and popular, i.e. read by the populus, in twelfth century France.

Love, as has been noted, played a special role in the literature of the period. With the flowering of troubador poetry in Provence, literary tropes, such as love initiated through the eyes, beauty as a cause of love, the in-born suffering of the lover, the attitude of service in the lover, and the ennobling power of love, became lofty expressions of the desire of man for woman. In its original form, secular love, or courtly love as it became known, presented a highly specialized picture characterized by humility, courtesy, adultery, and worshipping rituals.\textsuperscript{31} A cult arose with its own code of laws to which the lover
had to conform. These codes were worked out as a social system in the unique treatise, *De Arte Honeste Amandi*, written by Capellanus between 1174 and 1190. With the precision of a scholastic treatise and the orderly arrangement of a philosophical disquisition, the author discusses the art of courtship.  

One outgrowth of this emerging interest in love was the development of the medieval romance. The hero of this fiction yearns for a lost—or not yet won—beloved. This yearning prompts him to action that will bridge the gap between himself and the object of his desires. The outer adventures of the quest function as a metaphor for the inner search, a self-awareness by which "an individual differentiates himself from his outer circumstances and locates himself within the continuum of his life and the context of his character." It is this inner recognition, rather than any external catastrophe (as, for example, with Odysseus) that initiates and propels forward the hero's climatic adventures.

The two forms of the quest most clearly concerned with this growth of the hero are the religious quest and the twelfth century chivalric romance, which

... reflects the literary conventions of a specific society and cultural moment—twelfth century courtly society—by placing the chivalry topos, fantastic elements, and idealized protagonists drawn from a single social class within a narrative form.

While the goal of the hero's quest in the chivalric romance
is the winning of, or reconciliation with, an earthly beloved, such as in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*, the love object of the religious quest is God, and union with the beloved is salvation, fully obtained only in the next life. The progress toward God of the religious quester, exemplified by the Anglo-Norman Saint Brendan or Guillaume d'Angleterre, is initiated by the hero's recognition of his sinfulness, of his desire for God, and of the gap that exists between the two. The religious hero converts (conversio) his life, leaving behind worldly pleasures, and seeks union with God which he perceives as the goal of his fulfilled self.

Emerging at much the same time as the secular and religious quest was an abundance of theological speculation on love. Such noted theologians as Guigo II the Carthusian, Peter Abelard, Gilbert of Hoyland and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor all took up the problem of love. But, among the men who penned treatises on this subject, a group of monks whom Etienne Gilson calls the "Cistercian School," stands out as extraordinarily talented. The three founders and principal interpreters of this school were Bernard of Clairvaux, Aelred of Rievaulx, and William of St. Thierry. Each monk addressed a particular question of love and attempted to solve it. The "School" was mainly literary rather than philosophical. The thinkers of this "School" studied charity (amor), discussed its problems, and
determined solutions, not through the language of dialectics and speculative thinking, but through the language of experience.\textsuperscript{39}

Dom Leclercq has shown that Cistercian spirituality dominated the bailliage of Troyes not only visually, because of its many monasteries and the interchange with monks which proximity made possible, but more importantly for our purposes, through its literature. The writings of St. Bernard and William of St. Thierry on love and the individual's quest within salvation history were read and widely circulated throughout that region. The popularity of these works made it virtually impossible for Chretien not to be aware of them.

What becomes apparent when reading Chrétien de Troyes and Cistercian texts of spirituality are the many similarities between the two in structure and in theme.\textsuperscript{40} To acknowledge such similarities and parallels between a work expressing secular ethics and one expressing religious ideals is to note that loving speaks to the universal human experience. By exploring in depth the parallels between a secular model of courtly romance, Chrétien's \textit{Erec et Enide}, and a spiritual model of monastic \textit{conversio}, William of St. Thierry's \textit{De Natura Corporis et Animae}, we may be able to discover some of the "reverberations" set against our ear and thus come one step closer to understanding how we are to read this vernacular romance.
CHAPTER II

CISTERCIAN SPIRITUALITY AND WILLIAM OF ST. THIERRY

By the time Chrétien de Troyes embarked upon his career in 1170, the Cistercian Order had been in existence only seventy years, but its ideas and ideals already dominated the region around Troyes, if not most of Europe. Begun in 1098 by a group of self-imposed exiles from a Benedictine monastery who sought solitude, poverty, and a way of life similar to that of the Desert Fathers, the Order grew to 333 houses by 1151 and reached 647 in the thirteenth century. These white monks adapted and conformed to a literal interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict, thereby impressing all with whom they came in contact by their piety, austerity, and zeal for personal perfection. For almost a century, the Cistercians represented that which was brightest and most creative in the life and world of monasticism and spirituality; and these years, says David Knowles in his book Christian Monasticism, represent a period of monasticism par excellence.

The first Cistercians settled southwest of Dijon, Burgundy, in a spot almost inaccessible because of thickets, thorns, and wild beasts. They called it Citeaux. When the number of aspirants to religious life there made the problem of accommodation acute, four daughter houses were
founded; the first nearby in Burgundy and the other three across the river Seine in the county of Champagne. All four were situated within a radius of one hundred kilometers at four cardinal points north, south, east and west of Cîteaux. These "elder daughters," La Ferte (1113), Pontigny (1114), Clairvaux (1115), and Morimond (1115), gave birth to abbeys extending from Spain to the Baltic region and from Sweden to Southern Italy.

The daughter house of Clairvaux was established thirty-five miles southeast of the city of Troyes in the bailliage of Troyes, which constituted about one-fifth of the county of Champagne. The bailliage encompassed a fairly well-defined geographical area with a radius of thirty to fifty kilometers around the county's capital and principal town, Troyes. When, at the age of twenty-five, Bernard of Fontaines was sent with a dozen monks to found Clairvaux, this was a quiet, forested area, virtually devoid of men and their institutions. In the half century following the founding of this abbey, the bailliage saw a phenomenal proliferation of monastic houses, especially Cistercian. Of ten new ecclesiastical houses implanted in the bailliage of Troyes during these years, six belonged to the white monks. By 1170, the character of the region had changed from one of relative wilderness and sparse settlement to one of increasingly populated villages and towns, a development to which the monastic houses themselves
contributed. The rulers of Troyes, Thibaut II and his son Henry I the Liberal (1125-1181), maintained peaceful and orderly conditions while developing the bailliage into the commercial exchange center for western Europe. Under Henry, the court at Troyes gained wide repute as a center of literary activity.  

The founders of the new Order of Citeaux intended to establish their monasteries not in cities, castles, or villages, but in places far removed from the traffic of men, for the Rule bade them stay aloof from the doings of the world. But, the involvement of the Cistercian houses in clearing the land and supplying wood for village construction produced the opposite effect. In addition, as in the case of traditional monasticism, acceptance of donations, and the establishment of foundations made contacts with the contemporary feudal world unavoidable. Although the Cistercians created within their Order a class of lay brothers, the conversi, whose responsibility it was "to help the monks carry out what was necessary in a great medieval agricultural enterprise which would otherwise have forced them to relax their solitude and abandon their common prayer." This departure from the literal reading of the Rule, however, had the unexpected result of bringing considerable wealth to the white monks, thus precipitating entanglements with the world they had sought to renounce.

In addition to these potential distractions from a
proposed ascetic life, the monastic houses, especially Clairvaux and her daughters in the county of Champagne, were attracting brilliant young men with extraordinary literary gifts, men who sought to express their spiritual vocation through their pens. The greatest of these was Bernard of Clairvaux. Most historians attribute the success and growth of the Order to St. Bernard.

Later Cistercian hagiographers put him forward as the second founder without whom the first beginnings would not have lasted, and it is true that this youth, a-thirst for the absolute found at Citeaux the surrounding he needed, and which he was to cover with a quite unforeseen glory.53

Indeed this young man dominated the Order from the second generation. His creative originality was marked by and much in accord with the most modern aspirations of his age, for

Bernard was greatly concerned with personal sincerity and motivation, and . . . for him the spiritual life was a way of self-discovery which preserved the dignity and integrity of the individual even in the moment of union with God.54

It is increasingly recognized today, however, that in addition to Bernard, several other Cistercians contributed almost as powerfully to a type of monastic spirituality which would become known as Cistercian. William of St. Thierry, although not officially a Cistercian until his later years, wrote in the style and spirit of the order, and other brilliant figures such as Aelred of Rievaulx, Isaac of Stella, Guerric of Igny, and later Adam of Perseigne
and Gilbert of Hoyland (all seven of whom lived at least part of their adult lives in the county of Champagne), while perhaps not Bernard's equal certainly share his lus­tre. This does not mean they merely reflected Bernard's characteristics and theological teaching.

Their personalities, both on the intellectual plane and on the spiritual in its strictest sense, were, on the contrary, of surprising variety. If they had anything in common, it was the way in which all of them, but after his own manner, refused to be rigidly molded by a bygone past, but reconstructed it with a surprising sense of actuality and an inexhaustible creative flexibility.55

This group of men displayed the fervor of their monastic vocation by a proliferation of literature in which they examined the psychology of human affections and self-knowledge as means to God.

It cannot be denied, however, that the sudden brilliance of Cistercian monasticism was, more than to anything or anyone else, due to St. Bernard. Until his death in 1153, Bernard wrote sermons, more letters than anyone else of his century,56 and treatises on all aspects of love and monastic life, including a five book work, On Consideration, for the benefit of Pope Eugenius III, a Cistercian monk. In discussing Bernard's work, On the Song of Songs, Le­clercq calls the monk "one of the two greatest poets of the garden of love, Champagne,"57 the other being Chrétien de Troyes. The influence of this work on the liturgy, on art and iconography, and on literature continued for centuries.
Bernard was recognized and proclaimed as the greatest poet and minstrel of love Champagne had ever produced.\textsuperscript{58}

In addition to his prolific literary achievements, Bernard took time to engage in political and ecclesiastical controversies, to preach the Second Crusade to the Holy Land (1146-1148), and to instruct his monks at Clairvaux. At the Council of Troyes in 1128, he supported the formal recognition of the Knights Templar and composed a Rule for them. They in turn adopted the white habit of the Cistercians, adding to it the red cross of the Crusades, the novitiate of the monk, and the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.\textsuperscript{59} They swore to uphold Christian ideals to protect pilgrims on the highways to the Holy Land, and to defend Christianity against the infidel. In a sense, and with the full support of Bernard, this society of Knights became affiliated with the Order of Citeaux.

If Bernard's career of ceaseless involvement in worldly, albeit churchly, concerns seems to contradict the Cistercian ideal of withdrawal, the paradox did not go unnoticed by Bernard's contemporaries who commented on it without restraint.\textsuperscript{60} But, according to his own correspondence, no one was more disquieted by the paradox than Bernard himself. He seems to have suffered stress from the duality within himself; the monk vowed to total detachment, a contemplative called to seek God alone, vied with the man of action, involved in public affairs and political obliga-
tions. "I am the chimera of my times," he complained, "living neither as a cleric nor a layman." Here is a living paradigm for the conflicts of loyalty and love that occur so often in Chrétien and other medieval romances. Bernard, according to Leclercq, experienced a painful inner struggle when called upon to abandon a vocation of silence and solitude, but was persuaded to do so by his impelling desire to be of use to his neighbor, and to follow the orders of an authority he felt bound to obey.

Another theologian of the "Cistercian School," who also reflected on the psychology of love, is William of St. Thierry whom Louis Bouyer describes as "one of the most attractive personalities of the twelfth century, one of its most profound and original spiritual thinkers, and perhaps its most outstanding theologian." His treatises have everything, says Etienne Gilson, "power of thought, the orator's eloquence, the poet's lyricism, and all the attractiveness of the most ardent and tender piety." William constructed a carefully harmonious mystical theology which came to birth and lives entirely within the framework of monastic life.

Although perhaps educated at the Cathedral School of Reims where he would have received a sound classical education, William left the schools for the life of a Benedictine. Sometime before being elected abbot of St. Thierry in 1119, he met Bernard and became so enamored of the
Cistercian ideals and the man who exemplified them that he later petitioned Bernard for permission to enter Clairvaux. "I felt such joy in the presence of that man, and so great a desire to share the poverty and simplicity of his life, that had the choice that day been given to me, I should have chosen to stay there with him for ever and to serve him." For whatever reason, Bernard refused William's request, and it was not until after fifteen years as abbot of St. Thierry in Champagne, his health failing, that William quietly transferred to the new Cistercian abbey of Signy where he lived out his remaining years.

The Cistercian theological movement, as represented by William and Bernard, can be described as a synthesis of dogma and spiritual life. In contrast to the Benedictines, who tended to view Christianity as manifested through sacred history, the Cistercians stressed this history as experienced within the individual soul. Cistercian attention moved from the salvation of mankind to the destiny of the individual. Both William and Bernard were primarily monastic theologians, that is, they concentrated on practical and personal, rather than purely speculative, theology. They inquired less about the nature of God than about the human response to Him.

As a spiritual teacher, Bernard's passionately human nature enabled him to recognize that to traverse the road to God, one must begin at the level of the human senses.
Thus he, and in turn William, strove not to push aside this "carnal love" (amor carnalis), but rather to recognize it and make it the point of departure for any realistic approach of the soul to a union with God. By amor carnalis, these two monks meant:

a love of that which is within reach of the senses, including in an indissoluble union the search for sensual pleasure and the attraction of the beings from whom we gain it, all this being ultimately dominated by a desire for selfish pleasure which is at the bottom of every action of the fallen creature.

Amor carnalis can be a misdirected love, one which needs to be redirected toward a love of oneself which includes God. William and Bernard viewed love of self not as sharply divided from love of God, but as a stage in the development from fleshly love to a pure and spiritual love.

The program which these two Cistercians put forward for the governing of disordered love, is one of returning to God, of a journey which leads from sin to glory, from knowledge of self to possession of God. It is an interior pilgrimage whereby man, who is, in his deepest being, the image of God but lost his likeness through sin, moves back to the Father. This idea of self knowledge and natural attraction of like to like dominated the thinking of the twelfth century. William, in particular, recognized the multiplicity of affections and appetites which make up natural man, thus allowing for a better understanding of the individual and a clearer perception of man's
place in the universe. The fact that William understood the soul as rising through varying degrees of good toward God as the final goal reveals in him an acceptance of the yearnings for people and things which affect the actions of men. Both William and Bernard were concerned not only with external actions, but also with inner motives. They, like their twelfth century contemporaries, conceived of the spiritual life as founded on the intention of the believer.

For the Cistercians the "turning," which results from right intention, does not take the individual directly from amor carnalis to love of God above all things. This transition comprises an integral part of the "journey." The Cistercians called this journey conversio, a turning about which is not immediately complete, but which continues throughout the life of each man. Conversio consists of liberating the true self which is made in the image and likeness of God, purifying the self from all self-absorption, and acquiring, preserving, and nurturing the life of God within the self. The motivating power behind each of these stages is love.

William's spirituality, like that of Bernard, is grounded on love and the journey of the soul from domination by bodily senses to union with God. Appearing clearly in his works is the distinction of image and likeness as forming the two poles of the journey of the soul. Man, made in the image and likeness of God, lost his likeness
through original sin. The image is innate in man necessarily according to his nature, but the likeness comes to the soul in degrees, depending on its will and the work of the Holy Spirit. For William the image of God in man is an imprint of the Trinity which gives the soul its initial capacity to achieve a final state of perfect likeness. This image is what makes the ascent of the soul to God possible. The journey, then, is not one of locality or spatial distance, but one of ascent to a likeness once shared but lost. The image as a capacity for, an imprint of, the divine life makes possible the beginning of the journey. Likeness, divine life itself, the soul's realization of the supernatural powers which form the image, comes at the end of the journey. The itinerary consists of increasingly coming to know the mysteries of the Trinity.

Whereas both William and Bernard give special emphasis to the journey of the soul to the Trinity, Bernard stresses the union of the soul with Christ as the means to self-knowledge and, thus, to love of God, while William stresses the union of the soul with the Holy Spirit.

... no one learns to know the Son except the Father and him to whom He chooses to reveal Him. These are the Lord's words. The Father and the Son reveal this to certain persons then, to those to whom They will, to those to whom They make it known, that is, to whom They impart the Holy Spirit, who is the common knowing or the common will of both."

The fact that William often describes the Holy Spirit in terms of "will" and "love" indicates that he found these
terms to be particularly expressive of the Third Person.
But he conceived of the Holy Spirit primarily, according to Brooke, as the unity between the Father and Son, a "mutual union"

which is the foundation for the doctrine of the restoration of resemblance, a participation in the life of the Holy Spirit by sharing in the mutual union of the Father and the Son. This is described in terms of daring realism, portraying a unity of spirit, whereby the soul becomes as it were the life of the Holy Spirit himself.  

The soul journeys to union with the Trinity through its experience of the Holy Spirit. William calls this experience amor-intellectus, knowledge through love, love as a means of knowledge. It is the Holy Spirit, he says, who gives life to man's spirit and holds it together, just as it gives life to its body and holds it together. Men may teach how to seek God and angels how to adore him, but [the Holy Spirit] alone teaches how to find him, possess him and enjoy him. He himself is the anxious quest of the man who adores in spirit and truth, he is the wisdom of the man who finds, the love of him who possesses, the gladness of him who enjoys.

The journey, however, begins with a belief in Christ, in his sacred humanity. Those at the animal level need to pray to and meditate on Christ's humanity--his birth, passion, and resurrection, for then such a soul only able to think of material objects and their properties may have something to which it can apply itself and cling with devout attention, as befits its degree . . . . In this matter those who are poorer in spirit and more simple sons of God find as a rule that at first their feelings are the sweeter the nearer they are to human nature. Afterwards, however, when faith becomes a movement of love, . . . they begin to know him no longer according to the flesh, although they are
not yet fully able to conceive of him in his divinity.\(^8\)

In learning through Christ to love, the soul begins to ascend by means of amor-intellectus and participation in the life of the Holy Spirit. This experiential knowledge of the Triune God given through the Holy Spirit is William's most personal contribution to Trinitarian theology.\(^1\) For him, the Trinity was not a problem to be scrutinized, but a principle of life.

Of particular interest to William was the trinitarian aspect of the soul, what Augustine had distinguished as memory (memoria), intellect (intelligentia or cogitatio) and will (voluntas) and which William most often describes as mens, cogitatio or consilium, and voluntas or amor. He conceives of this trinitarian association as drawing the soul into a direct relation with the Persons of the Trinity and impelling it towards its archetype. In his work De natura et dignitate amoris, he illustrates how the Trinity works in the soul. He associates the powers of the soul, memory, reason, and will, with the different persons of the Trinity.

Memory of itself begets reason, then both memory and reason from themselves bring forth the will. Memory possesses and contains that to which it must strive. Reason—that it must strive; the will strives. These three (memory, reason, and will) are one yet effectively three, just as in the supreme Trinity there is one substance and three persons. As in that Trinity the Father is the one who begets, the Son the one begotten, and the Holy Spirit the one who proceeds from both, so reason is begotten from memory and from both memory and reason proceeds the will. So that the rational soul created in man may adhere to God, there-
fore, the Father claims the memory for himself, the Son the reason, and the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both claims the will proceeding from both.82

In De natura corporis et animae and Commentarius in Cantic-cles, he does not distinguish will from love.83

For William what is important about this analogy is the image of the Trinity as a dynamic force impelling the soul toward union with God. The image is no longer a mere capacity for resemblance, as in the Augustine analogy, but rather a process of actualization.84 The image, "imprinted" in the literal meaning of the word, is an indelible mark on the soul from the moment of creation so that the soul "found itself drawn by its own natural structure, into the ineffable trinitarian movement."85 Man's fall tarnished this image and caused the living likeness to disappear. The object of the soul's journey is to renew that likeness.

Before the fall, man was an "ordered microcosm" in which the flesh was subject to the soul, and the soul to the spirit which was naturally directed toward God.85 Sin disturbs this balance and disrupts the soul's ascent. Thus, man finds his natural course, the love which is the soul's natural pondus,86 drawing him to God, his source and his amor carnalis directing him away from his Creator.

God is said to be and is love. But that love is such that by it only the good can be loved, and only well loved. But the love which is the human soul can, by the change of its desires, both blaze with heavenly charity for higher things which for the soul is God alone, and descend to lower things with a damnable love.87
William prefaces his treatise De natura et dignitate amoris with a warning against Ovid—"who had written passionately about the fire of fleshly love"—and those who found his poems on the art of love so appealing. He attacks the eroticism of Ovid's verse for, William says, the poet had lavished all his talent on incentives to love, either by stirring up old ones enticingly or by inventing new ones. He certainly did not struggle to teach the fervor of fleshly love which, in both the students and the teacher, burned by its own natural fire without any rational control. He earnestly applied himself to change its natural power into a kind of insane licentious insanity by superfluous incitements to lust.  

Refuting the underlying conception of man and his relations with God which Ovid's path of love imparts, William insists:

The entire ordering of nature was destroyed in these depraved and wicked men by the rampaging vice of fleshly concupiscence . . . . Unhappy are they who have so defiled themselves against the clamorings of nature. They have made the place of their soul, which belongs to God the Creator and which is communicable to no creature, into the seat of Satan.  

Having acknowledged the wandering into the "region of unlikeness" of those who have taken as their teacher not Sacred Scripture or the Church Fathers but Ovid, William attempts to point the way back by examining the origin and development of love.

First of all, its birth place is God. There it is born, there nourished, there developed. There it is a citizen, not a stranger, but a native. Love is given by God alone, and it endures in him, for it is due to no one else but him and for his sake.
Designating four stages of love—will, love, charity, and wisdom—which are not degrees as rungs on a ladder, but rather concur and work together, William begins his discussion by a consideration of the will which can lead either to ruin or to restoration. Without self-ordering, the selfish will rushes headlong into disaster, is overwhelmed in the darkness of confusion, and is buried in the hell of vices, unless help comes to it promptly from grace. If it has truly forsaken the road to hell, it begins to lift its steps, and following the grace that leads and nourishes, it matures into love.

Thus, the will that co-operates with the grace of the Holy Spirit becomes love.

In the remainder of the treatise, William discusses the movement of love to charity and charity to wisdom. He attributes to the soul spiritual senses by which it "sees" God, for "just as the body has its five senses by which it is joined to the soul by the instrumentality of life, so, too, the soul has her five senses by which she is joined to God by the instrumentality of charity." William describes reason and love as two eyes of the soul "always throbbing by a sort of natural intensity to look toward the light that is God." When the two help one another in seeing God, they can do much, for they become the single eye, the eye of charity, of which the bridegroom in the Song of Songs speaks (Song 4:9). Separately, however, Reason is only able to discover what [God] is to the extent it discovers what he is not. Reason has its
own straight ways by which it progresses. Love, however, advances more by its shortcomings and apprehends more by its ignorance. Reason, therefore, seems to advance through what God is not toward what God is. Love, however, advances more by its shortcomings and apprehends more by its ignorance. Reason, therefore, seems to advance through what God is not toward what God is. Love, putting aside what God is not, rejoices to lose itself in what he is. From [God], love has come forth and it naturally aspires to its own beginning. Reason has the greater sobriety, love the greater happiness.95

Working together, "reason teaches love and love enlightens reason,"96 thus enabling the soul to "adhere" to God and "perform" in a manner pleasing to his will. William ends this work by describing wisdom as the Beatific Vision, the enjoyment and tasting of God. Comparing this stage to the union of the bride and bridegroom in the Song of Songs (2:16), he says of the soul:

Having left the body and all bodily cares and hindrances, she forgets everything except God and attends to nothing except God. And, as if regarding herself alone and God alone, she says: "My beloved is mine and I am his."97

From the beginning of the ascent, which is good intention, to this goal of complete consummation, Wisdom has been the support and the guide. Christ seen as man can now be understood as Wisdom.

It is difficult to estimate exactly the importance of Ovid on twelfth century France, though he was often cited in both monastic and secular love literature. His influence on writers varies from one to another. Some studied him as a means to their own literary formation, and others perhaps for their moral education. Chrétien de
Troyes read him and even translated some of his works.\textsuperscript{98} The importance of William's denunciation of Ovidian love, however, is more observable. His text influenced both secular and monastic writers and audiences. St. Bernard read and commented on William's treatise before his monks.\textsuperscript{99} If William felt the need to censure the Ovidian philosophy of life, Ovid's popularity must have been widespread. William attempts to present a theology of love based on the image of God in man which would counteract the lack of morality perceived in Ovidian poetry.

\textit{De natura et dignitate amoris} was an early text of William's, written between 1119-1124.\textsuperscript{100} Sometime after his entry into the Cistercian Abbey at Signy, he composed his wholly personal commentary on the Song of Songs. Applying this sacred writing to spiritual life, the white monk weaves the religious and mystical experience of a soul into the weft and warp of a Scriptural text. As a work, Dechanet calls it a soliloquy by William:

\begin{quote}
It is the secret of a soul--his own--within the limits of which he wishes to disclose himself. It is the patient pursuit . . . of the author's plodding walks through his own interior and of the tender colloquies to which his steps give rise. But at the same time, it is also a cold and rational examination of the birth and development of the various episodes of this unheard-of adventure in which the human soul, captive to Christ and victor over sin, becomes the Spouse, and through him, with the help of the Holy Spirit, yields to spiritual union with God.\textsuperscript{101}
\end{quote}

The Commentary presents not an allegorical explanation of the text, but what Dechanet calls a "certain moral sense"
wherein each discovers for himself norms, directives and, what is still better, the picture of his spiritual life, of the interior drama in which God and the soul are, by turns, the actors and the interpreters—everyone says William, can aspire to it.  

William begins the work with a fundamental text for Cistercian spirituality (Gen. 1:26): "O, Lord our God, you did create us to your image and likeness, it is plain, that we might contemplate you and have fruition of you." He presents love as an experience by which the soul meets God and emphasizes the right ordering of affections.

For when we love any creature, not to use it for you but to enjoy it in itself, love becomes not love but greed or lust or something of the kind, losing with the loss of freedom even the grace of the name of love. And man, in his misery, is compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them. And his whole sin consists in enjoying amiss and using amiss, for that is what he does when he loves some object, or his neighbor or himself not, as we said, to use it for you but to enjoy it in itself. Although it is permitted him to enjoy both his neighbor and himself, he must not do so save in you.

The Creator is perceived by means of love, love of oneself, love of others. Just how clearly He is perceived, however, depends on how pure, how free from corruption that love is.

After tracing out the historical sense of the nuptial poem, William adds the spiritual sense. Then, with "one last word before we undertake the journey we have proposed," he sets out three different states of men at prayer: animal, rational, and spiritual. These are the same concepts which he develops in De natura et dignitate amoris as adolescent love, adult love, and full maturity. When in
prayer life, man reaches the rational or spiritual level, he "has in his soul, thanks be to creative grace, the likeness and image of God." But even after reaching the spiritual level of prayer, "he still shares in the delights of fleshly love which are natural to him; but when they have come into the possession of the Holy Spirit, he devotes them all to the service of spiritual love.

William completed his commentary only as far as the first verses of the third song. He was prevented from going on, he says in the prefatory letter to the Epistola Aurea, "for I did not think I was justified in enjoying such delightful leisure within doors, while outside he, with naked sword as they say, was ravaging the confines of the faith." Thus, William took up his pen against him, who was ravaging the faithful, Peter Abelard. He followed his Disputatio contra Petrum Abaelardum with two treatises more theoretical than those already discussed, Speculum Fidei and the Aenigma Fidei, written for the brothers at Signy who were troubled by the innovations of Abelard and others "for their consolation and to help their faith."

The last of his spiritual writings, Epistola Aurea (or the Epistola ad Fratres de Monte Dei as it was originally called), was for many years attributed to St. Bernard. It enjoyed immense popularity and prestige and for many centuries was constantly quoted by spiritual masters and others who drew inspiration from its folios. In his
introduction, J. M. Dechanet OSB describes the treatise as expressing both perfectly and practically the spirituality of William.\textsuperscript{110}

What a remarkable work is the Golden Epistle, both in form and in substance! Here and there are new and bold ideas, daring formulas, standing out like medallions which give distinction to William's spirituality . . . . He asks of reason all that it can give him, but never tolerates any reason which does not end in some prayer and does not find its full development in some impulse of love.\textsuperscript{111}

Dechanet attributes to William the division of love into two kinds: love "against nature," a degenerate love that "debases the soul below its proper state and leads it to ruin," and love that is "natural" because it corresponds to God's plan for man.\textsuperscript{112} In this text, William examines more fully the steps of the latter: inclination toward God, adherence to God, enjoyment of God, deifying union with God (\textit{amor}, \textit{dilecto}, \textit{caritas}, \textit{unitas spiritas}). While the thought of William is clearly theologically motivated and inspired by Church doctors such as Augustine, he moves away from the essentially simple view of the choice between good and evil.

Once the multiplicity of affections and appetites had been recognized, the way lay open both to a better understanding of the individual and to a clearer perception of man's place in the universe. The individual's spiritual progress could be more subtly observed, for there was no longer a stark choice between good (made possible by grace) and evil (if man is left to himself), but rather a variety of appetites and goods. A man may rise from a lesser love to a higher one. All William's five loves may be in varying degrees, good, and the term \textit{carnalis amor}, which for much of Christian history would have meant fleshly or sinful.
love, is used to describe love of family, ... the psychology of the time, however much it was directed towards God as the final goal, had a genuine respect for natural man.

Love as understood by William began and ended with "communication on earth of the substantial charity of God."

Urged by the love he feels for the young brethren and novices at Mont-Dieu, and wishing "to console their solitude and spur them on in their holy resolution," William sets forth a "detailed directory of the religious life and a mirror of monastic conversatio." He repeats his earlier description of the religious life as being three states, or three ages, of religious life: the animal state or that of beginners, the rational state or that of those making progress, and the spiritual state or that of man's perfection in this life. Studying each state separately, he sketches an outline of behavior and obligation and offers advice and a plan for ascetic life. He stresses the importance of humility and of obedience which is the beginning of the path which leads to restored likeness. He makes clear to the monks that the inexpressible reality of God cannot be embraced by intelligence alone; only through love, a love through the instrument of the Holy Spirit, can He be grasped. In this last writing, William develops a whole psychology of the Godward movement of the soul which rests on self-observation. He provides his contemporaries with what Colin Morris calls, "a spiritual psychology," or,
"in modern terms, a 'clinical theology.'"\textsuperscript{118}

For our purposes, William's most significant work is \textit{De natura corporis et animae}, for in it he attempts to construct a line of communication between a physics of the body and a physics of the soul in order to emphasize the reality that any theory which intends to express man's ability to experience God must begin with man's physical situation in the world. Many of the echoes that resonate in Chrétiens's \textit{Erec et Enide} are found in this work.

In the Prologue, William acknowledges the two most important twelfth century themes, themes which comprised the cornerstone of Cistercian speculation on man: self-knowledge and man as the microcosm, the image of the world.

Among the Greeks the answer of the Delphic Apollo is well known: "Man, know yourself." So also Solomon, or rather Christ, says in the Canticle, "If you do not know yourself, go forth." For he who does not dwell in his own domain through the contemplation of wisdom, necessarily enters into that of others through the vanity of curiosity. The power of knowledge of the thinking man is hardly enough, without the help of grace, to know himself, and even this is of no value unless from the knowledge of what he is he rises to him from whom he is, to him who is above him. It is an unfortunate and stupid mistake to expend the forces of one's mind on other things when nature, indeed the God of nature, has enjoined such an important work within oneself. And so we shall make a thorough investigation of our microcosm, our little world, man, both within and without, that is in soul and body, so that through our understanding of what we see and perceive in ourselves we may rise to the Author of all things, visible and invisible. We shall first say something about the nature of the body, then about what is proper to the soul.\textsuperscript{119}

As we noted earlier, for the Cistercian, to know oneself
meant to understand in what sense each one is the image of God. By introspection, by looking within oneself to one's true nature, each man finds God, for the image of God has been implanted in the soul thus making God more intimate to man than his own inmost self. But unless one knows and understands the functioning of the body, William insists, one cannot fully understand himself and therefore come to know God. For it is through the functioning and harmony of the body that the soul which co-ordinates that body can be recognized. In just such a way, by perceiving the functioning and harmony of mankind and of the world, God comes to be recognized. Thus, the soul is to the body as God is to his universe—everywhere, everywhere entire—this the medievals understood as the parallel of microcosm to macrocosm.

Although John Scotus Erigena in the ninth century had given forceful expression to the theme "man is a microcosm,"¹²⁰ it was not until the first decades of the twelfth century that the subject fired imaginations less timid than their forbears and received decisive prominence in anthropological writing.¹²¹ Such renewed interest in this theme probably owed its popularity in part to the availability of Plato's *Timaeus* and to the preoccupation of the school of Chartres with discussion and commentary on this Greek work.

The first attempts to construct the parallelism between microcosm and macrocosm were rational, let us even call them scientific, in type. Like the cosmos,
man is made of the four elements, and their placement, at creation, within the superior structure of the human body did not alter their native physical character or operation. Because man's corporeal substance comes from these four elements— from earth, flesh, from water, blood, from air, breath, and from fire, warmth— he is called a microcosm, that is, a lesser world. This conception of man's material aspect afforded a vision of man's place in the world capable of giving birth alike to science and to contemplation. Henceforth Christians would direct interested attention upon the world; they would judge that in exercising such an attention they were fulfilling at least some part of their destiny, on the supposition that man is a being consecrated to the world and that in coming to know the world he comes to know himself as well.

Man exists in nature, but he stands at the point where the spiritual and material worlds meet. By coming to know the nature of man both physically and spiritually, one can come to an understanding of the nature of God, for it is through the order of the world that the Creator will be known. That order was conceived as a continuity from lower to higher being. Between each being is an intimate bond which draws the lower being upward and thus causes the fulfillment or happiness of that being. This vision of man as an analogue of God supported the image and likeness theology and provided a basis for the Cistercian insistence that one must look within oneself and know oneself before attempting to achieve any knowledge of God.
From the Prologue of *De natura corporis et animae*, William moves immediately into a discussion of the body which is strongly dependent on the new medicine known to twelfth century thinkers through the writings of Constan-tine the African. In the first treatise, "The Physics of the Human Body," William describes in detail the many parts of the body and how they interact and operate. He systematically moves from classification of the elements and humors to classification of bodily powers, and then to their operation. He concludes this part with a discussion of sensation, which William uses as an analogy for that faculty of the soul by which man can reach union with God.

He again takes up the theme of opposition announced in the Prologue:

We have now written about the exterior man. But not exclusively exterior. We have written about some things that are inside the body of man and are not entirely subject to the senses of man. But by reason and experience physicians and philosophers have discerned these, they have been able to reach this far in their search for the dignity of human nature. Yet they have failed most absurdly in this, that among these things they have thought to include that part of man by which man is the incorruptible image of God and is preeminent above other living things, namely, his rational soul . . . . Let us pass on to the soul, and let us not limit ourselves to what philosophers or scientists of the world think or guess about, but consider briefly what the Catholic Fathers have learned from God and taught to men.

William makes it clear here that, while he is not adverse to using the latest scientific and medical material available to him in attempting to establish a theology of man,
such knowledge is for him sapientia and not scientia. Rather than a surface knowledge which is analytical he aims for an experiential knowledge arrived at through an interiorization of the Truth.

But for a few exceptions, the first sections of the second book, "The Physics of the Soul," although important to William's anthropology and spirituality, are not relevant to this discussion. Section five presents a theme which will be important when discussing Erec et Enide. Here William discusses similitudes between the soul and divine nature, one of which is regal dignity. Although man received from the Creator dominion over other beings signified by his erect stature which, while standing on earth, reaches toward the heavens, his true kingship comes from the intellectual soul and the rule of reason over the desires of nature. True kingship resides in "putting on" the image of the Creator which, rather than looking down at the ground like an animal, looks up toward that with which he has much in common.

For the likeness of man to God is not a thing of passion. Voluptuousness does not liken [man] to God's transcendant nature. Fear and ferocity, desire for some things, hatred for others, are far from the character of divine beauty. 126

Section ten compares the soul's presence in the body to the presence of God in the world. Here William elaborates more fully his thesis that unless one knows and understands the functioning of the body, and the soul that
co-ordinates it, an understanding of God cannot be achieved, for the soul and the body operate as a microcosm of the macrocosm of God and the universe. In the next three sections, eleven through thirteen, William answers the question in what sense is man the image of God, culminating with a development of the Trinitarian aspects of the soul—*memoria*, *consilium*, *voluntas*—and an emphasis on the unique role of the Holy Spirit in the divination of man.

In the final two sections of his treatise, fourteen and fifteen, William details a symbolic presentation of the stages through which man's union with God is accomplished. It is this section which contains William's seven steps of ascent, an important pattern when we examine *Erec et Enide*. In the introduction to his translation of the work, Bernard McGinn says:

Symbols of ascension have been a favored way from the earliest times of bringing to speech those human experiences which are perceived as in some way going beyond the realm of the everyday. The history of the use of symbolic presentation of the ascension of the soul in Christian literature is a long one. Augustine, though normally preferring the use of images of interiorization to portray the way in which the soul encounters God, also made some use of symbols of ascension.127

But Augustine's scheme of ascent is more intellectualized than that of William. Like all Cistercian speculation on man, William's description of the ascent is meant to serve a direct moral purpose: the reformation of one's life by means of a step by step ascent from life to sensation to
reason to will to purgation to human perfection.

On the bottom step of this ladder of progression, the soul gives "life to this earthly and mortal body by its presence." Yet, man has this physical element in common with beasts and trees. "For we also say that these live, we see and confess that each of them is preserved, nourished, grows and reproduces according to its own kind." Thus, the soul of man should not remain at this level, for here

it is in turmoil in itself. Distorting natural skills into wickedness and cunning, it becomes malicious. It plunges itself shamefully into animal pleasures and those of the senses and abandons itself to lust. It becomes like the horse and mule which have no discernment. Prudent only to do evil, it no longer knows how to do evil, it no longer knows how to do well. It has no care for itself, no memory of God. Hence it is imprisoned by its pact with its passions which it abuses miserably. It fears only what is troublesome to its senses; rejoices only when pleasures are at hand; is saddened only when this is taken away. In all things it is like an animal.

Rising to the second step, that of the senses, "where life is more clearly and manifestly perceived," the soul can touch, taste, smell, hear, and desire. And the soul approves and desires that which it perceives as good for it. On this level, the soul must guard against the misuse of the five senses, for it has just begun its journey and has not yet gained the knowledge necessary to recognize and understand the danger they can represent. The soul still reacts and responds in common with the beasts, for it has not yet submitted itself to reason.
In rising to the third step, the soul reaches that which is proper only to man. It recalls in memory that which has been committed to memory and retained, such as:

So many skills of craftsmen and agriculture, the construction of various cities and buildings, the many wonders of architecture, the invention of so many signs: letters, words, gestures, sounds, pictures and paintings; the many languages of the nations, rivers of eloquence, all sorts of songs, many ways of playing and relaxing, musical skills, precision in measurement, mathematical abilities, present conjectures of the past and future.131

On this level the soul relies on those attributes which separate man from the animals: the ability to think, to reason, and to create. These specifically human properties, some learned and some unlearned, can be used for good or for evil. They are the common heritage of all mankind, regardless of how each one chooses to use them. They are the qualities capable of pulling man upward toward the divine. Up to this point the soul works in and through the body.

Now, however, the soul must move beyond the material. It is here that the will, relying on reason, begins to discern spiritual reality, right from wrong. In goodness, the will moves the soul above the actions of the body and withdraws it from dependance upon the physical. This choice involves purgation through obedience to the commandments, especially the commandment to "love one another as I have loved you." In order to delight more in God, the soul
withdraws itself more from sordidness. It wishes nothing for another that it does not wish to happen to itself. It follows the authority and precepts of the wise, and through them tells itself to believe in God. In this daring of the soul, wonderful as it is, there is still labor and great and bitter conflicts against varied troubles and allurements. For in the business of purgation it undergoes the experience of death.  

This is the "turning" point in the soul's ascent to God. By exerting the will in combination with reason and memory, the soul places itself above the region of the body and closer to an understanding of and a participation in the love of God. This is a crucial step in the soul's ascent, for at this point the soul chooses, by means of its will, to move towards restoration of the image of God, to become "truly human." When this choice has been made, the process of conversio, of returning to God, is underway. 

Having reached and moved beyond this "turning" point, the soul recognizes in the fifth step its own goodness and possesses a confidence in itself which enables it to go out to others in the name of God. It fears nothing for itself, but works diligently to restore itself in the image of God. It experiences the death of the body and rebirth in the truth of the mystery of God, the mystery of love which draws the soul towards union with its Lover. 

In the sixth step, the soul fastens a calm and direct gaze on truth, thus enabling an understanding of "those things that truly and ultimately are."

But this action, the desire of understanding those things that truly and ultimately are, is the supreme
gaze of the soul. There is none more perfect, better or more direct. This is the sixth step in its activity. For it is one thing to cleanse the eye of the soul, lest it look in vain or boldly look and see unworthily, another to guard and strengthen its well-being and another to fasten a clam and direct gaze on that which is to be seen. In these last two steps you see what the soul can do in itself.\footnote{133}

Free from the weight of bodily passions, the soul can concentrate all its energies on loving God as it is loved by him, with a purity of mind and heart. At the final step the soul views and contemplates God in everlasting joy.

The very vision and contemplation of truth is the seventh and last step of the soul, now no longer a step but a permanent state to which the previous steps lead. He who enjoys it alone understands what are its joys, what is fruition of the true and supreme good, what is the breath of peace.\footnote{134}

The soul has reached the point where charity reigns, where fear and sorrow are destroyed, where faith and hope are transformed. It lives the life of God, the spiritual life:

\ldots though in the flesh, it does not live according to the flesh. It becomes almost impassible, since its very passions are not passions for it but virtues. It does not fear except with a chaste fear. It is not sad except because it is kept from the kingdom. Rejoicing in the breadth of charity, it joyfully runs the way of the commandments of God.\footnote{135}

Thus does the faithful soul, burning with desire and zeal, make its anabathmon,\footnote{136} or ascension, to the place God has prepared for it. For such a soul has learned to turn its natural passions into virtues and to live, though in the flesh, not according to the flesh. It has learned to shape its will into love and love into charity, which is to direct its heart up the ladder of ascent.
William ends his treatise with a reminder of the importance of charity in this journey of ascent. "Only the difference in love makes the difference between the blessed soul and the damned. In the one love is the guardian of its natural dignity, but in the other it degenerates into carnal bestiality."\(^{137}\)

These Cistercian ideas circulated throughout the bailliage of Troyes and the court of Champagne during the time Chrétien was being educated and began to write.\(^{138}\) We know that an episcopal school dating back to the seventh century existed in Troyes.\(^{139}\) Run by a canon, it was for centuries a training school for clerics. Such a school would permeate the minds of its students with classical authors and theological texts deemed important by the master. Since Bernard, William, and many of the other Cistercian writers represented the best and most popular treatises being written and read at the time, they may possibly have influenced classroom commentary and discussion. The twelfth century saw a general renaissance in education which continued into the thirteenth century, by which time there were three Latin schools and a large number of elementary schools in Troyes suggesting that practically all the children of the town were able to attend one or the other.\(^{140}\) In addition, the monastic schools and novitiates, open to men preparing for monastic life, contained libraries which were continually being updated by the passing of
popular texts from monastery to monastery. Chrétien, who
certainly had a sound education, perhaps in a cathedral
school, may well have been exposed to Cistercian thought
during his educational years.

A more probable and provable influence of Cistercian
thought can be found in the court of Champagne with which
Chrétien identifies himself, both in Erec and in a later
work, Le Chevalier de la Charrette. John Benton has shown
in his article "the Court of Champagne as a Literary Cen­
ter," that Chrétien can be justifiably called a "court au­
uthor, that is someone who wrote for the court"\textsuperscript{141} of Henry
the Liberal and Marie of Champagne. Among the many centers
in twelfth century France where representatives of different
intellectual traditions met, mixing laymen of feudal courts
and churchmen trained in monastic and cathedral schools,
the court of Henry and Marie stands out as one of the most
important. This court was "notable for the education and
patronage of its count and countess, for the prominence of
the many scholars and authors associated with it in one way
or another, and for the quality of its literary remains."\textsuperscript{142}
Benton has also shown that Henry read serious literature,
both the classics and religious writings, and that he sought
the conversation of men of letters.\textsuperscript{143} In addition, he com­
missioned a poet, Simon Chevre d'Or, to compose a series of
short poetic epitaphs for St. Bernard, Hugues de Macon,
abbot of Pontigny, and Pope Eugenius III, all Cistercian
monks. We may properly assume from this, therefore, that Cistercian works were not entirely absent from Henry's
court. An author such as Chrétien who attended the court
of Champagne would have had the opportunity to hear the
recitation of works by other authors, and/or discussion of
such works, without necessarily meeting these authors or
officially studying under or about them.

If a familiarity with Cistercian thought and texts
can be assumed for Chrétien, what about the courtly audi­
ence for whom he wrote? Would they have understood the
literary approach and spiritual parallels which this thesis
attributes to the work?

At the court of Champagne about a third of the witnes­
ses to court charters were clerics, and there was a
small nucleus of churchmen, mainly canons, who traveled
with the count and countess and attended them regularly.
A somewhat larger body of laymen was regularly at the
court and in the company of these churchmen. A courtly
audience was therefore partly composed of clerics, who
may to some degree have shared the literary interests
and attitudes which they had learned in monastic and
cathedral schools. The learning of the count and coun­
tess was probably even more important. We know that
Count Henry read extensively in religious and classical
literature. Marie's training was presumably not as
deep, but her commissioning of Evart's Genesis shows
that she found allegorical exposition congenial.¹⁴⁴

The fact that she commissioned Chrétien to write a courtly
romance, Le Chevalier de la Charrette, shows that she found
that type of literature also to her liking.¹⁴⁵

Chrétien composed a verse narrative with a topic
that dominated the thought of twelfth century man, both
the worldly wise and the morally sensitive: the quest for
self-knowledge. Writing from and for an audience knowledgeable in Church symbolism and Cistercian spirituality, Chrétien, consciously or unconsciously, set up patterns in Erec et Enide parallel to patterns found in Cistercian spirituality, particularly in the treatise of William of St. Thierry, De natura corporis et animae, and in Church ritual. Turning now to Erec et Enide we can find those patterns, comment upon them, and discover what Northrup Frye's approach to literary criticism reveals about the work, the author, and the audience for which it was written.
CHAPTER III

ERE C ET ENIDE

The journey, the pilgrimage, the quest embodies a familiar yet profound literary pattern. The allegorical understanding of life as a journey through a land of exile to the celestial home is rooted in the Old Testament and in Paul's letter to the Hebrews, and its imagery enriched through the tradition of the Emmaus story, especially in the commentaries of Augustine and Gregory the Great. Successive generations of writers used physical imagery to express man's internal feelings of belonging and alienation by constructing a rudimentary geography of here and there, to express what the soul experiences as it travels in its life-journey.

In addition to Augustine and Gregory the Great, Bede, Alcuin and Anselm commented on the "pilgrimage of this life" either directly or through the evocative and associative power of key words such as "alien," "exile," "desire," "fatherland." This theme appears most notably in Augustine's City of God where he uses pilgrimage "as a framework for discussion, a structure within which to develop the subject of belief and moral choice." For Gregory the Great, pilgrimage is a "state of mind and heart, a way of 'seeing' and 'experiencing' the hedged-in-ness of man's
life." Bernard, in his work *The Steps of Humility*, marked out the stages of a spiritual itinerary whose point of departure is "fear of the Lord" by which he meant that knowledge of self, that awareness of man's wretchedness, which signifies the beginning of wisdom. William of St. Thierry speaks in *The Golden Epistle* of the long journey undertaken by those in the monastic life who seek the face of God.

In his work *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, Frederick Locke designates the image of a spiritual quest as fundamental among the archetypal images of mankind.

For this reason [it] is one of the most profound of all the literary themes. It is the "return" to whatever is nearest to the heart of each man that sets him on his quest. It is the search for the ultimate foundation of his being, for that which lies behind all the images of reality and which creates for him those images . . . . It is a dark voyage, a night journey from which no man will return as he left, if he returns at all. The way is long and the dangers almost insurmountable, and if he be alone, man cannot succeed in the high adventure.

The significance of the quest remains always obscure:

The truth that the quester discovers at the end of the Journey is essentially incommunicable and can be only obliquely suggested . . . . Unless the secret is in some way known, it will not be revealed.

The pattern of the journey is quite simple and, allowing for variations, follows this outline wherever it occurs:

The movement begins with a retreat from the familiar, often symbolized by a house or its metaphoric equivalent. The second, and more complex stage, involves opposition,
challenge, the overcoming of obstacles, and a Perilous Passage. The third stage brings the pilgrim to the discovery of the desired place where again the dominant symbol is the house. 154

In his work on structural patterns in the romance, Northrop Frye contends that the quest story, the journey, is the normal form of romance, and he divides the primary narrative movements in literature into descent and ascent. 155 Hierarchical patterns of ascent so important to the medieval mindset originated in Patristic times with neoplatonic thought, especially as expressed by Augustine, who shows in his treatise On Christian Doctrine 156 that man progresses to a conception of God through a series of steps that originates in sense perception. Variations and elaborations of Augustine's argument appear throughout the Middle Ages. In the introduction to his work A Preface to Chaucer, D. W. Robertson traces the development of this pattern of ascent, citing as examples such diverse works as St. Bonaventura's The Mind's Road to God, Dante's Divine Comedy, or Petrarch's Ascent of Mount Ventoux. 157 But, in the early twelfth century William of St. Thierry penned his treatise on the ascent of the soul, and his work, and Bernard's The Steps of Humility, exerted much influence on the thought and writing of their generation.

Though the theme of journey is common to the medieval romance, the principle of organization differs. "By a
principle of organization is meant a way of ordering the material of a work of art by an artist so as to give it meaning. Meaning has to do with the end in view in any work."158 To accept Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* as a work of art assumes that its central symbol, the journey replete with "aventur," will be the key to its artistic structure. Enumerating the kinds of images used to communicate the idea of journey in Cistercian thought and demonstrating how those images conform to the archetypal journey pattern outlined by Frye will give a context in which to understand the artistic structure of the work.

On Easter Day, King Arthur announces a hunt in which the knights must vie with one another to capture the White stag and thus win the right to kiss the fairest maiden of the court. When, on Easter Monday at daybreak, the hunt begins, Erec hangs back from the competition to ride with the Queen and her entourage. Spontaneous and self-indulgent, he has no intention of joining the chase: "My Lady, if it please you, I should gladly accompany you along this road, having come for no other purpose than to bear you company."159 But his refusal to join the courtly games places him in a provocative situation with an unpredictable and insulting dwarf, a situation which leads him indirectly to the country of his heroine, Enide.

When Erec first sees the young maid, he is startled from his self-absorption by her beauty. She is dressed all
in white, although her garments are poor and full of holes. Nature, says Chrétien, has used all her skill in forming this perfect creature.

Never again could [Nature] so strive successfully to reproduce her pattern. Nature bears witness concerning her that never was so fair a creature seen in all the world . . . . In sooth, she was made to be looked at; for in her one could have seen himself as in a mirror (p. 6).

With the promise of Enide as his reward, Erec enters the town sparrowhawk competition with a fixedness of purpose dramatically contrasted with his previous unwillingness to join the stag hunt. By drawing strength from the loveliness of Enide, Erec defeats the knight who held temporary claim to the bird. He returns to King Arthur's court with Enide where she is properly clothed by Queen Guinevere and awarded the honor of the White Stag contest. Chrétien extols the faultless equality of the two lovers: they are so perfectly matched as to be identical.

A perfect match they were in courtesy, beauty, and gentleness. And they were so alike in quality, manner and customs, that no one wishing to tell the truth could choose the better of them, nor the fairer, nor the more discreet. Their sentiments, too, were much alike; so that they were well suited to each other (p. 20).

On Pentecost the two lovers are married. Employing the images of stag and sparrowhawk in a different way, Chrétien describes the consummation of their love:

The hunted stag which pants for thirst does not so long for the spring, nor does the hungry sparrowhawk return so quickly when he is called, as did these two come to hold each other in close embrace. That night they had
full compensation for their long delay (p. 27). After a month-long celebration which includes great ceremony and rejoicing, and concludes with a tournament in which Erec is outstandingly triumphant, the young couple proceed to the court of Erec's father where they enjoy a blissful honeymoon. But Erec becomes inordinately absorbed by Enide. He loved her, says Chrétien, "with such a tender love that he cared no more for arms, nor did he go to tournaments, nor have any desire to joust; but he spent his time in cherishing his wife" (p. 32). His behavior disconcerts and distresses his companions and his wife. He is labeled "recreant." 160

As the two lay together in bed after a night of much lovemaking, the dozing knight overhears his wife's troubled lament, "Unhappy thou!" Aroused and surprised at these words addressed to him, Erec demands an explanation. Recognizing the accuracy of Enide's confession that, in loving her, he has neglected his duties, Erec replies, "You were in the right, and those who blame me do so with reason. And now at once prepare yourself to take the road" (p. 34). Dressing herself for the journey, Enide bemoans her situation: "In faith, alas, he was too fond of me. And now I must go away into exile" (p. 34). When King Lac learns of Erec's plans, he beseeches him to tell

What dost thou intend to do? ... Erec makes reply and tells him all in detail how he has planned his journey. "Sire," he says, "it must be so. I shall
take no extra horse, nor have I any use for gold and silver, squire or sergeant, nor do I ask for any company save that of my wife alone . . . Sire, it cannot be otherwise (pp. 35-36).

Departing, Erec "leads his wife he knows not whither, as chance dictates" (p. 36), forbidding her to speak a word under any circumstances unless he first addresses her. Thus, the two who have been made one by marriage begin a series of adventures the pattern of which, while designed to bring renewed harmony into their relationship, also subtly evokes a spiritual ascent similar to that described by William of St. Thierry. Erec and Enide are destined to shed their former selves in a journey to self-discovery.

Erec's first adventure involves three knights who, Chrétien says, "Covet the palfrey upon which Enide rides" (p. 36). They comment on the richness of her clothes and how they will divide all this booty among themselves. By the custom and practice of the day, however, only one knight at a time will assail him. Meanwhile Erec, deep in self-pitying thoughts, rides on unaware of the danger. Because of his reproach against speaking, Enide mentally agonizes before finally warning Erec of the impending assault. Facing each knight separately, Erec defeats all three. Capturing their steeds, he bids Enide "lead and drive the three horses in front of her" (p. 38).

Soon there appear five other knights bent on plunder. They too discuss the pickings before them and parcel
out what is most appropriate to each. "Covetousness," says Chrétien, "is a bad thing . . . . Much that a fool plans is not executed, and many a man misses what he thinks to obtain" (p. 38). Although Erec sees the approaching knights, he pretends not to, letting Enide respond to them first. He then chastises her for transgressing his commands. After defeating each knight in turn, Erec catches all five of the horses and hands them over to his wife to be led with the other three. "Enide had hard work to lead them all" (p. 40). When night comes and they take refuge under a tree, Enide insists on keeping the night vigil so that Erec can sleep. "Thus, he slept and she kept watch, never dozing the whole night, but holding tight in her hand by the bridle the horses until the morning broke" (p. 41).

Having weathered successfully the two dangers and the night, the couple arrive at the meadows of Count Galoain where they undergo their third adventure. Enamored of the beauty of Enide, the Count covets her for himself. Offering her riches and a life of luxury, he attempts to corrupt her through persuasion. When this fails, he threatens force. "I give you my word that if you do not do my will there soon will be some sword-play here. Rightly or wrongly, I will have your lord slain right before your eyes" (p. 44). To save Erec's life, Enide agrees to the count's treachery. But "with her heart's thoughts her words do not agree" (p. 44). Unaware of the danger threatening him,
Erec, in courtly fashion, permits the Count to enjoy his wife's company. "Now Erec is in great peril, and does not know that he must be on his guard. The Count's intentions are very base in planning to steal away his wife and kill him when he is without defense" (p. 45). That night as Erec sleeps in ignorance, Enide again keeps vigil over her lord. "Full of grief and anxiety, she never closed her eyes that night, but remained on watch for her lord's sake" (p. 45). In the morning the two escape, but the Count and one hundred well-armed knights pursue them. Erec takes his stand against these opponents killing many and grievously wounding the Count. Against such overwhelming odds only a strongly constructed armor would hold up. "Erec's hauberk," says Chrétien, "was very solid and protected him from death without the tear of a single mesh" (p. 47).

Having left the seven horses behind, Erec and Enide ride swiftly away. Coming to a deep and broad moat, they cross over the drawbridge and enter the kingdom of a knight "very small of stature, but very courageous of heart" (p. 48), who tears down the hillside prepared to defend his domain against what appear to be intruders. Enide, dismayed and despairing, knows not which of two courses to pursue: whether to speak or to hold her peace. Chrétien describes how she takes counsel with herself, preparing to speak so that her tongue moves, yet nothing comes forth.
from her voice. The function of words, gestures, sounds necessary for speech and for the operation of memory is particularized as Chrétien adroitly draws a picture of the human mind at work.

When Enide finally addresses him, Erec responds to her in a new way, "for he realizes and knows full well that she loves him above all else, and he loves her, too, to the utmost" (p. 49). The combat between the two knights also takes a different form from that of Erec's previous encounters: the two knights are so evenly matched in strength and power that they engage in battle from the third to the ninth hour before the knight breaks his sword upon Erec's shield and surrenders to his mercy. For the first time, Erec's opponent is named: "My name is Guivret the Little. I am very rich and powerful" (p. 51). As king of the Irish, Guivret equals Erec in rank and nobility, but in recognition of Erec's potential, the Irishman offers himself as liegeman to the young knight. "I promise you that never, so long as I am alive, shall you have need of my help but that I shall go at once to aid you with all the assistance I can command." After binding up each other's wounds, the two knights kiss and embrace in mutual affection before Erec and Enide resume their journey.

With this adventure, a subtle change in the pattern of the action occurs. Erec turns from self-defensive response to the onslaughts made on his person by marauding
knights to initiating the encounters in response to the needs of others. He moves from performing deeds for self-esteem to a higher purpose, bringing help to others. His next adventure will be to rescue a damsel in distress. The psychological relationship between Erec and Enide also undergoes a subtle transformation at this point in the narrative. Erec's harshness towards his wife and her docility in regard to him begin to change into a reciprocal trust and a deeper and enduring love. As her character asserts itself, Enide takes a more active role in the adventures. Her sapientia shapes and develops the action. In the remaining adventures, with growing confidence and by means of her reasoning powers rather than Erec's force of arms, Enide asserts herself to rescue and protect her husband.

When they resume their journey, Erec understands that he is sorely wounded and in need of medical care. Despite his condition, when they come upon King Arthur's outdoor Court tented in the forest for a few days of hunting, Erec again cannot be persuaded to remain and participate in their pleasurable pastimes. In his quest for self-discovery, he shuns the values of Arthur's Court. Leaving it behind—"Be not angry! but you shall not accompany me a single step. I'll thank you if you'll stay behind!" (p. 56)—Erec and Enide traverse the wood until the hour of prime. When, in the distance the cry of a damsel
in great distress is heard, Erec leaves Enide and hurries along the way toward his fifth adventure.

He finds the maiden who tells him that her knight and lover has been kidnapped by two wicked and cruel giants. Still weak from his wounds, Erec nevertheless takes on the challenge, slays the giants, and frees the knight. The knight, whose name is Cadoc of Gabriol, offers himself in liege to accompany and serve Erec as lord. Refusing his offer, Erec leaves the knight with his lady. "I shall continue my way alone; for you have no call to go with me. I have no need of your company . . . . To God I now commend you both, for too long, me thinks, I have tarried here" (p. 59).

Concerned for Enide's safety, Erec hastens to where he left her. But, faint from his wounds and from loss of blood, he falls from his horse causing Enide to believe he has been killed. As she mourns his death and contemplates taking her own life, the wealthy Count Oringle of Limors happens by. He attempts to give comfort, even offering to marry her. Enide spurns these advances, so the wily Count suggests taking the knight's body to his castle to be interred, for all assume Erec to be dead. Enide escorts the body, never ceasing along the way to make lament. When the entourage arrives at the palace, Oringle forces Enide to marry him in spite of her refusal to consent. Angered at her continued grief over Erec, the Count strikes her.
"Keep silence, all," the Count replies to his protesting barons, "the dame is mine and I am hers, and I will do with her as I please" (p. 63). Springing up, he strikes her again.

Amidst all the commotion, Erec recovers from his swoon, sees what is occurring and, drawing his sword, attacks and kills the Count and scatters the frightened barons who think he has risen from the dead. "Wrath and the love he bore his wife gave him courage" (p. 63). Erec grabs his shield and Enide seizes his lance and the two escape on the back of one horse. Embracing and kissing his wife, Erec, in an act of free will, offers himself to her.

Be no more concerned in any wise, for I love you now more than ever I did before; and I am certain and rest assured that you love me with a perfect love. From this time on for evermore, I offer myself to do your will just as I used to do before (p. 64).

The news about Erec and Enide and the Count of Limors reaches the ears of Guivret the Little who immediately assembles a thousand men-at-arms to recover the body of his friend and to deliver the lady. Coming upon these riders at midnight, Erec thinks first of Enide's safety and hides her in a thicket. He goes forth to meet his seventh adventure, weak and exhausted from his wounds. Failing to recognize one another in the darkness, the two friends clash, "but the fight was unequal, for one was weak and the other strong" (p. 65). When Guivret strikes Erec with such force that he falls to the earth, Enide
springs from the hedge, grabs the reins of Guivret's horse and, with angry words, chastizes him for attacking a wounded man. Distressed to learn he has injured his friend, Guivret apologizes and invites the pair to his castle to recuperate. Nursed back to health by Guivret's sisters, Erec and Enide enjoy a second honeymoon.

Now that Enide was very happy and had everything she desired, her great beauty returned to her; . . . Now she was embraced and kissed, now she was blessed with all good things, now she had her joy and pleasures" (p. 68).

Chrétien dwells on the state of joy earned by the two lovers:

Unadorned they lie in bed and each enfolds and kisses the other; nothing gives them so much joy. They have had so much pain and sorrow, he for her and she for him, that now they have their satisfaction. Each vies in seeking to please the other. Of their further sport I must not speak. Now they have so welded their love and forgotten their grief that they scarcely remember it anymore (p. 68).

When they decide to take their leave from the hospitality of Guivret, Erec indicates he is now ready to return to the Court of King Arthus. 

To which Guivret makes prompt reply, "Sire, you shall not go off alone! For I myself shall go with you and shall take companions with us, if it be your pleasure." Erec accedes to this advice, and says that, in accordance with his plans, he wishes the journey to be begun (p. 69).

In terms of the journey motif, Erec has traversed the land of exile and has emerged from his "night journey." By means of seven adventures, he has made his ascent to self-recognition and the recovery of his original identity.
Casting off that which concealed their true identity, Erec and Enide have attained a union which, like the journey itself, is capable of bearing a heavy burden of meaning. Having laid out a structural pattern of ascent by seven steps, a pattern paralleled in William's writing and discussed in the previous chapter, Chrétien now turns his attention to a vision suggestive of that which awaits the soul who chooses to abide in carnality.

The Joy of the Court "has caused sorrow to many a worthy man," Erec is told.

You yourself will eventually be killed and undone if you will not heed my counsel . . . . And know well that I have seen many a man ruined who solicited this Joy. They were never any the better for it, but rather did they all die and perish (p. 73).

The setting for this Joy which Erec goes to win is a garden which Chrétien describes in the following manner:

[It has] no wall or fence except of air; yet by a spell, the garden was on all sides so shut in by the air that nothing could enter there any more than if the garden were enclosed in iron, unless it flew in over the top. And all through the summer and the winter, too, there were flowers and ripe fruits there; and the fruit was of such a nature that it could be eaten inside; the danger consisted in carrying it out; for whoever should wish to carry out a little would never be able to find the gate, and never could issue from the garden until he had restored the fruit to its place. And there is no flying bird under heaven, pleasing to man, but it sings there to delight and to gladden him, and can be heard there in numbers of every kind. And the earth, however far it stretch, bears no spice or root of use in making medicine, but it had been planted there, and was to be found in abundance. Through a narrow entrance the people entered (p. 75).

Although this garden description fits the poetic nature
motif which E. R. Curtius identifies as *Locus amoenus*, the scenic images of abundance all turn inward. Nothing that exists within can escape, including the very tall knight who does battle with any vassal who dares to cross the pale. In addition, near this marvelous orchard of flowers, fruits, and melodious birds stand sharp stakes upon which are impaled helmets and the heads of dead bodies. One stake alone is vacant except for a horn.

Erec eagerly requests to undertake the ambivalent adventure called Joy of the Court. This experience undertaken with his full consent differs from and develops upon his earlier adventures. Leaving Enide behind—"I cannot longer tarry here, nor can you go along with me; for, as the King has ordered, I must not take you beyond this point" (p. 76)—Erec undertakes this most perilous of adventures. Recognizing this as his ultimate task, "he went off alone down a path, without companion of any sort" (p. 76).

On a splendid silver bed under a sycamore tree, Erec comes upon a lady. When in courtly fashion he sits with her in conversation, the tall knight heaves into sight and challenges him to do battle. The two fight first on horseback, then on foot. When their eyes are so blinded by sweat and blood that they "completely lose their sight, they let their shields fall to the ground, and seize each other angrily" (p. 78). Thus they fight hand to hand for several more hours until finally the big knight, completely
exhausted, admits defeat. In response to Erec's demand for the truth about this "Joy," the conquered knight tells his story: although the knight and his lady had known and loved each other since childhood, a blind oath bound him to her exclusively and uniquely for their lifetime. The full extent of his obligation to her became apparent only when he was dubbed a knight, the outward expression of attaining the status of manhood. It was then that he found himself caught in a "prison":

Thus my lady thought to detain me here for a long stay; she did not think that there would ever enter this garden any vassal who could conquer me. In this way she intended to keep me absolutely shut up with her all the days of my life . . . . Now I have told you the truth and be assured that it is no small honour which you have gained. You have given great joy to the court of my uncle and my friends; for now I shall be released from here; and because all those who are at the court will have joy of it, therefore those who awaited the joy called it "Joy of the Court" (p. 79).

Giving Erec his name, Mabonagrain requests that the young knight perform one more deed which will complete his liberation:

But I must still tell you that there is in this garden a horn which I doubt not you have seen. I cannot issue forth from here until you have blown the horn; but then you will have released me, and then the Joy will begin (p. 80).

Erec sounds the horn which summons the entire populace and initiates a celebration of joy which lasts for three days. This adventure is most significant; it raises Erec to a distinctively new status. Not only is Mabonagrain freed from his imprisonment, but Erec has conquered
something for himself as well as the others. What that something is Chrétien does not specify, relying instead on his audience's understanding of the word "Joie." In overcoming Mabonagrain and releasing him from the carnal love which controlled his life, Erec won "Joie" for himself and for all men of the courtly world.

After the three day celebration, Erec, Enide, and Guivret continue on their way to King Arthur's Court. Upon their arrival, they are greeted with joy and merry-making. The King asks Erec the news of his journey, at which Erec relates his seven adventures

without forgetting any detail . . . . of the three knights whom he defeated, and then of the five, and then of the Count who strove to do him harm, and then of the two giants—all in order, one after the other, he told him of his adventures up to the point where he met Count Oringle of Limors (p. 84).

Teasing his audience, Chrétien refuses to explain why Erec set out on his journey.

Do you think now that I shall tell you what motive he had had in starting out? Nay, for you know the whole truth about this and the rest, as I have revealed it to you (p. 84).

Having established a pattern which he can assume his audience will recognize, Chrétien moves on to complete his narrative.

Erec and Enide stay at Arthur's court until three weeks before Christmas, at which time Erec learns of the death of his father. At nine o'clock on Christmas day, dukes, counts, kings, Normans, Bretons, Scotch, Irish, folk

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from England and from Cornwall, all come together at court for the coronation of Erec and Enide. In rhetoric of luxury—glistening gems and armor, gleaming gold, sumptuous materials, priceless furs, chairs of ivory, ceremonies, feasts and tournaments—Chrétien sets a coronation scene distinguished not only by its praise of worldly splendour, but also by its belief in the God-given harmony of the natural order and man's ability to discover and imitate that order.164

Erec wears a lustrous robe on which four fairies with great skill and mastery had worked and woven with thread of gold the symbols of the quadrivium: geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy. The introduction of the quadrivium suggests a vision of transcendent kingship. The description of Erec's sceptor confirms this emphasis on the spiritual dimension.

Listen to the description of the sceptre, which was clearer than a pane of glass, all of one solid emerald, fully as large as your fist. I dare to tell you in very truth that in all the world there is no manner of fish, or of wild beast, or of man, or of flying bird that was not worked and chiselled upon it with its proper figure (p. 89).

When the bells for mass ring from the cathedral, Erec and Enide go there to solemnize their coronation. They are greeted by a procession of all the clergy coming toward them bearing all the holy relics and treasures of the Church.
Crosses and prayerbooks and censers and reliquaries, with all the holy relics, of which there were many in the Church, were all brought out to meet them; nor was there any lack of chants made (p. 89).

Chrétien ends his tale of trial through adventure with this image of royal pomp and celebration so grand and marvelous that it strains the imagination. But, into this joyful gathering of ritual and song, Chrétien inserts:

Never were seen so many kings, counts, dukes, and nobles together at a Mass, and the press was so great and thick that the church was completely filled. No low-born man could enter there, but only ladies and knights. Outside the door of the church a great number still remained, so many were there come together who could not get inside the church (p. 89).

It seems that, with these words, Chrétien intends to suggest the exclusiveness of this society to which Erec belongs and over which he is crowned king. While outside the church "a great number" had gathered, only those few, only knights and ladies, were allowed to enter. "For many are called but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:14)

Erec Auerbach has commented upon the exclusiveness of this courtly society and the way in which, by trial through adventure, the knight is admitted in. The series of adventures is raised to the status of a fated and graduated test of election; it becomes the basis of a doctrine of personal perfection which has very little to do with earthly or practical purposes. Auerbach notes that contemporaneous with courtly culture:

There was another movement which gave expression to this graduated proving of election, as well as the theory
of love, with much greater rigor and clarity--namely, Victorine and Cistercian mysticism.166

The structure of Erec et Enide as that of a progress through stages has echoes of the progress of the soul and, specifically, of William's treatise on the soul's ascent. Having traversed the narrative of the poem, underlining along the way certain shifts and changes deemed important to the argument, we will now look at the patterns in the courtly romance and in Cistercian spirituality and Church ritual noting the similarities and parallels.

Similarities and Parallels

Although the central pattern of Erec et Enide is the journey, there is another principle which governs the organization of the poem and which, when noted, provides a context in which to understand the artistic unity. Built into the structural fabric of the narrative is the ritual of the Ecclesiastical year which, although perhaps not immediately evident to the modern reader, would be recognized by an audience familiar not only with the Church's Liturgical year, but with the individual texts used for each day and the symbolism associated with liturgical feasts.167 The poem opens on Easter Sunday. The marriage of Erec and Enide occurs on Pentecost. Their crowning at the end of the poem takes place on Christmas day. The journey of the couple follows the liturgical path set out by the Church to evoke the
inter-action of Christ in the world and to lead Christians from death to a new life in Him. The Easter cycle celebrates the rising of Christ from the dead, the miracle upon which the Christian faith is founded. The cycle of Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit to abide forever with the Church. The Christmas cycle celebrates the sending by God the Father of His Son into the world.

The importance of the Church’s liturgical year cannot be overestimated. One of the most significant parts of Christian reality is this way of dividing the year. It reveals all the various aspects, the richness and glory, of the Pascal Mystery, the central and unifying event of Christian belief. It captures the acts of God, enshrines them in all of their timelessness, and makes them contemporary with each succeeding generation. Although today, the Ecclesiastical year begins with the Christmas cycle, it was not always and everywhere so in the Middle Ages. Many regions in France reckoned the year from Easter, a practice popular in court circles and introduced into the French chancery by Philip Augustus (1180-1223).  

Chrétiens poem opens with a topos familiar to Arthurian romance, one used not only by Chrétiens in other works, but also by other medieval writers: reference to a high church feast being celebrated at the court of Arthur. In this poem, the feast is Easter Sunday. In the liturgy of the Church, Easter is considered the greatest holiday of
the year. It symbolizes a return to life after death, the glory of Christ's resurrection. After the terrible conflict initiated by Satan whereby death entered the world, the dawn of Easter came to dispel the darkness, to undo that death, and to establish life in the Kingdom of God. The feast of the Resurrection provides the Christian with hope because eternal life for the soul began with the Resurrection of Christ.

The feast of Easter is fundamental to the concept of Christ's restoration of human nature. It celebrates an event that belongs to the Person of the Word made flesh, to the risen Lord who has triumphed once and for all over sin, death and Satan. In his Gospel, John interprets Christ's death as inaugurating a messianic era of personal intimacy with Him. This intimacy will demand a period of testing through tribulation, followed by perfect joy (John 14:18-22, 15:16-22). The Incarnation and birth, celebrated at Christmas, occurred in Christ's eternally meaningful humanity; His death and resurrection, the central events of his life, continue to operate as significant necessities for the movement of God into the life of man and the drawing of men into the family of God.

Gregory the Great penned a sermon for Easter Monday and another for Pentecost in which he associates the soul's journey to God with Luke's account of the Emmaus journey. The availability of these texts to, and their influence on,
medieval thinkers was enormous.

Gregory bequeathed, from the Easter Monday and Pentecost sermons, what was to become the standard interpretation of the beginning and end of the Emmaus journey . . . . Gregory's words reappear with a fair fidelity for the next six centuries in commentary after commentary. In general, however, the closer we approach the twelfth century, the less Gregory's exact words shine forth from these texts; yet never, we shall see, do these commentaries contravene Gregory's meaning . . . . Even in the twelfth century, some commentaries retain the form and wording of Gregory's original, though in a somewhat simplified form . . . . The Gregorian phrases emerge most elaborately in an anonymous twelfth century sermon . . . [listed] among "works associated with Bernard of Clairvaux."170

"Everyone," says Jean Leclercq, "had read [Gregory] and lived by him . . . . We have explicit information as to his being constantly read at Cluny and elsewhere."171

In his homily for Easter Monday, Gregory attends to the motives of the disciples who leave Jerusalem for Emmaus. They set out, he says, loving and doubting.172 Although the disciples "survived the crucifixion and burial with a love which doubt has not withered," doubt has obscured their vision. The disciples leave Jerusalem certain only of Christ's death and burial though they have heard of the resurrection. But Gregory attributes to them a love that brings them "deity" even though they do not yet fully grasp the meaning of Easter.

The two disciples love, and the object of their love walks with them; loving they speak, and the Person whom they discuss is there. For Gregory, the stranger is an outward extension of the disciples inner state. Here the union between Christ and the disciples is real, but incomplete, and thus it awaits development--which will come, in our terms, through the narrative progression.
Gregory's simple beginning implies that the disciples will progress towards a removal of their inner blindness, as the journey progresses toward a sense of completeness.  

Gregory uses the metaphor of pilgrimage to express the contents, not only of belief, but more importantly of experience.

The Pentecost sermon speaks of "our journey on earth." This earthly journey seeks "the holy society of the supernal citizens." Living within the conditions of this journey, man's heart loves and takes fire with "a desire for its own eternity."

Love directs the heart to a new, a supernal, destination. This new love has grown in the wayfarer as a result of his hearing words along the way, and with this new love, the heart has grown anxious in a desire for the unattained: "the heart grows anxious in desire for the supernal."  

This journey on earth which originates in love, proceeds through a meeting with the divine in words, and issues into new love and increased desire.  

In these homilies, Gregory sees the two disciples as a paradigm of all souls who see the face of God, and the Emmaus journey as a paradigm for the experience of that pilgrimage. In his comments on the Song of Songs, Gregory describes the pilgrimage of exiled mankind:

Ever since the human race was expelled from the joys of paradise and came into the pilgrimage of this present life, it has borne a heart blinded to spiritual understanding . . . . Thus the divine word speaks through certain enigmas to the sluggard and cold spirit, and from the things it knows it hiddenly insinuates a love it did not know. Thus scripture enkindles whom it spir-
Man is awakened to a pilgrim's response by words which enkindle his heart. This enkindling ignites an understanding of a love which it never knew but now tastes. In its typology, the Emmaus story reflects the soul's ascent to God. In his works, William of St. Thierry marked out this pattern which can be recognized in Scripture and in salvation history.

Chrétien's use of a structural pattern which evokes the Church's liturgical year and of such trinitarian patterns as those found in the works of William of St. Thierry, is important to an understanding of the poem. Through a mode of analogical evocation, he manipulates his materials to build a literary microcosm which, while not imitating in the usual sense of the word, reflects in its typology a macrocosm of Church life and salvation history. His decision to begin his narrative with the cycle of Easter rather than Christmas, is, perhaps, historically accurate for the time and place in which he writes, and is also essential to his principal of analogy. The journey on which Erec and Enide embark leads them from death to life, restores their human nature as images of God, and draws them finally into His Kingdom. Easter, as a memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ, evokes the condition of man as a corporeal and mutable creature who needs the mediation of the
God-made-man to raise him from the state of flesh, his historical situation as a consequence of original sin, to the state of spirit, the experiential knowledge of God.

The White Stag hunt, conducted on Easter Monday, presents the first image by means of which an understanding of Erec's universe can be obtained. Considered to be the "noblest" sport, the stag chase was especially favored by medieval writers to symbolize an adventure of magnitude or intensity. The hero's participation in the chase could lead him to a sense of his identity or it might define and alter his life.177

The stag had been rendered complex by its important appearances in a variety of contexts; having been charged with meanings often in conflict with one another, it afforded a figure of remarkable richness to secular love poets.178 Among the many literary meanings of the image, the most prevalent was the pursuit of sexual and erotic love.179 But, in exegetical and spiritual writings, the iconographic image of the stag signified Christ.180 In all these associations, the stag suggests a viewing as a tangible sign of some higher truth.

An interpretation of the White Stag as an image which combines the sensual and the spiritual, with the sensual dominating, defines Erec also. Like the stag who is governed by neither reason nor affection, Erec separates himself from the rest of the knights to ride with the Queen. "What shall I say of his virtues?" Chrétien asks,
and then describes the ermine mantle, flowered silk coat, brocade hose, and golden spurs in which he is clad. An ornament of court life, his soul exists at the level which William calls animalis. Carried along by life, he demonstrates no purpose or direction. Venturing into the unknown to avenge an insult, he is the animal man described by William as dominated by bodily senses, engrossed in the pleasures afforded it by material things, obsessed by overweening pride. When he meets and falls in love with Enide, an experience which should be a source of inspiration becomes for him an obsession with sensuality:

Now although, according to the order due to nature, [the lover's] spirit ought to be led upwards by its own natural gravity, by its own love to the God who created it, the person who is humiliated by the allurements of the flesh does not understand, comparable to stupid animals, he has become like them.

In order to salve his wounded pride, he enters the sparrowhawk contest. In the Middle Ages, the word "hawk" denoted any kind of bird of prey. This class-conscious society assigned the various kinds of birds according to a hierarchical rank. The sparrowhawk, cunning and handsome, with a propensity to attack larger birds, was allotted to the priestly class. As an image, it carries a multiplicity of meanings. In secular literature, the sparrowhawk is associated with sexual activity and the knightly lover. In religious art, the hawk symbolizes the pleasure of the chase and secular life as opposed to the spiritual life of
the cloister. In the processions of the Seven Deadly Sins, the hawk most often illustrates the attribute of Pride. As a whole, however, birds symbolize man's spiritual aspirations and represented the soul as opposed to the body.¹⁸³

Like the stag, the sparrowhawk combines carnal attributes with spiritual ones. When Chrétien, in his account of Erec and Enide's wedding, isolates the two images from their respective contests and employs them to convey the passion and voluptuous joy of the lovers, he suggests a symbolic identification of the two with the hawk and the stag and thus the incompleteness of their union.¹⁸⁴ The stag and the hawk cannot truly unite, for each thirsts and hungers for a fulfillment not possible on the carnal level.

Chrétien reinforces the incompleteness of their union by describing it in language which recalls Psalm 41:

Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum:
ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.
Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fortem vivium:
quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei?

(As the hart panteth after the fountains of water:
so my soul panteth after thee, O God.
My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God:
when shall I come and appear before the face of God).¹⁸⁵

Like the lamenting soul of the Psalm, Erec exists in a spiritual depression. His unbridled sensuality has exiled him from experiencing the True Love. Though his soul thirsts to see the face of God, its true dwelling place, Erec, like the soul, is no longer in contact with his own spirit, the higher part of his being. He is almost en-
tirely imprisoned within the realm of the sensible world­ly. As William says, when the soul

is accustomed to [the bodily senses] and thinks that nothing exists except what it has left outside or brought back into itself, it finds its happiness as long as possible in living with bodily pleasures. 186

When he is startled from his self-indulgent behavior by Enide's reproach of his way of life — "Unhappy thou!" — Erec, who found it "very difficult to observe due measure in what [he] believed to be good," 187 is in a state of "amor carnalis", involvement in misguided love. William cautions his monks about just such evils:

It is easy to overcome and meet with reason temptations which give grounds for suspicion or at first sight are obviously evil. It is those which insinuate themselves under the appearance of good that are more difficult to recognize and more dangerous to entertain. 188

Enide's lament forces Erec to acknowledge the direction in which he is moving. Like Dante the pilgrim, Erec may be viewed as turning his formless will toward God, the only step within his power to take. As William notes, this simple beginning, this moment of conversion, opens the way for God to act.

As the object of Erec's unbridled sensuality, Enide appears to give rise to his "amor carnalis." In fact, Enide is a multivalent symbol. If her name comes from the Welsh eneit meaning soul, as Urban Holmes suggests, 189 she carries suggestions not only of carnality, but also of spirituality. The fact that Erec's marriage to Enide takes
place on Pentecost Sunday is important not only for an understanding of the poem, but also for an understanding of Enide's role in it.

In the context of the liturgical year, Pentecost completes Easter: it brings to fulfillment the saving events commemorated during Paschal-tide. On this day, the Church celebrates the advent of the Holy Spirit, the product of the love which is exchanged between the Father and the Son. The Spirit comes to the hearts of mankind to live, to sanctify, to strengthen, to console. Through love, the Spirit strives to bring the soul into the mystical body of Christ, the Kingdom of God.

William conceives of the Holy Spirit as the link, the bond of union relating the soul to the Father and the Son. By means of the special relationship, which he calls experiential knowledge, the soul makes its return to God, its transition from image to likeness. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the divine nature is made present to the human soul. In William's trichotomy of memory, reason and will, the Holy Spirit "claims" the will.

As with Easter, these concepts about Pentecost would be known by the medieval audience and brought to bear on the narrative. Because she brings love into Erec's life, Enide typifies the Third Person of the Trinity. She is not to be taken as an allegorical symbol of the Holy
Spirit, but she participates in certain modalities which evoke His image. While functioning as an analogy of the Spirit of Love, she remains the maiden confined by space and time to the twelfth century narrative. The placement of their nuptial union on Pentecost permits Enide and her love for Erec to become an instrument for spiritual insight which then allows each person to draw from it in proportion to his capacity to understand.

Like Dante's Beatrice, Enide is subject to a multiplicity of meanings:

From the beginning Enide seems part of some larger pattern of meaning . . . . These linked references [to her shabby dress] lead inward in a way which suggests not only a truer worth in Enide than Erec first discovers, but also the possibility that she is herself 'only a stage in a figural pattern, that Erec's love of her must lead to something higher.192

Acting in the manner of grace, she is the motivating force which sets in motion Erec's journey toward inner conversion. As a bride, she suggests more than human love. Like the Bride of the Song of Songs, she personifies the love of God, the Holy Spirit, and the mystical union of Christ and His Church.

When Erec first sets eyes on Enide, Chrétien insists that her beauty so surpasses all other creatures of this world that Nature herself marveled at such perfection (p.6). In twelfth century neo-platonism, human beauty had a spiritual purpose:

It lures the eyes in order to possess the mind,
forcing it toward a higher reality of which it is a manifestation. Through its revealing power, it initiates a process of loving and, at the same time, knowing. 193

This experience of beauty is self-transcending in that the love it arouses leads upward in an ascent beyond the temporal. Human beauty, having a divine source, starts the soul on its course toward union with God by luring the soul up the ladder of love and actualizing in it even higher degrees of knowing until such beauty reaches its corporeal limit of power. 194 As such a vision of beauty, Enide, like Beatrice, can restore Erec to immortality.

"She was made to be looked at," Chrétien says, "for in her one could have seen himself as in a mirror" (p.6). In neo-platonic thought, corporeal beauty exists for the sake of incorporeal beauty; the love of and for the former is simply a reflex or mirror image, finite but faithful, of the love of and for the latter. 195 Since the principle of order in the medieval universe was hierarchical, Enide's beauty, as the finite mirror image of God, functions as a transmitter of that Beauty to those inferior orders on the cosmic ladder. She becomes for Erec a mirror in which he sees reflected his true beauty as image of God. This reflection initiates a process by which he enters into the internal mirror of his mind to begin a discovery of his true identity not only as image of God, but also as likeness. The soul
... recognizes in some way in itself the image of its Creator. It sees him as the illuminating light, and itself as the light able to be illumined. More, it sees that the things present in itself, the mind, thought, and will, in some way respond to the image of the Supreme Trinity. 196

When later Chrétien describes the two in the first bloom of their love as so much alike that no one could choose the better of them, he intends to suggest that the love which these two creatures share in a finite mode has the capacity to reflect, as a mirror image, the infinite Love of their Creator. 197

William, drawing from St. Paul, I Cor. 13:12, makes extensive use in his works of the mirror as image to describe the soul's thirst for God. He distinguishes quite clearly between images which reflect one's true identity and those which present a misshapen reflection:

"For as long as God is not seen save in a glass and in a riddle, man will succeed in contemplating him only through an image. Whether it be the glass or the riddle (that is, by the image clearer or more obscure), man in his lifetime will succeed in this only through an image. But in proportion as the soul has kept more faithfully within it the dignity and truth of God's image, it ascends toward God by means of images that are more faithful and closer to the truth." 198

Chrétien intends to present Erec's human love for Enide, when properly focused, as the instrument by which he will be impelled upward in an activity of conversion. In another text, William discusses the dynamic character of this movement toward the Trinity, which is the source of man's true dignity, by means of Platonic imagery:
Withdraw from things which are beneath you. They are less formed, less beautiful than you are. Come up to the Form that gives form so that you may be more beautiful. Constantly unite yourself to this Form, for you will receive more from its beauty the more the weight of charity (charitatis) presses you against it. From this you will be stabilized as the image of him from whom you took your origin.199

The journey of Erec and Enide follows the pattern set out by William for the soul's ascent to God. Even Erec's harsh treatment of his wife can be interpreted by means of this model. To explain the first step which animal man must take in order to move upward, William compares the subjugation of the will to the role of a wife who should submit herself

... wholly to obedience, concerned not to judge but only to do what [she] is bidden .... This perfect obedience especially in a beginner does not include discretion, that is, it does not question what is bidden, or why, but all its effort is directed to the faithful and humble accomplishment of what its [husband] commands it to do.200

The impulsive will must learn to be obedient and submissive to reason in order for the soul to ascend.

Since animality is a form of life dominated by material things, Erec must first subdue the three knights who can be understood in terms of his infatuation with worldly things: concupiscence of the flesh, avarice of the eyes, pride of life.201 Although "fear of the Lord" is beginning to develop, Enide's actions can be seen in terms of the will which has not yet submitted in complete obedience to reason and thus she ignores Erec's prohibi-
tion and informs him of the approaching knights. After defeating them, Erec gives their horses, often images of unbridled passions, to Enide to "lead and drive," for when the soul resides at the animal level, it remains weighted down by inordinate desires of the flesh. 202 When the five knights attack, Erec takes on and subdues each in turn. Similarly, spiritual writers speak of confronting and subduing the five senses "where life is more clearly and manifestly perceived." 203 Although chastised, Enide still fails to obey Erec's command for silence. He brings her the five horses whereby she has "hard work to lead them all." But, when night comes, as Erec sleeps, she manages to keep control of them.

On the third step of the ascent, Erec must protect himself against a more cunning enemy, one who uses skills which are "proper to man" 204 such as words, gestures, language, thought. When the covetous count fails to corrupt Enide through persuasion, he threatens her. Using her wits she outsmarts him and the couple escape leaving behind the "ponderous" horses which, as earlier suggested, might be associated with concupiscence. Although one hundred knights pursue and attack them, Erec's armor, like properly practiced asceticism, protects him from death blows.

In William's ascent pattern, the fourth step marks a turning point. Here the soul "dares" to move beyond the
material. The will, freed by a maturing obedience to reason, begins to orient the activity of the soul towards God. "Up to the present [the soul] has been the willing slave of his body, but now he is beginning to subject it to the spirit and fit himself to perceive the things of God." Erec's journey also assumes a subtle change, for "in order to delight more in God, [he] withdraws [himself] more from all sordidness." As his actions make clear, this is "the fourth step where goodness begins." In contrast to his former adventures, the confrontation with Guivret results from the small knight's misconception of Erec's intentions, not from any motive of covetousness.

Erec's relationship with Enide also undergoes maturity, thus becoming a truer reflection of Eternal Love. Erec's increasing tenderness and concern for his wife, and her cultivated obedience toward him, reflect in a finite way the will turning toward God. As pride weakens and humility grows, the will becomes love. But, although Erec and Enide may be viewed as having reached the stage of the spiritual life which William calls rationalis, and describes as "wonderful,"

there is still labor and great and bitter conflicts against varied troubles and allurements. For in the business of purgation [the soul] undergoes the experience of death.

Erec's battle with Guivret leaves him grievously wounded and ultimately will cause him to "die."
When Erec rejects the security of King Arthur's Court and instead places himself in extreme danger to rescue the maiden's knight from the savage giants, his actions parallel the fifth step of ascent where the soul takes "a leap toward God." The soul now washed of its stains of corruption "joyfully possess itself in itself and fears absolutely nothing for itself nor is anxious about anything for any reason of its own." Erec's compassion for others and his growing self-abnegation continue to lead him upward. Thus, when Erec falls from his horse as if dead, metaphorically he rises "to God, that is, to the very contemplation of truth, and that highest and most secret reward for which [the soul] has worked so hard." But, as Erec participates in "the supreme gaze of the soul," he must also "guard and strengthen [the soul's] well being" and "fasten a calm and direct gaze on that which is to be seen." Thus, the sixth step of his ascent brings him back from "the dead" to rescue Enide, and the two ride off together content in their love for one another. Erec freely submits his reason to the love of his bride, an action which elicits echoes of the Song of Songs and Psalm 41-42. William describes this same activity in his own language:

When reason as it progresses mounts on high to become love, and grace comes down to meet the one who so loves and desires, it often happens that reason and love, which produce those two states, become one thing, and likewise wisdom and knowledge, which result from...
them. No longer can they be treated or thought separately. They are now one thing, flowing from one activity and one faculty, both in the perception of understanding and in the joy of fruition. And so although each must be distinguished from the other, since the matter stands so, each must be thought and treated of with the other and in the other.\textsuperscript{212}

In describing the stages of ascent, William notes that the last two steps show "what the soul can do in itself."\textsuperscript{213} Enide's activity at these two points in their journey becomes the crucial factor. By the use of her sapientia, she aids and protects both of them. When in their last encounter, Guivret almost kills the weak Erec,\textsuperscript{214} Enide, heedless of her own safety, rebukes him for his disgraceful behavior, thus saving Erec and preparing the way for their sojourn at Guivret's castle.

Having been "cleansed and healed" by their journey, the lovers are prepared for the seventh step, "the vision and contemplation of truth."\textsuperscript{215} The soul is understood to be cleansed when reason, or the thought process (cogitatio), "has first restrained and cleared itself of all cupidity and all the filth of mortal things."\textsuperscript{216} In the Golden Epistle, William describes this state as unity of spirit:

\begin{quote}
... the spirit, the soul and the body, are duly set in order and established in their proper places, rightly appreciated and even thought about in accordance with their several characteristics. So man begins to know himself perfectly, advance through self-knowledge and ascend to knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{217}
\end{quote}

The progressive stages of illumination for the soul advance from what is perceived by the eyes to what is ab-
sorbed by the spirit. As an archetypal movement, the jour­
ney proceeds from obscurity and darkness to light and vi­
sion. In the history of redemption, the ascent moves from
carnal credulity to mystical faith.\textsuperscript{218} Although the lan­
guage is different, the experience is the same.

When Chretien sings praise to married life, he mir­
rors one of the realities of life.\textsuperscript{219} He also sets forth
in secular imagery, in the intimate communion experienced
by a husband and wife in their marriage bed, the spiritual
union of contemplation of God. "The material and the spir­
itual, the human and the divine, are, in love, inextrica­
bly bound up."\textsuperscript{220} Now that "Erec was strong and well,
cured and recovered," and Enide had regained "her great
beauty" (p.68), they are both properly prepared for the
experience of sexual union. Chretien accords several
lines to the delights of this experience. But, just as in
contemplation of God, "he who enjoys it alone understands
what are its joys, what is fruition of the true and su­
preme good, what is the breath of peace."\textsuperscript{221}

The state of love, whether secular or spiritual,
responds to the same language. This is why, William says,
the Holy Spirit when he was about to deliver to men the
canticle of spiritual love took the story which inwardly
is all spiritual and divine and clothed it outwardly in
images borrowed from the love of the flesh.\textsuperscript{222} As Leclercq
has stated so eloquently, there is only one language of
love, for "there is but one love." All the varieties and experiences of love reflect the One True Love, either clearly or through a glass darkly. Thus, the bond of union shared by Erec and Enide evokes analogously the spiritual marriage of the soul and God.

In addition to the structural principle of the Trinity, there is built into the narrative in an organic manner a parallel principle of temporality. Within the cycle of the liturgical year, the ascent of Erec and Enide takes four days, with their blissful union occurring on the fifth. Although Chrétien does not stipulate the day of the week on which the journey begins, he does designate Saturday as the night the couple spends at King Arthur's outdoor Court (p.55). Thus, the adventures begin on Thursday and conclude on Sunday, a pattern which evokes the four days of Christ's passion and resurrection. A look at number symbolism will reveal another layer to this structure.

In medieval numerology, the numbers three and four and their sum, seven, were believed to contain physical and spiritual truths. As basic concepts for the principle of cosmic order, numbers were thought to supply an understanding of the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Because of the four cardinal points of direction (north, south, east, west), the fourness of earth became a commonplace. From early antiquity, the number three expressed divinity or godlike attributes. A Christian
innovation in the ancient science of number identified the spiritual-temporal duality with the archetypal numbers three and four. The four winds, the four elements, the four seasons, and the four rivers confirmed four as the number of the mundane sphere. The mystery of the Trinity sanctified the number three. The addition of the triune principle of God and the quadruple principal of man produces seven, the first number which implied totality.  

Since Chrétien was a man of his time, a consciousness of numbers as fundamental realities, alive and eloquent with meaning, must have been deeply rooted in his thought. Thus, when he chose the liturgical year, which symbolizes not only the Church but also the Trinity, as the pattern to express the macrocosm of God and the universal reality, he needed to parallel that pattern with one which would express the microcosm of human response. The four day journey combines the number associated with the world and the body with the eschatological itinerary of Christ. Erec's seven adventures draw together in yet another way the spiritual and the temporal.

Once Chrétien brings his characters, and his audience, to the ecstasy awaiting the soul at the end of the process of ascent, he continues with the structure outlined by William. In the extended treatment accorded to the Joy of the Court episode, he dramatizes the opposing dynamism of the descending path.
The garden with its transparent wall of air which Erec enters appears to contain the bliss of Eden and even echoes the garden into which the lover beckons his beloved in the Song of Songs. But, this beautiful-appearing garden is not what it seems, for the fruits, flowers, birds, medicinal plants, and the beautiful lady can only be enjoyed within its wall. This "enclosed garden" exists as a world apart, as the "other world" of amor carnalis where the inordinate desires of the flesh reign free. The entrance is described as "narrow," echoing, yet twisting, Matthew 7:14. For, if the entrance is narrow, so must be the exit. "How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it."

Upon becoming a man, the knight who guards this world of carnal love, an "unhappy and wretched soul," made a "pact with his passions" which resulted in his being enclosed in the garden of his body, a tomb for his dead soul. Thus "separated from the life of God," he "dwells in a region of unlikeness," in the land of Cain. Such a soul, says William,

... is in turmoil in itself. Distorting natural skills into wickedness and cunning, it becomes malicious. It plunges itself shamefully into animal pleasures and those of the senses and abandons itself to lust .... Prudent only to do evil, it no longer knows how to do good. It has no care for itself, no memory of God. Hence it is imprisoned by its pact with its passions.

When Erec defeats him, the knight rejoices in his liberation, for amor carnalis disturbs the natural order of
beings, pulling downward that which by nature and inclination aims upward.

The negative ending of William's *De natura corporis et animae* provides an insight into Cistercian speculation on the nature of man, and may offer another context within which to read Chrétien's work. No matter how profound and learned Cistercian works might be, they were always meant to serve a direct moral purpose, the reformation of one's life as the first step in the ascent to union with God. William's concluding sentence succinctly sums up the contrast which Chrétien so dramatically draws when he places the journey of Erec and Enide alongside the Joy of the Court episode.

Only the difference in their loves makes the difference between the blessed soul and the damned. In the one, love is the guardian of its natural dignity, but in the other it degenerates into carnal bestiality.

Erec's liberating role in releasing Magonagrain from his carnal imprisonment evokes echoes of Christ's redemptive act and His Harrowing of Hell. As in the case of Enide, Erec does not "stand for" Christ. However, the narrative of this passage requires that Erec be seen "acting as" Christ. In a manner reminiscent of Christ's passion and death, Erec's journey toward personal perfection purged and prepared him for his most difficult and hard-fought fight. His function in this analogy to salvation history requires that he conquer the knight, deliver him
from his oath, and release the Joy of the Court, just as Christ conquered sin, delivered man from the clutches of Satan, and opened the gates of heaven.

What Chrétien meant by "Joy" remains an unanswered question among scholars. One article concludes that when Erec managed to win joy for himself and the court, he "delivered true love to the courtly world."\textsuperscript{231} This is only part of the answer. While the word joy (joie) can be defined as sexual bliss, it also carries connotations of the type of spiritual ecstasy of which the Song of Songs and the Psalms speak. Cistercian works use the phrase "joy of the court" to describe the joy of the Church at Christmas and the joy of paradise.\textsuperscript{232} Like the many other images in Chrétien's poem, Joy of the Court conveys a multiplicity of meanings. As Christ's Church, it signifies man's temporal means to salvation; as paradise, it expresses man's eternal hope; as Christmas, it anticipates and fulfills the promise of salvation history.

With the identification of Erec and Christ in the Joy of the Court segment, Enide's minor role becomes clear. Because she is a typological figure of the Holy Spirit, she may not participate in the redemptive function. This is clearly the historical province of the Second Person of the Trinity. As the Third Person, she provides the love through which redeemed souls ascend to the Trinity.

The final event of the poem, the coronation of Erec

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and Enide to the kingship of their earthly land, takes place on Christmas day. As the climax to the ecclesiastical year, Christmas expresses the Christian belief that God has come into the world. He became redemptively active in history in order that He might bring about a new order, an eternal life, the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is primarily the sovereignty of God; but this sovereign rule of God will be eschatologically manifested, bringing this age of man to its end and inaugurating the age to come, that is, eternal life. An inseparable relationship exists between God's Kingdom and His Fatherhood. As Father, God prepared the inheritance of the Kingdom for his children. Thus, as the Father, God grants entrance into the eschatological Kingdom to those who know Him as their Father. To be received into the realm means to accept the yoke of God's rule.

This Kingdom, however, is more than a future realm. It includes the here and now. The reign of the Kingdom of God came into history in the person and mission of Christ. Through the activity of the Holy Spirit that reign became manifest. Thus, the Kingdom of God translates not merely into an abstract concept that God as the eternal King rules over all, but also into a dynamic concept of God acting in human lives. Thus, the significance of Christmas is twofold: this divine action, while remaining a divine action, requires a human response.
In treating the image of man as a microcosm of the Trinity, William identifies memory with the Father. "So that the rational soul created in man may adhere to God, therefore, the Father claims the memory for himself." 236 William did not perceive of memory as simply a mental function which recalls the past. Rather is was the "latent presence of God in the soul," and the "latent participation of the soul in God." 237 As the principle essence of every creature, God is that from which all things derive, are maintained, and ultimately return. The memory recalls that essence as the image in which it is made. "I desire the mystery of the Kingdom of God; I entreat that the Father may be spoken to me plainly--face to face, eye to eye, kiss to kiss." 238

The mention of Christmas, at one level, merely defines the day on a Christian calendar. But it also functions as a reminder of the significance of that feast and makes present in the enthronement of Erec and Enide a sharing in the divine Kingship of God. Their crowning expresses their temporal assumption of the royal duties of the land. Chrétien emphasizes this temporality by placing Erec in the company of Caesar, Alexander, and Arthur. But Erec's crowning signifies more than worldly kingship. By analogy it evokes the Kingly office of God and the eternal Kingdom promised through Christ. It recalls the crown of life found in both the Old and the New Testament 239 and made

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particularly relevant to Erec's kingship in the verse from
St. James (1:12)

Beatus vir, qui suffert tentationem: quoniam cum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitae, quam repromisit Deus diligentibus se.

(Blessed is the man who endureth temptation; for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him.)

To affirm the analogy of transcendance, Erec wears a robe embroidered with the quadrivium and receives a scepter carved with all created beasts, each in its proper image. The depiction of the quadrivium and not the trivium is significant in that the trivium prepared medieval students in grammar, logic, and rhetoric, while the quadrivium explored arithmetic, music, astronomy, and geometry, disciplines concerned with measure, harmony, and proportion. According to Hugh of St. Victor, the quadrivium provided knowledge about the form of things: either with reference to number, to which arithmetic pertains, or to proportion, to which music pertains, or to dimension, to which geometry pertains, or to motion to which astronomy pertains. Understanding the form of things was a far higher knowledge than knowing the significance of words, for "the latter is instituted by custom, the former by nature; the latter is the voice of men, the former the voice of God speaking to men." Understanding the form of things leads the mind from the orderly cosmos to its Creator.
As symbols of the divine ordering of the universe and the glory of man in his dominion over the creatures of the earth, the robe and scepter evoke Psalm 8.

Domine, Dominus noster, Quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra!
Quoniam elevata est magnificentia tua super caelos.
... Quoniam videbo caelos tuos, opera digitorum tuorum, Lunam et stellas quae tu fundasti:
Quid est homo, quod memor es eius?
Aut filius hominis, quoniam visitas eum?
Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis;
Gloria et honore coronasti eum;
Et constituiisti eum super opera manuum tuarum.
Omnia subiecisti sub pedibus eius,
Oves et boves universas, Insuper et pecora campi,
Volucres caeli, et pisces maris Qui perambulant semitas maris.
Domine, Dominus noster,
Quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra!

(O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the world; thou that hast set thy glory above the heavens!
... For I will consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained.
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
Thou madest him lower than the angels,
to crown him with glory and worship.
Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of thy hands; and thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet;
All sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field;
The fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea;
and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas.
O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the world!)

Typological figures of mankind, Erec and Enide stand between earth and heaven; their carnality is a link with the beasts and with earth; their memory, reason, and will are attributes which unite them with the divine and lift
them toward the heavens.

In describing analogies of the soul as image of God, William distinguishes man's royal nature. Although his erect stature shows his superiority over other animals, man's true nature, his kingly nature, consists in the rule of reason over the desires of nature. Those who allow this relation to be reversed, lose the divine image and put on an earthly one:

In giving man a soul with the body, mixing the divine with the earthly, God gave reason a twofold opportunity. He wished that through relationship and association with both, man might enjoy the one and use the other, enjoy God through his more godlike nature and use the goods of earth through the related senses. The Supreme Artisan indeed made our nature suitable and apt for its regal role. In the formation of the soul, and also in the very shape of the body, as has already been sufficiently indicated, he prepared such an animal as would be equipped to rule, one not prone on the earth but standing erect toward the heavens. 242

Man's royal birthright consists in using the things of earth, those things about which the disciplines of the quadrivium taught, so that by right use he might enjoy the vision of God.

Conclusion

Erec et Enide is a romance in the sense that Frye uses the term. The narrative moves from one discontinuous episode to another, describing the external things that happen to the characters. They exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds, the courtly world
associated with happiness, security and peace, and the world of exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain and the threat of more pain. But, it is also possible to view the work on another level, on the spiritual level of the soul's progress toward God. A reading on this level can be supported by reference to the prologue of *Erec et Enide* for it provides evidence that Chrétien was consciously writing not only to delight, but also to instruct and enlighten his audience.

So Chrétien de Troyes maintains that one ought always to study and strive to speak well and teach the right; and he derives from a story of adventure a pleasing argument whereby it may be proved and known that he is not wise who does not make liberal use of his knowledge so long as God may give him grace . . . . And now I shall begin the tale which will be remembered so long as Christiandom endures (p. 1).

It seems from these words that Chrétien intends *Erec et Enide* to be the instrument of a revelation.

The structure of the poem visualizes for its audience a pattern of macrocosm to microcosm. Within the circular cycle of the Church year, the psychological growth of an Arthurian knight from Court dandy to kingship moves in a linear direction. Within this structure is the spiritual ascent of a soul expressed by means of a series of knightly adventures. The microcosm of the personal quest becomes part of the macrocosm of Divine Order and Salvation History. William's spirituality can also be seen in terms of macro-
cosmic to microcosmic pattern. Set against the circularity of the Trinity is the linear progression of the soul from the animal level to the spiritual level. Within that movement is the seven step ascent which leads to an understanding of the Trinity.

One way to understand the development which Erec and Enide undergo is to see that development in terms of the spiritual ascent described by William in the *Epistola Aurea* and the *De natura corporis et animae*. Read in light of William and Cistercian thought, the significance of these parallels in pattern cannot be denied. Although there is no historical evidence of a direct influence of William's spiritual works on Chrétien, given the similarity in pattern, the correspondence of theme, and the instances of common thought and language, the justification for this investigation becomes apparent. While it may be true that there existed in the twelfth century works other than Cistercian which dealt with themes of ascent, they are not subject to this thesis. We are concerned only with one spiritual expression of the theme, namely, Cistercian, and one secular expression, Chrétien de Troyes.

An understanding of the Cistercian spiritual patterns which were present and permeated the air in which Chrétien lived and wrote, a fact that can be historically documented, can only enrich an understanding of Chrétien's poem about married love, *Erec et Enide*. As a result of being used as
the methodological approach to this study, the title *The Secular Scripture*, which Frye gave to his work, takes on a meaning he may never have envisioned.
# ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exp</th>
<th>Exposition on the Song of Songs. William of St. Thierry.</th>
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<td>NDL</td>
<td>The Nature and Dignity of Love. William of St. Thierry.</td>
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 Defined as the quality of being excessively or dotingly fond of one's wife, uxoriousness violates "mesure." This emphasis on the mean has a long history from Aristotelian ethics and Stoicism, through Cicero and the Greek Fathers, to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Violations of "mesure" figure in all of Chrétien's romances. For example, Yvain who swings wildly from one over-enthusiasm to another.


6 Since practically nothing is known about Chrétien de

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7Leclercq, p. 121.


12Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalicon, translated with an introduction by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 92. "Exposition includes three things: the letter, the sense, and the inner meaning. The letter is the fit arrangement of words, which we also call construction; the sense is a certain ready and obvious meaning which the letter presents on the surface; the inner meaning is the deeper understanding which can be found only through interpretation and commentary. Among these, the order of inquiry is first the letter, then the sense, and finally the inner meaning.

13D. W. Robertson, Jr., "Historical Criticism," in English Institute Essays, ed. A. S. Downer (New York: Columbia
Robertson, "Historical Criticism," p. 15. In his article "Terminology" (pp. 60-62), Robertson interprets Hugh's procedure for understanding sacred texts which the twelfth century writer sets forth in his treatise De sacramentis: "One may arrive at the meaning of words by applying the disciplines of the trivium, but to determine the meaning of things, it is necessary to use the disciplines of the quadrivium." Because a thing may have many meanings, things are more fruitful in meaning than words. According to Robertson, the "higher meaning" of Scripture, the tropological and allegorical levels, arise from the meanings of things; "it is impossible to arrive at them through the disciplines of the trivium." An examination of words leads only to an historical interpretation which, although such an interpretation may reveal useful moral principles, does not reveal the message of faith and good works necessary to salvation. "The meanings of words," says Hugh in his Didascalicon, "are established by human convention, but the meaning of things are divinely established, representing as it were, the voice of God speaking to men" (p. 21).

Robertson, "Historical Criticism," p. 30.


Donaldson, p. 2.

Donaldson, p. 3.

Donaldson, p. 3.

Donaldson, p. 4.

Donaldson, p. 25.


Frye, p. 60.

Frye, p. 60.
This text of Andreas Capellanus (Andrew the Chaplin) raises many questions. On the basis of internal evidence it is nearly impossible to specify the tone of the text. It could be a serious "guide book" to love; but it could also be an ironic commentary on the excesses of romances, or a sarcastic (satiric) attack on what the author perceives as serious moral lapses. Leclercq in Monks and Love (p. 118) found the written tradition of this text to be poor. "The manuscripts of the text are few and far between" (p. 71). The treatise was "better known in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than in the twelfth." Certainly, sufficient cultural evidence from the twelfth century exists to justify the claims of such critics as C. S. Lewis that a pattern of courtly love can be detected. The precise structure of that pattern and how it should be valued remain problematic. Lewis considered the emergence of this ideal as a significant cultural change. D. W. Robertson, among many others, considered it a cultural development without significance. A Preface to Chaucer, Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 392-448. With "courtly love," as with "chivalry," something was there--history, literature and art testify to that. But, whether something real in society prompted literary expression, or whether literary expression prompted societal action, scholars have found it extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to say. A work by Roger Boase, The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love, A Critical Study of European Scholarship, (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1977), provides an interesting and thorough discussion of this convention.

Romance (romans), in the sense in which the twelfth century understood it, meant any verse narrative. Whereas Chrétien's romances treat courtly love, other verse narratives, such as La Vie de Saint Alexis and La Roman d'Alex-
Andre, deal with, respectively, religious subjects and classical motifs. Scholars have distinguished three sources of motifs for the medieval romance: The Matter of Rome (classical antiquity); the Christian Tradition (lives of the saints); and the Matter of Brittany (la matiere de Bretagne, which dealt with King Arthur and his knights). Until very late in the Middle Ages, courtly love was central only in the latter.


35 Hanning, p. 196.

36 Critics are divided on whether to ascribe this non-Arthurian adaptation of the Saint Eustace legend to Chrétien de Troyes. Although the name Chrétien appears in the first line as that of the author, Jean Frappier, Chrétien de Troyes: The Man and His Work, translated with preface by Raymond J. Cornier (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982), p. 6, believes the work lacks the turn of mind, style, and subtlety of Chrétien de Troyes.

37 Conversio or conversatio is a term used extensively in Cistercian spirituality for the monastic way of life. This idea will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

38 Hanning, pp. 204-205.


40 Leclercq, Monks and Love, p. 121. Leclercq demonstrates quite convincingly the similarities in language, theme and tone between Chrétien's Erec et Enide and Bernard's Song of Songs. "... between Chrétien and Bernard and their sources there exists something more than literary parallels and possible interdependence. There seems to be much of Bernard in Chrétien and vice versa" (p. 131). A close comparison of William's Exposition on the Song of Songs with Chrétien's works might also reveal "striking similarities."


42 The Exordium Cistercii, translated by Bede K. Lackner, in Lekai, p. 443.

44 *The Exordium Parvum* translated by Bede K. Lackner, in Lekai, p. 452.


46 Lekai, p. 126.

47 Evergates, p. 2.

48 Evergates, p. 8.

49 Evergates, p. 2.

50 *Exordium Parvum*, p. 452.


54 Morris, p. 54.

55 Bouyer, p. 13.

56 Leclercq, *Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, p. 192.


Beatrice A. Lees states that although William of Tyre (Recordes des Histories des Croisades) says that "they took the three vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty, More canoniconorum regularium, the Rule was based on the reformed Benedictinism of the constitutions of Citeaux." Bernard's translated text reads: "Therefore they come and go at the bidding of their superior. They wear what he gives them, and do not presume to wear or to eat anything from another source. Thus they shun every excess in clothing and food and content themselves with what is necessary. They live as brothers in joyful and sober company, without wives or children. So that their evangelical perfection will lack nothing, they dwell in one family with no personal property whatever, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You may say that the whole multitude has but one heart and one soul to the point that nobody follows his own will, but rather seeks to follow the commander." (4.7)

Bouyer, p. 19.


Bouyer, p. 21. This authority, according to Bernard in letter 48.3, is the Legate of the Apostolic See or his own bishop.

Bouyer, p. 67.


67. This question has been discussed by several scholars, among them: Déchanet, *Man and His Work*, p. 32; Watkin Williams, *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1935), and Ceglar, *William-Chronology*.


69. Bouyer, p. 44.

70. Plato used the term "image" for the relationship between the sensible and intelligible worlds. He stressed the limitation and participation of the sensible in the intelligible (*Republic*, 5018; *Laws*, 716D; *Phaedra*, 248a, and others). The description in the Book of Genesis (1:26) of the creation of man, "Let us make man in our image and likeness," and Paul's use of the term provided the Christian Fathers with a way to describe man's relation to God. In general, patristic writers known to the Middle Ages placed the image of God in the soul and not in the whole man, thus creating a body-soul dichotomy. Bernard McGinn discusses the development and influence of "image theology" in the introduction to his edition of *Three Treatises on Man, A Cistercian Anthropology*, Cistercian Fathers Series, no. 24 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1977), pp. 4-27.


72. Morris, pp. 73-75.
Although in the Biblical sense, conversion means returning to God, the Cistercians used it to signify one's leaving the world to enter the monastery, dying to the world in order to live in God in a special way. This process of conversion must continue throughout the life of the monk, as it must for all Christians.


Brooke, p. 35.


William, GE, p. 69.

Brooke, p. 25.

William, NDL, pp. 54-55.


Brooke, p. 17.

Déchanet, introduction to GE, by William, p. xxiii. See NDL, pp. 53-54 for the text of William which supports Déchanet's statements.
The Latin word *pondus* best translates into "natural gravity," an inner pull or weight moving a thing to its place. The idea of a natural gravity which pulls the soul toward God comes from Augustine, *City of God* 11, 28; *Confessions* 13.9.10; *Letter* 157, 2.9.


William, *NDL*, p. 49.


William, *NDL*, p. 78.

William, *NDL*, p. 78.


Leclercq, *Monks and Love*, pp. 64, 70.

There is no agreement as to when this text was written although most scholars believe it to be an early work. In his introduction to the treatise (pp. 17-18), David Bell suggests that, given the evidence that William was consecrated abbot of St. Thierry sometime between 1119 and 1121 as Ceglar argues (*William--Chronology*, 131-134), and left St. Thierry for Signy in 1135, a dating in the early twenties would not be wrong, although anything more specific would be guesswork.

Déchanet, introduction to *Exp*, by William, p. xi-xii.


Dechanet, introduction to GE, by William, p. xi. If Dechanet's assertion of the popularity of this text during the twelfth century is correct, he provides additional support for my contention that the milieu in which Chretien was writing was permeated by Cistercian spirituality, making it very difficult, if not impossible, for Chretien not to have been influenced by their thought.

Dechanet, introduction to GE, by William, p. ix.

Dechanet, introduction to GE, by William, p. xx.

Dechanet, introduction to GE, by William, p. xxv. William discusses "natural" love and love "against nature" in NDL, particularly in the Prologue (47-51), and also in NBS, particularly section 5, pp. 134-135 and section 15, pp. 150-153.

Morris, p. 77.

Dechanet, introduction to GE, by William, p. xxv.

William, GE, p. 4.

Dechanet, introduction to GE, by William, p. xvii.

This three-fold division of the stages of spiritual life is not original with William. Origin separates the faithful into three categories: beginners or "psychics," those making progress or "gnostics," and the perfect or "pneumatics." He identified the first with faith, the second with intellect, and the third with wisdom. This trilogy is set forth in Contra Celsum, PG 11: 1309C. A short summary of the threefold division among Cistercian writings can be found in Mother Columba Hart's footnote (note 34) to William's Exp, p. 11. Although William presents a three-fold growth in Exp and in NDL (as adolescent love, adult love and full maturity), he develops more fully the psychology of the three stages in his letter to the monks at Mont Dieu.

Morris, p. 76.

William, NBS, p. 103.

M. D. Chenu, OP, Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth
Century, translated and edited by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 29. The metaphysics of John the Scot is found in De divisione naturae. Chenu points out (note 52) that many texts on man-as-microcosm appeared from the tenth to the twelfth century, but they were "mere passing along of a topos from Christian writer to Christian writer." No works appeared that could nurture philosophical or religious contemplation of nature until the twelfth century when the School of Chartres gave attention to the theme, and a generation of writers treated it in a decisive and vital manner.

121 Chenu, pp. 24-37.
122 Chenu, p. 33.
123 Chenu, p. 33.
125 William, NBS, pp. 122-123.
126 William, NBS, p. 133.
127 McGinn, introduction to NBS, by William, p. 45.
128 William, NBS, p. 147.
129 William, NBS, p. 147.
130 William, NBS, p. 151.
131 William, NBS, p. 148.
133 William, NBS, p. 149.
134 William, NBS, p. 150.
135 William, NBS, p. 150.
136 Anabathmon, a Greek word signifying ascent, is also found in Augustine, In Psalmum 38, 2 (PL 36, 413) and in Ambrose, Epistle 26, 10 (PL 16, 1088C). William's use of this term has led several scholars, among them Dechanet, to argue for William's direct dependance upon Greek sources, particularly the Enneads of Plotinus. However, no known translation of the Enneads survives into the twelfth century. In addition, the possibility that William knew Greek remains slim.
137William, NBS, p. 152.


140D'Haucourt, p. 97.


142Benton, p. 551.

143Benton, p. 586.

144Benton, p. 590.


146I Kings 19:17, Hebrews 11:13-16. Many other Scriptural examples could be cited; for example: Psalms 38 and 119, II Cor. 5:6.


149Gardiner, p. 15.


153 Locke, p. 3.
154 Locke, p. 4.
155 Frye, p. 186.
158 Locke, p. 13.
160 Recreant, a French term, is defined as cowardly, faint hearted, unfaithful to duty. In the romance the word is used to describe a knight who had abandoned his prowess.
161 L. T. Topsfield, in his work Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 41, points to this scene as the only situation in the romance where there appears a declaration of what has been defined as "courtly love." It is noteworthy, Topsfield says, "that this plea to the married lady to accept a lover is shown . . . to be self seeking and treacherous. The courtly veneer . . . is hypocritical, a false courtoisie which seeks to disrupt a love in which the partners are suited to one another according to mesure 'the essential fitness of things.'"
162 In the Middle Ages, the term sapientia, meaning wisdom, most often referred to a particular knowledge associated with God. In monastic circles such knowledge was an experience of God and was contrasted with scientia which was knowledge attained through external means, among them dialectics. Topsfield (p. 38) describes Enide as possessing the sapientia akin to that which Oliver possessed in Song of Roland. Erec lacks this quality which Topsfield defines as an understanding that love and prowess must be selfless. Enide's innate savoir, that which gives self-knowledge, and determines and guides human conduct (p. 26), develops into sapientia as she experiences the trials of life and matches her wits against them.
163 E. R. Curtiss, European Literature and the Latin Middle
The idea of natural order as a pattern for human society comes out of the school of Chartres and especially from the works of Bernardus Silvestris. It is based on the idea that all creation has its constant place in the hierarchy of the cosmos. The higher up in the order toward God, the greater the fullness of being; conversely, the lower on the ladder, the further from the image of God and the lesser the sense of being. Although all creation is bound to its place in the hierarchical order, all strive toward fullness of being. The optimistic view of man's powers and possibilities that resulted from this belief in an ordered cosmos characterized twelfth century writers, both secular and spiritual. Topsfield, p. 60-62.


Auerbach, p. 119.

The possibility that in the microcosm-macrocosm structure of this work there exists a pattern of the Divine Office within the pattern of the Liturgical Year seems very possible to me. The Divine Office was the predominant means for reckoning time in the Middle Ages. The Biblical references most often detected in the narrative poem are from the Song of Songs, the prevailing Scriptural text for liturgical hours, especially at the lengthy Office of Vigils which, according to Chrysogonus Waddell was celebrated with all material sense distractions eliminated, thus allowing for the maximum impact upon the listening monks of the words proclaimed by the reader. "The Cistercian Night Office Lectionary in the Twelfth Century," paper delivered at the Eleventh Annual Conference on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 3 May 1976.


Yvain, line 1-2; Lancelot, line 31; The Quest of the Holy Grail, line 1; Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, line 37.

Gardiner, pp. 36, 26, 27, 29.
The chase as a pursuit of sexual love was exploited by Ovid in *Metamorphosis*. Twelfth century poets choosing the love chase as a literary device took much material from this and other Ovidian works. Andreas Capellanus' work *De Arte honeste amandi* departs from Ovid's exploration of sexual love by dramatizing the struggle between men and women of different social ranks.

Although Thiebaux discusses the incompleteness of the union of the stag and the hawk, he attributes their unfulfilled longing for each other to the fact that each longs for a fulfillment that does not take the other into account. For him, the lovers must suffer together before they can experience a selfless love toward each other.

All biblical verses are taken from these two versions.
188 William, GE, p. 38.
190 Brooke, pp. 31-32.
191 William, NDL, p. 55.
194 Mazzeo, pp. 130-131.
195 Mazzeo, p. 86.
196 William, NBS, p. 144.
197 Luttrell's later dating of Chrétien's works permits him the hypothesis that in writing Erec et Enide, the poet was influenced by Alan de Lille. Luttrell attributes Chrétien's descriptions of Nature to the influence of Anticlaudianus and De planctu nature. He demonstrates how the portrayal of Enide and the structure of the poem both reveal the poet's dependence on these philosophical works of Alan.
198 William, Exp, p. 17.
199 William, NBS, pp. 144-145.
201 William, NBS, p. 152. William is quoting I John 2:16, "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father but is of the world."
202 William, GE, p. 33.
203 William, NBS, p. 147.
204 William, NBS, p. 148.
Topsfield (p. 35) compares Erec's developing humility, exemplified by his attitude toward prowess, to the unthinking folly of Guivret, "who marching loyally to rescue [Erec] from the Count of Limors, attacks him with uncontrolled violence, because he happens to be there, on the same moon-lit path." Topsfield sees this incident, and Chrétien's ironic treatment of it, as an example of the poet's condemnation of aimless knightly violence, a theme Chrétien explores more fully in later works.

Leclercq, Monks and Love, p. 122.

Leclercq, Monks and Love, p. 33.

William, NBS, p. 150.

Leclercq, Monks and Love, p. 132.


Hopper, p. viii.
226 Song of Songs 4:12-16, 5:1.

227 Gen. 4:16.

228 William, NBS, p. 151.

229 McGinn, in his introduction to Three Treatises on Man, p. 47.

230 William, NBS, p. 152.


232 Leclercq, Monks and Love, p. 115.


234 Ladd, pp. 174-175.

235 Ladd, p. 190.

236 William, NDL, p. 55.


238 William, NDL, p. 28-29.

239 Principle examples of the crown of life theme are found in Revelations 2:10, 3:11; I Peter 5:4.

240 Luttrell (pp. 20-27) considers the inclusion of the quadrivium another indication of Chrétien's reliance on Alan de Lille.


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