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CHAUCER'S TROILUS AND CRISEYDE IN MALE HOMOSOCIAL CONTEXTS:
THE POLITICIZATION OF SAME-SEX DESIRE

by

RICHARD E. ZEIKOWITZ

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University
of New York

2000

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Abstract

CHAUCER'S TROILUS AND CRISEYDE IN MALE HOMOSOCIAL CONTEXTS:

THE POLITICIZATION OF SAME-SEX DESIRE

by

Richard E. Zeikowitz

Adviser: Professor Steven F. Kruger

I explore the dynamics of homosociality in late medieval culture, investigating both Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and its cultural and political environments. I articulate two conflicting attitudes toward male same-sex relations: one affirming and celebratory, the other homophobic. I conclude that Chaucer's poem both replicates and generates a late medieval sociocultural discourse characterized by tension between normative male same-sex behavior and the potential politicization of such behavior.

In the introductory chapter, I survey important recent historical and feminist criticism of *Troilus and Criseyde* and situate my project within the current debate regarding definitions of premodern sexuality. In chapter 2, part one, drawing on medieval concepts of imagination and vision, as well as psychoanalytically-inflected film theory, I suggest that chivalric treatises, biographies, and romances invite novice knights/readers to call forth potentially homoerotic images of model figures. I go on to examine eroticized male-male encounters in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*. In part two, I delineate the emotional intensity which informs male same-sex bonds in *Amyas and Amylion* and the French *Prose Lancelot* by situating these texts within a biblical, classical, and medieval literary tradition that celebrates

homosocial intimacy.

Chapter 3 examines politically-motivated depictions of male same-sex intimacy in important fourteenth-century historical texts. After exploring how testimonies from the trials of the Knights Templar produce a narrative of aggressive same-sex behavior, I demonstrate how the major chronicles of the reigns of Edward II and Richard II wage a politically-motivated attack on each king's relationship with his court favorites. I argue that the chroniclers were not attacking the *idea* of close male friendships, but rather Edward's and Richard's choice of intimate companions.

Chapter 4 examines how Chaucer's poem exemplifies, complicates, and dramatizes key homosocial interactions illustrated or suggested in chivalric texts. Drawing on Freud, his feminist and queer interpreters, as well as René Girard's and Eve Sedgwick's theories of triangulated desire, I articulate the interplay between homoeroticism and heterosexual desire. In chapter 5, I argue that, by depicting Troilus and Pandarus as advisee and adviser, respectively, *Troilus and Criseyde* suggests the highly criticized relationship between Richard II and his court favorites. I then demonstrate how the text moves against Troilus and Pandarus' friendship.

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Many people have assisted me -- both directly and indirectly -- in the planning, research, and writing of this dissertation. I would like first to thank the English faculty at Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center, in whose graduate seminars I honed my skills in critical reading and writing. I would particularly like to thank Susan Zimmerman, who offered me valuable suggestions on my first research project: an annotated bibliography for a sociohistorical study of Troilus and Criseyde.

I have benefitted enormously from the expertise of medievalists with whom I have worked. My three years as a research assistant to Gordon Whatley taught me to be extremely attentive to details when conducting research. I am grateful to Michael Sargent, who first alerted me to the subtle complexities of Troilus and Criseyde in his Chaucer course seven years ago, and I thank him for the valuable advice and feedback he offered at various stages of my work on this poem. Scott Westrem's comments on my dissertation draft go far beyond what one expects from a reader. I am extremely appreciative for his efforts and believe that the dissertation reads much more clearly as a result of implementing some of the revisions he suggested. Finally, this project would not have been possible without the guidance I received from Steven Kruger. His careful, attentive reading of drafts and his well-articulated feedback helped me to clarify my argument. Moreover, he pushed my thinking in new directions. I am grateful for his support, encouragement, and friendship throughout the process of writing this dissertation. Any imperfections or errors which remain, however, are my own.

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Male Homosocial Interactions in/with Chivalric Texts	38
Part One: Male-Male Spectatorship	39
Part Two: Chivalric Bonds and the Tradition of Male Friendship	119
3. Sodomy in the Public Eye: Discourses of Male Same-Sex Relations	
in the Fourteenth Century	167
Part One: Sodomy and Politics in the Early Fourteenth Century	168
Part Two: Richard II and his Court Favorities: Politics and Desire	217
4. <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u> in Chivalric Contexts: Dramatizing Same-Sex	
Interactions	255
5. The Politicization of Male Homosocial Intimacy in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>	331
Part One: Reading Books I-III through a Homophobic Lens	332
Part Two: Movements Against Troilus and Pandarus' Relationship	
in Books IV and V	363
Afterword: Some Observations on Female Same-Sex Dynamics in	
<u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>	393
Bibliography	398

Chapter 1

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed renewed interest in historical approaches to understanding literature. The “old” historicism made a sharp distinction between a literary text and its historical context, whereby the former “reflected” the latter.¹ Derek Pearsall aptly describes why some historians now reject such an approach: “Its unsatisfactoriness is perceived to be in the inertness which it imparts both to the reflected image (the literary work, and the mental process of the writer in his work) and to the reality of which it is the reflection (the material process of history).”² He also notes that this view fails to account for the possibility that a literary text may “shape anew” the reality that it is reflecting.³ Louis Montrose defines the “newness” of the approach that he and other “New Historicists” are taking: “the newer historical criticism is *new* in its refusal of unproblematic distinctions between ‘literature’ and ‘history,’ between ‘text’ and ‘context;’ new in resisting a prevalent tendency to posit and privilege a unified and autonomous individual -- whether an Author or a Work -- to be set against

¹For a good summary of the development of historical criticism in Chaucer studies, see Lee Patterson, Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987) 9-18.

²Derek Pearsall, “Chaucer’s Poetry and its Modern Commentators: The Necessity of History,” Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History, ed. David Aers (New York: St. Martin’s, 1986) 126-27. For a summary of recent Marxist theories regarding “reflectionism,” see 127-30.

³Pearsall 127.

a social or literary background.”⁴ Perhaps the most contentious claim made by New Historicists is that historians have no access to a material history outside the texts within which that history is preserved. As Montrose suggests, we cannot discover a “full and authentic past, a lived material existence unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question -- traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and social processes of preservation and effacement.”⁵ Although Montrose does not simply reduce history to textuality, he nevertheless situates material existence in a position which is dependent on and, thus, subservient to textual artifacts. While historians would probably not disagree that historical texts do not contain *all* the facts about *all* the people living at a specific time, some strongly protest the notion that history is nothing but text.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese insists that “history must also be recognized as what did happen in the past -- of the social relations and ... ‘events.’ of which our records offer only imperfect clues.”⁶ And referring to the tendency of New Historicists to focus on how history is written rather than the events which are being written about, she

⁴Louis A. Montrose, “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture,” The New Historicism, ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989) 18, emphasis in original. Other key “New Historicists” who, like Montrose, work on texts of the Renaissance include Stephen Greenblatt and Jonathan Goldberg. Brook Thomas questions the “newness” of the “New Historicists;” see his essay, “The New Historicism and other Old-fashioned Topics,” The New Historicism, ed. Veeser, 182-203.

⁵Montrose 20.

⁶Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, “Literary Criticism and the Politics of the New Historicism,” The New Historicism, ed. Veeser, 216.

argues that “[h]istory cannot simply be reduced -- or elevated -- to a collection, theory, and practice of reading texts.”⁷ According to Fox-Genovese, historians do not merely read and analyze written recordings of the past but also seek to “reconstruct the conditions of consciousness and action, with conditions understood as systems of social relations, including relations between women and men, between rich and poor, between the powerful and the powerless.”⁸

Medievalists have also questioned New Historicist claims that history is just another form of textuality. According to Lee Patterson, “[t]o adopt an interpretive method that assumes that history is not merely known through but constituted by language is to act as if there are no acts other than speech acts.”⁹ He, therefore, accepts the idea of the “historically real” and maintains that “[h]istory is impelled by consequential and determinative acts of material production: building cities, making wars, collecting wealth ... these are material processes that ... possess a palpable force and an intentional purposiveness ... that stand against the irresolutions and undecidabilities valued by contemporary techniques of interpretation.”¹⁰ Patterson, while not denying that history is primarily accessible to us in a textual form.

⁷Fox-Genovese 216.

⁸Fox-Genovese 217.

⁹Patterson, Negotiating the Past 62. For a detailed discussion and commentary on the New Historicists, see 57-74.

¹⁰Patterson, Negotiating the Past 62. He is referring here to the New Historicists' reliance on poststructuralist theories, particularly deconstruction, in their reading of texts.

nevertheless, urges us to “seek to accommodate, in however inevitably partial a fashion, something of the palpability and unavoidability of historical action.”¹¹ Likewise, Gabrielle Spiegel questions the “New Historicists’ insistence on the symbolic foundation of all social constructions -- textual and otherwise -- and its persistent deployment of deconstructive readings in the interpretation of cultural artifacts of all kinds,” and adds that “if we want to contextualize texts, we cannot achieve this merely by textualizing the context.”¹² Spiegel proposes a method of textual analysis that does not exclude the material realities of human subjects of the past. Reminding us that “texts represent situated uses of language,” she notes that “[s]uch sites of linguistic usage, as lived events, are essentially local in origin and therefore possess a determinate social logic of much greater density and particularity than can be extracted from totalizing constructs like ‘language’ and ‘society’.”¹³ She attributes to a text social agency in that “texts both mirror *and* generate social realities, are constituted by *and* constitute the social and discursive formations which they may sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform.”¹⁴ Thus, Spiegel suggests that a literary text, for example, might “mirror” contemporary social values and/or political concerns yet also produce a unique “discursive formation” which will affect the social sphere it enters and, in turn,

¹¹Patterson, Negotiating the Past 63.

¹²Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” Speculum 65 (1990) 71.

¹³Spiegel 77.

¹⁴Spiegel 77, *emphasis in original*.

influence future texts. She, therefore, acknowledges non-textualized sociohistorical subjects -- authors who write the texts and, at least implicitly, people who live in the "social realities" which these texts generate.

Paul Strohm regards both literary and nonliterary texts of the fourteenth century as fictional which, he claims, does not compromise a text's historicity: "[t]hey offer crucial testimony ... on contemporary perception, ideology, belief, and -- above all -- on the imaginative structures within which fourteenth-century participants acted and assumed that their actions would be understood."¹⁵ He also aptly notes that "fictive elements teem within historical narratives, trial depositions and indictments, coroner's rolls, and other officially sanctioned accounts."¹⁶ Strohm advocates situating the text which is central to the inquiry, whether literary or nonliterary, "within a larger field or 'environment' of previous and contemporary texts, visual representations, pageants, social dramas, and political acts."¹⁷ He, thus, democratizes the relationship between a text and its contexts in contrast to traditional contextual criticism which, he claims, tends "to enthrone the text at the center of a surrounding field of contributory and client-

¹⁵Paul Strohm, Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992) 4.

¹⁶Strohm, Hochon's Arrow 5-6.

¹⁷Strohm, Hochon's Arrow 6. David Aers, Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430 (London: Routledge, 1988), also advocates situating a text in its greater sociohistorical environment: "historical communities, their economies and their social relations, their discourses and practices ... provide the collective practices, including language, out of which texts are made" (3).

like texts and events.”¹⁸ And, while acknowledging that “[t]exts do, indeed, regulate our access to the past,” Strohm, nevertheless, like Patterson and Spiegel, also emphasizes “the contingency of texts, their reliance on a material reality beyond their own bounds.”¹⁹ A new historical approach, therefore, should, as David Aers neatly states, “attempt to relocate ... [the text] in the web of discourses and social practices within which it was made and which determined its horizons.”²⁰

Consistent with the views expressed by the medievalists above, I offer here an historically-informed reading of the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus in Troilus and Criseyde by situating Chaucer’s poem in its male homosocial -- cultural and political -- environments. While Chaucer’s text is the central focus of my study, I do not use the contexts to explicate Troilus and Criseyde but rather engage in parallel investigations of the text and its contexts. The historical “facts” I endeavor to uncover are attitudes, dramatized behavior, imagined effects, and social mores. Although the evidence I draw on is all textual, I do not deny material referentiality. Thus, part of my study is conjectural, suggesting the potential homoeroticism which informs the mental images “real” authors and readers create of model knights in chivalric texts. The “discursive formations” of male-male relations expressed in or suggested by these texts are products of a historically-specific social reality. In addition, I draw on texts such as chronicles and trial records which though “historical” are also -- as Strohm notes --

¹⁸Strohm, Hochon’s Arrow 7.

¹⁹Strohm, Hochon’s Arrow 7.

²⁰Aers, Community, Gender, and Individual Identity 4.

“fiction” in that they are not objective reports, yet they offer vivid illustrations of politically-motivated discourses of same-sex behavior. And I study how Chaucer’s text generates a similar discourse.

A key element of the new historical approach is its acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the historian/critic. As Montrose aptly states: “our analyses and our understandings necessarily proceed from our own historically, socially and institutionally shaped vantage points.”²¹ Patterson notes that our reconstructions of the past are “fabricated according to the processes of interpretation that are identical to those applied to the ‘not-history’ of the literary text.”²² And Marilyn Butler observes that in order to practice a “genuinely historical criticism,” it is necessary “to declare our interests, whether personal, national, or professional.”²³ I, therefore, do not claim to be offering an objective historical reading of Troilus and Criseyde and admit that I have an agenda: namely, to “dethrone” interpretations informed by heteronormativity which have dominated our reading of Chaucer’s poem. Before outlining my project more specifically, I will survey some important recent Troilus and Criseyde scholarship that approaches Chaucer’s text historically and/or in contexts of gender/sexuality.

* * * * *

²¹Montrose 23.

²²Patterson, Negotiating the Past 44.

²³Marilyn Butler, “Against Tradition: The Case for a Particularized Method,” Historical Studies and Literary Criticism, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985) 45. This is actually the fifth and final point Butler makes in outlining her proposed method. For points 1-4, see 43-44.

Charles Muscatine, while not taking a “new” historical approach, nevertheless, identifies sociohistorical elements in the juxtaposition of courtly and bourgeois styles in Troilus and Criseyde. He maintains that Chaucer depicts “a fourteenth-century courtliness, seen in a *context* of deepened naturalism.”²⁴ Comparing Troilus and Criseyde to Jean de Meun’s portion of the Roman de la Rose, Muscatine observes that Chaucer “sees, as Jean does, the elements of presumption, of naïveté and of impracticality in courtly idealism ... [b]ut, unlike Jean, he also prizes courtly idealism for its very virtues.”²⁵ Chaucer’s poem is thus indicative of a time in England when “practical events are continually cast up against an ever-brightening notion of the receding ideals of the past.”²⁶ Muscatine concludes that Chaucer demonstrates “the control and subordination of both naturalism and conventionalism to the expression of a coherent pattern of meaning.”²⁷ Stephen Knight qualifies Muscatine’s observations, offering a more rigorous sociohistorical interpretation: “the variations of style relate not so much to generic patterns of romance or fabliau ... but to the social register of utterance, whether it creates shared values embodied in language ... or whether a

²⁴Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley: U of California P, 1957) 131, emphasis in original. Lee Patterson (Negotiating the Past) situates Muscatine among the New Critics and observes: “the announced goal of Muscatine’s project was to show that realistic writing, far from representing an unmediated access to the world, was itself a product of verbal art and therefore as conventional as the high style of courtly poetry” (22).

²⁵Muscatine 131.

²⁶Muscatine 129.

²⁷Muscatine 165.

personal and informal utterance is being marked out for value."²⁸ Knight finds that Chaucer's poem vividly expresses contemporary sociohistorical concerns: "The dialectical relations of public and private life and values are the central topic of Troilus and Criseyde, and the poem is a most potent realization of a structure of feeling in a period when, in a mobile socioeconomic environment, the private sphere was beginning to be constructed as a possible self-concept for human beings."²⁹ Troilus and Criseyde are, according to Knight, both individuals suffering under "the collective coercions of the medieval public world." Although Knight situates Chaucer's poem within its contemporary social environment, he offers few details of specific fourteenth-century referents and, thus, his observations are, in some ways, as general as Muscatine's.

Two important recent historical studies of Chaucer's work are Paul Strohm's Social Chaucer and Lee Patterson's Chaucer and the Subject of History.³⁰ Strohm notes that "[j]ust as Chaucer's life was intersected by contrary social experiences and

²⁸Stephen Knight, Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 38.

²⁹Knight 33. Knight's approach here is Marxist, and, in referring to a "structure of feeling," he draws on Raymond Williams. For a full discussion of Williams's concept, see Raymond Williams, Politics and Letters (London: New Left Books, 1979) 156-74. For the conflict between public and private life in Chaucer's poem, see also Peter Goodall, "Being Alone in Chaucer," Chaucer Review 27 (1992) 1-15, and Barry Windeatt, "'Love That Ought Ben Secree' in Chaucer's Troilus," Chaucer Review 14 (1979) 116-31. Other related sociohistorical studies include Richard F. Green, "Troilus and the Game of Love," Chaucer Review 13 (1979) 201-20, and Arlyn Diamond, "Troilus and Criseyde: The Politics of Love," Chaucer in the Eighties, ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Robert J. Blanch (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986) 93-103.

³⁰In my survey of relevant book length studies of Chaucer's work, I focus on the author's approach to Troilus and Criseyde and, thus, do not claim adequately to represent the entire scope of the study.

competing systems of social explanation, so does his poetry provide an intersection for different, ideologically-charged ideas about social relations.”³¹ In his rather brief discussion of Troilus and Criseyde, Strohm identifies how the poem articulates the contemporary degeneration of the chivalric oath of “trouthe.” He observes that Pandarus’ oaths are motivated by practical concerns, thus illustrating the less formal, more lateral associations gaining currency in England in the late fourteenth century, while Troilus’ oaths are not practical and more indicative of ideal chivalric bonds.³² Strohm maintains that such attitudes “transcend the narrative forms they inhabit and the particular characters who embrace them, having instead the more general character of socially created and ideologically charged structures of thought, sustained by the principal political and economic institutions of the age.”³³ Unlike Muscatine or Knight, Strohm locates Chaucer directly in his historical world and argues that Chaucer’s “*gentil* rank” and “unlanded status” made him well situated “for viewing the conflict between ... a fading feudal hegemony and a rising, commercial counterhegemony.”³⁴ By insisting that social attitudes inform fictional characters as well as articulate the “intersection” of conflicting ideas about social relations which surface in a text, Strohm offers valuable methodological tools for engaging in a “new” historical approach to a literary text.

³¹Paul Strohm, Social Chaucer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989) xi.

³²Strohm, Social Chaucer 102-03.

³³Strohm, Social Chaucer 123.

³⁴Strohm, Social Chaucer 142. Although Strohm is referring here to “The Knight’s Tale” and “The Miller’s Tale,” his conclusions are certainly applicable to Troilus and Criseyde, which he discusses earlier in the chapter.

In the introduction to his influential study of Chaucer's relationship to history, Patterson maintains that, contrary to the belief held by many literary critics working on texts of the early modern period, there was, indeed, a concept of the individual self in the Middle Ages. Moreover, he maintains that "the antagonism between the desires of the individual and the demands of society provided one of the great topics for literary exploration throughout the Middle Ages."³⁵ He argues that Troilus and Criseyde offers "a conceptualization of history not as a series of temporally contingent and humanly tractable events but instead as a total form of being, history as a transhistorical idea rather than a material reality ... a meditation on history that effaces the historical."³⁶ Patterson goes on to suggest that Chaucer encourages the reader to read the love story in direct relationship to the historical events within which it takes place, but in the end he turns away from making a connection between Troilus and Criseyde's failed love affair and the fall of Troy.³⁷ In the final section of his (lengthy) chapter on the poem, Patterson focuses on events that were unfolding as Chaucer was composing his poem and finds that "[i]f we read the poem topically, we can see that its representation of a society under siege that undoes itself through parliamentary miscalculation has a general rather than a specific and partisan relevance."³⁸ Patterson's excellent and provocative reading

³⁵Lee Patterson, Chaucer and the Subject of History (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1991) 8.

³⁶Patterson, Chaucer and the Subject of History 85-86.

³⁷Patterson, Chaucer and the Subject of History 113.

³⁸Patterson, Chaucer and the Subject of History 162. D. W. Robertson, Jr. offers another topical reading of the poem; see his essay, "The Probable Date and Purpose of

is, therefore, more concerned with identifying the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde and “History” rather than history, and while I agree with him that “little of the pressure of historical events is directly recorded in the poem,”³⁹ my project endeavors to identify those contemporary forces that are *indirectly* expressed.

Unlike the historical readings of Troilus and Criseyde examined thus far, that of David Aers offers a sociohistorical approach that concentrates on female gender. He notes that “in creating the figure of Criseyde, Chaucer developed a social psychology which comprised a profound contribution to the understanding of interactions between individual and society.”⁴⁰ Aers maintains that Chaucer “used the romance genre and conventions of courtly literature to explore the tensions between the place women occupied in society and the various self-images presented to them.”⁴¹ Aers draws the interesting conclusion that because of her vulnerable position in Troy, both as a result of her specific situation as well as the general social reality of “women as a subordinate

Chaucer’s Troilus,” Medievalia et Humanistica ns 13 (1985): 143-71. Robertson maintains that Chaucer’s audience would have easily substituted France for Greece and England for Troy, and suggests that Chaucer’s purpose was to warn knights and noblemen in the audience that idleness and self-indulgent love, characteristic of contemporary chivalric behavior, was a threat to the security of their country. Although I do not agree with his conclusions regarding Chaucer’s purpose, my reading does, in part, build on the assumption that a late fourteenth-century poem dealing with the siege of Troy was bound to evoke contemporary political issues.

³⁹Patterson, Chaucer and the Subject of History 85.

⁴⁰David Aers, Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) 118. In another work I will be discussing shortly, Aers focuses on the male courtly subject.

⁴¹Aers, Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination 119.

group.” Criseyde uses her sexuality as “leverage on the powerful.”⁴² He also comments on the social realism of the parliament’s decision to trade her for Antenor which, he argues, “acts as a symbol for the position of women in relation to men (fathers, husbands, rulers) in Chaucer’s world as much as the fictional one of his poem.”⁴³ Aers’s study of Criseyde, therefore, articulates the social relevance of the poem and is an early example of feminist-inflected Chaucer scholarship.

A great number of studies focusing on issues of gender/sexuality in Troilus and Criseyde have been written in the last twenty years. But before I examine several of them, selected because they are influential and/or relevant to my project, I want briefly to discuss two earlier readings which also explore the depiction of sexuality in the poem. According to D. W. Robertson, Chaucer’s poem “is neither a tale of true love ... nor of courteous love ... [but] rather, a tale of passionate love set against a background of Boethian philosophy” and, thus, readers of the time would regard the lovers in the story as sinners to be pitied.⁴⁴ In arguing that Troilus’ “external submission to Criseyde is based on an inner submission of the reason to the sensuality ... [a]nd when sensuality rules him, he can no longer fulfill the chivalric obligations of his station,” Robertson suggests an interrelationship between gender and sexuality.⁴⁵ Donald Howard, on the

⁴²Aers, Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination 120.

⁴³Aers, Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination 130.

⁴⁴D. W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962) 472.

⁴⁵Robertson, Preface to Chaucer 478. Interestingly, while Robertson observes in Criseyde a similar interconnection between gender and sexuality, he denies her an

other hand, takes a more positive view of the sexuality dramatized in Chaucer's poem, claiming that "the 'game' of love was a ritualized expression of anxieties about social class and sexuality, and that it provided medieval men with a moral-building ideology which assuaged their feelings of guilt and unworthiness."⁴⁶ Howard, drawing on the work of Herbert Moller, points to the fact that in late medieval society there was a great number of eligible knight bachelors and a shortage of suitable women of their class. And, thus, courtly love poems served as a sort of therapeutic fantasy for young knights, "deflect[ing] biological energies into culturally desirable channels."⁴⁷ Howard's suggestion that a courtly poem can have an eroticized effect on a specific class of readers is something I will take up in my study of male readers' homoerotic interactions with chivalric texts.

In a more recent study, David Aers explores how Troilus and Criseyde illustrates the major role heterosexual love plays "in the making of masculine identity in a particular class and culture."⁴⁸ He argues that the poem is not primarily concerned with a knight's "instinctual drive for copulation," but, rather, "the *cultural* formation of

individual social gender position: "Her beauty is the sensuous beauty of the world, and her fickleness is the fickleness of Fortune; but she is, at the same time, a sort of feminine Everyman" (498).

⁴⁶Donald R. Howard, The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966) 97. On the "game" of love, see also Green.

⁴⁷Howard, The Three Temptations 97-98. See also Herbert Moller, "The Social Causation of the Courtly Love Complex," Comparative Studies in Society and History 1 (1959): 137-63; and "The Meaning of Courtly Love," Journal of American Folklore 73 (1960): 39-52.

⁴⁸Aers, Community, Gender, and Individual Identity 119.

knightly love and the social construction of specific forms of sexuality."⁴⁹ By maintaining that "Troilus's 'private' fantasy [regarding Criseyde] is a product of a public culture," and acknowledging the integral role Criseyde plays in both the construction and deconstruction of Troilus' knightly identity, Aers suggests that psychoanalytical processes are being dramatized in the poem -- a suggestion that I will make as well.⁵⁰ Stephanie Dietrich also investigates the construction of Troilus' masculine identity, but, unlike Aers, she does not fully explore the sociocultural implications of the portraits she presents.⁵¹ In the readings she offers of four portraits of Troilus, Dietrich articulates Troilus' "slydyng" masculinity. However, because these portraits are public appearances involving multiple spectators -- the narrator, Criseyde, men and women in the crowd -- her readings would have benefitted from an attempt to theorize various direct and indirect gazes suggested in these descriptions. For Troilus' perceived masculinity is inextricably linked to the observer(s) in each portrait.

One masculine character clearly absent from these two studies is Pandarus. Winthrop Wetherbee offers an insightful observation regarding the relationship between Pandarus and Troilus. Highlighting the "tension ... between Troilus's essentially

⁴⁹Aers, Community, Gender, and Individual Identity 121, emphasis in original.

⁵⁰Aers, Community, Gender, and Individual Identity 123, 136. Aers does not offer a detailed psychoanalytical reading here. He does, however, later draw on the work of Melanie Klein, exploring how the interactions between Criseyde and Troilus illustrated in book III express "a reactivation of the mother-infant relationship" (140).

⁵¹Stephanie Dietrich, "'Slydyng' Masculinity in the Four Portraits of Troilus," Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Cambridge: Brewer, 1998) 205-20.

passive, contemplative attitude toward love and Pandarus's single-minded focus on the 'fyn' of consummation." Wetherbee observes that "Pandarus becomes, in effect, that appetitive element lacking in Troilus's feelings toward Criseyde"; moreover, "[a]s his desire begins to menace Troilus's radical innocence, his guidance becomes increasingly a matter of deception and seduction."⁵² Wetherbee, thus, not only draws attention to Pandarus' "desire" for consummation but also suggests that this desire is so powerful as to cause him to manipulate and seduce his friend into compliance. Although Wetherbee does not speculate on the homoeroticism implied here, his focus on Pandarus' "appetite" is certainly useful for investigating the dynamics of male same-sex relations illustrated in the poem.

One of the most influential feminist studies of Chaucer in recent years is Carolyn Dinshaw's Chaucer's Sexual Poetics. In the chapter focusing on Troilus and Criseyde, Dinshaw explores gendered reading positions in the poem. Her purpose is to denaturalize the "masculine response" in order to demonstrate that "the dominant perspective isn't given, natural, or universal and that there can therefore be other perspectives."⁵³ She argues that Troilus, Pandarus, and the narrator all "read like men": namely, that they "impose a structure that resolves or occludes contradictions and disorder, fulfills the need for wholeness ... to constrain, control, or eliminate outright the feminine -- carnal love, the letter of the text -- in order to provide a single, solid.

⁵²Winthrop Wetherbee, Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on Troilus and Criseyde (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984) 75.

⁵³Carolyn Dinshaw, Chaucer's Sexual Poetics (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989) 29.

univalent meaning firmly fixed in a hierarchical moral structure.”⁵⁴ In contrast, feminine reading in the poem, exhibited by Criseyde and Cassandra, is viewed by masculine readers as “potentially disruptive of orderly, logical, linear narratives that have well-delimited boundaries.”⁵⁵ Dinshaw observes that the constructed nature of gendered reading positions in the poem is revealed in Pandarus’ rejection of Criseyde in book V. For he is here “acting *like* a man,” illustrating “expedient behavior” which, she argues, is analogous to “reading *like* a man,” thereby suggesting “there are ... other ways to read *as* a man.”⁵⁶

Elaine Tuttle Hansen likewise explores how unstable gender constructions in Chaucer’s poetry open the way to new interpretations. Hansen investigates masculine anxiety by articulating the “feminization” of male characters which she defines as “a dramatized state of social, psychological, and discursive crisis wherein men occupy positions and/or perform functions already occupied and performed, within a given text and its contexts, by women or normatively assigned by orthodox discourses to Woman.”⁵⁷ She maintains that in Troilus and Criseyde “the narrative technique ... calls

⁵⁴Dinshaw, Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics 51. Dinshaw’s argument is informed by “the patristic association of the surface of the text (the letter) with carnality (the flesh, the body), and carnality with women” (21). For her survey of the Christian exegetical tradition, see 18-25.

⁵⁵Dinshaw, Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics 53.

⁵⁶Dinshaw, Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics 63, emphasis in original.

⁵⁷Elaine Tuttle Hansen, Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender (Berkeley: U of California P, 1992) 16.

attention from the outset to the question of agency and power in heterosexual relations ... and to the problems of male sexuality in particular, which the conventions of romantic love both conceal and exacerbate through the emphasis on role reversal."⁵⁸ She concludes that at the end of book V, "[t]he plot of the story ... refixes the characters in positions that flatten ambiguities and restore proper gender alignments."⁵⁹ Dinshaw's and Hansen's studies are very important not only because they problematize gender/sexuality within Chaucer's poem but also because they point to *our* constructed notions of gender/sexuality which hinder our ability to explore effectively the sociocultural phenomena dramatized in a medieval text such as Troilus and Criseyde.

Gayle Margherita's innovative study investigates the relationship between history and sexual difference as illustrated in several late medieval texts. Relying heavily on psychoanalytical (Lacanian) theory, Margherita aims "to elucidate the sense in which the problem of history is bound up with the problem of body, or, more precisely, the sense in which sexual difference as an effect of lack is made to stand in for historical difference as an effect of loss."⁶⁰ Thus, the attempt to recover the past (wholeness) is, according to Margherita, linked to the fetishization of the female. In her reading of Troilus and Criseyde, Margherita cites the narrator's identification with

⁵⁸Hansen 148.

⁵⁹Hansen 186.

⁶⁰Gayle Margherita, The Romance of Origins: Language and Sexual Difference in Middle English Literature (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1994) 4. The question of applying psychoanalytical theory to the study of medieval texts is taken up by David Aers. See his review of Margherita's book in Speculum 70 (1995): 933-36.

Oedipus early in book I and argues that “[t]his longing, which is at the heart of melancholia, continually threatens to return poetic language to its lost maternal and material origins, thereby silencing any textual endeavor.”⁶¹ She goes on to argue that “[i]t is up to Pandarus to install sexual difference ... and thus to ‘shore up’ the myth of male discursive plenitude, a myth which the narrator’s uncertainty continually calls into question.” and concludes that “[o]nly when Criseyde’s femininity is bound within a specular economy ... can she become ... the symptomatic reflection of the narrator’s disavowal and repression of the communal and historical world.”⁶²

In a not unrelated study, Louise Fradenburg explores the role of “loss” in constructing chivalric identities in Troilus and Criseyde. She historicizes Chaucer’s poem by suggesting that it “shows how the aristocracy of the later Middle Ages substantiated itself partly *through* its melancholic embroidering of embarrassment, rejection, humiliation, betrayal, defeat, valorizing them as a means of preventing their implications from posing radical questions about the heroization of suffering.”⁶³ She articulates how suffering and final loss inform gender differences in chivalric identity, arguing that Troilus, as a result of his honorable, violent death, “inhabit[s] the space of loss,” while Criseyde, in expressing the desire to survive, is denied her own honorable.

⁶¹Margherita 111.

⁶²Margherita 115.

⁶³Louise O. Fradenburg, “‘Our owen wo to drynke’: Loss, Gender and Chivalry in Troilus and Criseyde,” Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde: “Subgit to alle Poesye”: Essays in Criticism, ed. R. A. Shoaf (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992) 94, emphasis in original.

historical death.⁶⁴ Both Margherita and Fradenburg, in focusing on the dramatization of the processes of identification and melancholy in Chaucer's text, illustrate how psychoanalytical theory can be productively applied to uncover sociocultural meaning embedded in a medieval poem.

Sarah Stanbury, in two recent works less conspicuously-informed by psychoanalytical theory, explores the dynamics of the gaze in Troilus and Criseyde. She poses the following questions in the first essay: "How is power in Troilus vested in and enacted through vision? And how are the powers of the private gaze articulated through the poem's spatial design?"⁶⁵ In her reading of Criseyde's gaze at Troilus the first time he passes by her window in book II, Stanbury interestingly complicates Criseyde's spectatorial position. She observes that Criseyde appropriates "male visual authority and desire" and at the same time "her response to what she sees is conditioned by the intersected sight lines of a public spectacle."⁶⁶ Stanbury considers this scene in the second essay as well and concludes that although Criseyde initially "adopt[s] a male posture of master of the gaze," because she identifies with Troilus' blush -- and blushes herself -- "she withdraws her eyes in shame, as if the dynamics of visual control had

⁶⁴Fradenburg 94, 104-05. She goes on to conclude that Chaucer's text, thus, illustrates how "the feminine chivalric subject is constructed to enter the 'symbolic order' of chivalric culture through the renunciation of all desire that does not take the form of an appeal for a life free from violence" (105).

⁶⁵Sarah Stanbury, "The Voyeur and the Private Life in Troilus and Criseyde," Studies in the Age of Chaucer 13 (1991) 144.

⁶⁶Stanbury, "The Voyeur and the Private Life" 149.

completely reversed and she were the object of someone else's gaze."⁶⁷ Three observations that Stanbury makes in these essays are very useful for considering male-male spectatorship in chivalric texts: 1) an individual's gaze at a desired object can be influenced by the public gaze at the same object; 2) the gazer may identify with the object of the gaze; 3) two-way spectatorship complicates the dynamics of visual desire.

My brief survey indicates that there is no shortage of excellent scholarship exploring issues of gender and/or sexuality in Troilus and Criseyde, and some critical works do, indeed, articulate the sociohistorical implications of "masculine" and "feminine" actions in the poem. What is lacking, however, is an in-depth study of the depiction of male same-sex behavior in Chaucer's text -- a study that examines the dynamics of Troilus and Pandarus' relationship interacting with both its cultural and contemporary political contexts; and, thus, a study that seeks to historicize late-medieval male homosocial intimacy.

* * * * *

In his landmark study, John Boswell investigates Christian attitudes towards male homosexuality up to the fourteenth century.⁶⁸ Although generally applauded for his rigorous scholarship, Boswell has been criticized for his claim that "gay" people, whom he defines as "persons who are conscious of erotic inclination toward their own gender

⁶⁷Sarah Stanbury, "The Lover's Gaze in Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde:"Subgit to alle Poesye", ed. R. A. Shoaf, 237.

⁶⁸John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980).

as a distinguishing characteristic."⁶⁹ not only existed in the Middle Ages but also were until the fourteenth century, for the most part, tolerated. In opposition to Boswell's view of homosexuality, which some consider essentialist,⁷⁰ are "constructionists" who are strongly influenced by Michel Foucault's now famous distinction:

As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood.... It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature.... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.⁷¹

Thus, David Halperin maintains that "[b]efore the scientific construction of 'sexuality' as a positive, distinct, and constitutive feature of individual human beings ... there was no conceptual apparatus available for identifying a person's fixed and determinate

⁶⁹Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 44. For Boswell's defense of his use of the term "gay," see 41-59.

⁷⁰For Boswell's response to criticism of the essentialist assumptions underscoring his study, see "Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories," Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, ed. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989) 17-36; also "Concepts, Experiences, and Sexuality," Forms of Desire. Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy, ed. Edward Stein (New York: Routledge, 1992) 133-73.

⁷¹Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (1978; New York: Vintage, 1990) 43.

sexual *orientation*, much less for assessing and classifying it.”⁷² The constructionist position does not, however, rule out investigations of pre-modern sexuality per se. According to Robert Padgug, “[t]he content of sexuality is ultimately provided by human social relations.... [Sexuality] consists of activity and interactions -- active social relations -- and not simply ‘acts,’ as if sexuality were the enumeration and typology of an individual’s orgasms.”⁷³ Padgug’s attention to the influence of social community on an individual’s sexuality is particularly useful for an examination of male-male relations in chivalric contexts. He goes on to point out that “[t]he particular interrelations and activities which exist at any moment in a specific society create sexual and other categories which, ultimately, determine the broad range of modes of behavior available to individuals who are born within that society.”⁷⁴ In applying Padgug’s observations to the study of pre-modern sexuality, one would not, therefore, focus exclusively on acts of

⁷²David M. Halperin, “Sex Before Sexuality: Pederasty, Politics, and Power in Classical Athens,” Hidden from History, ed. Duberman et al., 41, emphasis in original. Halperin reinterprets Foucault’s (and his own) position in “Queering the Past,” Lesbian and Gay Studies Newsletter 26 (Spring 1999): “Nothing Foucault says about the differences between two historically distant, and operationally distinct, discursive strategies for regulating and delegitimizing forms of male same-sex sexual contacts prohibits us from inquiring into the connections that pre-modern people may have made between specific sexual acts and the particular ethos, or sexual style, or sexual subjectivity, of those who performed them” (8). For a more detailed discussion of his current views on historicizing sexuality, see “Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality,” Representations 63 (Summer 1998) 93-120.

⁷³Robert Padgug, “Sexual Matters: Rethinking Sexuality in History,” Hidden from History, ed. Duberman et al., 58. Padgug offers an excellent list of studies written in the 1980s which take a constructionist view of homosexuality, see 486n.17.

⁷⁴Padgug 58. To Padgug’s formulation, I would, perhaps, add individuals not necessarily born into a particular society but nevertheless desiring to be part of it.

genital sex but rather a broad range of erotically-informed social behavior.

Medieval sexuality can be viewed as both a modern and a medieval construction:

‘Sexuality’ designates a domain that is of interest to us today, and that interest has led us to look back to the Middle Ages to find phenomena that answer to it ... [yet] [t]he medieval phenomena that answer to our interest in sexuality will also have been historical formations, produced by and embedded in specifically medieval discourses, customs, institutions, regulations, and knowledges.⁷⁵

Thus, as Glenn Burger points out, it is possible “to talk about [medieval] sexuality (in the sense of an identity organized around a bodily reading of sex, gender, sexual practice difference) ... [but] it shouldn’t be the modern hetero/homo axis of sexuality we are presuming or blindly reproducing.”⁷⁶ In exploring medieval sexuality, then, one attempts to articulate what Dinshaw aptly defines as an historically-particular “cultural

⁷⁵Introduction, Constructing Medieval Sexuality, ed. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997) ix. Steven F. Kruger, in “Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories,” Constructing Medieval Sexuality, ed. Lochrie et al., importantly notes that “[a]s we ‘construct medieval sexuality,’ reading sexual otherness back into texts,” it is important to uncover “how excluded sexualities are constructed in relation to other excluded or disfavored identity positions -- femaleness, religious and class difference, and disease (most notably ‘leprosy’)” (159).

⁷⁶Glenn Burger, “Doing What Comes Naturally: The Physician’s Tale and the Pardoner,” Masculinities in Chaucer, ed. Beidler, 121.

structure that locates an individual in relation to his or her desire."⁷⁷ In order to uncover attitudes toward medieval "homosexuality" or expressions of same-sex desire in works by Chaucer and his contemporaries, some medievalists have endeavored to "queer" these texts.

"Queering" can be defined as attempts to uncover "rhetorical strategies that exclude same-sex relations, acts, and desires so that the world appears to be ordered along heterosexual lines."⁷⁸ Burger points out that queer theory is useful to "explore the structuration and instantiation of sexuality (and homophobia/anti-homophobia) rather than attempt to discover some prior and stable 'self' that will 'explain' sexual activity."⁷⁹ He goes on to explain that in "[e]mphasizing the performance of sexualities and identities," this theoretical approach "attempts to map a more dynamic, less assured account of the body in motion within prevailing discourses of power."⁸⁰ Queering Chaucer does not involve uncovering evidence regarding Chaucer's sexuality but rather historicizing the "Chaucerian body" -- the conception of Chaucer, the poet, which has

⁷⁷Carolyn Dinshaw, "A Kiss Is Just a Kiss: Heterosexuality and Its Consolations in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Diacritics* 24 (1994) 206.

⁷⁸Allen J. Frantzen, *Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998) 6. Frantzen goes on to note that "[t]he view that sexual identity is an effect of discourse might be said to be the most distinctive assumption of queer theory" (7). See also, Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities -- an Introduction," *Differences* 3.2 (Summer 1991) iii-xviii.

⁷⁹Glenn Burger, "Queer Chaucer," *English Studies in Canada* 20.2 (June 1994) 156.

⁸⁰Burger, "Queer Chaucer" 157.

been constructed over time -- thereby "resist[ing] the hegemonic forces of a presumptive heterosexuality that would fix what Chaucer means by fixing who he 'is'."⁸¹ In his sophisticated and provocative reading of the Pardoner, Burger maintains that "[e]ven though the Host and Pardoner's kiss ostensibly functions as the end point in a series of attempts to define the Pardoner as absolute other, it also underscores the continuing proximity of the Pardoner and shows how his efforts to assert identity -- his transgressive desire -- mirrors ours."⁸² Burger articulates how the textualized reader, in being forced to "touch" the Pardoner, in effect, identifies with him, thus suggesting that readers might, like the Pardoner, "desire otherwise."⁸³

In another recent, engaging discussion of Chaucer's Pardoner, Steven Kruger does not seek "to 'prove' the Pardoner's (indeed unprovable) homosexuality" but rather, argues that "Chaucer wants us to see, as part of the Pardoner's sexual 'queerness,' the possibility of homosexuality."⁸⁴ Kruger's emphasis on the "possibility" of

⁸¹Burger, "Queer Chaucer" 161.

⁸²Glenn Burger, "Kissing the Pardoner," *PMLA* 107 (1992) 1145-46.

⁸³Burger, "Kissing the Pardoner" 1152. Burger goes on to observe that "[t]he kiss, resonating with the sexual, social, and linguistic dissidence of the Pardoner's voice, initiates and gestures toward a reading strategy that can 'increase and multiply' in meaningful ways within the fragmentation of human language and human embodiment" (1152).

⁸⁴Steven F. Kruger, "Claiming the Pardoner: Toward a Gay Reading of Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*," *Exemplaria* 6.1 (1994) 125. Kruger's project, which involves a reading of the Pardoner and his tale, is "concerned with writing lesbians and gay men back into a history where they too often remain absent, [but] it also attempts to historicize the Pardoner, considering how one constellation of common medieval ideas about male homosexuality might shape an approach to Chaucer's text" (126).

homosexuality is an extremely useful approach for exploring how a text while not explicitly delineating same-sex intimacy may, nevertheless, suggest it. He draws the following important conclusion regarding the altercation between the Pardoner and the Host: "[t]he very act of containing the Pardoner -- the verbal violence that needs to be done to silence him -- reveals the violent force needed to contain the queer: it simultaneously reveals the force, the effort needed to construct and maintain the dominance of what Harry Bailey represents."⁸⁵ Thus, like Burger, Kruger identifies how conflicting social ideologies may interact with one another in a literary text.

Dinshaw draws attention to the "touch of the queer" which she claims "is not only confined to that of characters in narratives; sometimes the touch of the queer is *my* touch, as critic focusing on the ways in which heterosexuality is constructed and represented -- my queer touch disorienting and rendering strange what has passed until now without comment"; and, thus, "the touch of the queer can work powerfully toward historicization and localization of particular sexualities."⁸⁶ Dinshaw applies this methodology in her reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Focusing on the kisses exchanged between Gawain and Bertilak (in relation to Gawain's interaction with the Lady), she argues that the poem produces the possibility of homosexual sex -- a "hypothetical fulfillment" -- but renders it "*unintelligible* within the heterosexual world

⁸⁵Kruger, "Claiming the Pardoner" 138.

⁸⁶Carolyn Dinshaw, "Chaucer's Queer Touches / A Queer Touches Chaucer," Exemplaria 7.1 (1995) 79, emphasis in original; 77.

of the poem.”⁸⁷ Dinshaw goes on to explain that male homosexual relations, “because they deviate from normative gender behavior and the ‘proper’ direction of desire, *would* break apart the matrix that structures heterosexual identity in this poem.”⁸⁸ Dinshaw’s “queer” reading does not merely denaturalize heterosexuality in the poem but also urges us to read against the heteronormative grain of the text and consider the potential eroticism of “two men kissing feelingly, solemnly, seriously.”⁸⁹

As stated earlier, I intend to study the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus by situating Chaucer’s poem within its sociocultural and political contexts. In separating the sociocultural and the political, I am, perhaps, imposing an artificial division between two interconnected contexts. However, in order to examine how the politicization of homosocial behavior and traditions produces homophobic discourses, it is necessary first to study uncriticized expressions of male same-sex relations. That is not to say that male homosocial interactions as depicted (or suggested) in chivalric texts existed outside a society informed by political concerns. In fact, one might argue that in presenting an ideal view of homosocial bonding in a militarized society dedicated to fighting good Christian causes, some chivalric texts are informed by a political agenda

⁸⁷Dinshaw, “A Kiss Is Just a Kiss” 206, emphasis in original.

⁸⁸Dinshaw, “A Kiss Is Just a Kiss” 209, emphasis in original.

⁸⁹Dinshaw, “A Kiss Is Just a Kiss” 223. I have conflated Dinshaw’s conclusion here with that contained in her essay, “Getting Medieval: Pulp Fiction, Gawain, Foucault,” The Book and the Body, ed. Dolores Warwick Frese and Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1997) 136.

which promotes male same-sex attachments. Nevertheless, I endeavor to articulate the tension between socially-acceptable male homosocial intimacy and the potential *negative* politicization of such intimacy. My project, thus, takes two approaches.

I investigate the male homosocial cultural environment of Troilus and Criseyde by uncovering homoerotic interactions in/with various chivalric treatises, biographies and romances. Drawing on film theory as well as medieval concepts of visual reading and optics, I explore spectatorship between male readers (and narrators) and imagined model knights. I also examine classical and medieval treatises on ideal friendship which inform chivalric works. Like Kruger and Dinshaw, I focus on possible/potential same-sex contact, but my project differs in that I study how certain chivalric texts, in affirming close relations between men -- both "real" men and fictional characters -- suggest that homoerotic relations are not necessarily a threat to heteronormativity but rather socially acceptable and hence "natural" behavior. This part of my project, thus, parallels that of Eve Sedgwick who seeks "[t]o draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic."⁹⁰ I am not concerned with specific sexual identities but rather, as Burger aptly puts it, "bodies in motion," homoerotically-charged moments dramatized in chivalric romances, including Troilus and Criseyde. While I follow a "constructionist" position, viewing socially-contextualized subjects engaging in "acts" of eroticized looking, emotional intimacy, kissing and embracing, I also assume

⁹⁰Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 1.

that a subject expresses “individual” desire.⁹¹ I draw on psychoanalytical theories regarding the processes of identification/desire and fantasy -- particularly those advanced by Freud and his feminist/queer interpreters -- to articulate the potential homoeroticism that informs chivalric society as it is presented in some representative texts.⁹² I demonstrate how in depicting Pandarus’ relationship with Troilus, Chaucer’s poem offers a dramatization of these internal processes. I also study how Criseyde influences Troilus and Pandarus’ friendship, and suggest that the heterosexual love story, rather than excluding homosocial intimacy, actually propels it.⁹³

My second approach is to investigate depictions of male same-sex behavior in

⁹¹I agree with Bruce W. Holsinger (“Sodomy and Resurrection: The Homoerotic Subject of the Divine Comedy,” Premodern Sexualities, ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero [New York: Routledge, 1996]) that one can speak of “*homoerotic subject positions*” which are “historically contingent, fleeting, unstable, produced at certain moments, by certain texts, and through specific cultural practices” (245, emphasis in original).

⁹²By using modern theories to understand medieval texts, I am not claiming that people living at that time would have used similar formulations; however, the fact that psychological processes were not conceptualized, or were conceptualized in different terms, does not necessarily mean that they did not occur. Lee Patterson, “On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies,” Speculum 65 (1990), rightly urges us to recognize “that the literary texts we seek to expound are governed by the same social forces ... that are operative, albeit in different forms, in our own lives” (107). Thus, in offering us a language for articulating human interactions depicted in medieval texts, psychoanalytically-inflected theories help bridge the gap between past and present, and, at the same time, help maintain the historical otherness of the medieval work.

⁹³Throughout the study, I use the term “heterosexual” (adj) to describe relations, sexual or emotional, between persons of different genders, without implying that such persons are “heterosexuals” in the modern sense. I do not, however, employ the term “homosexual,” but rather, use “homosocial,” “same-sex,” “male-male,” and, when appropriate, “sodomitical” for describing intimate relations (not necessarily sexual) between men.

selected fourteenth-century historical texts. In studying trial records of the Knights Templar as well as the chronicles of the reigns of Edward II and Richard II, I explore how these texts articulate politically-motivated homophobic discourses.⁹⁴ By situating Troilus and Criseyde alongside the political concerns of the 1380s -- particularly the nobles' displeasure with Richard II's intimate male friends -- I study how Chaucer's poem generates a parallel homophobic discourse. In so doing, I view Chaucer's text as a product both of its sociopolitical environment and the self-conscious intention of an author who is living in a historically-specific moment.⁹⁵ I suggest that Chaucer's intention is not to send a political message to Richard II or his court but rather to compose/rework an Italian poem to make it more relevant to England in the 1380s. By offering more vivid descriptions of medieval battles, presenting Troilus, at times, as a model chivalric knight, focusing more on the intimate friendship between Troilus and Pandarus, and giving Pandarus a more active role in the courtly love story (placing him in the consummation scene, for instance), Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde illustrates not only a "medievalization" of Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, but also, I would suggest, a

⁹⁴In each case I am less concerned with uncovering evidence indicating whether or not the allegations were true than with highlighting the language used to describe male-male intimacy.

⁹⁵As Patterson (Negotiating the Past) aptly expresses: "writing comes into being within a socially determined context and by means of a socially constituted discourse, and it always makes meanings beyond and often other than those the author intended.... But a text is also a function of specific human intentions, in the sense of both self-consciously maintained purposes and of impulses that may be incapable of articulation but nonetheless issue from a historical intentionality" (73).

chivalrization of the Italian source.⁹⁶ In drawing attention to a male homosocial relationship in a fictional world where personal relations are linked to political concerns -- a world that, in a sense, parallels contemporary England -- Chaucer, unwittingly or not, engages some of the key issues of his day.

My two approaches, thus, explore the conflicting environments within which Chaucer's poem emerges: one where male-male intimacy is affirmed, the other in which a political opponent is accused of engaging in homosocial behavior deemed indecent or threatening. I will now outline, in more detail, the contents of the individual chapters.

In chapter 2, I explore the chivalric, homosocial contexts within which Chaucer's poem should be read. In part one, I identify a type of unidirectional male-male spectatorship, which I term the "chivalric gaze," suggested in chivalric treatises such as Geoffrey de Charny's Book of Chivalry and Ramon Lull's Book of the Order of Chivalry, as well as the Chandos Herald's Life of the Black Prince, where the reader is urged to look at an exemplary knight in order to become just like him. After studying medieval ideas regarding visualization in the composition process and how thoughts can be emotionally or erotically charged, I turn to medieval theories of visual reading, drawing on Aristotle and, particularly, Augustine. I suggest that the images novice knights/readers call forth of model figures are informed by fantasy and, thus, potentially

⁹⁶I am, of course, referring to C. S. Lewis's famous pronouncement in "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato," 1932, Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II: Troilus and Criseyde and the Minor Poems, ed. Richard J. Schoek and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1961) 16-33. For a fine study of Chaucer's poem in relation to Boccaccio, see David Wallace, Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985).

homoerotic. I offer a theoretical analysis of the “chivalric gaze,” drawing on contemporary film theory as well as Roger Bacon’s thirteenth-century study of vision. I then focus on dramatized instances of male-male spectatorship in the French Prose Lancelot and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. I follow this with a study of how the Stanzaic Morte Arthur invites some male readers to form sadomasochistic identifications with protagonists in fight scenes. The chivalric romances I study here and in the next section have been selected because they all had currency in late fourteenth-century England and offer vivid depictions of male-male interactions. My purpose is not to offer an exhaustive survey of late medieval chivalric romances, but rather explore how *some* chivalric texts in illustrating or inviting homoerotic spectatorship offer a sociocultural context for reading Troilus and Criseyde.

In part two of my second chapter, I attempt to delineate the emotional intensity which informs male same-sex bonds depicted in chivalric romances. I begin with an examination of three important treatises on ideal friendship, Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, Cicero’s De Amicitia, and Aelred of Rievaulx’s De Spiritali Amicitia, concentrating on how love and intimacy between friends are inherent to each concept. After a brief look at some expressions of male-male love in classical, biblical, and medieval texts, I offer a more detailed reading of same-sex relationships depicted in Amys and Amylion and the French Prose Lancelot. I suggest that these texts produce a cultural discourse of homosocial intimacy and potential eroticism -- a discourse also operative in Troilus and Criseyde.

In chapter 3, I turn to politically-motivated depictions of male same-sex relations

found in fourteenth-century historical texts. Part one concentrates on the early fourteenth century. After a brief survey of instances where a religious group or political opponent was accused of performing sodomitical acts, I focus on the accusations of indecent behavior made against the wealthy and influential Order of the Knights Templar in the early fourteenth century. Examining the trial records of confessions, I identify a discourse of same-sex behavior in which an “aggressor” acts upon a “victim,” thus ruling out the possibility that both parties might have enjoyed the encounter. I then turn to the 1323 trial of Arnold of Verniolle which offers a narrative like that of the Templars characterized by the use of force and aggression, but also, importantly, suggests that both parties derived pleasure from the encounter. I conclude this part of the chapter with an examination of how the major chronicles of the reign of Edward II, voicing the concerns of the powerful nobles, wage a politically-motivated attack on Edward’s intimate relationship with Piers Gaveston. I maintain that the issue is not male-male intimacy per se, but rather a particular friendship viewed as threatening the interests of the nobles. I follow up with a brief survey of chronicles written well after Edward’s death which refer to his relationship with Gaveston, thus indicating that this topic had currency in the later fourteenth century.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the depiction of Richard II’s intimate relationships with his court favorites in the chronicles of the time. I offer evidence that, as in the case of Edward II, what was under attack here was not the *idea* of close male friendships, but rather, in the eyes of the nobles, Richard’s choice of intimate companions. After illustrating how the chronicles depict and also condemn the intimacy

between Richard and Robert de Vere. I identify the discourse of seduction and perversion which informs the descriptions of Richard's encounters with the men of his inner circle. I conclude with a look at how chronicles written or revised after Richard's deposition raise the question of sodomy, thus expressing what is merely hinted at in the earlier narratives of Richard's reign.

Having examined some of the social and political environments of Troilus and Criseyde, I now concentrate on how Chaucer's poem interacts with these contexts. In chapter 4, I explore how Troilus and Criseyde exemplifies, complicates, and dramatizes some key homosocial interactions illustrated or suggested in the chivalric texts I studied in chapter 2. After pointing to moments in the poem where readers are invited to gaze at Troilus as a model knight and, at times, form sadomasochistic identifications with him, I study how the intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus echoes the treatises on ideal friendship. In addition, I delineate how the developing heterosexual love story serves to intensify the homosocial relationship. Then, drawing on Freud and his modern commentators, I demonstrate how Pandarus, ever unsuccessful in love, can be viewed as a "novice knight" who constructs Troilus as a model knight and lover with whom he identifies and whom he desires. I argue that Chaucer's text dramatizes a psychological process inherent to chivalric society, as suggested in Charny's and Lull's treatises. Studying how Troilus and Criseyde also complicates this process marks my agenda for the remainder of the chapter. I explore the interplay between homoeroticism and heterosexual desire in the consummation scene -- how Criseyde as subject and object of desire problematizes Pandarus' position -- and offer two readings: one which, drawing

on René Girard and Eve Sedgwick, interprets the scene as a series of triangular configurations of desire; the other viewing the scene as a dramatization of Pandarus' fantasy.

While chapter 4 highlights how Troilus and Criseyde affirms homosocial intimacy, in chapter 5, I set Chaucer's poem against the discourses of male same-sex relations studied in chapter 3 and explore the politicization of Troilus and Pandarus' relationship. In part one, I reread books I-III through a homophobic lens -- a process of reappraisal that parallels Thomas Walsingham's politically motivated reevaluation of Richard II's relationship with Robert de Vere. (In his Historia Anglicana, a revised version of his Chronicon Angliae, Walsingham adds a sentence that describes the friendship between Richard and de Vere as "obscene.") Focusing first on Pandarus' actions in book I, I demonstrate how Chaucer's poem articulates discourses of seduction and aggression. I argue that, by depicting Troilus and Pandarus as advisee and adviser, respectively, Troilus and Criseyde suggests the highly criticized relationship between Richard II and his court favorites (as well as that of Edward II and Gaveston). I then highlight instances where the text leaves open the *possibility* of sodomy. Part two focuses on books IV and V, mapping out how the text moves against Troilus and Pandarus' friendship. I first delineate how in contrast to his earlier successful maneuvers, Pandarus, in book IV, fails effectively to "seduce" Troilus to follow his counsel, a failure that indicates the waning influence he has over his friend. In addition, his unsuitability as a court favorite/adviser is thrown into relief. I then turn to the final destruction of this same-sex bond in book V and point to how the text, by figuring

Criseyde as the cause of this, conceals its political agenda.

In applying, to borrow Dinshaw's formulation, a "queer touch" to Troilus and Criseyde I attempt to effect a "perceptual shift" in our understanding of Chaucer's text⁹⁷ -- one that does not presume that heteronormativity was dominant either in the fictional world of the poem or its chivalric, cultural environment; and, furthermore, one that acknowledges the historicity of Chaucer's work and the politically-informed discourse it generates.

⁹⁷In "Chaucer's Queer Touches," Dinshaw observes that "[q]ueerness works by contiguity and displacement, knocking signifiers loose, ungrounding bodies, making them strange; it works in this way to provoke perceptual shifts and subsequent corporeal response in those touched" (76).

Chapter 2

Male Homosocial Interactions in/with Chivalric Texts

Part One: Male-Male Spectatorship

In the late twelfth-century chronicle, Historia Gaufredi Ducis, John of Marmoutier describes in detail the ceremonial bath and dressing of the future knight, Geoffrey, Count of Anjou: "After the cleansing of [his] body, rising from the cleansing of the baths, Geoffrey, the noble offspring of the Count of the Angevins, is clothed in a linen shirt wrapped against his flesh."¹ A similar bathing ritual is described in the early thirteenth-century Ordene de Chevalerie, as Hugh, Count of Tiberias, prepares his captor, Saladin, for knighting under Christian law: "Cheveus et barbe et le viaire / Li fist appareillier molt bel / ... Puis le fist en un baing entrer [He [Hugh] had his [Saladin's] hair and beard and face well prepared ... then he made him enter a bath]."² After explaining that the bath symbolizes cleansing the body of sin, similar to baptism, "l'a du baing osté, / Si l'a couchié en un biau lit, / Qui estoit fez par grant delit [Hugh took him out of the bath and laid him in a fair bed, which was delightfully wrought]" (126-28). In Geoffrey de Charny's Book of Chivalry, written in the mid-fourteenth century, the ritual

¹Chroniques des Comtes D'Anjou, ed. Louis Halphen and René Poupardin (Paris: Picard, 1913) 179: "Post corporis ablutionem, ascendens de balneorum lavacro, comitis Andegavorum generosa proles, Gaufredus bysso retorta ad carnem induitur." English translation is mine.

²L'Ordene de Chevalerie in Raoul de Hodenc: Le Roman des Eles; The Anonymous Ordene de Chevalerie, ed. Keith Busby (Amsterdam: Utrecht Publications in General and Comparative Literature, 1983) ll. 106-07, 109. Subsequent quotations will be documented in the text by line number. All translations from the French are by Keith Busby. Here and in other places I have emended "Hue" in Busby's translation to "Hugh." Maurice Keen, Chivalry (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984), notes that the Ordene de Chevalerie "achieved widespread popularity and men continued to refer to its authority even in the later fifteenth century. It was copied into numerous manuscripts, and appears often in company with other material interesting to knightly readers" (6).

bath is also described: "Et puis quant vient la veille dont l'en doit estre chevalier le landemain. il se doivent mettre en un bain et y demourer une longue piece Adont se doivent partir tout net de conscience de celle eaue et de ce bain et se doivent aler gesir en u lit tout neuf et les draps blans et nez [On the eve of the ceremony, all those who are about to be knighted the next day should enter a bath and stay there for a long time Then they should come out of the water in the bath with a clear conscience and should go and lie in a new bed in clean white sheets]."³

These three chivalric texts spanning nearly two hundred years offer three instances of spectatorship, whereby a naked knight-to-be appears before the eyes of a male observer, thus clearly illustrating moments of same-sex observation that are potentially homoerotic. The texts differ, however, in the position of the author/narrator vis-à-vis the naked knight. In the first text, John of Marmoutier is writing a true account of the ceremonial bath and vigil on the night in 1128 in Rouen before Geoffrey V, Count of Anjou, was to be knighted and married to Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England.⁴ Although Jim Bradbury points out that John of Marmoutier did not know Geoffrey personally, and it is, therefore, unlikely that he was present during the bath, John does describe Geoffrey physically.⁵ In writing his account of the bathing ritual

³The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny, ed. and trans. Richard W. Kaeuper and Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996) 36.6-8.10-12. Subsequent quotations will be documented in the text by section and line.

⁴Keen 64-65.

⁵Jim Bradbury, "Geoffrey V of Anjou, Count and Knight," The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood III: Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference 1988, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, Suffolk:

John had to construct it either from information received from an eyewitness or perhaps solely on the fact that he knew that it took place. However, this narrative text presents a spectatorial situation in which the narrator/author claims to be describing what he himself is seeing. But since he was not there, he describes a scene that he has observed only in his mind.⁶

Unlike John's Historia, the narrator of the Ordene admits that he is relating events he has heard: "Des or mes voudrai paine metre / A rimoier et a conter / Un conte qu'ai oï conter [Henceforth I wish to put my effort into rhyming and relating a tale I have heard told]" (12-14). Thus, the narrator is reporting a story that someone else has evidently witnessed -- a common convention in medieval narratives -- yet despite the fact that Saladin is a historical figure, the events of the story are fictitious. While John of Marmoutier narrates as a direct observer, the narrator in the Ordene is once-removed from the spectatorial scenario of his story. He reports the scene as a camera perched on a wall with an unobstructed view, a non-participant who sees both Hugh and Saladin, yet his gaze is nearly always directed on Saladin as Hugh raises him from the bath and proceeds to dress him. The constructed nature of the observed scene, implied in Marmoutier's text, is more apparent in the Ordene. Thus, in both texts, the authors/narrators report a scene of bathing and dressing a knight which they have

Boydell, 1990) 22. Bradbury summarizes John's description of Geoffrey: "a tall man, lean and taut, with sparkling eyes, strong through nature and through exercise" (23).

⁶It is, of course, possible that he is merely setting down on paper someone else's account, without imagining the scene. However, as I will be studying in the next section, the composition process in the Middle Ages is often described as involving a visualization of the words one is composing.

presumably imagined.

Charny's Book of Chivalry presents yet another spectatorial configuration. The author describes a typical bathing ceremony which *any* knight-to-be would experience. His gaze is not focused on the image of a historical figure like Geoffrey or Saladin, but rather on imaginary knights. His description is as detailed as those in the Historia or the Ordene and his gaze follows the knights-to-be as they bathe, rise from the bath, lie in vigil and undergo the ritual dressing. Like the narrator of the Ordene, Charny's viewpoint is that of a camera on the wall with an unobstructed view. However, the spectatorial scene in Charny's text offers a greater challenge to the imaginative faculty of the author because he presents a setting with numerous "characters" -- both knights-to-be and those knights who act on them.⁷

Chivalric texts, whether chronicles, treatises or romances, present many instances where someone -- author, narrator, reader, character -- is gazing at a figure. Gazes can be divided into external and internal in relation to the text. An external gaze posits the author directly witnessing an event such as in a chronicle, or a narrator relating a supposedly true event (the Ordene) or an old story (Arthurian romances). In these situations the author/narrator is located outside the text and can be likened to a camera recording a scene in a film (I will discuss this at length later in the chapter). In addition, chivalric treatises such as Charny's do not present actual characters in a scene, but rather abstract scenarios with imaginary "actors." External gazes are, however, not

⁷The role of the imaginative faculty in the composition process will be discussed in the next section.

limited to author/narrator vis-à-vis the subject of his text. The reader/listener also occupies the position of observer external to the text. Generally, chivalric texts invite the reader to observe the scene from the viewpoint of the narrator.⁸ Nevertheless, the reader cannot merely adopt the narrator's view, because like the author, the reader, too, must imagine the scene. Thus, the object of his gaze will certainly not be identical to that imagined by the author. Here, too, we can discriminate between the reader's external gaze at an actual literary or historical character and the more abstract subjects of the treatises. Internal gazes, on the other hand, occur between characters within a text. These gazes can be implied or actual. An implied gaze can be found in chivalric treatises where the narrator describes how potential knights are examined by nobles to see if they are suitable, or instructs novice knights to observe closely model knights in order to learn how to be an ideal knight. Thus, these texts imply that novice knights focus their gaze at model knights in the "real" world. Although the act of a subject gazing at an object is not explicitly described, there is an implied referential world where this spectatorial phenomenon occurs. Implied spectatorship may also take place *within* a text, when, for instance, the narrator in Troilus and Criseyde observes Troilus in a public scene, thereby suggesting that others are also viewing him. An internal gaze occurs when one character observes another in a romance. The gaze can be unidirectional, where the object of the gaze does not appear to know he is being observed, or reciprocal, with two characters alternately observing one another.

⁸Here and throughout the study, I am primarily referring to a male reader gazing at a male knight. I do not, however, mean to suggest that there were no female readers/listeners of chivalric texts.

Many chivalric texts offer a type of unidirectional male-male spectatorship in which the observer looks, or the reader is urged to look, at an exemplary knight in order to become just like him. The model knight who is the object of this gaze does not look at his observer and the text gives no indication that he knows he is being observed. I refer to this particular form of male-male spectatorship as the "chivalric gaze" and suggest that this gaze is erotically charged. Since the observer desires to be like the model, he must be attracted in some way to the model knight. In addition, in order to learn how to be an ideal knight, the novice must focus on the physical body and actions of the model knight. Although my study assumes a referential world where this form of spectatorship takes place, I am, however, focusing on the writing and reading of chivalric texts and, thus, investigating the chivalric gaze occurring within the mind of the author or reader. Hence, my examination of this spectatorial phenomenon must make a detour through medieval concepts of the imagination. I will first explore medieval ideas regarding visualization in the composition process and how thoughts can be emotionally or erotically charged. I then move on to investigating concepts of visualization in reading, emphasizing theories of memory derived from Aristotle and Augustine, to which I apply the psychoanalytical concepts of identification/desire and fantasy. I return to the chivalric gaze and offer a theoretical analysis of this particular form of spectatorship drawing on contemporary film theory as well as Roger Bacon's (thirteenth-century) concept of vision. I then rearticulate the concepts and theories already discussed and offer readings of male-male spectatorship, both external and internal, in the Prose Lancelot and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Finally, I use

Freud's theory of sadomasochistic identification to explore how some male readers might derive vicarious pleasure from imagining and, thus, participating in fight scenarios depicted in the Stanzaic Morte Arthur. The phenomena I explore here comprise an important part of the sociocultural environment of Troilus and Criseyde and the spectatorial acts I articulate are all, in some way, operative in Chaucer's poem.

I. Visualization and Eroticism in Medieval Composition

In the Poetria Nova (c.1208-13), Geoffrey of Vinsauf instructs the poet to be "[a]s a prudent workman, construct the whole fabric within the mind's citadel; let it exist in the mind before it is on the lips. When due order has arranged the material in the hidden chamber of the mind, let poetic art come forward to clothe the matter with words."⁹ Thus, a mental picture is first constructed in the mind of the author to which he then adds words. Similarly, Matthew of Vendôme in Ars versificatoria (c. 1175) outlines the poetic composition process as beginning with visualization: "In the exercise of the poetic faculty a mental image of the perception comes first; utterance, which expounds the meaning, follows; and finally, arrangement ensues in the nature of the treatment."¹⁰ Douglas Kelly summarizes the composition process in the Middle Ages as

⁹Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova 58-61, qtd. in Douglas Kelly, Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978) 32: "Opus totum prudens in pectoris arcem / Contrahe, sitque prius in pectore quam sit in ore. / Mentis in arcano cum rem digesserit ordo, / Materiam verbis veniat vestire poesis."

¹⁰Matthew of Vendôme, Ars Versificatoria, qtd. in Kelly 32: "In poeticae facultatis exercitio praecedit imaginatio sensus, sequitur sermo interpret intellectus, deinde ordinatio in qualitate tractatus."

“[i]magination, verbalization, stylization and disposition.”¹¹ It is the first part of this process that I am most interested in exploring. Imagination in the act of composition may involve remembering past images or actual events. Alain de Lille elucidates the process in which the mind becomes completely enraptured by recalled images: “When, through a certain recall of sensory perceptions, to which the senses have gone out, the soul inscribes itself, as it were, an exemplum in memory, the entire attention of the soul, removed from the presence of the sensible objects upon which it reflects, seems to be suspended figuratively in the Imagination of them.”¹² Thus, an author composing a description of a model knight, historical or fictitious, could very well be drawing on remembered images of exemplary knights he himself has seen. His gaze is then focused on this mental image.

Medieval literature provides not a few examples of the poet/author vividly recalling the image of a loved one, for instance, the lady envisioned in the following balade by Guillaume de Machaut:

Gente de corps et tres bele de vis.

¹¹Kelly 32. Mary Carruthers, The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), describes the medieval theory of composition as “rumination, cogitation, dictation, a listening and a dialogue, a ‘gathering’ (*collectio*) of voices from their several places in memory” (198). She offers an excellent discussion of the role of memory in the composition process in chapter 6. I, however, focus my rather brief investigation of medieval composition practice on visualization.

¹² “Cum in quadam sensibilibus ad que sensus exierat rememoratione, anima penes se quasi quodam memoriale exemplum inscribit, ut tota animalis intentio preter sensibilibus de quibus cogitat presentiam, in eorundum ymaginationem comparabiliter videatur esse suspensa” (qtd. in Kelly 48).

Vraie de cuer, d'onneur la souverainne,

Ymage à droit parfaite, à mon devis,

La grant bonté de vous, entiere et seinne,

Le scens, le pris, la maniere certainne

Et vo douceur vous font estre en ce monde

M'amour premiers et ma dame seconde. (1-7)

[Noble in person and with a very beautiful face, true in heart, sovereign in honor, image exactly perfect -- in my estimation -- your great goodness, whole and sound, your wit, renown, assured, manner, and your sweetness, make you here on earth my love first and my lady second.]¹³

The poet's mental image of his lady which he calls "exactly perfect," although a copy of the actual lady, nevertheless, apparently offers him emotional fulfillment. It is noteworthy that this vivid image is not based solely on a static portrait of his lady but also incorporates the lady in action so to speak. He envisions his lady's wit and "assured manner" which can only be expressed in picturing the lady performing some action, interacting with others. It is, therefore, not a great stretch to compare such authorial/poetic envisioning with that of authors of chivalric texts who would accordingly envision the model knights they wish to present to the reader. I intend to take up a further comparison between the imagined loved lady and the admired (and desired) model knight in my discussion of eroticism in imagination.

V. A. Kolve provides illustrations of how medieval composition was represented

¹³Guillaume de Machaut, Balade CLXXIII, qtd. in Kelly 47-48.

as “visual imagining” in manuscripts which depict the author seated in the act of writing while the subjects of his work appear before him. For instance, in a manuscript of the collected works of Machaut (c.1370), the author is shown at his desk greeting the God of Love who introduces his children, *Douce Penser*, *Plaisance*, and *Esperance*. Kolve also draws attention to a deluxe fifteenth-century manuscript of Boccaccio’s De casibus virorum illustrium in which Lady Fortune sits before the author as he writes about her.¹⁴ Boccaccio’s text offers a particularly striking example of the operation of imagination in the composition process. The first book opens with a view startling in its panoramic scope: “I saw an army of mourners milling about me.”¹⁵ He periodically returns to a sweeping image of mourners, but in each case, one or two figures step out of the crowd and appear to him in remarkably vivid detail: “Leading them was Athea, Queen of Calydon. She was in mourning attire, weeping copious tears, her hair was snarled, and her face sadly torn by her fingernails ... [i]n this group, too, was Hercules, horribly

¹⁴V. A. Kolve, Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1984) 32, 34.

¹⁵Giovanni Boccaccio, De Casibus Illustrium Virorum, ed. Louis Brewer Hall (Gainesville: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1962) l.31: “Sic iam agmine flentium circundari me video” (l.31). Citations are given by book and page number. English translation is taken from The Fates of Illustrious Men, trans. Louis Brewer Hall (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1965). Another example of “cinematic” inner vision can be found in Hugh of Saint Victor, De Vanitate Mundi, Hugh of Saint-Victor: Selected Spiritual Writings (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). In the dialogue between the Soul and Reason, the Soul tells Reason what it sees: “I can see men going on their way, laden with many and great wares. There are countless camels carrying different loads, and many wagons and two-horsed drays in the travellers’ train” (162).

burned. his beard blackened and tangled, his hair shaggy.”¹⁶ Despite the fact that some of these images appear to confront Boccaccio without him summoning them, he also can exercise control over which image he wishes to view: “Many others were cursing their fortunes and groaning about their various fates. Among them that very brilliant and eloquent orator, Marcus Tullius Cicero, entered in silence, his head lowered. I put all the others from my mind and gazed at him in admiration.”¹⁷ Thus, not only does Boccaccio construct mental images of the subjects of his text but he also gazes at the image before him. Such a gaze of admiration suggests a contemplative spectatorial relation between the observing author and the mental image, whereby the inner eye moves over the form before him. It is not unreasonable to assume that authors of chivalric texts also engaged in such imaginative gazing at their subjects as they composed their narratives.

An author/poet can experience intense emotions as a result of his imagination, as does the speaker in chapter 31 of Dante’s Vita Nuova:

Dannomi angoscia li sospiri forte,
quando ’l pensiero ne la mente grave
mi reca quella che m’ha ’l cor diviso.

.....

¹⁶Boccaccio, De Casibus Illustrium Virorum I.39: “Et ante alios facie unguibus laniata suis discerpto crine et lugubri veste lachrymas abunde fundentes althea ... Erat & insuper herculus vultu incedens horrido atra & incomposita barba hirsuto crine.”

¹⁷Boccaccio, De Casibus Illustrium Virorum VI.158: “Et alii plurimi insuper variis ex casibus gemebundi Fortunas adcusabant suas. Quibus iunctus splendissimus adque facundus orator Marcus Tullius Cicero deiecta fro[n]te tacitus incedebat. Quem ego postpositis ceteris mirabundus i[n]tueri coepi.”

E quand 'l maginar mi ven ben fiso,
 giugnemi tanta pena d'ogne parte.
 ch'io mi riscuoto per dolor ch'i' sento:
 [I breathe deep sighs of anguished desolation
 when memory brings to my weary mind
 the image of that one who split my heart:

.....

When this imagining has hold of me,
 bitter affliction binds me on all sides,
 and I begin to tremble from the pain.]¹⁸

Naturally, the emotion experienced by the speaker need not correspond to Dante, the poet, as he composes these lines. Poetic embellishment notwithstanding, this excerpt does, however, offer an illustration of the emotive force of the medieval imagination. The connection between the imagination and emotions is underscored by medieval physicians, particularly in their writings about love and lovesickness. For instance, Mary Wack points out that according to Urso of Calabria, "all the passions of the soul originate in the imagination and are completed in the heart."¹⁹ She goes on to summarize

¹⁸Dante Alighieri, Dante's Vita Nuova, trans. and ed. Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973) 67, 65. For a discussion of the relation between imagination and feelings in Dante's Vita Nuova, see Robert L. Montgomery, The Reader's Eye: Studies in Didactic Literary Theory from Dante to Tasso (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979) 54-61.

¹⁹Mary F. Wack, "Imagination, Medicine, and Rhetoric in Andreas Capellanus' 'De Amore'." Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske, ed. Arthur Groos et al. (New York: Fordham UP, 1986) 105.

Urso: "when we sense something pleasurable, the mind's attention turns toward it, and the *spiritus* moves to the 'instrument of the fantasy,' which is the first cell of the brain where the imagination is localized. Immediately imagination moves us to conceive the pleasurable effects of the sensed thing 'with a thirsting appetite'."²⁰ The imaginative faculty is particularly active in the case of lovesickness, when the desired person is absent. Peter of Spain describes the situation as follows: "in lovesickness there is depressed thought. And then the imaginative faculty imagines that thing, and <sends> it to the irascible and concupiscible faculties, which are faculties located in the heart that control movement. And then these controlling faculties order the faculty of movement, which is in the nerves, to move the limbs in pursuit of that thing."²¹ Thus, the imagined form of the beloved is evidently vivid enough to send the lover in pursuit of it. While I do not make the claim that an image of an exemplary knight would cause an author (or reader) of a chivalric text to pursue such a person, a desired image *could* have an

²⁰ "Aliquotiens per sensum concupiscendo ad ymaginanda sensibilia incitatur, utpote cum aliquae delectabilia sensu percipiamus, intentione mentis ad haec deflexa, spiritu recurrente ad fantasiae instrumentum et incitante virtutem fantasticam, statim ad concipiendos effectus rei sensae et cum sitiendi appetitu per ymaginationem movemur" (qtd. in Wack 106). For additional discussions of medieval psychology, see E. Ruth Harvey, The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (London: Warburg Institute, 1975) and Murray Wright Bundy, The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1927).

²¹ Peter of Spain, Questions on the Viaticum (Version A) in Mary Frances Wack, Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The *Viaticum* and Its Commentaries (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990) 216-17: "in amore hereos est profundacio cogitationis. Et tunc virtus ymaginativa ymaginatur illam rem, et eam <mandat?> virtuti irascibili et concupiscibili, que sunt virtutes motive inperantes in corde existentes. Et tunc huiusmodi virtutes inperantes inperant virtuti motive que est in nervis ut moveant membra ad prosecucionem illius rei."

emotional and possibly erotic effect on the viewer.

Bernard de Gordon concentrates on the vivid and incessant images which plague the sufferer of lovesickness: "when someone is madly in love with a woman, his mind is so full of her figure, face, and manner that he is convinced that she is better, more beautiful, more admirable, more attractive, more naturally endowed, and more morally endowed than any other woman."²² This image is extraordinarily three-dimensional, containing the woman's face, figure, and manner. Since the actual woman is absent from view, the *image* of her is what convinces the lover that she is far superior to any other woman. It is, perhaps, just such a rich and lifelike image that, according to Peter of Spain, sends the lover in pursuit of the object of his desire.

The intimate association between vivid thoughts and desire is well illustrated in Chaucer's Troilus who ponders Criseyde upon returning home directly after the consummation scene:

And in his thought gan up and down to wynde
 Hire wordes alle, and every countenaunce.
 And fermely impressen in his mynde
 The leeste point that to him was plesaunce:
 And verraylich of thilke remembraunce

²²Bernardus Gordonius, Lilium Medicinæ, qtd. in Carol F. Heffernan, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: The Disease of Love and Courtly Love," Neophilologus 74 (1990): 303, 309n.43: "cum aliquis philocaptus est in amore alicuius mulieris, ita fortiter concipit formam & figuram & modum, quoniam credit & opinatur hanc esse meliorem, pulchriorem & magis venerabilem, magis speciosam, & melius dotatam in naturalibus & moralibus, quam aliquam aliarum."

Desir al newe hym brende, and lust to brede ...²³

What is particularly interesting here in relation to the composition process is the depiction of agency in imagination.²⁴ Troilus is not assaulted by uncontrolled thoughts of Criseyde, but rather actively ponders her every word and look, presumably directed toward him. Thus, he summons the mental images and even the least pleasant remembrance is firmly impressed in his mind.²⁵ Echoing Peter of Spain, the mental images Troilus forms in his mind stimulate "desir al newe" -- in other words, this desire, while certainly relating to earlier desire, is, nevertheless, a new experience initiated as a direct response to vivid thoughts in his imagination.

While the active imagination of the lovesick sufferer is by doctrine confined to heterosexual eroticism, medieval mystics experienced both heterosexual and same-sex

²³Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 3.1541-46.

²⁴The connection between imagination and desire is certainly relevant for reading/listening as well, and I will take this up in the next section.

²⁵The idea that a memory image is firmly impressed in the mind can be traced to Aristotle, whose theories of memory were read and commented on in the Middle Ages. See Thomas Aquinas, *The Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas on Aristotle's De Anima*, trans. Kenelm Foster and Silvester Humphries (New Haven: Yale UP, 1951). For an in-depth discussion of Aristotle's theory of memory, see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*. Aristotle, *De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, qtd. in Richard Sorabji, *Aristotle on Memory* (Providence: Brown UP, 1972) 50: "one must think of the affection, which is produced by means of perception in the soul and in that part of the body which contains the soul, as being like a sort of picture, the having of which we say is memory. For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people do who seal things with signet rings." I will explore medieval ideas of memory and imagination, drawing particularly on Augustine, in my discussion of the reader/listener in the next section.

erotic images.²⁶ Mary Wack reports on Rupert of Deutz who in a dream where he is worshipping Christ on the Cross, Christ's return of his gaze prompts Rupert to rush to the altar and engage in a remarkably homoerotic encounter with Christ: "I wanted to touch him with my hands, to embrace him, kiss him ... I sensed that he wanted me to hold him, embrace him, kiss him for a long time. I sensed how seriously he accepted these love-kisses when while kissing, he himself opened his mouth so that I might kiss more deeply."²⁷ Here, as in Peter of Spain's description of how an image of the beloved prompts the lover to pursue the actual person, Rupert's imagination effects a physical response in that he rushes toward the figure he is imagining. However, he does not seek the actual Christ, but rather satisfies his desire in an erotically-charged encounter with the image. Religious fervor notwithstanding, this passage exemplifies the erotic potential of images.

Returning to the Ordene de Chevalerie, according to medieval concepts of

²⁶The heteronormative agenda of courtly love is clearly expressed in Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia UP, 1960) 30: "love cannot exist except between persons of opposite sexes. Between two men or two women love can find no place, for we see that two persons of the same sex are not at all fitted for giving each other the exchanges of love or for practicing the acts natural to it." Among the numerous English mystics, Margery Kempe and Richard Rolle come easily to mind regarding, respectively, heterosexual and homoerotic encounters with Christ.

²⁷Rupert von Deutz, Comm. in Math. 12, qtd. in Peter Dinzelbacher, "Über die Entdeckung der Liebe im Hochmittelalter," Saeculum 32 (1981) 197n.94: "Non satis hoc mihi erat, nisi in manibus apprehenderem, amplexumque deoscularer ... Sensi enim ego, quia voluit ... apprehendi, quem diligit anima mea, tenui illum, amplexatus sum eum, diutius osculatus sum eum. Sensi quam graviter hunc gestum dilectionis admitteret, cum inter osculandum suum ipse os aperiret, ut profundis oscularer." My English translation draws on both Dinzelbacher's German translation and Wack's English translation, Lovesickness 24.

composition, the author would presumably conjure in his mind an imaginary scene where Saladin is undergoing the ritual bath and dressing of one about to be knighted. Chivalric treatises make very clear that only those men who have demonstrated exceptional military prowess and who are of admirable physical stature can be worthy of knighthood. Thus, Saladin, besides occupying a powerful position in that he is holding Hugh captive in the Holy Land, must also be physically suitable for knighting (otherwise the exemplary Christian knight, Hugh, would have declined Saladin's request to be knighted). The author's inner gaze is, therefore, focused on the naked body of a physically strong knight-to-be. He imagines Hugh leading Saladin into the bath, views him sitting in the bath as Hugh explains the significance of the bath. The author's gaze rests continually on Saladin as Hugh performs the following actions:

l'a du baing osté,

Si l'a couchié en un biau lit,

Qui estoit fez par grant delit

.....

Quant el lit ot un poi geü.

Sus le dresce, si l'a vestu

De blans dras qui erent de lin. (126-28, 137-39)

[Hugh took him out of the bath and laid him in a fair bed, which was delightfully wrought ... When Saladin had lain a little while on the bed, Hugh raised him up and clad him in white sheets made of linen.]

I would suggest that there is an underlying homoeroticism in this imagined scene. Most

obvious is that the author presumably draws forth a mental image of a naked knight with a worthy physical appearance and, recalling Boccaccio's encounter with Cicero, gazes at him in admiration. The author's emotional involvement can be assumed, because if the author did not find the qualities of knighthood attractive, he would hardly have undertaken the writing of such a detailed account of the bathing and dressing ritual.²⁸

What is, perhaps, not so apparent is the author's participation in the scene. The mental image of Saladin is hardly a fixed one. Saladin is continuously being acted upon by Hugh. He is led into the bath, taken out of the bath and laid on a bed, and finally dressed in a series of clothes and accouterments. The author's image of Saladin must also include a sense of the actions being performed on him. Boccaccio senses the pain of his imagined figures. Rupert von Deutz feels the imagined Christ's welcoming responses to his kisses, and, likewise, I suggest that in his imagination, the author of the Ordene is being bathed and dressed by Hugh. While I do not claim that the author experiences sexual arousal in the scene, the apparently vivid powers of imagination at work in the composition process do allow for potential homoeroticization in the act of composing a chivalric text such as the Ordene de Chevalerie.

II. Visual Reading: Imagining Model Knights

In his Speculum doctrinale, Vincent de Beauvais, quoting Alpharabius, states:

²⁸The narrator's gushing exuberance as he describes Troilus in book II (624-37) suggests a similar emotional (erotic?) involvement of the author's narrator persona. For Chaucer here does not translate Boccaccio word for word, but rather "eched" in his own words, thus implying imaginative composition.

“It belongs to poetica to make the hearer through its locutions image something as fair or foul which is not so, that he may believe and shun or desire it. Although certainly it is not so in truth, nevertheless, the minds of the hearers are roused to shun or desire what they image.”²⁹ Similarly, authors of chivalric texts present an ideal view of chivalry and strive to stimulate the imaginations of their listeners and readers. Before examining medieval concepts of visualization in reading, I want briefly to survey theories of memory and imagination that had currency in the Middle Ages. While the last section concentrated on the composition process, I will now focus on the reader/listener.

Thomas Aquinas comments on Aristotle’s concept of memory in De Anima:

“Images can arise in us at will, for it is in our power to make things appear, as it were, *before our eyes* -- golden mountains, for instance, or anything else we please, as people do when they recall past experiences and form them at will into imaginary pictures.”³⁰ Once again, images are regarded as pictures “before our eyes.” That these mental pictures could be extraordinarily vivid, I have demonstrated in the previous section. But memory is not only important in the composition process, it is also intimately involved in listening to chivalric narratives.³¹ The reader is prompted to summon recollections of

²⁹Alpharabius is the Latinized version of al-Farabi, the 9th century Arabic scholar whose book on the division of the sciences, De scientiis, Vincent is quoting. See James J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: U of California P, 1974) 91. The quote from Vincent de Beauvais is taken from Charles Sears Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (1928; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959) 175.

³⁰Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima 383, emphasis mine.

³¹I will use “listener” and “reader” interchangeably since chivalric texts were evidently both listened to and read, although in-text clues often seem to target an aural

historical figures heard in other narratives, or to conjure up a mental picture of the scene the author is painting. And as I pointed out earlier, according to Aristotle and medieval writers on the imaginative faculty, mental images do not assault the viewer, but rather, the viewer summons the image. Even the helpless sufferer of lovesickness conjures up images of the beloved. This acknowledged agency of the observer allows for influences from the emotions and desire of the reader/observer.

It is also relevant to my study that Aristotle regarded the mental image as independent of the original object: "One must ... conceive the image in us to be something in its own right and to be of another thing. In so far, then, as it is something in its own right, it is an object of contemplation or an image. But in so far as it is of another thing, it is a sort of copy and a reminder."³² Thus, the mental image has a life of its own so to speak. In a sense, the original object is reborn at the moment of recollection, but while it is a copy of the original, it, nevertheless, will reflect the mental state of the viewer at the time of recollection.

Augustine defines three kinds of vision: "one through the eyes, by which we see the letters; a second through the spirit, by which we think of our neighbor even when he is absent; and a third through an intuition of the mind."³³ Steven Kruger expounds on

audience. This might, however, be merely a narrative devise borrowed from minstrelsy.

³²Aristotle, De Memoria et Reminiscentia, qtd. in Sorabji 51.

³³Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram, Patrologiae cursus completus, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, vol. 34 (Paris, 1844-65) XII.6.15.: "tria genera visionum occurrunt: unum per oculos, quibus ipsae litterae videntur; alterum per spiritum hominis quo proximus et absens cogitatur; tertium per contuitum mentis." Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from the Patrologiae cursus completus refer to the Series Latina. The Literal

Augustine's concept of the second kind of vision: "In the absence of an actual body, its image can be recalled from memory, and such remembered images can be combined to create composite pictures -- conjectural likenesses of bodies that exist but that have never been seen, or even likenesses of non-existent bodies."³⁴ In De Trinitate, Augustine offers an explanation of how one visualizes places both seen and not seen with the eyes of the body:

When I want to express Carthage I search about in myself in order to express it and in myself I find the image of Carthage. But I got this through the body, that is through the senses of the body, because I have been present there in body and seen it and perceived it and kept it in my memory.... So too when I wish to express Alexandria which I have never seen I have its image ready to hand within me. I have heard about it from lots of people ... and so I have fabricated its image as best I could in my mind ... looking at it in my mind, that is at its image, like a picture of it.³⁵

Meaning of Genesis, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vol. 2 (New York: Newman, 1982). All subsequent English translations of De Genesi ad litteram are taken from this edition. I will be drawing heavily on Augustine's theories of imagination and memory, and although he is not contemporary with the period I am concentrating on, his ideas influenced later medieval writers as David C. Lindberg, Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976), points out: "because of his immense authority, Augustine came to be consulted on all sorts of matters to which he had addressed himself only incidentally; on the theory of vision in particular, later medieval writers frequently quoted Augustine when his view paralleled their own" (89).

³⁴Steven F. Kruger, Dreaming in the Middle Ages (New York: Cambridge UP, 1992) 37.

³⁵Augustine, De Trinitate, Patrologiae cursus completus, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, vol. 42 (Paris, 1844-65) VIII.6.9: "Et Carthaginem quidem cum eloqui volo,

Although Augustine is stressing the point in this second act of vision that his belief that this image is Alexandria is based on faith -- that what others told him was true -- for my purposes, what is important is that Augustine delineates the process in which readers could visualize something they have only heard about but never actually seen themselves. He also remarks on how vivid images of persons can be: "it may sometimes be that by an excessive application of thought, or by the influence of some disorder ... or by the agency of some other spirit, whether good or evil, the images of bodies are produced in the spirit just as if bodies were present to the senses of the body."³⁶

Augustine's observations are in keeping with the view held by physicians that a person suffering from the "disorder" of love can produce a clear and multidimensional image of

apud me ipsum quaero ut eloquar, et apud me ipsum invenio phantasiam Carthaginis: sed eam per corpus accepi, id est per corporis sensum, quoniam praesens in ea corpore fui, et eam vidi atque sensi, memoriaque retinui ... Sic et Alexandriam cum eloqui volo, quam nunquam vidi, praesto est apud me phantasma ejus. Cum enim a multis audissem ... finxi animo meo imaginem ejus quam potui ... atque intuens in animo meo ipsam, id est imaginem quasi picturam ejus." English translation is taken from The Trinity, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991). All subsequent English translations of De Trinitate are from this version. Similarly, in the Confessions, ed. James J. O'Donnell, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); trans. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953). Augustine discusses his inner vision of things both seen and not seen with his eyes: "I did not see with my eyes all these things [e.g. the ocean, mountains, rivers] when I was talking about them. Yet, I could not have talked of them unless I could see within, in my memory, in their vast expanses, *as if I were seeing them externally* [haec omnia, cum dicerem, non ea videbam oculis, nec tamen dicerem, nisi ... in memoria mea viderem, spatiis tam ingentibus foris viderem]" X.8.15, emphasis added. Bourke points out that Augustine had never actually seen the ocean (276n.45).

³⁶Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram XII.12.25: "Cum autem vel nimia cogitationis intentione, vel aliqua vi morbi, ut phreneticis per febrem accidere solet, vel commixtione cujusquam alterius spiritus seu mali seu boni, ita corporalium rerum in spiritu exprimuntur imagines, tanquam ipsis corporis sensibus corpora praesententur."

the beloved. I would, however, suggest that Augustine's observation can be applied to any act of concentrated thought which is motivated by a strong desire to see something or someone. This imagined person could be the image of someone actually seen or someone merely told about. Such imaging, on faith, so to speak, is very much a part of the act of reading or listening to a narrative.

In his Life of the Black Prince (c. 1385), the Chandos Herald aims to tell of "la vie et des faites d'armes d'un tres noble Prince de Gales et Daquitaine qu'auoit a noun Edward [the life and deeds of arms of the most noble prince of Wales and Aquitaine named Edward]." ³⁷ The author places Edward against past greats as a means for the listeners, whom he periodically addresses directly, to form a mental image of Edward as a model knight. For instance, he claims that "si com il tournye a le ronde / Ne qui fust puis les tamps Clarus. / Jule Cesaire ne Artus / Ensi com vous oïr pourrez/ Mais que de bon cuer l'escoutez [the most valiant there has been since the time of Charlemagne, Julius Caesar or Arthur, as you shall hear if you listen with a good heart]" (47-54). Similar to chivalric treatises such as Charny's Book of Chivalry, The Life of the Black Prince stresses ideal chivalric qualities that all knights should strive for. The Chandos Herald's intense admiration for the subject of his narrative is evident in the following:

"cils frans Princes dont je vous dy. / Depuis le jour que il nasquy / Ne pensa fors que loiaute. / ffranchise. valour et bonte / Et se fu garniz de proece [the noble prince of

³⁷Chandos Herald, Life of the Black Prince, ed. Mildred K. Pope and Eleanor C. Lodge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910) p.1 (no line number). Unless otherwise noted, the English translation is taken from The Life and Campaigns of the Black Prince, trans. Richard Barber (New York: St. Martin's P, 1986). Subsequent citations will be given in the text by line number.

whom I speak never, from the day of his birth, thought of anything but loyalty, noble deeds, valour and goodness, and was endowed with prowess]" (63-67). The repetition of "si" before each chivalric virtue is also telling: "Si preus, si hardis, si vaillanz / Et si courtois et si sachanz [so noble, bold, and valiant, so courteous and so sage]" (83-84).³⁸ Although no physical description is offered, it was, indeed, the Black Prince's *body* that was "endowed with prowess" and, thus, readers are encouraged to visualize a physical male body performing "noble deeds."

Many of the events that the Chandos Herald describes he did not witness himself.³⁹ For instance, he was not at the battle of Crécy, yet he, nevertheless, reports as if he were there:

La fu li Princes de bonte,

Qui l'avantgarde conduisoit.

Si vaillantment se gouvernoit

Que merveille fu a veïr;

A paines lessoit envaïr

Nuli, tant fust hardyz ne forz. (324-29)

[The good prince was there, leading the vanguard, and he behaved so valiantly that it was a wonder to see. He scarcely gave anyone a chance to attack, however bold and strong he was.]

Following Augustine's explanation of inner vision, the narrator is visualizing a scene

³⁸Translation by Pope and Lodge 135.

³⁹Chandos Herald, Life of the Black Prince, ed. Pope and Lodge lvi.

that he knows only from someone else's account. Nevertheless, his words reveal that he is, in fact, seeing the events he is reporting and thus his listeners are urged to do the same -- for they in turn, according to Augustine, would conjure images of the scene based on the authority of the "sight" of the narrator.

The idea that a narrator envisions what he describes and then invites his listeners to imagine it as well is found in Longinus' writings on the Sublime where he defines the terms "image" and "imagination": "[image or imagination] is predominantly used in cases where, carried away by enthusiasm and passion, you think you see what you describe, and you place it before the eyes of your hearers."⁴⁰ In another passage, Longinus notes that "[y]ou will make your hearer more excited and more attentive, and full of active participation, if you keep him alert by words addressed to himself."⁴¹ Augustine describes how a reader/listener may respond to a text: "Anyone, surely, who has read or heard what the apostle Paul wrote or what was written about him, will fabricate a face for the apostle in his imagination, and for everybody else whose name is mentioned in these texts."⁴² What is particularly interesting here is that Augustine does

⁴⁰Longinus, De Sublimite, qtd. in Bundy 108.

⁴¹Qtd. in Jane P. Tompkins, "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response," Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) 202. The reader is often directly addressed by the Chandos Herald. Tompkins observes that unlike a modern reader's "interpretation" of a text, according to Longinus, "if the reader has become part of the action, is caught up by the language, the question of what the passage 'means' does not arise. Once the desired *effect* has been achieved, there is no need, or room, for interpretation" (203, emphasis in original).

⁴²Augustine, De Trinitate VIII.4.7.: "Quis enim legentium vel audientium quae scripsit apostolus Paulus, vel quae de illo scripta sunt, non fingat animo et ipsius

not regard this imaginative process as something that only certain people with exceptional skills can do. And although here, as in most of his writings on visualization, his focus is on spiritual matters, it is noteworthy that he does not restrict the subject of these images to Paul or any other saintly figure. He also addresses the idea of visual reading in a letter to Nebridius when discussing the second class of mental images, “images of things supposed.” He notes that we form a mental image “when we picture a situation while a narrative is being read, or while we hear or compose or conjecture some fabulous tale.”⁴³ He goes on to offer specific examples: “When it pleases me or when it comes to my mind, I can picture to myself the appearance of Aeneas, or of Medea with winged serpents yoked to her chariot.”⁴⁴ Thus, mental imaging, according to Augustine, is not limited to persons who have been actually observed, but can include characters known only through literature.

Later writers also describe reading as a visual process. When Richart de Fournival, writing in the mid-thirteenth century, refers to the “painture” of a text he is speaking of *both* the illustrated image in the manuscript *and* the mental image which the text prompts readers/listeners to conjure in their minds:

Apostoli faciem, et omnium quorum ibi nomina commemorantur.”

⁴³Augustine, Epistolae Secundum Ordinem Temporum Nunc Primum Dispositae, Prima Classis, Patrologiae cursus completus, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, vol. 33 (Paris, 1844-65) VII.2.4.: “qualia figuramus cum legimus historias, et cum fabulosa vel audimus vel componimus vel suspicamur.” English translation is taken from Saint Augustine, Letters, trans. Sister Wilfred Parsons, vol 1 (Washington D.C.: Catholic U of America P, 1951).

⁴⁴Augustine, Epistolae VII.2.4.: “Ego enim mihi ut libet atque ut occurrit animo, Aeneae faciem fingo, ego Medae cum suis anguibz alitibus junctis jugo.”

Car quant on voit painte une estoire, ou de Troies ou d'autre, on voit les
fais des pseudommes ki cha en ariere furent, ausi com s'il fussent
present. Et tout ensi est il de parole. Car quant on ot .i. romans lire, on
entent les aventures, ausi com on les veïst en present.

[When one sees painted a story, whether of Troy or something else, one
sees those noble deeds which were done in the past exactly as though
they were still present. And it is the same thing with hearing a text, for
when one hears a story read aloud, listening to the events one sees them
in the present.]⁴⁵

The visual experience of reading is dramatized in Chaucer's House of Fame where the narrator *sees* the story of Troy written on the walls of Venus' temple. Chaucer blurs the distinction between words and images, at times referring clearly to words, such as Virgil's opening lines of the Aeneid and Dido's lament, and, in other places, presenting panoramic scenes of action. Nevertheless, as Kolve rightly observes, the narrator's repetition of "I saugh" are "clearly intended to make us 'see' in our turn."⁴⁶

Mary Carruthers draws attention to Petrarch's emotional experience of reading, memorizing, and then recalling the words of Virgil. She comments on "[t]he active agency of the reader ... 'breaking up' or 'shattering' ... each single word as he recreates

⁴⁵Richart de Fournival, Li Bestiaires d'Amours, qtd. in Carruthers 341n.10, 223.

⁴⁶Kolve 41. He comments further on the multisensual quality of the reported temple scene: "Reading, seeing, hearing, remembering, and even writing (see lines 381-82) are rendered as interchangeable" (42). See also Karla Taylor, Chaucer Reads 'The Divine Comedy' (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989) 25ff.

the scene in his memory ... [h]e re-hears, re-sees, re-feels, experiences and re-experiences.” She concludes that “Virgil’s words are embodied in Petrarch’s recollection as an experience of tumult and calm that is more physiological (emotional, passionate) than ‘mental,’ in our sense. Desire underlies the whole experience, changing from turmoil through anger to repose.”⁴⁷ This example of active, emotional, and visual reading is certainly not the unique experience of a skilled poet. For as I pointed out above, Augustine acknowledges in The Trinity that *anyone* can imagine the face of Paul when reading about him. But the questions I want to address now are whether Augustine’s concept of visual reading and recollection allows for the workings of the emotions and passions of the reader/recollector and if so what this might suggest about how chivalric treatises address their readers.

Augustine describes the vivid intensity of inner vision:

if it [the will] concentrates its whole energy on the inner image, and withdraws the conscious attention [i.e. inner eye] altogether from the presence of bodies that surround the senses, and from the senses of the bodies themselves, and directs it utterly on the image that is perceived within, then the likeness of a bodily appearance printed off from the memory looms so large, that it does not even allow the reason to tell whether a real body is being seen outside or something like it is being

⁴⁷Carruthers 169.

thought about inside.⁴⁸

In the same paragraph, he relates a rather remarkable example of vivid imaging: “I remember once hearing a man say that it was usual with him to see the form of a woman’s body so vividly and as it were so solidly in his thoughts that he would as good as feel himself copulating with her and seed would even flow from his genitals.”⁴⁹ The idea that someone might experience orgasm as a result of viewing a mental image points to the potentially erotic effects of visualizing a male knight one desires to be like.⁵⁰ This example is certainly in keeping with what medieval physicians note regarding how an image of a desired one stimulates the visualizer to actually pursue the image. It is also significant that Augustine appears to give equal weight to memories of objects once physically seen and those things which were never seen with corporeal vision: “the consciousness has the power of fabricating not merely things that have been forgotten but even things that have never been sensed or experienced: it can compose them out of things that have not dropped out of the memory, by increasing, diminishing, altering,

⁴⁸Augustine, *De Trinitate* XI.4.7.: “Voluntas ... si ad interiorem phantasiam tota confluerit, atque a praesentia corporum quae circumjacent sensibus, atque ab ipsis sensibus corporis, animi aciem omnino averterit, atque ad eam quae intus cernitur imaginem penitus converterit; tanta offenditur similitudo speciei corporalis expressa ex memoria, ut nec ipsa ratio discernere sinatur, utrum foris corpus ipsum videatur, an intus tale aliquid cogitetur.” Because Augustine is referring to a process of inner vision, the “conscious attention” suggests an inner sense that, in some manner, perceives forms visually.

⁴⁹Augustine, *De Trinitate* XI.4.7.: “Et memini me audisse a quodam, quod tam expressam et quasi solidam speciem feminei corporis in cogitando cernere soleret, ut ei se quasi misceri sentiens, etiam genitalibus flueret.”

⁵⁰I will explore this possibility toward the end of this section.

and putting them together as it pleases.”⁵¹ This rather free hand at reconstructing memory images suggests that one can exercise one’s will to fashion a new image depending on what the viewer wishes to see/experience. One can piece together different images into a new, improved, ideal image that may in turn attract the viewer passionately.

In Vegetius’ Epitoma Rei Militaris, written in the fourth or fifth century and translated into English in 1408, it is recommended that young men who are to be trained for warfare have these physical characteristics:

þilke þat ben ordeyned to þe werk of Mars, þat is god of batayle,
comounliche þey hauen þese tokenes: Wakyng ey en, streyte and
stalworþe nekke, brood brest, wel brawned schuldres, stalworþ bonyd
armes, longe fynGRES, smal of wombe, mesurable porpocyonyd þyes, not
to grete ne to smale, anclees and feet not coumbred wiþ flesch, but wel
hardid & knyrt togidre wiþ sadnesse of synewes.⁵²

It is, therefore, implied that the physical bodies of these young men were closely

⁵¹Augustine, De Trinitate XI.5.8.: “Sed quia praeualet animus, non solum oblita, verum etiam non sensa nec experta confingere, ea quae non exciderunt augendo, minuendo, commutando, et pro arbitrio componendo.”

⁵²Vegetius, The Earliest English Translation of Vegetius’ De Re Militari, ed. Geoffrey Lester (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1988) 14-20. French versions of Vegetius’ work, including one by Jean de Meun (c.1284) and several others during the 14th century, existed before the English translation which was completed in 1408 for Thomas of Berkeley. See the introduction to Lester’s edition 7, 15. Richard Green maintains that “the unquestionable popularity of Vegetius throughout the middle ages suggests that he was read with more than merely antiquarian curiosity” (qtd. in Lester 12).

scrutinized in order to determine whether they exhibited these qualities. While it is certainly possible that the examinees were not wearing much clothing during this examination, it is also possible that the eyes of the examiners penetrate the clothing to the chests, stomachs, and thighs beneath -- an activity that parallels that of readers/listeners (as well as actual novice knights) viewing model knights in armor. Although in the Libre del Orde de Cavayleria, Ramon Lull does not suggest that the physical body of a potential knight be so keenly examined, he does recommend that "euery squyer ... be examyned to fore er he be made knyght."⁵³ He urges the examining knight to search for "noblesse and valoyre" in the squire and also to be certain that the young man not illustrate any vice: "A squyer prowde / evylle taught / ful of vylaynous wordes / and of vylayne courage / auarycious / a lyar / vntrew / slouthful / a glouton / periured / or that hath any other vyces semblable Accordeth not to chyualry" (65). I would suggest that a close scrutiny of the physical body of the squire is implied in Lull's advice. While one might discover whether a young man is slothful or a glutton, or if he demonstrates "valoyre," by interrogation, it is plausible that since these characteristics point to actions of the body, this information could be obtained by observing bodies in action.

Despite the above example from Lull's text, chivalric treatises, including Lull's, are more concerned with elaborating on the qualities of an ideal knight of chivalry rather

⁵³Ramon Lull, The Book of the Order of Chivalry, trans. William Caxton, ed. A.T. P. Byles, EETS o.s. 168 (London: Oxford UP, 1926) 65. Caxton's text closely follows a late fourteenth century French manuscript. For a discussion of the manuscripts, see xvi ff. Additional citations will be given in the text by page number.

than negative characteristics of unsuitable squires. For instance, Charny describes “true men of worth” as follows: “Et quant yteles bonnes gens d’armes sont ainsi approuvez de leur bon ouvrage de leur main et de leur corps, de leur bon travail ... de leur bonnes hardiesces assurees ... de bonne contenance que l’en voit en eulx sur les durs partis que l’on peut trouver es faiz d’armes [The quality of these good men-at-arms has been thus fully proved through their good works of their hand and their body, through their strenuous efforts of endurance ... through their great acts of true valor ... through their splendid bearing, to be seen under the very difficult conditions often to be encountered in the practice of arms]” (34.18-23).⁵⁴ I would suggest that the bodies of these model knights are subjected to the same intense scrutiny as that recommended by Vegetius for choosing suitable youths to be trained as fighters. For according to Charny, these men-of-worth have been “fully proved” by observing their “great physical exploits,” their “strenuous efforts of endurance”; the proof thus comes from focusing one’s attention on the physical bodies of those performing such feats. Charny does not draw attention to their military accouterments but rather concentrates on the “splendid bearing” of the knights themselves, apparently performing before keenly observing eyes.⁵⁵

⁵⁴I have altered one phrase in the translation so that it follows the French text more closely. Kaeuper and Kennedy render “de leur bon ouvrage de leur main et de leur corps” as “through their great physical exploits.”

⁵⁵The lack of detailed descriptions of physical bodies in the chivalric treatises might indicate a political agenda of idealizing chivalric combat -- urging knights-to-be to fight good Christian causes without focusing on the potential wounding and maiming their bodies may suffer. For an interesting discussion of how the masculine chivalric body is constructed in medieval culture, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and the Members of the Interscripta, “The Armour of an Alienating Identity,” *Arthuriana* 6.4 (1996) 1-24.

Charny encourages novices to take such men-of-worth as models for emulation:

“et a teles genz fait bon prendre exemplaire et mettre paine de faire les ouvres pour eulz ressembler [And it is good to take such men as examples and to strive to act in such a way as to resemble them]” (35.25-26). The powerful effect that close observation of model knights has on novices is evident in the following passage:

et de plus en plus leur accroist leur cognoissance tant qu’il voient et cognoissent que les bonnes gens d’armes pour les guerres sont plus prisiez et honorez que nul des autres gens d’armes qui soient. Dont leur semble de leur propre cognoissance que en ce mestier d’armes de guerre se doivent mettre souverainement pour avoir la haute honnour de proesce. (16.38-43)

[Their knowledge increases until they see and recognize that the men-at-arms who are good in war are more highly prized and honored than any other men-at-arms. It therefore seems to them from their own observation that they should immediately take up the practice of arms in war in order to achieve the highest honor in prowess.]

This passage is significant not only because it highlights the central role of observation in chivalric training but also because it offers a glimpse of what motivates a young man to pursue a career as a knight. The novice is, in a sense, seduced by the image of the model knight -- he, too, wants to be “highly prized and honored” -- and the way to obtain this desired goal is to emulate one who has achieved “the highest honor in prowess.”

Chivalric treatises offer their readers aids in imagining model knights. Just as in The Life of the Black Prince where the reader/listener is offered figures from the past as an aid in visualizing the ideal qualities of the Black Prince, Charny presents his reader with an exemplary model from the past. Judas Maccabeus: “il fu preudoms ... il fu fors, appers et penibles; il fu beaus entre touz autres ... il fu preux, hardis, vaillans et bien combatens [he was a man of worth ... he was strong, skillful, and unrelenting in effort and endurance: he was handsome above all others ... he was full of prowess, bold, valiant, and a great fighter]” (35.151-52).⁵⁶ And Lull provides the reader with imaginary scenarios in which a model knight performs: “the knyght ought to apparylle hym / & presente his body to fore his lord / whan he is in peryl hurte or taken / ... yf it behoueth hym to moeue / he ought to haue grete courage / noble & hardy ageynst his enemye for tenhaunce thordre of chyualrye” (82, 84). In both examples, the reader is given the basic material from which to build an imaginary picture of a model knight whom one desires to be like.

Augustine describes how one visualizes as one listens to a story: “When I am told something, I do not think about what was lying around in my memory but about what I am actually hearing now.... I mean that I think about those bodily appearances which the narrator signifies by the words he utters, and it is these I think about as I

⁵⁶Judas Maccabeus’ prowess is also praised in the Middle English Parliament of the Three Ages, where he takes his traditional place as one of the “nine worthies.” I would like to thank Steven Kruger for directing my attention to what appears to be Charny’s evocation of a common medieval cultural reference.

listen.”⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Augustine admits that one cannot conjure these bodily appearances without recourse to memory: “I could not even begin to understand what he was telling me if I was hearing all the things he said and what they added up to for the first time, and did not have a general memory of each of them.”⁵⁸ He concludes that “everyone who thinks about bodily things, whether he makes them up himself or hears or reads someone else describing past events or forecasting future ones, has to have recourse to his memory.”⁵⁹ Therefore, according to Augustine, visual reading depends on a reservoir of remembered images that one links to the words one is hearing, and these memories can be of persons previously seen with corporeal vision or simply past images made from listening to a narrative. However, it appears that for Augustine all mental images ultimately are derived from an act of physical vision. He summarizes the process of thinking as follows: “The senses receive the look [i.e. image] of a thing from the body we sense, the memory receives it from the senses, and the thinking attention from the memory.”⁶⁰ Augustine refers to vision occurring during the act of thinking as

⁵⁷ Augustine, De Trinitate XI.8.14.: “Non enim quod latebat in memoria mea, sed quod audio, cogito, cum aliquid mihi narratur ... sed eas cogito corporum species, quas narrans verbis sonisque significat; quas utique non reminiscens, sed audiens cogito.”

⁵⁸ Augustine, De Trinitate XI.8.14.: “Neque enim vel intelligere possem narrantem, si ea quae dicit, et si contexta tunc primum audirem, non tamen generaliter singula meminisse.”

⁵⁹ Augustine, De Trinitate XI.8.14.: “Ita fit ut omnis qui corporalia cogitat, sive ipse aliquid confingat, sive audiat, aut legat vel praeterita narrantem, vel futura praenuntiantem, ad memoriam suam recurat.”

⁶⁰ Augustine, De Trinitate XI.8.14.: “Sensus enim accipit speciem ab eo corpore quod sentimus, et a sensu memoria, a memoria vero acies cogitantis.”

“the thinking gaze” (*visio cogitantis*) and stresses its dependence on physical vision: “It is to make possible the sight of thought that there is produced from sight of sensation [i.e. physical sight] something similar in the memory which the conscious attention [i.e. inner eye] can turn to in thought, just as the attention of the eyes turns to the body in actual observation.”⁶¹ That Augustine draws a parallel between physical vision and inner vision suggests that the images seen by the inner eye are of a vividness comparable to that registered by physical sight. While the two types of vision are similar, Augustine identifies how the images seen by the inner eye are not merely copies of those held in the memory: “the sights seen in our thoughts, while they do indeed derive from the things in the memory, can still be multiplied and varied to an innumerable and really infinite extent.”⁶² Thus, if we follow Augustine’s concept, chivalric texts offer their readers descriptions of model knights which the readers in turn imagine by drawing upon remembered images of actual knights that they have observed (or images of knights they have previously imagined from other texts -- but ultimately based on men actually seen).⁶³ But it is not merely a matter of connecting words and pictures; the

⁶¹Augustine, *De Trinitate* XI.9.16.: “ut autem possit esse visio cogitantis, ideo fit in memoria de visione sentientis simile aliquid, quo se ita convertat in cogitando acies animi, sicut se in cernendo convertit ad corpus acies oculorum.”

⁶²Augustine, *De Trinitate* XI.8.13.: “visiones tamen illae cogitantium ex iis quidem rebus quae sunt in memoria, sed tamen innumerabiliter atque omnino infinite multiplicantur atque variantur.”

⁶³It is plausible that readers who have never actually seen a knight might still summon forth an image of one based on the descriptive material offered by a text; and while the image might, in fact, bear little resemblance to “real” knights, it, nevertheless, enables the reader to participate in the action depicted in the text. Authentic reproduction is not the issue here, for as I shall argue shortly, every image is a highly

novice knights have an emotional investment in the reading/imagining process -- they desire *to be* the model knights they are envisioning. In this context, I suggest that the "thinking gaze" is, in a sense, eroticized as the remembered image becomes charged with ideal chivalric qualities, such as "splendid bearing," handsomeness, physical strength, endurance, and prowess, which the chivalric text urges the male reader to strive for. In constructing an image of a model knight based on his individual understanding of what these words mean, the reader focuses his inner gaze on an image colored by fantasy -- one which he desires to be and to have.

Recent psychoanalytic theory has been concerned with the processes by which a subject is constructed through identification with desired images. Elizabeth Cowie maintains that "[i]dentification does not involve a simple matching of self and image. What we are dealing with here is the desire for such images, so that through these images, narratives, etc., we come to know ourselves as we truly are ... [but] only discovering all this in the moment of reading, in the act of watching, the novel or film."⁶⁴ The blurring of the distinction between reading and watching in Cowie's statement relates well to the medieval understanding of reading as a visual process. Cowie also makes a very important point regarding one's desire for the image: it is both a desire *to be* and *to have* the image.⁶⁵ Thus, identification with the image of a knight

individual one, colored by the emotions (personal taste?) of the reader.

⁶⁴Elizabeth Cowie, Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997) 5.

⁶⁵Cowie 4. Many recent feminist and queer theorists have problematized Freud's distinction between identification and desire. I will draw on these discussions in my

would include a desire to possess this image. “Having” the image implies that the desiring subject “unites” with the imagined figure. And while I am not suggesting that the subject attempts to engage in a sexual act with an image, it is reasonable to assume that in seeking to take hold of the desired image, a male reader is erotically motivated towards it. And, thus, in this context, Augustine’s “thinking gaze” marks a homoerotically-charged visual action. Since chivalric texts offer only the raw material for constructing an image of a model knight, it is necessary to examine the role that one’s imagination plays in constructing the desired image one “sees” while reading or listening.

Cowie observes that “fantasy has come to mean the making visible, the making present, of what isn’t there, of what can never *directly* be seen.”⁶⁶ She also points out that it refers to a “preoccupation with thoughts associated with unattainable desires.”⁶⁷ Chivalric treatises invite the reader/listener to imagine the model knights who are described: some are fictional or historical men, others merely ambiguous figures embodying ideal characteristics. Following Augustine’s concept of visual reading, novice knights grasp the meaning of the narrator’s words by drawing forth memories of

reading of the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus in chapter 4.

⁶⁶Cowie 128, emphasis in original.

⁶⁷Cowie 127.

knights actually observed or remembered images of knights previously envisioned; however, the reader/listener alters, enhances these memories, thus creating a new image. Chivalric treatises are directed at the emotions of the reader in that they offer an enticing view of the rewards enjoyed by men-of-worth. This new image of a model knight appearing in the reader's mind is therefore a product of past vision and present emotion -- a fantasy image that the reader desires to be and to have, yet at the same time this image is unattainable. That the imagined figure exists only in the mind of the viewer does not diminish the erotic potential of the desired image -- an image that is desired ever more intensely as it eludes the grasp of the desiring subject/viewer. And as is clear from the example Augustine cites of the man reaching orgasm while having sex with an imagined woman, a vivid image, particularly one based on intense desire, has the potential for eroticization.

Moreover, fantasy is an imagined sequence of scenes in which the fantasizing subject is a protagonist and is based on the subject's identification with the "player[s]" in the scene.⁶⁸ In a chivalric context, a novice knight can imagine a scenario where a model figure is performing and, in a sense, participate in the scene as an observer. He might, in fact, form what Kaja Silverman refers to as a "sodomitical identification," which "permits the fantasizing subject to look through the [imagined] figure's eyes and

⁶⁸Cowie, 127, 140. I offer a more in-depth discussion of fantasy in chapter 4. My purpose here is merely to introduce the notion that in visualizing a model knight in action, as suggested by chivalric texts, the reader is setting up an imagined scenario which is not unlike the psychoanalytical concept of fantasy. The erotic implications of conjuring up such a "fantasy" scene will become clearer in my study of Troilus and Criseyde.

to participate in his sexuality by going ‘behind’ him.”⁶⁹ This is a useful concept for expressing the homoerotic intimacy between the fantasizing subject and his object. Since the model figure, whether based on a “real” person or an imagined image, exists only in the subject’s mind, he is an extension of the subject; and thus, the subject/observer does, in effect, “see” and perform *through* him.⁷⁰ That the model knight/player is invested with qualities deemed worthy of emulation by the novice knight/fantasizing subject underscores the emotional (erotic?) relationship between the two knights, regardless of the fact that it is an “imaginary” one. While I am not claiming that readers of chivalric treatises satisfy their sexual urges while envisioning model knights, I would, however, suggest that these texts offer a potential homoeroticism in the fact that they urge their readers to construct an ideal (fantasy?) image of a model knight whom they desire to be like. And in viewing this image, the motivated reader seeks to unite with the desired imagined figure in an erotically-charged visual act.

III. Theorizing the Chivalric Gaze

The chivalric gaze is a particular form of male-male spectatorship suggested in chivalric texts whereby the observer gazes intently at a model knight whom he desires to

⁶⁹Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins (New York: Routledge, 1992) 173. See 170-74 for her intriguing reading of Henry James’s “The Beast in the Jungle.”

⁷⁰In my reading of the consummation scene in Troilus and Criseyde as Pandarus’ fantasy scenario, which I undertake in chapter 4, I examine more thoroughly the psychoanalytical concept of subject/object unity in fantasy and how this can be pleasurable for the fantasizing subject.

be like. It is a unidirectional gaze in that the object of the gaze, the model knight, apparently does not return the gaze of the observer. In chivalric treatises, the reader is urged to closely observe true men-of-worth and strive to be just like them. Although this recommendation is less evident in chivalric biographies and romances, the reader here, too, is offered images of model knights worthy of emulation. Whether the author presents images of model knights in general or an image of a specific knight, the reader/listener is invited to visualize and study the physical bearing and skills of worthy knights based on the reader's memories. A chivalric text's success in communicating its edifying message concerning exemplary knighthood depends on the reader's ability to internalize the chivalric gaze by formulating an idealized and desired image of a model knight as suggested by the text.⁷¹

As pointed out in the previous section, medieval reading was thought to be a visual process whereby the reader constructs images while reading words. That these images could be quite vivid and life-like is attested to by Augustine and others. In addition, Boccaccio and Hugh of St. Victor offer examples of mental images teeming with action. In light of these characteristics of medieval reading and, perhaps most important, the prominent role that spectatorship plays in the chivalric tradition, I suggest that film theory offers a useful language for studying male-male spectatorship in chivalric texts. However, as we shall see, chivalric contexts problematize the gendered

⁷¹ Although in the discussion that follows I am primarily concerned with male readers/novice knights, female readers or male readers who do not desire to be a knight may certainly internalize the chivalric gaze, forming a mental image of an admired model knight.

spectatorial positions which some film theorists delineate. And thus, contemporary film theory helps articulate the historical specificity of a medieval sociocultural phenomenon -- a phenomenon in which the distinction between activity and passivity is blurred.

The chivalric gaze, as I have defined it, is unidirectional. The novice knight/reader directs his gaze at the model knight, which, according to classical film theory, positions the model knight as object to be identified with or desired. Although chivalric treatises and biographies do not offer direct evidence that the model knight is aware that he is being watched, there are clues which suggest the potential of two-way spectatorship. Model knights are sometimes portrayed as receiving praise by admiring observers as they perform feats in tournaments and battles. In addition, the chivalric tradition is cyclical: the model knights of the moment were formerly novice knights who observed other model knights. Besides illuminating the fiction implicitly maintained in some chivalric texts that the reader/viewer occupies an invulnerable, observer-only position, film theory is useful for exploring the observer's attraction to the masculine power demonstrated by the model knight/object of the gaze.

Christian Metz observes that perceptions one has while watching a film are in a sense false in that "the perceived is not really the object, it is the shade, its phantom, its double, its *replica* in a new kind of mirror."²² Reading chivalric texts involves a similar

²²Christian Metz, The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982) 45. Metz is drawing on Lacan's concept of the mirror phase, but he distinguishes the mirror afforded by film from Lacan's: "[film] differs from the primordial mirror in one essential point: although, as in the latter, everything may come to be projected, there is one thing and one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator's own body" (45). One might question Metz's conclusion, for is it not possible to project an image of one's own body

act of “false perception” in that readers form mental images of persons -- not real persons -- at whom they direct their gaze. Chivalric texts do not, however, offer images of statuesque figures but rather situate model knights in action. Similarly, Metz describes the fictional film as “[a] meeting which is possible only around a pseudo-real (a diegesis): around a *place* consisting of actions, objects, persons, a time and a space ... but which presents itself of its own accord as a vast simulation, a non-real world; a ‘milieu’ with all the structures of the real and lacking ... only the specific exponent of real being.” The diegesis, according to Metz, is an imitation of the real which can be likened to daydreams and dreams.⁷³

Metz goes on to explain the relationship of the observer to the images on the screen: “At the cinema, it is always the other who is on the screen; as for me, I am there to look at him. I take no part in the perceived, on the contrary, I am *all-perceiving*. All-perceiving as one says all-powerful.”⁷⁴ By aligning the observer with the all-perceiving, all-powerful camera, Metz, in effect, positions the observer as male phallus-bearer -- a positioning that is, as we shall see, problematic when both the observer and the observed are male. Metz’s formulation is, nevertheless, useful in that it offers a conceptual model for illuminating the “fiction” of unidirectional spectatorship suggested

onto an object in a film? At the very least, the perceived object may be “colored” by the spectator’s image of his/her own body.

⁷³Metz 141, emphasis in original.

⁷⁴Metz 48, emphasis in original.

by "orthodox" chivalric texts, particularly the treatises.⁷⁵ Because these texts offer no indication that the model knight responds to or acknowledges the attention he receives from the novice knight, they imply that the observer is, in a sense, "all-powerful" -- not in a physical sense but rather in controlling the spectatorial relationship. However, a human subject cannot be merely an external observer of the world. Cowie rightly draws attention to the vulnerability of the spectator. While the object is controlled by the look of the observer, "the subject is also always looked at and as a result the 'omnipotent gaze' is unstable, difficult to sustain."⁷⁶

In her influential and often commented upon essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey offers a rigorous psychoanalytical reading of cinema spectatorship. She draws on Freud's concept of scopophilia, pointing out that Freud originally identified it as a sexual drive operating independently of the erotogenic zones in which the observer takes "other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling

⁷⁵I consider chivalric treatises, biographies, and those romances that depict only one-way spectatorship as "orthodox," while, as I shall point out in the next section, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is "disruptive" in that it exposes the fiction of unidirectional spectatorship. In chapter 4, I will demonstrate how Troilus and Criseyde is, likewise, "disruptive."

⁷⁶Cowie 170. Cowie is evidently referring to Metz's theory of the all-powerful gaze of the camera. Understood in Metz's formulation is that the observer, in identifying with the controlling gaze of the camera, occupies a subject position that only looks, thus denying the possibility of being looked at. Metz's theory is ultimately dependent on Lacan. Earl Jackson, Jr., Strategies of Deviance: Studies in Gay Male Representation (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995), offers a neat summary: "Lacan's deconstruction of Cartesian perspectivism begins from the presumption that the subject's self-certainty as cogito depends upon a mastery defined as a privileged position as unseen seer. Thus constituted, the cogito can be demythologized by considering the reversibility of the gaze in any act of seeing" (127).

and curious gaze.” and adds that Freud viewed this gaze as erotically charged, bringing pleasure to the observer.⁷⁷ Mulvey observes how “[t]he cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking” but goes even further by “developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect.” Quite relevant to spectatorship promoted by chivalric texts, Mulvey maintains that “[t]he conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form ... curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition.”⁷⁸

Mulvey’s most contentious claim is that “[i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly.”⁷⁹ She goes on to argue that “the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like.”⁸⁰ Mulvey,

⁷⁷Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1992) 24. For Freud’s early ideas on scopophilia, see Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962); for his later analysis, see “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,” General Psychological Theory, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Macmillan, 1963). Here and elsewhere I am using “gaze” and “look” interchangeably. Lacan, however, draws a distinction between the two as summarized by Jackson: “The exteriority of the gaze to the subject leads Lacan to classify the gaze as an example of an objet a (or objet petit a) ... the relation of the gaze to the eye characterizes the gaze as an objet a” (127). On Lacan’s concept of the “gaze” vs. the look of the eye, see also Silverman 130, and Jacqueline Rose’s lucid discussion of Lacan’s essay, “The Look as objet petit a,” in Sexuality in the Field of Vision (London: Verso, 1986) 190-94.

⁷⁸Mulvey 25.

⁷⁹Mulvey 27.

⁸⁰Mulvey 28.

therefore, distinguishes between male and female objects within a film. The male figure becomes an ally of the male observer, occupying an active position, while the passive female figure is "styled" by the fantasies of the male observer. Elizabeth Cowie, commenting on Mulvey's concept, points out that "[v]isual pleasure is not a straightforward affair. It always implies specularising the object ... [a]nd this is as true of women as of men."⁸¹ Thus, the male figure in a film is not immune from objectification by the spectator; and, likewise, the model knight observed in the virtual world of the reader's imagination. This does not suggest that the male object is "passive." For just as an actual model knight -- a hardy "man-of-worth" demonstrating prowess and thus evidently physically strong -- will exert an effect on an observer from a powerful, "active" position, so too would an imagined model figure, "styled" by the fantasies of the observer.⁸²

Lacan defines desire as "neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference resulting from the subtraction of the first from the second, the very phenomenon of their splitting."⁸³ Juliet Mitchell clarifies this further: "Desire persists as an effect of a primordial absence and it therefore indicates that, in this area,

⁸¹Cowie 169-70. For an in-depth discussion and commentary on Mulvey, see also D. N. Rodowick: The Difficulty of Difference: Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference & Film Theory (New York: Routledge, 1991) chapter 1.

⁸²I will shortly discuss the blurring of active and passive positions in male-male spectatorship.

⁸³Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1982) 81.

there is something fundamentally impossible about satisfaction itself.”⁸⁴ The Lacanian notion that desire begins with the splitting of the subject as it enters the symbolic and thus can never be completely satisfied because it cannot be articulated in the language of the symbolic has relevance for understanding the operation of the chivalric gaze. As I pointed out earlier, chivalric treatises entice their readers with the promise that they too can enjoy the praise and admiration of true men-of-worth if they closely study model knights. Model knights are imbued with physical strength and military prowess, and while not exhibiting a primordial wholeness, these men do, nevertheless, represent a greater wholeness and power than the novice knights who observe them. I would, therefore, suggest that the Lacanian concept of never-ending, continuous desire can be viewed as the motivating force underlying the chivalric gaze. For the model knight represents an ideal “wholeness”/power which the novice knight strives for but can never actually obtain. The model figure, therefore, symbolizes the satisfied desire of the young observer.⁸⁵ And since Lacan does not limit desire to a sexual need, I, too, do not claim that the desire which propels the gaze of novice knights towards model knights is necessarily sexually motivated. That does not, however, rule out the possibility that the chivalric gaze is homoerotically charged.

⁸⁴Juliet Mitchell, Introduction, Feminine Sexuality 6.

⁸⁵In Lacanian terms, then, the model knight can be viewed as “being” the phallus for the novice knight. However, Lacan’s division between “having” and “being” the phallus is problematized here. For the model figure, imbued with military prowess, in a sense, “has” the phallus and yet, at the same time, can “be” the phallus for the novice knight. For an excellent discussion and commentary on Lacan’s concept, see Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex” (New York: Routledge, 1993) 57-91.

Linda Williams refers to the cinematic human image as a "larger-than-life, projected film body [which] is ideally visible; although on display for the viewer, it goes about its business as if unaware of being watched."⁸⁶ This idea that the observed body looms up large on the screen can find a parallel in the imagined knight who fills the mental screen of the reader. Following medieval concepts of visual reading, the novice knight summons forth a new image of a model knight (who in the reader's mind would be unaware that he is being observed), which is a product of one or more previous images stored in the reader's memory. That the larger-than-life image goes about his activities oblivious to the fact that he is the object of the chivalric gaze allows the viewer a certain freedom in observing/fantasizing. By offering no indication that a model knight has given a novice permission when and where to observe him, chivalric texts imply that the chivalric gaze as it occurs in the "real" world is a voyeuristic activity. While undetected, the observer "controls" the spectatorial situation (yet is also "mastered" by the object); but if the object looks back, the observer loses spectatorial control and is placed in a solely "passive" position to be acted upon spectatorially by the desired object of his gaze -- a situation that might, in fact, be pleasurable. Similarly, although the virtual model knight may not directly look at the fantasizing observer, nevertheless, the observer is always vulnerable to being acted upon (stimulated?) by the performing life-like image. I, therefore, suggest that this tension/excitement involved in viewing the imagined model knight charges the fantasy scenario with a potential

⁸⁶Linda Williams, Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible," (Berkeley: U of California P, 1989) 45.

homoeroticsm.⁸⁷

Mulvey's claim that "[t]he image of woman ... [is] (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man" places spectatorship along the heterosexual binary of active-male-observer/ passive-female observed.⁸⁸ This heterosexual division of labor, so to speak, is problematized when the male spectator cannot merely join the male protagonist in exerting a controlling gaze on a female object because there is no female available for objectification: in this situation a male observer focuses his gaze on a male object. As this is a common scenario suggested in chivalric treatises -- a scenario that implicitly takes place in actual chivalric society -- the question I would like to address is whether the active/passive binary against which observer and observed are often positioned in film theory is applicable in studying the subject and object positions within the operation of the chivalric gaze.

In theorizing the act of vision, ancient and medieval writers favored either intromission, whereby the observed object was thought to be a light source which travels to the eye, or extromission, where the eye was said to emit a ray or power that reaches the light object, seizes it, and then returns it to the eye.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the

⁸⁷In chapter 4, I will suggest that Troilus and Criseyde dramatizes the potentially erotic effect of the observed on the observer in both actual spectatorial situations and fantasy scenarios.

⁸⁸Mulvey 32.

⁸⁹For an in-depth study of ancient and medieval theories of vision, see David C. Lindberg, Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler. See also Katherine H. Tachau, Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham: Optics, Epistemology and the Foundations of Semantics 1250-1345 (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

process was often expressed as a combination of both. For instance, Augustine describes the process of seeing as follows:

Sight is begotten of the visible thing but not from it alone; only if there is a seeing subject present. Sight then is the product of the visible object and the seeing subject, where the seeing subject of course provides the sense of the eyes and the intention of looking and holding the gaze but the information of the sense, which is called sight, is imprinted on it only by the body which is seen, that is by some visible thing.⁹⁰

Although he grants the viewer the active role of holding the gaze on the object seen, the object also occupies an active position, *imprinting* sight on the observer.

One of the major writers on optics in the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon, explains his theory of vision in some detail in his Opus Maius. Central to Bacon's theory is the understanding that rays or species are emitted from the visible object in the form of a pyramid reaching the observer's eye as the apex of the pyramid. Although the species is not a material substance that directly connects the object to the observer, the object and the viewing eye are nevertheless connected. Lindberg summarizes Bacon: "an object produces its likeness or species in the adjacent transparent medium, which in

⁹⁰Augustine, De Trinitate XI.2.3.: "Gignitur ergo ex re visibili visio, sed non ex sola, nisi adsit et videns. Quocirca ex visibili et vidente gignitur visio, ita sane ut ex vidente sit sensus oculorum, et aspicientis atque intuentis intentio: illa tamen informatio sensus, quae visio dicitur, a solo imprimatur corpore quod videtur, id est, a re aliqua visibili." Augustine describes the act of seeing as a trinity in which the observer and the observed are linked by the conscious intention. For a discussion of Augustine's theory of vision, see Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's De Trinitate and Confessions," Journal of Religion 63 (1983): 125-42.

turn produces a further likeness in the next part of the medium, and so forth.”⁹¹ The idea that a viewed physical object produces likenesses of itself which eventually reach the viewer’s eye is not opposed to Augustine’s concept “that sight, that is the form which is produced in the sense of the beholder, has its quasi-parent in the form of the body from which it is produced [i.e. the observed].”⁹² Thus, both Augustine and Bacon stress the interrelation between observer and observed.

While Bacon generally favors intromission, he does identify activity on the part of the observer: “the process of seeing concerns the cognition of a distant visible object, and therefore sight perceives the visible object through the multiplication of its own power to the object.”⁹³ In fact, in the following passage, the observing eye exerts itself on the species received from the object:

The species of the things of the world are not suited to act immediately and fully in sight because of the nobility of the latter [i.e. the observing eye]. Therefore these species [coming from the observed object] must be aided and excited by the species of the eye, which proceeds through the locale of the visual pyramid, altering and ennobling the medium and rendering it commensurate with sight; and thus it prepares for the

⁹¹Lindberg 109, 113.

⁹²Augustine, De Trinitate XI.5.9.: “Visionis igitur illius, id est formae quae fit in sensu cernentis, quasi parens est formae corporis ex qua fit.”

⁹³Lindberg 115. The ‘Opus Majus’ of Roger Bacon, ed. John Henry Bridges, vol. 2 (Frankfurt/Main: Minerva, 1964) pt. 5.1, dist. 7, ch. 4: “sed operatio videndi est certa cognitio visibilis distantis, et ideo visus cognoscit visibile per suam virtutem multiplicatam ad ipsum.”

approach of the species of the visible object [itself], so that it is altogether conformable and commensurate with the nobility of the animated body. i.e. the eye.⁹⁴

There is, thus, a union of sorts between the species of the observing eye and the species reaching the eye from the observed object. This union is expressed in rather erotic terms: the species of the eye excites the approaching species, acting upon it to make it conformable with the eye of the observer. And while the observer is positioned as an active agent in the process, the scenario also renders the observer as the passive player in a love duo, receiving a loved one who is made comfortable in the "home" of the eye. Bacon clearly sums up the concurrent active and passive positions of the observer by drawing on Aristotle:

Therefore, Aristotle, who wished to verify all things as far as the possibilities of his age permitted, rejects both opinions regarding vision: namely, that of the Stoics, who maintained that it is passive only, and that of the Platonists, who held, and erroneously so, that it was only or principally active.... But those versed in the philosophy of Aristotle and particularly in perspective think that vision is active and passive. For it receives the species of the thing seen, and exerts its own force in the

⁹⁴Lindberg 115. The 'Opus Majus' of Roger Bacon pt. 5.1, dist. 7, ch. 4: "species rerum mundi non sunt natae statim de se agere ad plenam actionem in visu propter ejus nobilitatem. Unde oportet quod juventur et excitentur per speciem oculi, quae incedat in loco pyramidis visualis, et alteret medium ac nobilitet, et reddat ipsum proportionale visui, et sic praeparet incessum speciei ipsius rei visibilis, et insuper eam nobilitet, ut omnino sit conformis et proportionalis nobilitati corporis animati, quod est oculis."

medium as far as the visible object.⁹⁵

If one applies Bacon's theory of vision (and Augustine's and Aristotle's as well) to examining the dynamics of the chivalric gaze, it is not possible to view either the observer or the observed as occupying an exclusively active or passive position. While the observer does, indeed, *actively* gaze at the observed and, in a sense, controls the image received, the observed plays a more active role than that generally recognized in film theory. Given the fact that the observed object of the chivalric gaze is likely to be more physically powerful than the observer, medieval optics affirms the potency and attraction of the objectified male, without reducing the observer to a passive, "mastered" position. Neither participant in this spectatorial act, therefore, occupies an exclusively active or passive position but rather one that is simultaneously active *and* passive. Moreover, applying medieval concepts regarding the interaction between observer and observed to chivalric spectatorship, one might describe male-male spectatorial encounters as a form of "copulation": and these encounters, while not necessarily sexual, in light of the emotional investment of the novice knight coupled with his desire to be the model, are, however, potentially eroticized (even if only one-sided). Although Bacon's theory is concerned with external acts of vision, it is, I would suggest, also

⁹⁵The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon, trans. Robert Belle Burke, vol. 2, 1928 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962) 470. Opus Majus pt. 5.1, dist. 7, ch.3.: "Et ideo Aristoteles, qui voluit certificare de singulis secundum possibilitatem sui temporis, reprobavit utramque opinionem de visu, scilicet Stoicorum, qui posuerunt eum tantum esse passivum, et Platoniorum, qui voluerunt esse tantum vel principaliter activum et erronee.... Exercitati vero in philosophia Aristotelis et praecipue in perspectiva aestimant quod visus est activus et passivus. Nam recipit speciem rei visae, et facit suam virtutem in medium usque ad visibile."

applicable to imagined spectatorial scenarios. The fantasizing reader occupies an active/passive position vis-à-vis the imagined object -- he both acts/creates the image and is acted upon by it. While the imagined model figure does not emit a "species." Bacon's concept, nevertheless, implies that a virtual male-male union occurs between the subject and object of the fantasized scene.⁹⁶

Medieval theories of vision comprise, in part, the contextual environment of chivalric texts and, thus, provide us with valuable conceptual tools for articulating the dynamics of male same-sex attraction in late-medieval chivalric culture. And contemporary film theory offers a theoretical language for uncovering both the sociohistorical specificity of chivalric spectatorship and modern notions of gendered spectatorial interactions which influence our readings of premodern texts.

IV. Man to Man: Eroticizing Spectatorship in Romances

Mulvey identifies three gazes in association with films: "that of the camera as it records the profilmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion."⁹⁷ We can isolate three corresponding gazes in romances: that of the external narrator at characters in the text; that of the reader/listener at characters in the text; and that of characters at each other within the text.

⁹⁶I will offer a more detailed study of this phenomenon in my discussion of how the consummation scene in Troilus and Criseyde can be read as a dramatization of a fantasy scenario.

⁹⁷Mulvey 33.

According to Mulvey, there are two types of looks that a spectator can direct at an object: active scopophilia and identification. Paul Willemen neatly summarizes: "(1) the spectator can be in direct scopophilic contact with an object of desire or (2) he/she can be fascinated with the image of his/her like, identifying with this ideal ego and thus, in a roundabout way, gain control and possession of the desired object within the diegesis."⁹⁸ In this second instance, the spectator forms a sort of alliance with the ideal ego and, thus, shares in the rewards. Willemen justly questions Mulvey's insistence that men cannot be the direct object of scopophilia by pointing out that, according to Freud, the scopophilic instinct is originally directed at one's own body and only later displaced to another object.⁹⁹ Willemen goes on to suggest that "[i]f scopophilic pleasure relates primarily to the observation of one's sexual like ... then the two looks distinguished by Mulvey are in fact varieties of one single mechanism: the repression of homosexuality." He concludes that a male spectator identifying with a male character could at the same time gaze *at* the male hero which would "be a substantial source of gratification for a male viewer."¹⁰⁰ This position is echoed by D. N. Rodowick, summarized by Steve

⁹⁸Paul Willemen, "Voyeurism, The Look, and Dwoskin," Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 212. ("Dwoskin" is a misprint for "Dworkin.") For Mulvey's explanation of the two forms of looking, see "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 24-26.

⁹⁹See Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes."

¹⁰⁰Willemen 212-13. He argues against the traditional claim made by film theorists that male spectators merely identify with the male protagonist as a mediator "in order to get at a desired woman" by offering the example of male buddy films where "the suggested homosexual gratification appears in direct proportion to the degree women are humiliated in/eliminated from the diegesis" (213).

Neale: "the [narcissistic] male image can involve an eroticism, since there is always an oscillation between that image as a source of identification, and as an other, a source of contemplation."¹⁰¹

Regarding active scopophilia and identification as two distinctly different processes is merely another expression of Freud's separation of identification and desire. That this separation is a precarious one even in an ostensibly heterosexual milieu is suggested above; the distinction is openly challenged, however, when the spectator is gay. Earl Jackson cogently analyzes one possible gay male spectatorial relation to a male character in a film:

The gay male spectator ... regularly identifies with the figure he sexually objectifies. In other words, he experiences a coalescence of drives that are radically dichotomized in his heterosexual male counterpart. For the gay male spectator, the pleasure of looking at the male object of desire potentially merges with an erotic identification with that object: scopophilia and identification become interanimating components of a specifically ego-erotic subjectivity.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹Steve Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1992) 281. Neale is drawing on Rodowick's essay, "The Difficulty of Difference," Wide Angle 5 (1982).

¹⁰²Jackson 173. Drawing on Freud's theory regarding the primordial autoeroticism of the scopophilic instinct, Teresa de Lauretis, The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994), describes a more complex relation between a spectator and film object of the same sex: "the film would address the spectator as a subject of its fantasy and the means of access to it, would make a place for the spectator as subject in its fantasy, by the solicitation of her 'primordial' autoerotic and scopophilic instinct in its reflexive form" (98). For an in-

While I am not suggesting that male readers of chivalric romances necessarily respond to male protagonists as gay men would. I do think that Jackson's analysis is extremely relevant for an examination of male-male spectatorship in romances. By allowing identification to mingle with desire, one can, perhaps, better articulate the attraction often clearly expressed in chivalric texts between narrators and their male subjects, between male characters within the text, and between knights/readers and male protagonists in the text. Like the gay male spectator for whom, according to Jackson, "options for identification among camera, profilmic gazing male, and object of the gaze are multiple and mobile," the male reader of a chivalric romance also has several options: he can identify with the narrator, gazing together with him at the protagonist, or identify with a character as he gazes at another character, or identify with the object of the gaze of the narrator or character. Here, too, the figure with whom the reader identifies can vary throughout the reading process.

In the thirteenth-century French Prose Lancelot, the narrator gazes intently at the youthful Lancelot:

Et les espauls furent lees & hautes a raison. Et le pis teil que en nul cors ne trouast on ne si large ne si gros ne si espes ... & li brac furent lonc & droit. Et bien furent furni par le tor desos ... les mains furent de dame tout droitement. se li doit fussent vn poi plus menu. Et des rains & des hanches ne vous poroit nus dire que len les peust miex deuier en nul

depth study of female-female spectatorship, see 81-148. See also the collection of essays in How Do I Look: Queer Film and Video, ed. Bad Object Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991).

cheualier. Droites ot les cuisses & les iambes & voltis les pies. Ne nus ne fu onques plus drois en son estant.

[his shoulders were broad and conformably high, and never was there a chest that was so broad or so full or so deep.... And his arms were long and straight, and they were well supplied by the body beneath.... His hands had been those of a lady, had the fingers been somewhat more delicate. And for his loins and his hips, they might not be called better fashioned in any knight. His thighs and his legs were straight, and his feet were arched, and no man ever stood more erect.]¹⁰³

The narrator does more than recite the ideal physical characteristics of a model knight that one would find in a chivalric treatise; he is, I would suggest, emotionally involved in the image he presents of Lancelot. For in the narrator's vision, the perfection of Lancelot's chest, loins, and hips cannot be surpassed. Lancelot, in a sense, represents an ideal ego and object for the narrator, and the narrator's effusive praise reveals an

¹⁰³ Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, ed. H. Oskar Sommer, vol. 3. (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1910) p.34, ll.37-39; p.35, ll.5-6, 7-11. English translation is taken from Sir Lancelot of the Lake, trans. Lucy Allen Paton (London: Routledge, 1929) 76-77. "Tor" and its slightly later form, "torel" is, according to the Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française, ed. Alain Rey, 2 vols. (Paris: Le Robert, 1992), derived from the Latin form, *taurus*, thus denoting "mâle de la vache" or "bull." Could the narrator, then, also be admiring Lancelot's power and virility? Although I am dealing primarily with fourteenth-century English romances, the French Prose Lancelot was extremely popular throughout Europe in the later Middle Ages. William Calin, The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994), maintains that it was "the most important single romance of the Middle Ages" and notes that "[w]hen Chaucer and Gower allude to Lancelot or Tristan, they allude to the prose cycles of the thirteenth century, not the verse classics of the twelfth, which had gone out of fashion" (139). I will be drawing more extensively on this romance in the second part of this chapter.

underlying desire to “possess” this image. Since Lancelot appears unaware that he is being observed, this is a clear example of the chivalric gaze and, more importantly, it offers an instance of eroticized looking. How might the reader be positioned here?

Lancelot can be likened to the male hero in a film with whom a male spectator can identify. Mulvey describes this association: “As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, according to Mulvey, the spectator is not attracted *to* the male protagonist, but rather is attracted *by* the potential power the actor has to control events. By insisting on the split between identification and scopophilia, she denies the male spectator the possibility of resting his gaze on the male protagonist. In a chivalric romance such as the Prose Lancelot however, the two types of looks are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A novice knight/reader would possibly align himself with the narrator’s gaze and identify with Lancelot as a model knight -- but this identification would also include a desire to “possess” the image of Lancelot.¹⁰⁵ In other words, in order to be a knight like Lancelot, the reader must, in effect, become Lancelot; and, thus, a sort of union with the identified

¹⁰⁴Mulvey 28.

¹⁰⁵The dynamics of this putative process would be more pronounced in male readers who are novice knights because of the sociocultural motivation already discussed. I am, therefore, limiting my discussion to these readers. However, I am not denying the possibility of a similar effect on female readers, or male readers who are not knights-to-be. Certainly any reader, male or female, could identify with Lancelot, thereby creating a fantasmatic self image.

object takes place.¹⁰⁶ The Prose Lancelot is in this way like a chivalric treatise in that it presents an image of a true man-of-worth, but it offers a more vivid character for the reader to visualize. The reader, in following Lancelot's exploits and interactions with other characters, has the possibility of viewing action that takes place in a fictional world not unrelated to the world in which the reader lives.

Diana Fuss, in her discussion of how identification and desire interact when a female spectator views women's fashion photography, acutely observes that "[f]ashion photography works to ensure the formation of a subject's heterosexual object-choices through the stimulation and control of its 'homopathic' identifications; the same-sex desire one might imagine to be triggered by the erotically charged images of women's bodies is sublimated into the camera's insistence on same-sex identification (being rather than having the woman)."¹⁰⁷ Similarly, in the Prose Lancelot we can assume that the narrator is not openly expressing a desire "to have" Lancelot, but, nevertheless, his painstakingly detailed description is erotically charged in that his "eyes" rest on Lancelot's body, and, as pointed out before, the narrator is emotionally invested in the image he presents by insisting that no knight can surpass Lancelot's physical perfection. While the narrator/camera, as in the chivalric treatises, urges the male reader to identify and be like Lancelot, "these structural identifications," as Fuss argues, "while harnessing the tabooed desire, nonetheless give it a certain play, licensing the desire as

¹⁰⁶In my reading of Troilus and Criseyde, I will demonstrate how this process is dramatized in Pandarus' relationship to Troilus.

¹⁰⁷Diana Fuss, "Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look," Critical Inquiry 18 (Summer 1992) 732, 734.

that which must be routinely managed and contained.”¹⁰⁸ Fuss’s conclusion is extremely relevant for an examination of male spectatorship in chivalric romances: “Desire operates *within* identification, destabilizing the grounds of a heterosexual identity formation and undermining its defensive claims to a ‘pure’ or ‘uncontaminated’ sexuality.”¹⁰⁹

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight disrupts the operation of the chivalric gaze in that it offers a rather exaggerated image of a model knight who not only acknowledges the looks of his observers but also appears to enjoy exhibiting himself. When the Green Knight arrives at Arthur’s court, the narrator gazes intently at the giant knight’s physical form, similar to the traditional chivalric gaze:

Fro the swyre to the swange so sware and so thik,
 And his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete,
 Half etayn in erde I hope that he were:
 Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene.
 And that the myriest in his muckel that myght ride,
 For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne,
 Both his wombe and his wast were worthily smale,
 And alle his fetures folwande in forme that he hade.

¹⁰⁸Fuss 734. Although I endeavor to uncover homoerotic elements in chivalric texts and maintain that homosocial bonds between knights are emotionally charged with an intensity that parallels heterosexual love, I do not deny the heteronormative impulse of the late Middle Ages nor that it necessarily surfaces in chivalric romances.

¹⁰⁹Fuss 734, emphasis in original.

ful clene.¹¹⁰

The Green Knight, while shockingly large in size, does exhibit the perfect physique of a model knight such as Lancelot -- a model knight one might desire to be like. The narrator's emotional investment is suggested by his praise of the knight's bearing and "worthily smale" stomach and waist and, perhaps more important, his concentration on the power of the Green Knight's frame "fro the swyre to the swange."¹¹¹ The narrator's fascination with the Green Knight's body is also revealed in the attention he gives to the knight's close-fitting apparel: "A strayt cote ful streght that stek on his sides, / ... / Heme, wel-haled hose ... / That spenet on his sparlyr" (152, 157-58). The interplay between identification and desire which Fuss draws attention to is clearly evident here. The narrator's gaze at the Green Knight's body, and, by implication, the reader's gaze, is not merely narcissistic identification since the narrator/reader can hardly view the Green Knight as a like image, yet the Green Knight is similar enough to a human male that the narrator/reader can identify with him. The pronounced *dissimilarity* -- more striking than that between a novice knight and a model figure -- stimulates the observer's desire to *have* this powerful form, thus eroticizing the Green Knight as

¹¹⁰Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. A. C. Cawley and J. J. Anderson (London: Everyman, 1976) ll. 138-46. Further citations will be given in the text by line number.

¹¹¹Interestingly, Marie Borroff, in her verse translation, renders "swange" as buttocks. See Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A New Verse Translation, trans. Marie Borroff (New York: Norton, 1967) 138. The Middle English Dictionary, ed. Hans Kurath et al. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1956 -), defines "swange" (n) as "the middle of the body; the lower abdomen;" the second definition thus situates "swange" near the sexual organ.

desired object.¹¹² The effect here is similar to that sought by Charny tempting his reader with promised power and prestige if he emulates a model knight in that the narrator in Sir Gawain is seduced by the power exhibited in the Green Knight's body: the difference lies in the fact that the narrator is seduced by the image he himself creates.¹¹³

The Green Knight is, however, observed not only by the narrator. The eyes of Arthur's knights are fixed on the giant knight as he strides around the hall demanding to meet "The governour of this gyng" (225). Arthur's knights stare at the giant knight and are rendered speechless: "Ther was lokyng on lenthe, the lude to beholde. / ... / Al studied that ther stod, and stalked hym nerre, / ... / And al stouned at his steven and stonstil seten" (232, 237, 242). Thus, the Green Knight not only has an audience but also one which is strikingly affected by his presence.¹¹⁴ By placing his head at Gawain's disposal, the Green Knight, in a sense, performs for his audience. He displays himself carefully for his spectators:

¹¹²The interrelationship between being and having the object of identification exists even when there is not such a marked dissimilarity between subject and object; however, I suggest that the Green Knight's extraordinary form, and the power it represents, intensifies the desire to "possess" him.

¹¹³I have argued in an unpublished paper, "Confronting the Elusive Phallus: Deconstructing Masculine Gender in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," which I presented at the Seventh Annual Central New York Conference on Language and Literature at SUNY Cortland in October 1997, that the Green Knight represents the phallus, in a Lacanian sense, exhibiting primordial wholeness and power before the splitting of the human subject.

¹¹⁴Arthur's knights are not depicted as identifying with the Green Knight. Identification/desire is external to the poem (narrator/reader vis-à-vis the Green Knight). Thus, in the following discussion of eroticized spectatorship between Arthur's knights and the Green Knight, I am concentrating on the dramatization of two-directional gazes rather than identification.

The grene knyght upon grounde graythely hym dresses:

A littel lut with the hede. the lere he discoveres:

His longe lovelych lokkes he layd over his croun.

Let the naked nec to the note schewe. (417-20)

While one could argue that the Green Knight is simply exposing his neck so that Gawain can more easily strike him with the ax, the narrator's language suggests that the Green Knight's actions are pleurably observed. For he does not merely brush his hair over his head, but rather, lays his "longe lovelych lokkes" over his crown: the narrator focuses on the exposure of the naked flesh of his neck -- a nakedness which lies in stark contrast to his well-apparelled frame. Here again, I am not claiming that the narrator is sexually attracted to this image of the Green Knight; yet, the Green Knight's powerful body is, in a sense, "raw material" which is molded into a desired image -- one that places the Green Knight in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis his observers.¹¹⁵ For the observers within (and outside of) the text, the eroticization of the Green Knight is heightened in that his powerful form is more approachable in its passive position, thus suggesting that "possession" of the desired object is within reach.¹¹⁶

What is normally avoided in chivalric texts but exposed here is the

¹¹⁵I am drawing on Mulvey's observation that in classical cinema, "[t]he image of woman [is] ... (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of the man" (32).

¹¹⁶For a very different reading of this scene, see Sarah Stanbury, Seeing the Gawain-Poet: Description and the Act of Perception (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991). While I am concentrating on visual eroticism, Stanbury explores how mutual gazes "set up an exclusive interpretive frame where meaning is channeled through visual epistemology -- through knowledge gained through the sense of sight" (97).

acknowledgement that a model knight is aware that he is being observed. The Green Knight. I would suggest, can be likened to a "gay male exhibitionist," who, according to Jackson, "deliberate[ly] surrender[s] to the annihilation of the gaze."¹¹⁷ In other words, the male exhibitionist asserts his identity by deliberately positioning himself as the object of another's gaze. Thus, Jackson explains, "the narcissistic exhibitionist effectively inverts intentionality in constituting himself as subject by positing himself as [desired] image-object in the consciousness of the other." The male exhibitionist surrenders his "male-gendered ontology" of gazer in order to "sustain the desiring look of the other."¹¹⁸ While one may question whether Jackson is accurately depicting every "gay male exhibitionist," one must recognize that he does, however, articulate one possible interpretation of a male who deliberately objectifies himself. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight offers an illustration of male exhibitionism similar to that described by Jackson yet also presents a more complex scenario of the interactions between a male performer and his observers -- a dramatization informed by its cultural environment. The Green Knight's exhibitionism is expressed from conflicting positions of power: one active, one actively passive, and one passive. He directs his gaze at Arthur's knights, ridiculing their lack of manliness: "Hit am aboute on this bench bot berdles chylder: / ...

¹¹⁷Jackson 142.

¹¹⁸Jackson 143. In heteronormative films, the male protagonist does not readily submit to an exhibitionist role. See Steven Cohan, "Masquerading As the American Male in the Fifties: Picnic, William Holden and the Spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film," Male Trouble, ed. Constance Penley and Sharon Willis (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993) 203-32. For a study of male models, see Richard Dyer, "Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up," The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1992) 265-76.

/ Here is no man me to mach, for myghtes so wayke" (280, 282). However, at the same time, he, in effect, summons the gaze of his powerless observers and is seemingly aware (and enjoying) the fear and fascination his form generates. And then, as pointed out above, in baring his neck, the Green Knight "surrenders" to the look of the narrator, and, by implication, the knights. After receiving Gawain's blow, the Green Knight reaffirms his original subject position -- his "male-gendered ontology" -- in that he directs his gaze, from his severed head, at the stunned knights before him. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, therefore, not only suggests that there is an underlying exhibitionism operating within chivalric texts but also, in dramatizing the instability of subject/object positions, demonstrates how male-male desire circulates in ways which defy rigidly defined active/passive positions -- a binary which often informs modern concepts of same-sex relations.

The instability of subject/object positions and the concomitant eroticization of the relation between gazer and gazee is illustrated in Gawain's arrival and sojourn at Bertilak's castle. Although Gawain arrives as a model knight, having successfully battled wild animals and giants, his model status is immediately compromised when he comes face to face with the formidable presence of Bertilak:

Gawayn glyght on the gome that godly hym gret,

And thught hit a bolde burne that the burgh aghte,

.....

Sturne, stif on the stryththe on stalworth schonkes

.....

And wel hym semed for sothe, as the segge thught.

To lede a lortschyp in lee of leudes ful gode. (842-43, 846, 848-49)

Instead of maintaining his position of power by directing his gaze at Bertilak, Gawain is seduced by the object of his gaze -- an object he is unable to "control." For Bertilak does not occupy the position traditionally gendered female and thus cannot be "captured." In addition, although Gawain is at first welcomed by his host as an equal, later, after "he was dispoyled" of his armor (860), he willingly yields to Bertilak's power, telling him "Whyl I byde in yowre borghe, be bayn to yowre hest" (1092).¹¹⁹ However, while the text transgresses the traditional relation between subject and object of the gaze by effecting a power reversal, it does not fix either of the two male protagonists in an active or passive position.

The relation between the two men is continuously portrayed as one of congeniality and warmth. For instance, on the first night: "When Gawayn wyth hym [Bertilak] mette. / Ther was bot wele at wylle" (1370-71). It is also on this first night that Gawain offers Bertilak his winnings, namely, a kiss from the lady: "He hasppes his fayre hals his armes wythinne, / And kysses hym as comlyly as he couthe awyse" (1388-89). Gawain's embrace and kiss is more than the traditional brotherly kiss of peace between knights in that it is erotically charged with the sexual tension between Gawain

¹¹⁹What is particularly interesting here is that we have a dramatization of how the object of the gaze, in this case, Bertilak, exerts power on the viewer, which is actually in keeping with medieval theories of vision. But, as Bacon points out, vision is both extromissive and intromissive. Therefore, the observer also exerts a force on the observed as I will demonstrate.

and the lady.¹²⁰ In addition, Gawain assumes the subject position, rendering Bertilak the object of his look and kiss. The relation between the two men escalates as Gawain plants two and then three kisses on Bertilak on the second and third nights respectively.¹²¹

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, in offering a particularly rich selection of spectatorial moments between men, either external or internal to the text, not only exposes the fiction of the unidirectional chivalric gaze suggested by the treatises (and other "orthodox" texts) but also uncovers the exhibitionism often ignored in chivalric works. The poem also reveals how the chivalric gaze depends on a model "performing" for the narrator, reader and/or actual novice knights, all of whom closely observe the physical form of the particular man-of-worth before their mind's eye. And in each case, the observer is, in a sense, seduced by this model image. In addition, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight dramatizes how the observed model figure stimulates the observers from

¹²⁰For a cogent analysis of these exchanges between Gawain and Bertilak, see Dinshaw, "A Kiss Is Just a Kiss." While Dinshaw maintains that "[t]he narrative ... produces the possibility of homosexual relations only to -- in order to -- preclude it, in order to establish heterosexuality as not just the only sexual legitimacy but a principle of intelligibility itself" (206), she also draws attention to the "fulfillment [of the agreement] that is right before our eyes: two men kissing feelingly, solemnly, seriously" (223).

¹²¹Gawain actually mirrors the Lady's actions and thus occupies a passive role in the bedroom with the Lady and an active role with Bertilak. For an engaging study of the Lady's interactions with Gawain, see Geraldine Heng, "A Woman Wants: The Lady, Gawain, and the Forms of Seduction," Yale Journal of Criticism 5 (1992): 101-33. See also Sheila Fisher, "Taken Men and Token Women in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism, ed. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1989) 71-105.

a position of both power and vulnerability. Commensurate with medieval optics, the text, thus, depicts same-sex spectatorship in which each participant does not occupy a stable active or passive position.

* * * * *

The eroticization of spectatorship external to a romance can be studied from a different angle, so to speak, one that positions the observer in closer proximity to the action unfolding before his eyes. Cowie aptly describes how fantasy informs both reading and film spectatorship: "Films and stories offer us a contingent world for their events and outcomes, and, just as we draw on the events of the day to produce our own fantasies, so too we can adopt and adapt the ready-made scenarios of fiction, as if their contingent material had been our own."¹²² Likewise, a chivalric narrative invites readers to create fantasy scenarios which are informed by individual emotions and, possibly, unconscious wishes for fulfillment. For isn't reading or listening to a narrative a pleasurable activity? And isn't that pleasure/fulfillment derived from vicariously participating in the action which is unfolding? Like the fantasizing subject I have just described, a male reader of a chivalric text does not actually desire the knights in the narrative, but rather, as Cowie explains, "*identif[ies]* with the character's *position of desire* in relation to other characters."¹²³ And this identification would be more intense for a reader who is also a knight -- whether actively engaged in military activities or

¹²²Cowie 140.

¹²³Cowie 140, emphasis mine.

not.¹²⁴ Thus, in imagining a fight scenario certain male readers might, in a sense, *feel* the pain experienced by the protagonist. And that feeling of pain could be pleasurable.

Freud, in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," defines masochism as "sadism turned around upon the subject's own ego."¹²⁵ He describes three stages in this process: in the sadistic first stage, there is an "exercise of violence or power upon some other person as its object ... [t]his object is abandoned and replaced by the subject's self ... [t]ogether with ... [a] change from an active to a passive aim in the instinct.... [Then] another person is sought as an object ... [who] takes over the original role of [active]... subject."¹²⁶ Thus, a masochist is actually the original sadist only now he is the passive object being tortured by someone else who occupies the subject/sadist position. According to Jean Laplanche, "sexuality emerges only with the turning round upon the self, thus with masochism."¹²⁷ Before this "turning round" the attacker may display heteroaggressive sadism, or sadism that is not sexually charged. In chivalric fight scenes, then, it is only when the attacking subject "allows himself" to be attacked that

¹²⁴Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), referring specifically to film spectatorship, rightly points out that "the question of spectatorial desire and identification in any particular film must rest less on cinematic conventions or form as such than on ... the ways in which [the spectator] ... is located in social relations of sexuality, race, class, gender, etc." (129). Her observation is also relevant to my examination of a knight's spectatorship of an imagined fight scenario.

¹²⁵Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 91.

¹²⁶Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 92.

¹²⁷Jean Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (1976; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985) 89.

the fight becomes, in a sense, sexualized. Laplanche and Pontalis elaborate on Freud's definition of masochism by indicating that "[in] masochism proper, the subject has pain inflicted upon himself by another person [i.e. it is not self-inflicted]."¹²⁸ Freud describes a fourth stage in the process whereby "once the suffering of pain has been experienced as a masochistic aim, it can be carried back into the sadistic situation and result in a sadistic aim of *inflicting pain*, which will then be masochistically enjoyed by the subject while inflicting pain upon others, through his identification ... with the suffering object."¹²⁹ Thus, sadistic pleasure is, according to Freud, actually informed by masochism. Or, as Laplanche puts it, "it is within the suffering position that the enjoyment lies."¹³⁰ Applying this to a chivalric text, then, a knight, who after being wounded attacks his opponent, can identify with the pain he is now inflicting. Moreover, Freud maintains that "[s]ensations of pain, like other unpleasurable sensations, extend into sexual excitation and produce a condition which is pleasurable, for the sake of which the subject will even willingly experience the unpleasantness of pain."¹³¹ He refers to this particular form of masochism as "erotogenic masochism."¹³² I

¹²⁸Laplanche, J. and J.-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-Analysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973) 402.

¹²⁹Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 93, emphasis in original.

¹³⁰Laplanche 91.

¹³¹Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 93.

¹³²Freud, "The Economic Problem in Masochism," General Psychological Theory 192. The other two expressions of masochism are "feminine" and "moral," yet, according to Freud, the "erotogenic" type "is also to be found at bottom in the other forms" (192). Kaja Silverman points out that since "[t]he adjective 'erotogenic' is one

would suggest that some male readers, in identifying with the protagonists involved in a protracted physical conflict -- each of whom occupies at some point the positions of attacker and attacked -- can, likewise, experience the erotic pleasure of pain.¹³³

In his essay, "A Child Is Being Beaten," Freud distinguishes three phases in the female beating fantasy:

Phase 1: "My father is beating the child [whom I hate]."

Phase 2: "I am being beaten by my father."

Phase 3: "Some boys are being beaten. [I am probably looking on.]"¹³⁴

The subject of the fantasy moves from a non-sexual sadistic identification with the father in phase 1 to a masochistic subject position in phase 2 and then in phase 3, the subject forms a sadistic sexual identification with the beater that is informed by a

which Freud habitually links with 'zone,' and with which he designates a part of the body at which sexual excitation concentrates[.] ... [i]mplicit, then, in the notion of masochism, whether feminine or moral, would seem to be the experience of corporeal pleasure, or -- to be more precise -- corporeal pleasure-in-pain" (188). See Silverman's detailed discussion of Freud's three kinds of masochism, 188-210. Laplanche expands on Freud's theory of sadism/masochism: see 85-102. For a discussion of Laplanche, see Jackson 135-39.

¹³³It is certainly possible that female readers could likewise form sadomasochistic identifications with male protagonists, especially when one considers the writings of female mystics focusing on the wounded body of Christ. See, for instance, Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991). However, in the discussion that follows I am focusing on potential male homoeroticism suggested by imaginative reading of fight scenarios.

¹³⁴Qtd. in Silverman 201. For an in-depth discussion and commentary on the entire beating fantasy, see Rodowick 66-94. For Freud's text, see "'A Child Is Being Beaten': A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversion," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1953-74) 17: 175-204.

masochistic identification with the beaten boys. We can draw a similar scenario for a fantasizing subject/reader of a chivalric text. Phase 1: knight A is beating knight B [whom the reader hates]. Phase 2: the reader fantasizes being beaten by knight A; or, the reader forms a masochistic identification with “hated” knight B and thus also experiences being beaten by knight A (for in Freud’s scenario the fantasizing subject seems to take the place of the “hated” child in the first phase, but since the subject does not actually recall this, it is, perhaps, more accurate to regard the subject here as *identifying* with the masochist position of being beaten rather than *actually* being beaten). Finally, phase 3 (in a slightly altered form): knights A and B are beating each other, which the reader is observing. Thus, in the first phase, the reader identifies with heteroaggressive knight A which “turns round” into a sexually-charged masochistic identification with knight B. And in the third phase, the reader can identify with whichever knight gains the upper hand, thus forming an eroticized sadomasochistic identification with the beater; for, if we recall, Freud (as well as Laplanche) claims that the beater derives sexual pleasure in identifying with the one being beaten because he has previously been beaten himself. The beating fantasy thus illustrates how a fantasizing subject/observer becomes, in a sense, a “participant” in the observed scene by identifying with the protagonists, thereby vicariously experiencing pleasure-in-pain. This spectatorial phenomenon is well illustrated in the mid-fourteenth century romance, The Stanzaic Morte Arthur. While I do not claim that this text replicates the beating fantasy, particular fight scenes do demonstrate how the text, in inviting male readers, particularly knights, to form masochistic and sadomasochistic identifications with the

characters, affords vicarious homoerotic pleasure.

In the first scene I will examine, Lancelot exhibits heteroaggressive sadism in attacking Ewain, giving him a “dint ... with mikel main,” causing Ewain to be “wounded wonder sore.”¹³⁵ However, Ector then takes over and attacks Lancelot:

Ector smote with herte good
To Launcelot that ilke tide;
Through helm into his hed it yode
That nighe lost he all his pride. (305-08)

In thus “turning round,” Lancelot illustrates masochism in its proper form, for the pain he has formerly inflicted on Ewain is now inflicted on himself by Ector. But then,

“Launcelot hit him [Ector] on the hood / That his horse fell and he beside” (309-10).

And so, we have an illustration of the next stage in which the masochist becomes once again a sadist. However, unlike the non-sexual initial stage, this time the sadistic instinct is sexualized because of Lancelot’s masochistic identification with the knight he is attacking. For Lancelot is, indeed, also wounded. The narrator informs us that “Launcelot blindes in his blood; / Out of the feld full fast gan ride” (311-12). That the masochist finds pleasure-in-pain is aptly expressed in Lancelot’s comments to Ector:

Though thou have sore wounded me,
Ther-of I shall thee never wite [blame],
But ever the better love I thee,

¹³⁵ Stanzaic Morte Arthur, King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure, ed. Larry D. Benson (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1986) 269, 272. Further citations will be given in the text by line number.

Such a dint that thou can smite. (500-03)

I would suggest that the love which unites the wounded knight with his attacker eroticizes the physical combat that has just transpired, and this in turn informs the relationship between the fantasizing reader and the protagonists in the imagined scenario. The text, therefore, invites the reader to experience not only the pleasure-in-pain of Lancelot but also the eroticization of the entire fight scenario.

Another scene involves a fight between Lancelot and Mador, the brother of a Scottish knight who was accidentally poisoned at Arthur's court. The narrator, in drawing attention to the fight as an exceptional spectacle to be observed, "the batail for to see and lithe [hear] : / *Saw* never no man stronger fight!" (1582-83, emphasis mine), invites readers to summon forth vivid images which would in some cases be informed by actual chivalric encounters previously experienced -- thus fantasy images based on "real" knights. The fight begins with both knights occupying the position of heteroaggressive sadist: "There was so wonder strong a fight, / O foot nolde nouthur flee ne found" (1592-93). Each knight then slips into the position of masochist: "From lowe noon til late night / But given many a woful wound" (1594-95). For each knight is not only attacking the other but also receiving "many a woful wound." The text offers two opportunities for masochistic identification in that both knights are presented as exemplary models of chivalric prowess; and while the text may lead a reader to identify more with Lancelot and thus "hate" Mador, it is not unlikely that, as in the second phase of the beating fantasy, a reader/observer might form a masochistic identification with the "hated" knight -- since he is, after all, avenging the death of his brother. Although

the fight continues into the third phase of the beating fantasy, only Lancelot offers the reader an eroticized sadomasochistic identification:

Launcelot then gave a dint with might:

Sir Mador falles at last to ground:

'Mercy!' cries that noble knight.

For he was seke and sore unsound. (1596-99)

Following Freud here, Lancelot's "dint with might" is eroticized in that he derives pleasure from identifying with the pain he is inflicting. Mador's fall and cry of "mercy" suggests orgasmic pleasure-in-pain. For some male readers, vicarious homoerotic pleasure is realized through a sadomasochistic identification with Lancelot or a masochistic one with Mador. It is also possible that both can occur simultaneously, thus intensifying the erotic effect. Once again, the beaten knight expresses pleasure (stimulation?), for he tells Lancelot: "I have fought in many a land, / With knightes both less and more, / And never yet ere my match I fand" (1605-07). In other words, there is nothing as pleasurable as being beaten in a good fight. Like the previous scene, here, too, the text reveals the homoerotic foundation upon which the fight scenario itself is played out: "Launcelot him kist with herte free, / And in his armes gan him up take" (1622-23). The body language here is striking. The victor receives the defeated one as a lover in a display of affection which, in a way, parallels the happy turn of events in a courtly (or modern) love story. Except, in this case, the union of "lovers" is based on shared pleasurable (erotic?) experiences of pain. And the fantasizing reader, having vicariously experienced the pleasure-in-pain of both knights, also derives satisfaction

from this male-male kiss and embrace.

In the third and final scene I will explore, Gawain, who swears revenge on Lancelot for killing his brother, engages him in a protracted fight. That future pleasure motivates this fight, at least for Gawain, is suggested by his vow: "Ere either of us shall other slayn. / Blithe shall I never be" (2410-11). For, either as sadomasochistic slayer (with the assumption that in the process of slaying Lancelot he will himself be wounded) or masochistic slain (assuming that before succumbing to his wounds he inflicts pain on Lancelot), Gawain expects to be "blithe." Nevertheless, as the scene unfolds, Lancelot, too, is in a position to be "blithe." And the reader can identify with the pleasure-in-pain experienced by either knight. As in the previous scene, the fight begins with both knights attacking each other, and again, the reader is clearly invited to visualize the scene along with the narrator: "The knightes met, as men it sigh / How they set their dintes sore" (2800-01). But, then, Lancelot's heteroaggressive sadist position "turns round" into a purely masochistic one: "Again twenty strokes he gave not one" (2809): after previously striking Gawain, he now merely accepts blows. That he "many a dint ... gan well endure" (2812) suggests that he might, indeed, enjoy the pain of being repeatedly struck. How might a reader fantasize this vivid illustration of masochism? Would it not situate his fantasmatic self in an eroticized, submissive position vis-à-vis the imagined Gawain? The text, then, offers a brilliant dramatization of the emergence of sadomasochism. For Lancelot, who is evidently in a crouched position as he is being beaten, straightens up and gives Gawain "a wounde wide" (2815). Moreover, the narrator vividly (excitedly?) describes Gawain's wounded

condition:

The blood all covered his colour
 And he fell down upon his side
 Thorough the helm into the hede
 Was hardy Gawain wounded so
 That unnethe was him life leved ... (2816-20)

Following Freud here again, having previously endured repeated “dints, Lancelot’s sadistic action is sexually charged in that he can identify with the pleasure-in-pain he causes. And, thus, the beating he administers to Gawain is informed by an eroticized masochistic identification with him. While it is, admittedly, difficult to imagine how either of the depicted beatings might be pleasurable, not to mention erotic, for a reader forming a sadomasochistic or, simply, masochistic identification, the text reveals that in a chivalric context, it is, indeed, just that. Gawain, who is barely alive, can’t wait to continue the fight. For he assures Lancelot, “When I am hole and going on high; / Then will I prove with might and main” (2830-31). When the fight continues a fortnight later, Gawain’s masochistic pleasure-in-pain is briefly transformed into sadomasochism as he beats on Lancelot so “bitterly” that Lancelot “all for-wery was” (2900-01). But, once again, Lancelot delivers a mighty blow, and Gawain “grisly groned upon the ground” (2912). Nevertheless, he refuses to yield (2919). Because he will be “blithe” only when one of them is slain, his repeated experiences of being grievously wounded, in effect, lead him towards contentment and are, therefore, informed by the very pleasure he awaits. Thus, Gawain’s unquenchable thirst for pain is inextricably linked to the

pleasure that motivates it. And the same would be true for the fantasizing reader who forms a masochistic identification with Gawain.

The following observation made by Robert Scholes offers further means for uncovering erotic pleasure experienced by a reader: "what connects fiction ... with sex is the fundamental orgasmic rhythm of tumescence and detumescence, of tension and resolution, of intensification to the point of climax and consummation ... much of the art consists of delaying climax within the framework of desire in order to prolong the pleasurable act itself."¹³⁶ This masculine-based analogy speaks clearly to my examination of a male reader's homoerotic sadomasochistic identifications with knights engaged in a protracted conflict. In the scene just described, although the fight between Gawain and Lancelot approaches a climax on several occasions, it is not actually attained. And, thus, the fantasizing reader vicariously experiencing Gawain's pleasure-in-pain is propelled ever forward toward achieving blissful resolution.

I have concentrated on (sado)masochistic identification because the pleasure afforded the observer is, perhaps, less apparent than that suggested by an identification with the figure who is the "beater." For it is not difficult to imagine a spectator who has formed an alliance with the protagonist-as-aggressor experiencing vicarious pleasure as he delivers blows to his opponent.¹³⁷ In chivalric romances, however, the hero does not

¹³⁶Qtd. in de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't* 108.

¹³⁷ Although I do not want to suggest that late medieval readers react to an imagined fight as modern spectators do at a boxing match or even as witnesses to an unofficial street fight, I do, however, think a parallel can be drawn. A study of the expressions and behavior of such modern spectators seems to underscore Freud's observation of the erotic pleasure informing acts of sadism/masochism even when

merely perform the beating, but, in fact, often suffers "beatings" in battle. Thus, identifying with the wounded hero is, in a sense, the other half of the narrator/reader's spectatorial experience -- one that offers pleasure to the participating observer. I would, therefore, suggest that Freud's concept of sadism/masochism, particularly regarding how the former "turns into" the latter and the pleasure-in-pain that informs erotogenic masochistic identification, provides another methodological tool for uncovering homoerotic spectatorship in chivalric texts.

merely observed.

Part Two: Chivalric Bonds and the Tradition of Male Friendship

While chivalric romances generally revolve around a love story between a knight and a lady, male homosocial relations often feature prominently in these tales as well. Because heterosexual love is the dominant expression of romantic feelings in modern society, it is, perhaps, easy to dismiss love between knights in medieval romances as being void of any emotional or erotic content. Although I am not suggesting that bonds between knights should be read as expressions of homosexuality, I do propose a rethinking of these relations that does not reduce same-sex affection to an either/or position on the sexual orientation binary. With that aim in mind, I turn to classical and medieval concepts of friendship which will provide useful sources for better understanding the sociocultural milieu from which chivalric romances evolved.

I will first examine three important treatises on friendship: Books VIII and XI from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Cicero's De Amicitia, and Aelred of Rievaulx's De Spirituali Amicitia.¹ After comparing the general concepts of ideal friendship

¹Robert Grosseteste, the Oxford scholar, translated Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics in the mid-thirteenth century and, "[i]t became in its original or in a revised form the standard version in the Middle Ages," according to Bernard G. Dod, "Aristoteles latinus," The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy, ed. Norman Kretzmann et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 61. Dod indicates that Grosseteste's translation survives in 33 manuscripts as well as an additional 246 which are revised versions (77). Cicero's De Amicitia was also, evidently, known in the later Middle Ages. Alan T. Gaylord, "Friendship in Chaucer's Troilus," Chaucer Review 3 (1968-69), cites the following passage from Fragment B of the Romaunt of the Rose: "And whilom of this amyte, / Spak Tullius in a ditee: / 'Man shulde maken his request / Unto his frend, that is honest' / ..." (5285-88, qtd. in Gaylord 245). Gaylord suggests that "[t]he reference to 'Tullius' makes it clear that the classical source for the whole passage is Cicero's De Amicitia" (245). Although this fragment of the Romaunt was not written by Chaucer, it was, however, contemporaneous with him, and the lengthy passage on friendship, which draws on ideas also expressed in Aristotle, indicates that classical ideas of ideal

presented in these three texts. I will explore how love and intimacy between friends is inherent to each theory. I will then move on to an examination of specific illustrations of male friendship, drawing on classical, biblical, and medieval texts, demonstrating that intense feelings of love and devotion underscore these bonds whether or not sexual relations are implied. Finally, I turn to two medieval romances, Amys and Amylion and the French Prose Lancelot, both providing excellent illustrations of same-sex relationships that are best understood when read in light of ideas regarding intimate male friendship outlined in the treatises and expressed in literature prior to these romances. The male-male spectatorship I identified in the first part of this chapter should be considered in terms of a sociocultural phenomenon characterized, in part, by homosocial intimacy. Moreover, the expressions of male friendship I study here provide an important cultural context for examining the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus depicted in Chaucer's poem.

friendship had currency in late fourteenth-century England. Aelred of Rievaulx's mid-twelfth-century work, De Spirituali Amicitia, (or, De Spirituali Amicitia) was evidently not well known in the later Middle Ages. Although Douglass Roby, in his introduction to Aelred of Rievaulx: Spiritual Friendship, trans. Mary Eugenia Laker (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), notes that "[b]y the end of the fourteenth century there were at least four short versions of the Spiritual Friendship in existence," he, nevertheless, admits that "[a]fter the thirteenth century the influence of the Spiritual Friendship becomes more difficult to uncover" (38, 40). However, Aelred draws heavily on Cicero's text -- which was evidently known -- and because it was written around the same time as the early chivalric romances, it reflects medieval sensibilities which find expression in later romances as well as Troilus and Criseyde. Robert G. Cook, "Chaucer's Pandarus and the Medieval Ideal of Friendship," Journal of English and Germanic Philology 69 (1970), maintains that "the main ideas of a traditional standard of friendship that originated in classical times ... was well known in the fourteenth century" (409). Thus, writers and readers of chivalric texts might not have actually read these treatises on friendship, but the ideas contained in them would have been, according to Cook, "commonplace" (409).

I. Three Treatises on Friendship

According to Aristotle, there are three types of friendship, which are distinguished by whether the object of love is based on utility, pleasure, or good. The first two, he maintains, are not ideal because they cannot last: “these sorts of friendships are easily dissolved, when the friends do not remain similar [to what they were]; for if someone is no longer pleasant or useful, the other stops loving him.”² It is only the last one that can lead to true, long-lasting friendship, for “these people’s friendship lasts as long as they are good; and virtue is enduring.”³ The three types are, however, not mutually exclusive. Ideal friendship based on moral goodness encompasses the other less-perfect types and raises them to a perfect whole: “good people are both unconditionally good and advantageous for each other. They are pleasant in the same ways too, since good people are pleasant both unconditionally and for each other.”⁴ As H. H. Joachim aptly summarizes, “The main characteristic of ideal friendship is its inclusiveness: each friend loves the other because that other is what he is, i.e. the whole

²Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985) VIII.9.32. All subsequent quotations unless otherwise noted are from this edition. For a detailed discussion of Aristotle’s concept of “perfect friendship,” especially looking at the relation of an individual to another self, see A. W. Price, Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) 103-30. See also the useful brief summaries in Reginald Hyatte, The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 16-21, and Philip Culbertson, New Adam: The Future of Male Spirituality (Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1992) 92-94.

³Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.9.35.

⁴Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.9.35.

character or personality of each friend is comprehended in the union.”⁵

The understanding that ideal friendship can occur only between virtuous men is central to Cicero’s theory as presented in his De Amicitia. He clearly states: “friendship cannot exist except among good men.”⁶ He goes on to define the qualities of good men as “[t]hose who so act and so live as to give proof of loyalty and uprightness, of fairness and generosity; who are free from all passion, caprice, and insolence, and have great strength of character.”⁷ It is not difficult to draw a parallel between Cicero’s description of “good” men and the qualities of men-of-worth outlined in chivalric treatises. We should not understand Cicero’s dismissal of “passion” as a statement against the suitability of intense attachment or love between friends since he describes friendship as “nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection.”⁸ In fact, as I will point out shortly, love, according to Cicero, is

⁵H. H. Joachim, Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951) 247. Joachim provides a detailed, nearly line-by-line, commentary on the complete work.

⁶Marcus Tullius Cicero, Laelius De Amicitia, De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione, trans. William Armistead Falconer, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 20 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard UP, 1971) V.18: “nisi in bonis amicitiam esse non posse.” All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. See Hyatte 26-33 for a brief discussion of Cicero’s treatise. For a good overview of classical theories of friendship, see Carolinne White, Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 13-44.

⁷Cicero, De Amicitia V.19: “Qui ita se gerunt, ita vivunt, ut eorum probetur fides integritas aequitas liberalitas, nec sit in eis ulla cupiditas libido audacia, sintque magna constantia.”

⁸Cicero, De Amicitia VI.20: “Est enim amicitia nihil aliquid nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio.”

very much a part of friendship.

Aelred of Rievaulx's treatise, De Spiritali Amicitia, draws on classical theories of friendship, particularly Cicero's, which Aelred refers to specifically. Aelred's text is extremely interesting in that it marks an attempt to align classical pagan ideas of friendship with Christian spirituality and, further, offers a view of same-sex relations closer to the period which is the focus of my project.¹⁰ For Aelred, there are three types of friendship: carnal, worldly, and spiritual. True friendship can only be of the spiritual type which "should be desired not with a view to any worldly good, nor for any reason extrinsic to itself, but from the worthiness of its own nature, and the feeling of the human heart, so that it offers no advantage or reward other than itself."¹⁰ Aelred's concept is in keeping with both Aristotle's and Cicero's idea of perfect friendship in that he stresses that only "good" people can form true friendships: "spiritual friendship is born among good people through the similarity of their characters, goals, and habits in

¹⁰Mark Williams dates Aelred's text between 1147 and 1157 in Aelred of Rievaulx's Spiritual Friendship, trans. Mark F. Williams (Scranton: U of Scranton P, 1994) 16. For a thorough discussion of Aelred's concept of friendship, see Adele M. Fiske, Friends and Friendship in the Monastic Tradition (Cuernavaca, Mexico: CIDOC, 1970) 18/1-49. She provides extensive excerpts and commentary drawing on both De Spiritali Amicitia and De Speculo Caritatis. For a brief treatment of Aelred's work, see Hyatte 62-69.

¹⁰Aelred of Rievaulx, De Spiritali Amicitia, Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia, ed. A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, vol. I (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971) I.45: "non utilitatis cuiusque mundialis intuitu, non qualibet extra nascente causa, sed ex propriae naturae dignitate, et humani pectoris sensu desideratur; ita ut fructus eius praemiumque non sit aliud quam ipsa" (emphasis in original). This and all subsequent English translations of De Spiritali Amicitia are taken from Mark Williams's translation.

life.”¹¹

Despite the ideal nature of each author’s concept of friendship and the fact that few could actually live up to these conditions, these treatises were, nevertheless, intended as guides for forming friendships between “real” people -- friendships that were based on love and affection. Aristotle claims that when good people form close associations, “loving and friendship are found most of all and at their best.”¹² The importance of love in Aristotle’s concept is implied in that goodwill is not enough for true friendship, “for when they have goodwill people only wish goods to the other, and will not cooperate with him in any action, or go to any trouble for him.”¹³ It is only after a period of time, when friends “grow accustomed to each other” that goodwill becomes true friendship, “for, as the proverb says, they cannot know each other before they have shared the traditional [peck of] salt, and they cannot accept each other or be friends until

¹¹Aelred, De Spirituali Amicitia I.45: “Amicitia itaque spiritalis inter bonos, uitae, morum, studiorumque similitudine parturitur.”

¹²Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.9.35. Thomas Aquinas highlights the motivating force of love inherent in Aristotle’s concept of friendship, noting that “because love is an act of friendship, there will be three kinds of friendship equal to the three objects of love [i.e. good, useful, pleasant].... In each of these the definition of friendship ... is fulfilled, because in each of the three a recognized return of love by someone is possible [et quia amicitiae actus est amatio, consequens est quod etiam sint tres species amicitiae aequales numero amabilibus ... in singulis enim horum salvatur ratio amicitiae supra posita, quia secundum unumquodque horum trium potest esse redamatio non latens]” (Sententia Libri Ethicorum, Opera Omnia, vol. 47 [Rome, 1969] 1156a6.31-33, 35-38). English translation is taken from Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, trans. C. I. Litzinger, vol. 2 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964) 714.

¹³Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics IX.11.22.

each appears loveable to the other and gains the other's confidence."¹⁴ Thus, in getting to know one another, friends become more intimate, which does not, of course, imply sexual relations between friends; but, Aristotle does, in fact, draw a parallel between close friendship and erotic relations, both of which he says can involve only a few people: "indeed it ... seems impossible to be an extremely close friend to many people. For the same reason it also seems impossible to be passionately in love with many people, since passionate erotic love tends to be an excess of friendship, and one has this for one person; hence also one has extremely close friendship for a few people."¹⁵ As Carolinne White justly concludes, "Such an attitude is indicative of how intense a friendship his ideal friendship was considered to be."¹⁶ Also, in describing erotic love as merely "an *excess* of friendship," Aristotle is not denying passion a place in friendship, but rather, limiting passion in ideal friendships to that which is *not* excessive. Nevertheless, he does draw another surprising parallel between erotic love and complete friendship: "for [complete friendship, like erotic passion,] is like an excess, and an excess is naturally directed at a single individual."¹⁷ What kind of excess does he mean? I would suggest that this excess refers to all the qualities that make up complete/ideal friendship, namely, mutual goodwill, usefulness, and pleasure, which are all grounded in love and intimacy. While it falls short of erotic passion, perhaps, Aristotle's concept of

¹⁴Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.9.35.

¹⁵Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.11.73.

¹⁶White 27.

¹⁷Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.9.46.

ideal friendship posits two friends steeped in mutual warmth and affection.

Cicero considers love to be the foundation upon which true friendship is built. He draws the following etymology: "it is love (*amor*), from which the word 'friendship' (*amicitia*) is derived."¹⁸ He finds that friendship occurs naturally "from an inclination of the soul joined with a feeling of love rather than from calculation of how much profit the friendship is likely to afford."¹⁹ Friendship, thus, from its inception, is inextricably linked to feelings of love. He goes on to describe "that kindred impulse of love, which arises when once we have met someone whose habits and character are congenial with our own."²⁰ In keeping with his definition of true friendship being only possible between virtuous people, he observes that "there is nothing more loveable than virtue, nothing that more allures us to affection, since on account of their virtue and uprightness we feel a sort of affection even for those whom we have never seen."²¹ What is particularly

¹⁸Cicero, *De Amicitia* VIII.26: "Amor enim, ex quo amicitia nominata est."

¹⁹Cicero, *De Amicitia* VIII.27: "Quapropter a natura mihi videtur potius quam indigentia orta amicitia, applicatione magis animi cum quodam sensu amandi, quam cogitatione quantum illa res utilitatis esset habitura."

²⁰Cicero, *De Amicitia* VIII.27: "sensus exstitit amoris, si aliquem nacti sumus, cuius cum moribus et natura congruamus."

²¹Cicero, *De Amicitia* VIII.28: "Nihil est enim virtute amabilius, nihil quod magis alliciat ad diligendum, quippe cum propter virtutem et probitatem etiam eos, quos numquam vidimus, quodam modo diligamus." While I am most interested here in Cicero's linking of love and friendship, his observation that someone could love a person never actually seen is relevant to my earlier investigation of visual reading in that Cicero implies that emotions are stirred merely from listening to or reflecting on a description of a virtuous person. This idea can be related to a reader's response to chivalric texts where the reader could, in a sense, love the image of a model knight he constructs in his mind.

interesting here is that Cicero identifies the alluring attraction of a virtuous person. Understood in Cicero's scenario of how one is first attracted to a future friend is desire - not necessarily erotic desire, but a longing nevertheless that leads to affectionate relations. Thus, Cicero clearly does not consider friendship to be an emotionless bond between virtuous persons, but rather, an association within which love and mutual admiration grow.

Aelred offers an etymology of "friend" similar to that put forth by Cicero: "The word 'friend' [*amicus*] is derived from 'love' [*amor*], as it seems to me; and 'friendship' [*amicitia*] is derived from 'friend'."²² Like Cicero, Aelred maintains that friendship depends on love: "Love is the source and origin of friendship, for although love can exist without friendship, friendship can never exist without love."²³ While Aelred identifies four characteristics inherent to friendship, "love, affection, security, and delight," all four are, in fact, related to love in a broader sense:

Friendship involves love where there is a show of favor that proceeds from benevolence. It involves affection when a certain inner pleasure comes from friendship. It involves security when it leads to a revelation of all one's secrets and purposes without fear or suspicion. It involves delight when there is a certain meeting of the minds -- an agreement that is pleasant and benevolent -- concerning all matters, whether happy or

²²Aelred, De Spiritali Amicitia I.19: "Ab amore, ut mihi uidetur, amicus dicitur: ab amico amicitia."

²³Aelred, De Spiritali Amicitia III.2: "Fons et origo amicitiae amor est, nam amor sine amicitia esse potest, amicitia sine amore numquam."

sad. which have a bearing on the friendship.²⁴

Since Aelred is, after all, writing about ideal relations between monks, he stresses that temperance is needed to keep intense affection within the realm of spiritual rather than carnal friendship. He, thus, warns about "puerile friendship" which tends to lead young men into unstable attachments that could unleash "illicit" desires. Nevertheless, Aelred does not deny that spiritual friendship is informed by pleasurable feelings, as the four characteristics above indicate: he merely urges a grounding of friendship in the principles of "purity of intent, the advice of reason, and the guide of temperance," so that when one feels intense affection for another, he will keep the energy within safe boundaries.²⁵ Since the values praised in chivalric literature are, in effect, Christian values, it is reasonable to assume that had the authors of chivalric treatises offered a

²⁴Aelred, De Spiritali Amicitia III.51: "Ad amicitiam quatuor specialiter pertinere uidentur: dilectio et affectio, securitas et iucunditas. Ad dilectionem spectat, cum beneuolentia beneficiorum exhibitio; ad affectionem, interior quaedam procedens delectatio; ad securitatem, sine timore uel suspicione omnium secretorum et consiliorum reuelatio; ad iucunditatem, de omnibus quae contingunt, siue laeta sint, siue tristia; de omnibus quae cogitantur ... quaedam dulcis et amica collatio." Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality, rightly notes that "from the scholar's point of view, any distinction between 'friendship' and 'love' must be extremely arbitrary. No scientific differentiation has ever been proposed, nor is it easy to conceive of an experiment which might be performed to determine whether one person's love for another was friendly or erotic. From a phenomenological point of view, it seems likely that 'friendship' and 'love' are simply different points on a scale measuring a constellation of psychological and physiological responses to other humans" (46). Throughout this study, I point to instances in texts where the "scale" measures the potential eroticization of a particular same-sex encounter.

²⁵Aelred, De Spiritali Amicitia II.59: "Eapropter primordia amicitiae spiritualis, primum intentionis habeant puritatem, rationis magisterium, temperantiae frenum; et sic suauissimus accedens affectus, ita profecto sentietur dulcis, ut esse numquam desinat ordinatus."

concept of ideal friendship, they would have stated something rather similar to that proposed by Aelred. Like Aelred, these authors would have been wary of unbridled pleasure and affection informing the friendship between knights. That is not to say, however, that ideal bonds between knights or monks were void of intense affection or even erotic feelings.

Within Aelred's classification of kisses, "the kiss of the flesh, the kiss of the spirit, and the kiss of discernment," he is, understandably, most concerned with the latter two. Nevertheless, his discussion of the "kiss of the flesh" sheds light on accepted displays of affection between friends within secular society. He describes the "kiss of the flesh" as one which "is made by a pressing together of lips," and warns that it "is to be neither offered nor received, except for definite and honorable reasons -- for example, as a sign of reconciliation, in place of words, when two people who had been mutual enemies become friends."²⁶ He also allows such fleshly contact "as a sign of affection, such as is permitted between a husband and wife, or such as is offered and accepted by friends who have long been apart."²⁷ Aelred's observation is, indeed, valuable for uncovering medieval mores regarding socially acceptable displays of affection, because in drawing this parallel Aelred juxtaposes heterosexual unions

²⁶Aelred, De Spiritali Amicitia II.24: "Est igitur osculum corporale, osculum spiritale, osculum intellectuale. Osculum corporale impressione fit labiorum.... Osculum proinde corporale, non nisi certis et honestis causis, aut offerendum est, aut recipiendum. Verbi gratia, in signum reconciliationis, quando fiunt amici, qui prius inimici fuerant ad inuicem."

²⁷Aelred, De Spiritali Amicitia II.24: "in signum dilectionis, sicut inter sponsum et sponsam fieri permittitur; uel sicut ab amicis, post diuturnam absentiam et porrigitur et suscipitur."

alongside male homosocial ones.²⁸

Before I look at what each treatise says about friendship being a union between two individuals, I want to explore what is in essence a variation on the theme that a true friend is a second self. In expounding this theme, all three authors enable us to understand the intimacy that was expected between close friends. According to Aristotle, "[t]he excellent person is related to his friend in the same way as he is related to himself, since a friend is another himself."²⁹ Thomas Aquinas expands on this: "Aristotle notes that a virtuous man is disposed to his friend as to himself because a friend is -- so to speak -- another self by affection, that is, a person feels for a friend what he feels for himself."³⁰ This idea is also expressed by Cicero, who asks "[w]hat is sweeter than to have someone with whom you may dare discuss anything as if you were communing with yourself?"³¹ He goes on to suggest that one can look at a true friend as

²⁸While Aelred does not explicitly state that the friends he is referring to are both male, I am making that assumption since it is unlikely he would have witnessed many instances of female friends kissing one another after being separated for a long time or male and female friends exchanging a kiss on such occasions. That Aelred not only participated in male friendships, such as his loving relationship with a monk named Ivo, referred to in II.5, but also observed displays of affection between men is suggested by Roby, who, drawing on Walter Daniel's Life of Ailred, observes that "Aelred, unlike some other abbots, was not scandalized by demonstrations of affection, such as holding hands, by his monks" (21-22).

²⁹Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII.11.68.

³⁰Qtd. in Litzinger 806. Thomas Aquinas, Sententia Libri Ethicorum 1166a30.170-73: "Et dicit quod virtuosus se habet ad amicum sicut ad se ipsum, quia amicus secundum affectum amici est quasi alius ipse, quia scilicet homo afficitur ad amicum sicut ad se ipsum."

³¹Cicero, De Amicitia VI.22: "Quid dulcius quam habere quicum omnia audeas sic loqui ut tecum?"

a sort of image of oneself.³² And, most relevant for understanding the intimacy inherent to chivalric bonds is Cicero's observation that "when two people have the same ideals and the same tastes, it is a natural consequence that each loves the other as himself."³³ Aelred quotes Cicero, exclaiming "what happiness, what security, what pleasure it is to have a friend 'with whom you would dare to speak just as you would speak to yourself!'"³⁴ But he goes on to lift Cicero's words to a higher plane, so to speak, offering a vision of intimacy where one could reveal one's spiritual progress as well as all of one's innermost secrets. Thus, for all three authors, true friendship involves a relationship of such extreme intimacy that one's friend is essentially an extension of oneself. That this is not merely narcissism is demonstrated in each treatise by the linking of friendship with love and affection for another person. This is aptly summed up by Aelred: "unless you transfer this affection for yourself to another and love your friend freely ... you will not be able to enjoy the pleasures of true friendship.... For then the person you love will become your alter ego once you have taken your esteem and poured it forth onto him."³⁵

³²Cicero, De Amicitia VII.23: "Verum etiam amicum qui intuetur, tamquam exemplar aliquod intuetur sui."

³³Cicero, De Officiis, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 21 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard UP, 1968) I.XVII.56: "in quibus enim eadem studia sunt, eaedem voluntates, in iis fit ut aequae quisque altero delectetur ac se ipso."

³⁴Aelred, De Spirituali Amicitia II.11: "At quae felicitas, quae securitas, quae iucunditas habere *cum quo aequae audeas loqui ut tibi*" (emphasis in original). Aelred is quoting Cicero from De Amicitia VI.22. (See n.31).

³⁵Aelred, De Spirituali Amicitia III.69-70: "Nisi igitur et tu hunc ipsum in alium transferas affectum, gratis amicum diligens, ... uera sapiat amicitia non poteris. Tunc

Aelred, quoting Ambrose, proposes that friendship should be an intimate union: "For a friend is the sharer of your soul. to your friend's spirit you join and attach your own, and you so mingle the two that you would like for your two spirits to become one."³⁶ This idea that true friends are united in some sort of permanent union is found in all three treatises, and is, thus, not solely a Christian concept. Cicero makes a nearly identical statement: "man ... seek[s] out another whose soul he may so mingle with his own as almost to make one out of two."³⁷ And, on a more earthly plane, Aristotle, too, proposes a union between friends in that he says they should spend their lives together, sharing one another's thoughts.³⁸

In each author's view the unions are both permanent and informed by intense affection. Aristotle draws a parallel between erotic lovers and true friends, in that, like lovers who enjoy most to see their beloved, "what friends find most choiceworthy is living together." He explains that since friendship involves the "perception of our friend's being," in order to achieve this type of intimacy, friends should live together.³⁹

enim erit ipse quem diligis tamquam alter tu, si tuam tui in ipsum transfuderis caritatem."

³⁶Aelred, De Spirituali Amicitia III.6: "*Nam cum amicus tui consors sit animi, cuius spiritui tuum coniungas et applies, et ita misceas ut unum fieri uelis ex duobus*" (emphasis in original). Aelred is quoting from Ambrose, De Officiis, III.134.

³⁷Cicero, De Amicitia XXI.81: "alterum anquirat, cuius animum ita cum suo misceat, ut efficiat paene unum ex duobus."

³⁸Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics IX.11.69. Irwin points out that Aristotle is not implying that friends need to live in the same house, but rather share the same activities, and thus, spend much of their time together (360n.1157b18).

³⁹Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics IX.11.91.

Thomas Aquinas, in restating Aristotle's observation that true friendship is a "partnership" which is best carried out by friends living together, points out that this union is, indeed, pleasurable because friends share in those activities which they enjoy most -- activities which "constitute their whole life."⁴⁰ Regarding the permanence of this union, Joachim observes that since ideal friendship incorporates the whole being of both partners -- and both are completely moral in character -- "the union is therefore stable and unlikely to change."⁴¹

Cicero speaks of virtue only being achieved "in union and fellowship with another." He goes on to consider "[s]uch a partnership as ... the best and happiest comradeship along the road to nature's highest good."⁴² Elsewhere, he comments on friends who "are joined in intimate friendship," thus bringing together the two dominant features of ideal friendship: intimacy and permanency.⁴³ Since Cicero does not imply that such a bond is ever broken, and given the fact that it is based on mutual love and

⁴⁰Qtd. in Litzinger 855. Thomas Aquinas, Sententia Libri Ethicorum 1171b32.29-32: "amicitia in communicatione consistit ... maxime autem se ipsos sibi invicem communicant in convictu; unde convivere videtur esse maxime proprium et delectabile in amicitia."

⁴¹Joachim 247.

⁴²Cicero, De Amicitia XXII.83: "solitaria non posset virtus ad ea quae summa sunt pervenire, coniuncta et consociata cum altera perveniret.... Quae si quos inter societas ... eorum est habendus ad summum naturae bonum optimus beatissimusque comitatus."

⁴³Cicero, De Officiis I.XVII.55: "cum viri boni moribus similes sunt familiaritate coniuncti."

affection, we can interpret this union as a sort of same-sex marriage.⁴⁴ Aelred seems to echo Cicero in that he stresses the union which is achieved in true friendship: “When friendship has made two people one, just as that which is one cannot be divided, so also friendship cannot be separated from itself.”⁴⁵ Aelred’s union refers not only to a union on a spiritual level but also a temporal one: “[a friend] will belong to you and you to him, as much in temporal as in spiritual matters.”⁴⁶

Although, of the three authors, Aelred would appear to be the one most removed from the secular world of chivalric romances, I would, nevertheless, suggest that his moving depiction of same-sex friendship in the De Speculo Caritatis best expresses the affection and intimacy that informs ideal bonds between knights:

It is in fact a great consolation in this life to have someone to whom you can be united in the intimate embrace of the most sacred love ... who weeps with you in sorrow, rejoices with you in joy, and wonders with you in doubt ... with whom you can rest, just the two of you, in the sleep of peace away from the noise of the world, in the embrace of love, in the kiss of unity, with the sweetness of the Holy Spirit flowing over you: to

⁴⁴Permanence is implied because ideal friendship is based on the union of two virtuous men, and nowhere in the text does Cicero warn that good men could “lose” their virtue. I will be citing examples of same-sex “marriages” in the next section.

⁴⁵Aelred, De Spirituali Amicitia III.48: “Cum enim amicitia de duobus unum fecerit, sicut id quod unum est non potest diuidi, sic et amicitia a se non poterit separari.”

⁴⁶Aelred, De Spirituali Amicitia III.7: “ille ita tuus, et tu illius sis, tam in corporalibus quam in spiritalibus.”

whom you so join and unite yourself that you mix soul with soul, and two become one.⁴⁷

That Aelred had in mind some sort of marriage between friends is observed by Brian McGuire, who notes that except for denying sexual relations a place in his scheme, Aelred presents ideas of union which conform to those later realized in concepts of heterosexual marriage.⁴⁸ While I would, perhaps, reverse McGuire's emphasis, he, nevertheless, astutely points out that "Aelred was perhaps ahead of his time when he imagined such a bond not only between a man and a woman but also between two people of the same sex."⁴⁹ He is also justified in concluding that the bond Aelred imagined is clearly linked to intimate same-sex friendships illustrated in biblical and classical literature.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Aelred of Rievaulx, De Speculo Caritatis, Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia, ed. A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971) III.109: "Porro non modicum uitae huius solatium est, habere quem tibi affectu quodam intimo ac sacratissimi amoris unire possis amplexu ... qui tibi collacrymetur in anxiis, collaetetur in prosperis, tecum quaerat in dubiis ... ac quiescente mundi strepitu in somno pacis, in amplexu caritatis, in osculo unitatis, interfluente Spiritus sancti dulcedine, solus cum solo repaues: immo ita te ei adiungas et applies, et animum animo misceas, ut de pluribus unum fiat." English translation taken from John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 225.

⁴⁸I am referring particularly to the idea that a husband and wife are united until death parts them as well as the vow to lead an everyday life caring for one another "in sickness and in health."

⁴⁹Brian Patrick McGuire, Brother and Lover: Aelred of Rievaulx (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 114-15.

⁵⁰McGuire 115.

II. Expressions of Love Between Friends

Discussing intimacy between heterosexual men in the late twentieth-century. Philip Culbertson observes: "Because men have been taught to be uncomfortable with male friendship, men mask their fear by making sure their heterosexual status is clearly proven in public, by reaffirming marriage as more important than friendship."⁵¹ This modern conception of male heterosexual friendship has often informed readings of same-sex relations in medieval literature. In order to better contextualize intimate associations between men as depicted in chivalric romances, I suggest we turn to examples of male friendship culled from a wide range of premodern literature. Carolinne White offers a neat summation of close male relationships as understood in patristic literature: "a high degree of intimacy between two or at most a few persons which made it possible to think of a friend as a second self; the idea that a friend ought to possess some reason for being loved, which in the case of good men would be their virtue."⁵² Although White is focusing on friendship as presented in texts primarily of the fourth century, her observations are applicable to textual illustrations of male

⁵¹Philip L. Culbertson, "Men and Christian Friendship," Men's Bodies, Men's Gods: Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture, ed. Björn Krondorfer (New York: New York UP, 1996) 161-62.

⁵²Qtd. in Culbertson, "Men and Christian Friendship" 169-70. Ambrose offers a splendid example of this concept, writing in De Officiis III.22: "What is a friend if not a consort of love, to whom you can join and attach your spirit, mingling it so that out of two you would become one? One to whom you are united as to another self [Quid est enim amicus, nisi consors amoris, ad quem animum tuum adiungas atque applices, et ita misceas, ut unum velis fieri ex duobus]" (qtd. in Peter Dronke, Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric, vol. 1 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1968] 195). A parallel can certainly be drawn between Ambrose's and Cicero's understanding of friendship.

relationships from Homer up to the late Middle Ages.

That male friendship in the premodern era was more than the expression of love and affection is attested to by the fact that true friendships were viewed as permanent unions. Although in actual life friendships probably fell short of the ideals set forth in the treatises and other writings on perfect friendship, there is evidence that same-sex unions took place, particularly in Eastern Christendom. John Boswell provides numerous examples in his exhaustive study of this topic and maintains that "same-sex unions were commonplace in early medieval Byzantine society, even among the prominent and notable."⁵³ He is, I believe, justified in concluding that a same-sex union can be measured against modern conceptions of heterosexual marriage in that it was, in fact, "a permanent romantic commitment between two people, witnessed and recognized by the community."⁵⁴ Boswell's observation is well supported by a Frankish

⁵³John Boswell, Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe (New York: Vintage, 1994) 229. He offers an excerpt from an actual eleventh-century Byzantine law which states: "Same-sex unions are of persons, and they [the persons joined through the unions] alone incur impediments to marriage, not the other members of their families." He interprets this law to mean that members of the two families are permitted to intermarry. It is, I think, also interesting to note that the law apparently does not allow the partners in the union to enter into any sanctioned relation with the opposite sex, thus giving the same-sex union the same status as a monogamous heterosexual union. Boswell's study has been criticized for drawing a general conclusion from a paucity of evidence. Marina Warner, rev. of Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe, by John Boswell, New York Times Book Review 28 August 1994 <http://ausqrd.queer.org.au/qrd/documents/arts/same_sex_review.txt>, points to the political agenda which informs the work: "[Boswell] is careful throughout this book to stress that his responsibility is to the record of the past, not the agenda of the present, but his concern with same-sex unions rings with contemporary special pleading in a time of emergency."

⁵⁴Boswell, Same-Sex Unions 281.

document, dated 776, which states: "Be it known that I, Rachifrid, a cleric, the son of Fredulo the merchant, do by this document establish, confirm and appoint you, Magniprand, a cleric, the son of Magnipert, to share my dwelling all the days of our lives ... that as regards the said church of God, and all those things and persons belonging to it, you should be therein my partner [*frater*] ... and my heir."⁵⁵ Boswell rightly argues that this is more than a commercial contract between friends in that the two men plan to live together "all the days of ... [their] lives" which is not normally a stipulation in a purely economic arrangement.⁵⁶ Boswell's conclusion that ordinary men and women in premodern Europe were very likely to express feelings which we would today label "romantic" in same-sex friendships and unions is also well supported by the treatises studied in the previous section.⁵⁷ I turn now to specific literary examples which highlight male-male intimacy and affection.

In Book XVIII of Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles' expression of grief upon learning of Patroclus' death illustrates the emotional intensity of this particular friendship:

and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Achilleus.

In both hands he caught up the grimy dust and poured it
over his head and face, and fouled his handsome countenance,
and the black ashes were scattered over his immortal tunic.
And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay

⁵⁵Qtd. in Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions* 255.

⁵⁶Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions* 254.

⁵⁷Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions* 280.

at length, and took and tore at his hair with his hands, and defiled it.⁵⁸

This image of the powerful Achilles lying face-down in the dust, tearing at his hair, is strikingly foreign for many twentieth-century readers in that such excessive outpouring of emotion is gendered “feminine” in modern society -- and thus particularly inappropriate for a heroic warrior. Furthermore, he is wallowing in grief over the death of a male friend. The emotion Achilles experiences at Patroclus’ death is, however, very much in keeping with classical ideas of ideal friendship where two intimate friends were said to be united in one soul. Achilles feels the pain of being severed from his other half. In response to his mother’s reminder of what has been gained from the victory that cost Patroclus his life, Achilles laments: “But what pleasure is this to me, since my dear companion has perished, / Patroklus, whom I loved beyond all other companions, / as well as my own life.”⁵⁹

An equally famous male friendship from Antiquity is that between Jonathan and David as presented in the Book of Samuel.⁶⁰ After David defeats Goliath, Saul observes how “the soul of Jonathan was bound closely to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved

⁵⁸Homer, The Iliad, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1951) XVIII. 22-27.

⁵⁹Homer, The Iliad XVIII.80-82.

⁶⁰Two ideas expressed by both Aristotle and Cicero in their writings on friendship, namely, that friends are one soul in two bodies and that a friend is a second self, are found in many biblical and patristic texts. See Culbertson, “Men and Christian Friendship” 152-53 for a thorough documentation of these occurrences.

him as his own soul.”⁶¹ The two enter into a covenant (*foedus*) that is symbolized by the following action: “Jonathan stripped himself of the outer garment in which he was clothed, and gave it to David, as well as his remaining garments, from his sword and bow to his girdle.”⁶² Since Jonathan is David’s social superior, Culbertson is, I believe, justified in reading the scene as Jonathan’s desire to enter into a relationship based on equality, and thus “[he] strips off his military princely clothing, and naked, hands it and all his weapons to David.” This leveling of social distinctions, according to Culbertson, “enables the friendship to grow and deepen.”⁶³ A sense of the deep love between the two men is expressed in the biblical narrator’s observation that “Jonathan, the son of Saul,

⁶¹ 1 Samuel 18.1. Biblia Sacra Latina ex Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1970): “anima Jonathae conglutinata est animae David, et dilexit eum Jonathas quasi animam suam.” All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. English translations are mine.

⁶² 1 Samuel 18.4: “Nam exspoliavit se Jonathas tunica, qua erat indutus, et dedit eam David, et reliqua vestimenta sua usque ad gladium et arcum suum, et usque ad balteum.” Culbertson, who rightly interprets the covenant as intended to be eternal, points out that “this is the only time in the Bible that a pact of intimate loyalty is made between same-sex friends” (New Adam 83).

⁶³ Culbertson, New Adam 84. This idea that true friendship involves making unequals equal is found in both Aristotle’s and Cicero’s treatises. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, states: “when people love one another according to their worth, even those who are of unequal condition can be friends because they are made equal in this way [dum se invicem amant secundum suam dignitatem, etiam illi qui sunt inaequalis condicionis poterunt esse amici, quia per hoc aequabuntur]” (Sententia Libri Ethicorum 1159a33.102-04). Trans. Litzinger 743. Cicero echoes this in De Amicitia XIX.69: “it is of the utmost importance in friendship that superior and inferior should stand on an equality [maximum est in amicitia superiorem parem esse inferiori].”

loved David intensely.”⁶⁴ and the repetition of his earlier remark that “he [Jonathan] loved him [David] as his own soul.” That David felt the same about Jonathan is well illustrated in his lament: “I grieve over you, my brother, Jonathan, very graceful and lovable, surpassing the love of women.”⁶⁵ The relationship between Jonathan and David, therefore, offers a vivid example of an intimate bond between two men that was imbued with an extraordinary intensity. Peter Abelard’s poem, “Dolorum solacium,” which takes as its subject David’s lament for Jonathan, offers a medieval interpretation of the biblical text that situates the friendship securely within classical and medieval views of intimate male relationships:

Jonathan, more than a brother to me,

One in spirit with me,

What sins, what crimes

Have sundered our hearts?

.....

For you, my Jonathan,

I must weep more than for all the others.

Mixed in all my joys

⁶⁴1 Samuel 19.1: “Jonathas filius Saul diligebat David valde.” Culbertson suggests the following is a more accurate translation from the Hebrew: “David made Jonathan’s eyes light up so that Jonathan’s heart melted” (New Adam 85).

⁶⁵2 Samuel 1.26: “Doleo super te, frater mi Jonatha decore nimis, et amabilis super amorem mulierum.” The following line, “Sicut mater unicum amat filium suum, ita ego te diligebam [just as a mother loves her only son, so I loved you],” does not necessarily de-eroticize the relationship but rather, I would suggest, emphasizes the extremely intimate and exclusive nature of this same-sex bond.

There will always be a tear for you.

.....

Stabbed like you.

I should have died happily.

For love can do nothing

Greater than this.

And to outlive you

Is to die at every moment:

Half a soul is not

Enough for life.⁶⁶

The English word “hearts” does not full convey the sense of *viscera* (flesh: internal organs). Thus, Abelard suggests that the innermost parts of Jonathan’s and David’s bodies were joined together before Jonathan’s death separated them. I concur with Boswell’s observation that Abelard, despite his “heterosexual interests ... explored with great sensitivity and feeling the nature of the love between two men.”⁶⁷ What is most important for my survey is that both the biblical version and Abelard’s rendition clearly present the relationship between Jonathan and David as one of intense affection and

⁶⁶Peter Abelard, “David’s Lament for Jonathan [Dolorum solacium].” Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship, trans. Thomas Stehling (New York: Garland, 1984) 45-48, 61-64, 73-80: “Plus fratre mihi, Ionatha, / in una mecum anima, / quae peccate, quae scelera, / nostra sciderunt viscera! / ... / Tu mihi, mi Ionatha, / flendus super omnia, / inter cuncta gaudia / perpes erit lacrima. / ... / vel confossus pariter / morerer feliciter, / cum, quid amor faciat, / maius hoc non habeat, / et me post te vivere / mori sit assidue, / nec ad vitam anima / satis sit dimidia.”

⁶⁷Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 238.

intimacy, a union founded on mutual love, whether or not it is informed by sexual acts.

Another medieval work which highlights male homosocial intimacy in Antiquity is Walter of Châtillon's twelfth-century epic, *The Alexandreis*. The narrator describes the relationship between two Greek soldiers, Nicanor and Symachus: "Love bound them both / with equal force, as did the work of war."⁶⁸ Commensurate with the classical concept of intimate friends sharing one soul, these two men are described as "a pair / of comrades linked in body and soul."⁶⁹ The intensity of this male-male bond is poignantly expressed in the following narration of their deaths, which occur at the same moment:

Thus undivided.

Their youth lay plaited by a spear, nor did

their endless love recede even in death.

They passed amidst their kisses and embrace,

each dying doubly in his friend's demise.⁷⁰

Cicero's theory of ideal friendship was undoubtedly influenced by his lifelong association with Scipio Africanus. He reflects back on the relationship he had with his

⁶⁸Walter of Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, ed. Marvin L. Colker (Padua: Antenore, 1978) 80-81: "par militiae labor ambos / Parque ligabat amor." All English translations are taken from *The Alexandreis of Walter of Châtillon. A Twelfth-Century Epic*, trans. David Townsend (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996). I would like to thank Scott Westrem for drawing my attention to this text.

⁶⁹Walter of Châtillon, *Alexandreis* 90: "Corporis atque animi socia paritate ferebant."

⁷⁰Walter of Châtillon, *Alexandreis* 142-46: "sic indiuisa iuuentus / Cuspide nexa iacet, sed nec diuturnus in ipsa / Morte resedit amor, amplexus inter et inter / Oscula decedit, moriensque sua sociique / Morte perit duplici."

younger friend: "such is my enjoyment in the recollection of our friendship that I feel as if my life had been happy because it was spent with Scipio, with whom I shared my public and private cares; lived under the same roof at home." They both took part in the same military campaigns and were compatible in all of life's pursuits.⁷¹ Cicero speaks of the love each had for the other and that their intimate association with one another fueled their mutual affection.⁷² Although not formalized by a document, their friendship was, nevertheless, a sort of same-sex union -- broken only by Scipio's untimely death. Towards the end of De Amicitia, Cicero offers a moving tribute to his friend: "If my recollection and memory of these things [i.e. the life they shared] had died with him, I could not now by any means endure the loss of a man so very near and dear to me."⁷³

A much shorter, but equally intense youthful friendship is recorded by Augustine. Although Augustine, writing about it many years later in his Confessions, claims it was not a *true* friendship because he and his friend were not bound by the love of God, it was, however, apparently a bond characterized by extreme intimacy and

⁷¹Cicero, De Amicitia IV.15: "Sed tamen recordatione nostrae amicitiae sic fruor, ut beate vixisse videar, quia cum Scipione vixerim, quocum mihi coniuncta cura de publica re et de privata fuit, quocum et domus fuit et militia communis et, id in quo omnis vis est amicitiae, voluntatum studiorum sententiarum summa consensio."

⁷²Cicero, De Amicitia IX.30: "sed ego admiratione quadam virtutis eius, ille vicissim opinione fortasse non nulla quam de meis moribus habebat, me dilexit: auxit benevolentiam consuetudo." Although I think "close association" is an accurate translation of what Cicero means, it is interesting to note that *consuetudo* can also refer to an intimate relationship between lovers. Thus one can identify a parallel in Roman culture between erotic and merely "close," presumably platonic, relations.

⁷³Cicero, De Amicitia XXVII.104: "Quarum rerum recordatio et memoria si una cum illo occidisset, desiderium coniunctissimi atque amantissimi viri ferre nullo modo possem."

affection.⁷⁴ This is clearly evident in Augustine's recollection of the grief he experienced at his friend's early death: "At this sorrow my heart was utterly darkened, and whatever I looked upon was death.... Mine eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not granted them; and I hated all places because he was not in them."⁷⁵ He goes on to reveal: "I was astonished that other mortals lived, since *he whom I loved*, as if he would never die, was dead; and I wondered still more that I, who was to him a second self, could live when he was dead."⁷⁶ While this was not, perhaps, "Christian" love, it was, love nevertheless.⁷⁷ That Augustine was so intimate with his "second self" that he wonders how he can live without him also attests to the intensity of this same-sex bond. He underscores the extreme closeness of this union by drawing on classical tradition: "Well did one say of his friend, 'thou half of my soul,' for I felt that my soul and his

⁷⁴For a good overview of Augustine's thoughts on friendship as expressed in various writings, see White 185-217.

⁷⁵Augustine, Confessions IV.4.9: "Quo dolore contenebratum est cor meum, et quidquid aspiciebam mors erat ... expetebant eum undique oculi mei, et non dabatur, et oderam omnia, quod non haberent eum." I am drawing on Vernon J. Bourke's English translation here and for all subsequent quotations from the Confessions.

⁷⁶Augustine, Confessions IV.6.11: "mirabar enim ceteros morales vivere, quia ille, quem quasi non moriturum *dilexeram*, mortuus erat, et me magis, quia ille alter eram, vivere illo mortuo mirabar." Emphasis added.

⁷⁷Boswell suggests that this friendship did involve sexual relations, citing Augustine's self-condemnation for his conduct in earlier friendships: "Thus I contaminated the spring of friendship with the dirt of lust and darkened its brightness with the blackness of desire [Venam igitur amicitiae coinquinabam sordibus concupiscentiae, candoremque eius obnubilabam de tartaro libidinis]" (qtd. in Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 135). Carolinne White disagrees with Boswell, claiming that there is no direct evidence that it was a homosexual relation (255n.3).

soul were but one soul in two bodies: and, consequently, my life was a horror to me, because I would not live in half.”⁷⁸ Although James O’Donnell rightly notes the classical origin of Augustine’s statement, he is, I believe, not justified in dismissing it as merely “classical sentimentalism” which even at the time of writing Augustine would not have felt.⁷⁹ Augustine’s own words place him firmly within classical and (later) medieval views of intimate friendship. He describes the relations he had with other friends: “to discourse and jest with them; to indulge in an interchange of kindnesses ... these and similar expressions, emanating from the hearts of those who loved and were beloved in return, by the countenance, the tongue, the eyes, and a thousand pleasing moments, were so much fuel to melt our souls together, and out of many to make but one.”⁸⁰ This was, therefore, the milieu in which Augustine lived at that time, and it is in this world of male-male intimacy that he experienced the love and loss of a dear friend.

There are additional records of intimate male friendship among Christians in the early Middle Ages. One of the best documented relationships is that which took place in the mid-fourth century between Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil, Archbishop of Caesarea, who as young men lived together. It is, however, Gregory who is most

⁷⁸Augustine, Confessions IV.6.11: “bene quidam dixit de amico suo, ‘dimidium animae suae’, nam ego sensi animam meam et animam illius unam fuisse animam in duobus corporibus, et ideo mihi horrore erat vita, quia nolebam dimidius vivere.”

⁷⁹O’Donnell, vol.2, 227. He cites Ode 3 from Horace’s Carmina as the source of Augustine’s quotation.

⁸⁰Augustine, Confessions IV.8.13: “conloqui et conridere et vicissim benivole obsequi ... his atque huius modi signis a corde amantium et redamantium procedentibus per os, per linguam, per oculos et mille motus gratissimos, quasi fomitibus conflare animos et ex pluribus unum facere.”

effusive in expressing his affection. In one letter, after Basil leaves Gregory to assume his position as bishop of Caesarea, Gregory writes: "I would rather breathe you than the air, and only live while I am with you, either actually in your presence, or virtually by your likeness in your absence."⁸¹ Even after Basil's death, Gregory hopes they will remain bonded, thus, echoing the classical (and subsequently medieval) idea that the souls of two intimate friends can be joined together.⁸² At roughly the same time, Paulinus of Nola expresses his love for Ausonius:

No matter how far I am separated from you in the world,
 You will be neither distant from me nor far from my eyes:
 I will hold you, intermingled in my very sinews.
 I will see you in my heart and with a loving spirit embrace you
 You will be with me everywhere.⁸³

I agree with Boswell who maintains that "[t]heir friendship can scarcely be called

⁸¹Gregory of Nazianzus, Epistle VI, Epistolae, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series Graeca, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 37 (Paris, 1857): "Equidem ipse te magis quam aerem spiro, idque solum vivo, quod tecum sum, vel coram, vel absens per animi simulacrum." English translation is taken from A Selection from the Letters of Saint Gregory Nazianzen, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 7, 2nd series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961). See Culbertson, "Men and Christian Friendship," 157-58 for a brief discussion of this friendship. The relationship is discussed much more fully in White; see 61-84. In addition, she documents both Basil's and Gregory's views of friendship.

⁸²Epistle LIII: "Ubique enim nos inter nos conjunctos esse cupio." I have paraphrased the English translation in the Schaff and Wace edition.

⁸³"Ego te per omne" 4-8: "discernar orbe quamlibet, / nec orbe longe nec remotum lumine / tenebo fibris insitum, / mente conplectar pia / ubique praesentem mihi." Qtd. in Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship 5. English translation is taken from Stehling.

anything but passionate ... whether or not physical eroticism was involved."⁸⁴ The poetic conceit used by the author whereby he embraces the image of his beloved friend does not lessen the emotive intensity being expressed. Paulinus envisions intimate contact with Ausonius even if it only occurs in his mind.

Despite the fact that close associations between monks were discouraged, many close friendships developed throughout the centuries.⁸⁵ I will take Aelred of Rievaulx as an example since he speaks quite openly about one particular friendship. The nature of Aelred of Rievaulx's same-sex friendships has been the subject of much scholarly speculation. Brian McGuire admits that although Aelred struggled with homoerotic desire in his early years at the monastery, he nevertheless "maintained the traditional view of medieval theology that sexual contact among men is morally more reprehensible than between men and women."⁸⁶ It is not important for my purposes to prove whether or not Aelred had sexual relations with his intimate friends. What is

⁸⁴Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 133.

⁸⁵A very thorough study of this subject can be found in Brian Patrick McGuire, Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience 350-1250 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988). See also Adele Fiske, Friends and Friendship in the Monastic Tradition and chapter 8 of Boswell's Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality.

⁸⁶McGuire, Friendship and Community 305-06, 303. McGuire further points out that even after Aelred controlled his urges to masturbate, he still fantasized about erotic relations with men. McGuire offers a fine, sensitive discussion of Aelred, both his private life and his writings on friendship, in Friendship and Community 296-338 and Brother and Lover: Aelred of Rievaulx 39-67. Mark Williams explores the subject of Aelred's sexuality in the appendix of his English edition of Aelred's Spiritual Friendship. See also Boswell's brief discussion in Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 221-26.

significant, however, is that Aelred apparently experienced the perfect friendship he sets forth in his treatise. Near the end of De Spiritali Amicitia, Aelred describes an intimate relation with an anonymous monk. That this “spiritual” friendship also included earthly emotion and affection is, I believe, clearly evident from the following:

[L]ove increased between us, our affection grew warmer, and our charity was strengthened until it got to the point that there was in us *‘one heart and one mind, agreement in likes and dislikes,’* and this love was free of fear, ignorant of offense, utterly lacking in suspicion.... Between us there was nothing faked, there was no simulation, no disgraceful fawning ... but we were open and aboveboard in everything. After a fashion, I considered my own heart to be his, and his to be mine, and he himself felt likewise.⁸⁷

What is particularly interesting about this passage is that Aelred provides the reader with a vivid picture of how an intimate relationship develops between two men: he plots out the gradual building of mutual trust and congeniality, and the concomitant increase in love. Aelred goes on to express a rather quotidian view of the life of a same-sex couple: “when I was tired with labors his loving heart received me, and his counsel refreshed me when I was sunk in sadness and lamentation.... When I was stirred up he

⁸⁷ Aelred, De Spiritali Amicitia III.124-25: “Ita inter nos amor creuit, concaluit affectus, caritas roborabatur, donec ad id uentum est, ut esset nobis *cor unum et anima una, idem uelle et idem nolle*, essetque hic amor timoris uacuuus, offensionis nescius, suspicione carens Nihil inter nos simulatum, fucatum nihil, nihil inhoneste blandum ... sed omnia nuda et aperta: qui meum pectus quodammodo suum putarem, et eius meum, ipseque similiter” (emphasis in original). Williams identifies the quoted passage as coming from Acts 4:32.

set me at ease, and when I became angry he calmed me.”⁸⁸ Although Aelred describes how such brotherly love ascends to divine love, and thus offers his own experience as an illustration of that ideal form of friendship which is the subject of his treatise, it is also important not to forget that he is, after all, describing a relationship that was lived in a world inhabited by imperfect people. His own lifelong struggle with his homoerotic urges suggests that “spiritual friendship” could in fact be infused with eroticism.

In all of the above literary illustrations -- whether it is of Achilles lying face-down in the dust, tearing at his hair in grief, or Augustine hating the world because his beloved friend is no longer in it, or Paulinus drawing passionate mental images of his absent friend -- tremendous love and affection between friends are expressed. That these relationships were not just passing fancies is evident in the covenant made by Jonathan and David, or the long life Cicero spent with Scipio Africanus, both in the public and private spheres, or the quiet, intimate life Aelred shared with his companion. Were these friendships informed by sexual or erotic relations? Boswell, speaking about early medieval love poetry such as that written by Paulinus of Nola to Ausonius, maintains that “the authors of such sentiments were expressing, at the very least, gay sensibilities, since the primary focus of their love relationships was confined to their own gender, and since the passion animating the friendships far exceeds what would be considered ‘normal’ between heterosexual friends in societies which distinguish between

⁸⁸Aelred, *De Spiritali Amicitia* III.126-27: “cuius amoris sinus excipiebat laboribus fatigatum, cuius consilium recreabat tristitia uel moerore demersum. Ipse commotum pacificabat; ipse leniebat iratum.”

homosexual and heterosexual feelings.”⁸⁹ I suggest that his observation can be applied to all of the examples I have cited. What these literary illustrations offer us in the way of historicizing same-sex relations is that they allow us to observe intense affection between men who did not necessarily define themselves according to the gender of the person whom they loved. That such intimate feelings could be expressed erotically is certainly within the realm of possibility. It is in the context of this long tradition of male friendship and intimacy that I turn now to an examination of same-sex relationships in two chivalric romances.

III. Surpassing the Love of Women: Male Same-Sex Unions in Amys and Amylion and the Prose Lancelot

Vern Bullough notes that in the later Middle Ages, young knights often developed close relations with one another: “[u]sually, the young noble youth was incorporated into a group of friends who were taught to love one another as brothers ... and whose every waking moment was spent in each other’s company.” He goes on to point out that these young men often stayed together for many years until at around the age of 30 they were supposed to marry. But, since there were not always eligible women available, some men continued their close friendships together and thus, “it is quite possible that they turned to each other for friendship, encouragement, and even sexual

⁸⁹Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 134.

relief."⁹⁰ Without questioning the accuracy of Bullough's observation and its relevance for a study of same-sex relations in chivalric romances, I want, nevertheless, to suggest that his underlying presumption that knights chose one another as intimate companions out of necessity rather than desire is not always the situation in literature.

In both Amys and Amylion and the Prose Lancelot, women are available, yet these texts privilege the relationships between the male protagonists, highlighting the mutual love and devotion of the knights. And, in both instances, an eternal bond is suggested -- a bond not between a man and his wife/lover but rather between two men.

The story of the friendship between Amys and Amylion was popular in the Middle Ages. Besides the early fourteenth-century English text which I am examining there were Latin, French, and Anglo-Norman versions.⁹¹ What I find particularly interesting about the story is that it offers a dramatization of many of the ideals set forth in the classical and medieval treatises on perfect friendship. William Calin makes an insightful observation on the friendship depicted in this romance: "It is as if the themes and motifs appropriate to *fin' amor* in romance, especially idyllic romance, have been subverted in order to proclaim, against the courtly, secular love of man and woman, a heroic, Christian love between man and man."⁹² I would, however, suggest that the tale,

⁹⁰Vern L. Bullough, Sexual Variance in Society and History (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976) 399-400.

⁹¹See the introduction in Amys and Amylion, ed. François Le Saux (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1993). Le Saux also provides summaries of the Latin, French, and Anglo-Norman versions in the appendix. See also the introduction in Amis and Amiloun, ed. MacEdward Leach, EETS 203 (London: Oxford UP, 1937).

⁹²Calin 485.

in presenting a vivid account of a same-sex union founded on love which is not only “spiritual” but also “earthly,” does not actually subvert the heteronormative impulse of courtly romances but, rather, eclipses it.

Even as children, Amys and Amylion were “Both curteys, hende and guode,” thus qualifying them for perfect friendship in the classical tradition.⁹³ The true love that the children feel for each other is reaffirmed when they reach adult age. Amylion, in reminding Amys of their earlier pledge of “truth,” restates it:

Brother, we are trowth-plyght,
Both in word and dede.
Ffro this dai forward ever moo.
Nother faile other, for well ne woo.
To helpe other at nede.
Brother, be now trew to me.
And y schall be as trew to the.
As wys God me spede! (24.5-12)⁹⁴

⁹³ Amys and Amylion, ed. Françoise Le Saux (Exeter: U of Exeter P. 1993) 5.3. All quotations are taken from this edition and subsequent citations will be given in the text by stanza and line number. I follow the spelling of the protagonists’ names as presented in Le Saux’s edition.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the chivalric ideal of “truth” and its expression in Amys and Amylion, see Dean R. Baldwin, “Amis and Amiloun: The Testing of Treuþe,” Papers on Language and Literature 16 (1980): 353-65. Baldwin does not examine the actual bond of friendship between the two protagonists, but rather is concerned with the moral world of the romance. He concludes that it “tests treuþe on several levels. It shows the value of unswerving loyalty to a sworn oath while insisting that adherence to the spirit of the vow is more important than mere fidelity to the letter. More importantly, it tests the virtue of treuþe itself, showing it to be an imperfect substitute for faith and

Amylion's words are spoken on the occasion of his departure from Amys. He is "ferly woo" to leave his dear companion, one who was always in his thoughts (20.1-3). And, Amys, "for thought and kare, / For mornyng and sekyng sare, / Allmost swonned" (21.4-6). Since the two are like two halves of one soul, very similar both in appearance and character, each feels incomplete without the other. Despite the fact that Amys and Amylion are virtually identical and thus Amylion can pretend to be Amys in the fight against the steward, the two men are, nevertheless, two individuals. Amylion warns Amys of the "fals steward" and urges his friend to be on his guard (25.11). Amys evidently does not have the same intuitive skills as Amylion because he does, in fact, fall prey to the steward's scheme. Observing the uncanny similarity -- yet individuality -- of the "brothers" opens the possibilities for studying the eroticism or passion underlying the relationship between two men who are not related by birth.

Later, when Amys is challenged by the treacherous steward, Amylion, "In his bedde lay anyght, / A dreame he mette anon, / Him thought he saw sire Amys with syght" (83.2-4). Amylion's reaction confirms that the image of Amys which appears to him is quite vivid: "Ffor certes ... with som wrong, / My brother ys in perell strong" (84.7-8). He then rushes up immediately to go to the aid of his companion. The two are so intimately bound to one another that not only does Amylion know when Amys is in danger, but there is nothing one friend will not do for the other: Amylion takes Amys's place in the fight with the steward, and later, Amys sacrifices his own children to cure Amylion of leprosy. While the text does not dwell on physical expressions of the love

grace, and requiring the tempering of 'kinde'" (365).

that binds the two friends, there are hints of what I would refer to as “passionate affection.” For instance, when the two friends meet by chance as Amylion, responding to his dream, is heading for Amys’s residence, they instantly dismount “And kiste togeder both two” (87.9). That this is not a passionless kiss of peace but rather an emotional reunion between two friends in love with each other is evident from Amylion’s concern over his friend’s “sory chere,” and Amys’s breathless pouring out his troubles to Amylion, sparing no intimate detail.

The same-sex friendship is all the more exceptional when contrasted with the relationship each of the male protagonists has with his wife. Amys’s response to Belesaunt’s amorous advances is ambivalent at best. Before responding to her request that he pledge her his “truth,” he thinks to himself: “Yt is better to graunt here asking / Then thus my lyfe to spylle” (53.2-3). Unlike a jubilant courtly lover who effusively swears service to his lady, Amys merely says: “as y am trewe knyght, / I schall graunt the thi wyll” (53.11-12). The narrator does not elaborate on their exchange of oaths, but simply states that “plyght here trowthes both twoo” (54.8). What a contrast with the heartfelt words spoken between Amys and Amylion as they pledged their “truth” to one another! While Belesaunt is portrayed far more positively than Amylion’s wife in that she does not hinder Amys from bringing Amylion into the house in his leperous condition and even helps take care of him, the text, nevertheless, expends few lines on the relationship between Amys and Belesaunt. Amylion’s wife, on the other hand, fails to understand the intimate friendship between Amys and Amylion. When her husband explains what he did for Amys, she scolds him for killing the steward. The narrator is

obviously on the side of Amylion, commenting on the wife's cruelty: "So wikked and schrewed was his wiffe. / Sche brake his herte withoute knyffe. / With wordes hard and kene" (127.1-3).⁹⁵

The text's privileging of the male-male relationship is further exemplified in the exchange between Amys and the steward which triggers the main events of the story. When the steward offers Amys his friendship, Amys responds by reaffirming his loyalty and devotion to Amylion: "Ffor onys y plight trouth to that hend. / Where in lond that y wend. / Y schall be to him trewe" (31.4-6). Evidently a knight can have only one such bond in his life, for Amys does not consider entering into a parallel friendship with the steward. In language that is strikingly similar to that found in oaths exchanged between courtly lovers, Amys swears that he "schall never. be nyght ne day. / Chonge him [Amylion] for no newe" (31.11-12).⁹⁶ Thus, the union between Amys and Amylion is not only "monogamous" but also permanent.

Perhaps the most powerful depiction of the extraordinary love between Amys and Amylion occurs towards the end of the romance, when Amys takes in his sickly friend. Considering the behavior of Amylion's wife -- banishing him from his own table

⁹⁵While the text seems to set homosocial relations against heteronormative marriage, where male-male intimacy, in effect, depends on an implicit misogyny, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, heterosexual love motivates homosocial intimacy. I will explore this phenomenon in chapter 4.

⁹⁶Compare the speech of the royal tersel in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* 428-34.

and reducing him to a beggar -- Amys's compassion is remarkable indeed.⁹⁷ As a further attestation to the bond between the friends, Amys, without hesitation, slays his children according to the directions he receives in the dream and anoints Amylion with their blood.⁹⁸ Although the text does not offer explicit details of the scene, the two friends are alone as Amys bathes Amylion's naked body in blood and then dresses him. This scene is, I would suggest, eroticized in that Amys is not performing this act as a professional physician but rather someone who evidently loves his "patient" more than his own children. Yet, because the children miraculously come to life again, the poem does not set male-male intimacy against Christian procreation, thus suggesting that the relationship between Amys and Amylion is not condemned but rather sanctioned by God.

The romance ends happily for the same-sex relationship but offers little consolation for heterosexual unions. Amys aids Amylion in taking revenge on Amylion's wife, and even Amys's good wife disappears from the final stanzas. Amys and Amylion return home from their adventure and "Togeder lad thei here lyfe" (200.11). Their bond on earth is not broken even when they die. They are laid in one grave and we are told that they enjoy eternal bliss together. Thus, the mutual love of Amys and Amylion, like that of David and Jonathan, truly surpasses the love of women.

⁹⁷In all fairness to Amylion's wife, Le Saux points out that she follows standard medieval procedure for dealing with someone afflicted with leprosy (77n.129-31). It is therefore all the more remarkable that Amys would welcome a leper.

⁹⁸Compare the directions given to Moses for curing leprosy; the leper is first sprinkled with the blood of a bird, and then eight days later the priest places the blood of a sacrificed male lamb on various parts of the leper's body. See Leviticus 14.1-8, 10-15.

Although the love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere holds a prominent position in Arthurian romance, in the French Prose Lancelot a great deal of attention is also given to another amorous relationship -- the one between Lancelot and Galehot. In fact, as Reginald Hyatte aptly observes, "The Prose Lancelot provides the title character with a compliment to Queen Guinevere's love in the perfect ... chivalric friendship of *compagnonnage* [with Galehot] which shares many extreme affective characteristics with romance representations of erotic love."⁹⁹ While I agree with Hyatte that this male-male friendship is, perhaps, offered as a parallel to heterosexual *fine amor*, I disagree with his view that the bond between Galehot and Lancelot conforms more to Guinevere and Lancelot's relationship than to the Aristotelian-Ciceronian tradition of perfect friendship.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere, the union between Lancelot and Galehot is presented as one destined to be permanent. In addition, the two male characters demonstrate mutual love and intimacy -- two key components of true friendship in the classical tradition. However, my intention is not to insist on how perfectly this particular male union conforms to ideal friendship but rather to explore

⁹⁹Hyatte 90.

¹⁰⁰See Hyatte 109-21 for a reading of the romance against Aristotelian-Ciceronian tradition. Hyatte maintains that "[Galehot's] benevolence, beneficence, disinterestedness, sacrifices, and affection for Lancelot are *extreme*, and, therefore, they transgress the ethical limits of the classical code of *amicitia*" (106, emphasis in original). This is, perhaps, a valid observation if one interprets the classical code of *amicitia* solely from the treatises. However, "actual" examples of same-sex relationships from classical and medieval texts often reveal excessive behavior or feelings on the part of one or both friends; yet, these relationships, while not illustrating ideal restraint, nevertheless conform to the basic principles of perfect friendship as outlined by Aristotle and Cicero.

how the Prose Lancelot reveals the passion and potential eroticism that underlie classical and medieval concepts of same-sex friendship.

That Galehot initiates and sets the tone of his relationship with Lancelot cannot be denied. The night before he offers his friendship to Lancelot, Galehot closely observes his future friend as he sleeps: “la nuit dormi li cheualiers moult durement & toute nuit se plaingnoit en son dormant & galahos looit bien car il ne dormoit gaires ains pensa toute nuit a retenir le cheualier [That night ... (Lancelot) slept heavily, and ever he made moan in his sleep, and Galehot, that scarce slept, heard him well and thought all the night through on how he might keep him]” (III, 247, 13-15).¹⁰¹ The next morning, Galehot reveals his feelings for Lancelot: “sachies que vous porres bien auoir compaignie de plus riche homme que ie ne sui. Mais vous ne laures iamaiz a homme qui tant vous aint [wit ye well that ye can have the company of a more powerful man than I, but ye will never have that of a man that loveth you so well]” (III, 247, 21-23). While Lancelot does not respond in kind, he does, nevertheless, accept Galehot’s offer of friendship. Furthermore, I would suggest that Galehot’s love is the determining factor in this budding relationship because, if one assumes Galehot is honest in admitting that he is not exceptionally powerful, then the only thing he is qualified to offer, and which Lancelot apparently feels is worthy of accepting, is his professed love for Lancelot. That this relationship is to be a “monogamous” one is evident from Galehot’s request to Lancelot, and Lancelot’s subsequent agreement, not to give his “company” to another.

¹⁰¹All quotations are taken from Sommer’s edition of Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac and will be cited in the text by volume, page, and line number. All English translations are taken from Paton’s edition.

The narrator informs us that a “covenant” between Lancelot and Galehot has taken place, and as further indication that they are united in a formal bond. Galehot asks Lancelot to wear his arms “por commencement de compaignie [for the beginning of our friendship]” (III, 248, 6-7). Lancelot also refers to their “covenant.” When Galehot is about to follow Lancelot’s wishes and pretend to take Arthur (after Lancelot, in Galehot’s armor, defeats Arthur’s men), Lancelot reminds Galehot of the solemn union between them: “couent me tenes [keep your covenant with me]” (III, 248, 41). While, admittedly, Lancelot does not illustrate the same selflessness towards Galehot as Galehot does to him, he does, nevertheless, clearly love and appreciate his friend:

Et quant li boins cheualiers en uoit aler galahot & faire si grant meschief
pour lui si quide bien & dist que nus si boins amis ne si veritable
compaignon not il onques mais si en a si grant pitie que *il en souspire del
cuer aual & pleure des iex de la teste sous le hiaume* & dist entre ses
dens biax sire diex qui porra ce deseruir (III, 249, 7-11, emphasis mine)
[When the good knight [Lancelot] saw Galehot go to do himself such
great mischief for his sake, he thought and said that never had he had so
good a friend and so true a comrade, and he felt so great pity for him that
he sighed from the depths of his heart and wept beneath his helmet and
he said between his teeth, ‘Fair Lord God, who can recompense this?']

Central to classical and medieval concepts of perfect friendship is that a friend is like a second self. Thus, one wishes to please a friend in the same manner that one wishes to please oneself. This is clearly expressed in the relationship between Galehot

and Lancelot, but unlike the treatises, which stress the importance of the doer, here the focus is on how performing deeds for a friend offers pleasure to *both* friends. Galehot obviously enjoys fulfilling his friend's wishes and Lancelot clearly finds pleasure in being the recipient of Galehot's good gestures (not least of which is his liaison with Guinevere, which Galehot arranges). That Lancelot is emotionally involved with Galehot and not merely taking advantage of Galehot's love is demonstrated in the above passage. However, it is also possible to read Lancelot as "doer" in that he permits Galehot to perform deeds which bring pleasure to both of them, and in this role he is, in effect, expressing his love for his friend in accord with classical tradition.

Unlike the rather informal arrangement between Guinevere and Lancelot -- she is, after all, married to Arthur -- the union linking Galehot and Lancelot is presented as a form of same-sex marriage. In a rather odd verbal exchange, Galehot asks Guinevere, his "rival," for permission to have Lancelot's company forever. She grants it formally, "ie vous doing cest cheualier a tous iors [I give you this knight forever]," but with this stipulation: "sauf ce que ie i aie eu auant [save that I have him afore ye]" (III, 264, 4-5). I would suggest that implied in Guinevere's remark is her acknowledgement of the parallel nature of the two relationships. Galehot and Lancelot's union is, in a sense, "consummated" when Galehot later goes to Lancelot "& se couchent ambedoi en j lit & parolent toute nuit de ce dont lor cuer sont moult a aise [and they rested that night in one bed, and they talked all the night long of that whereof their hearts had full great ease]" (III, 264, 34-36). While the text offers no *explicit* evidence of physical contact taking place between the two men, the scene is, nevertheless, erotically charged in that the

friends are committed to one another and have on several occasions professed their mutual love. We are told that their all-night "talk" brings their hearts "full great ease." That the narrator makes the point of indicating that they rest in one bed -- a fact that might have been omitted if this were the usual manner for platonic friends to spend the night -- suggests that this is an occasion of eroticized male bonding.¹⁰² In addition, although the text does not elaborate on the living arrangement of the two friends, it appears that for a while at least, they do spend much of their time together, an arrangement that, it will be recalled, both Aristotle and Cicero recommend. Granted, they do not suggest that friends share one bed, and they do not endorse sexual relations between men; however, the intimacy generated by friends remaining in one another's physical presence, which both writers clearly endorse, can certainly be realized in such a sleeping arrangement.

The intense mutual love that Galehot and Lancelot have for each other is further illustrated in a verbal exchange initiated by Galehot's belief that they are about to be separated. Galehot states how he has given himself "wholly, body and soul, to loving" Lancelot.¹⁰³ And Lancelot acknowledges that he loves Galehot "more than all other men in the world."¹⁰⁴ Galehot reveals his dependency on Lancelot, telling Arthur that he

¹⁰²I highlight "eroticized" here because I am not suggesting that chivalric male bonds, while generally informed by love or strong emotional feelings, are always erotically charged.

¹⁰³Prose Lancelot III, 427, 24-25: "Que ferai iou qui tout ai mis en vous mon cuer et mon cors."

¹⁰⁴Prose Lancelot III, 427, 25-26: "Certes ... iou vous doi plus amer que tous lez hommes del monde. Et si fai iou."

cannot live without Lancelot and accuses him of trying to take "his life" away from him.¹⁰⁵ This idea that two friends are so closely entwined with one another that neither can live without the other is directly related to the classical concept that true friends are like one soul in two bodies. One measure of the intimacy between two friends is that one visualizes a future crisis that affects them both. Galehot reveals his premonition to Lancelot: "me fu il auis que iou auoie ij cuers en mon ventre et estoient si pareil ca paines pooit len connoistre lun de lautre. Et iou nesgardai leure que iou oi perdu lun [me seemed that I saw two hearts in my body, and they were so alike that one might scarce be known from the other. And even as I looked, I lost one]" (IV, 5, 14-16). Galehot's dream proves to be accurate and the two friends are forced to separate.

Galehot's self-inflicted death is caused by a form of lovesickness suffered by someone who loses his "other half."¹⁰⁶ It is not, however, merely the desire to obtain the aloof beloved that is at the root of Galehot's "sickness" but rather his refusal to live without the sharer of his soul. Galehot does not plunge into despair simply because Lancelot is not with him -- quite the contrary. We are told that "Galeholt sen confortast sil ne quidast que il fust mors certainement [he would have been consoled, if he had not thought that Lancelot was assuredly dead]" (IV, 155, 4-5). Although Galehot's death demonstrates the negative repercussions when a close union, such as suggested in the

¹⁰⁵Prose Lancelot III, 428, 38-39: "Ne si mait diex iou ne sa[u]roie viure sans lui si me tolries ma vie." Compare with Augustine's lament discussed in the previous section.

¹⁰⁶One finds a similar situation in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess, where the Black Knight suffers the loss of the lady with whom he was, in effect, joined; see especially 1289-95.

treatises on ideal friendship, becomes invested with too much emotion, it, nevertheless, also offers a positive illustration of an intimate and affectionate same-sex relationship.

The story of Galehot and Lancelot's friendship does not end with Galehot's death. Admittedly, while Galehot is alive Lancelot does not express his feelings for his companion in a manner that equals Galehot's effusive outpourings. However, that Lancelot does, indeed, love Galehot in "body and soul" is brilliantly revealed in his emotional outburst at Galehot's grave:

Et quant il voit chou si chiet a terre tour pasmes et iut grant piece sans
dire mot Et quant il est reuenus de pasmisons si dist ha diex quel doel
et quel damage & quel anui. Lors fiert lun poing sor lautre et esgratine
son visage si quil en fait le sanc saillir. Si se prent par ses cheueus et se
fiert del poing grans cops en mi le vis et pleure si durement que il ni a
celui qui nen ait pitie. (IV, 276, 39-42; 277, 1-3)

[When he saw this (i.e. the inscription), he fell to the earth in a swoon,
and he lay a long time without saying a word.... And when he was come
out of his swoon, he cried on high and said, 'Alas, what sorrow and what
loss!' Thereupon he beat one fist upon the other, and he tore his hair and
gave himself great buffets with his fists on his brow and on his breasts,
and he wept so sore that there was none there but had pity on him.]

Lancelot's behavior calls the image to mind of Achilles grieving the death of his beloved Patroclus. Lancelot even contemplates suicide, thus demonstrating the idea that in true friendship one cannot bear to live without his other half. What prevents him from

taking this action is the message he receives from the Lady of the Lake, informing him of her plan to have Galehot buried in his own tomb.¹⁰⁷ Thus, like partners in any other blessed union, Galehot and Lancelot will be united eternally.

The intimate and affectionate union between Galehot and Lancelot depicted in this romance is not really that extraordinary when one considers the long tradition of male friendship I have outlined in the previous section. What is remarkable, however, is that the Prose Lancelot offers such a vivid dramatization of a same-sex amorous relationship in a genre that generally reserves excessive displays of love for partners who are of the opposite sex. Nevertheless, a modern, heteronormatively-informed reading of the depiction of love in the Prose Lancelot would undoubtedly not focus on Lancelot and Galehot. On the other hand, medieval readers, whose view of same-sex friendship was presumably more informed by classical ideas of true love between men, might very well have cast their imagined gazes on the poem's illustrated scenarios of male-male intimacy.

Thus, my rather long exploration of the male homosocial tradition in chivalric literature ends with a romance which depicts same-sex love and devotion. None of the literary examples I have examined in this chapter openly portrays or even suggests sexual conduct between men. Nor am I concerned with uncovering such acts. However, all the chivalric texts I have studied present instances where men (readers, authors,

¹⁰⁷Prose Lancelot IV, 277, 25-29: "Elle vous mande que vous osten le cor Galehot de chaiens & len faites porter a la ioieuse garde et illueques soit mis en la tombe ou vous trouastes uostre non escrit. Et elle le v[eut] ensi pour chou quele se[t bien] que en celui meisme [lieu sera] vostres cors enterres."

characters) are face-to-face with other men (images, characters) in situations that are at times eroticized or, at the very least, emotionally charged. It is this *possibility* of same-sex attraction that, I believe, needs to be acknowledged when interpreting chivalric literature. These texts together produce a cultural discourse of homosocial intimacy and potential eroticism -- a discourse that is also operative in Troilus and Criseyde. In addition, the interrelationship between heterosexual and homosocial desire in the romances examined in this chapter is, as we shall see, more vividly dramatized in Chaucer's poem. I turn now to the "non-fictional" world of fourteenth-century France and England where the topic of presumed sexual behavior between men is clearly in the air.

Chapter 3

Sodomy in the Public Eye:

Discourses of Male Same-Sex Relations in the Fourteenth Century

Part One: Sodomy and Politics in the Early Fourteenth Century

While scholars are not in agreement regarding when “sodomy” acquired its current meaning -- the act of anal sex between men -- they do generally concur that the biblical citizens of Sodom were not guilty of indulging in this particular form of same-sex behavior. Derrick Bailey, referring to the men of Sodom wishing to “know” the visiting angels, observes that the Hebrew word, *y' dha*, is rarely used in the Old Testament to denote sexual activity, and when it does occur it generally refers to heterosexual intercourse.¹ John Boswell supports Bailey and offers as further evidence a passage from the New Testament where Jesus apparently relates the Sodom story to inhospitality.² Most recently, Mark Jordan expresses the view that the moral lesson of the Sodom story in Genesis 19 is about hospitality to strangers and not same-sex copulation.³ Jordan's thesis is that “‘sodomy’ is a medieval artifact,” a term that was

¹Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition (1955; Hamden, CT: Archon, 1975) 8. Bailey examines references to Sodom in canonical and apocryphal texts; see 9-28. He concludes that the idea that Sodom was destroyed because of “homosexual” practices “originated in a Palestinian Jewish reinterpretation of Gen. xix, inspired by antagonism to the Hellenistic way of life and its exponents” (27).

²Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 94. Boswell is referring to Matt. 10:14-15: “Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement, than for that city” (qtd. in Boswell 94).

³Mark D. Jordan, The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997) 30. Jordan goes on to trace the use of the Sodom story in both the Old and the New Testament as well as in writings of the early church fathers; see 30-44. For a rather brief survey of the concept of sodomy/homosexuality across the centuries, see Arthur N. Gilbert, “Conceptions of Homosexuality and Sodomy in Western History,” Journal of Homosexuality 6 (1980/81): 57-68.

“invented” during the high Middle Ages in that it united under one rubric “desires, dispositions, and acts, that had earlier been classified differently and separately,” and, in addition, imposed a judgement on those acts.⁴ Whether or not one agrees with Jordan’s argument that “sodomy” first took on its current meaning in the high Middle Ages, there is little doubt that by the fourteenth century accusations of “sodomy” referred to sexual acts between men and had become an effective political weapon to be used against one’s opponents.

While the discourses of same-sex relations I examine in the following discussion are all in some way informed by homophobia, I will argue that homophobia was in each instance politically motivated. In a society where strong homosocial attachments were common, an accusation of sodomy was a convenient weapon to hurl at one’s opponents. In addition, the historical documents I study offer valuable insight into how same-sex desire was depicted in the fourteenth century. I will first briefly examine how sodomy was used to defame those groups deemed enemies of the Roman church, followed by a look at two specific cases where a (French) king accuses a political enemy of committing acts of sodomy. I then turn to what is perhaps the most sensational series of trials of the fourteenth century, the prosecution of the Knights Templar. Among the major accusations leveled against the order were that indecent kisses were performed at the initiation ceremony and that permission was given to commit “sodomy.” Looking particularly at testimony recorded at the Poitiers trial, I argue that the diversity and

⁴Jordan 1. He begins his genealogy of medieval “sodomy” with a detailed discussion of Peter Damian’s Liber Gomorrhianus; see chapter 3.

vagueness of the witnesses' accounts, in effect, condemn the entire order. Moreover, I draw attention to how the narratives present same-sex activity as one-sided encounters between an "aggressor" and a "victim." I follow this rather broad survey with a discussion of the trial of Arnold of Verniolle, a sub-deacon and confessed sodomite, which took place in Pamiers, France in 1323. The testimonies at this trial present scenarios of same-sex behavior informed by acts of aggression but, unlike the nearly contemporary Templar trials, offer evidence that both participants derived pleasure from the encounters. I then turn to a study of the condemnation and attack on the intimate relationship between Edward II of England and his court favorite, Piers Gaveston. The discourse of same-sex desire found in the chronicles focuses on Edward's exclusive, immoderate love for his favorite -- a love that was viewed as dangerous because it antagonized the powerful nobles of England. The case of Edward II set a precedent for attacks on Richard II's intimate friends later in the century.

The, for the most part, politically-motivated discourses of male-male relations that I examine here are all in some way operative in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and are thus useful contexts against which to read the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus.

I. Sodomites: Heretics, Muslims, and Political Enemies

In his discussion of the rise of social intolerance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Boswell identifies a general trend throughout Europe which he describes as "a sedulous quest for intellectual and institutional uniformity and corporatism." The

Inquisition, as Boswell rightfully points out, was one manifestation of this movement.⁵

James Brundage also finds that in the late twelfth century, “[s]exual practices and preferences ... commenced to be taken as indicators of doctrinal orthodoxy: deviance from the dominant sexual preference was thought to manifest deviance from accepted doctrine.”⁶ By this logic, followed that groups such as the various “Manichean” sects which the orthodox church considered heretical must also be guilty of committing acts of sexual deviance. Boswell notes that “[i]t became a commonplace of official terminology to mention ‘traitors, heretics, and sodomites’ as if they constituted a single association of some sort.”⁷ An early linking of heresy and sodomy is made by Guibert of Nogent (c.1114) targeting heretics near Soissons:

They condemn marriage and propagation by intercourse. Clearly ... you may see men living with women without the name of husband and wife in such fashion that one man does not stay with one woman, each to each, but men are known to lie with men and women with women, for with them it is impious for men to go to women.⁸

⁵Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 270.

⁶James A. Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 313.

⁷Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 284. See Bailey 137-41 for a discussion of how the term “bougre” came to denote “heretic” and eventually “sodomite.”

⁸Guibert de Nogent, Autobiographie, ed. and trans. Edmond-René Labande (Paris: Société D’Éditions “Les Belles Lettres,” 1981) 430: “conjugia damnant, et fructificare coitibus. Et certe ... videas viros mulieribus cohabitare sine mariti conjugisque nomine, ita ut vir cum femina, singulus cum singula, non moretur, sed viri

While Guibert's charges of same-sex intercourse may be accurate, it is also possible that he is merely discrediting the sect because it rejects a basic tenet of the Roman church, namely, lawful procreation. Regarding similar accusations leveled against the Cathars, Vern Bullough suggests that "[s]ince the medieval people recognized the sexual nature of man, they undoubtedly used this aversion to procreation to ascribe to the Cathars every kind of nonprocreative sex." However, Bullough does not rule out the possibility that some members of the heretic sects actually engaged in deviant sexual acts, just as some orthodox (Roman) Christians undoubtedly did.⁹

Heretics were not the only ones accused of sodomy. Boswell observes that during the period of the crusades, Christian writers increasingly portrayed Muslims as engaging in deviant sexual acts. That this defamation was politically motivated is evident from a letter originally thought to have been written by Alexius I Comnenus of the Eastern Church, but now believed to have been composed (i.e. forged) in the west shortly before the first crusade: "They have degraded by sodomizing them men of every age and rank: boys, adolescents, young men, old men, nobles, servants, and, what is worse and more wicked, clerics and monks, and even -- alas and for shame! something which from the beginning of time has never been spoken of -- bishops! They have

cum viris, feminae cum feminis cubitare noscantur, nam viri apud eos in foeminam coitus nefas est." English translation is taken from Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent (1064? - c.1125), ed. John F. Benton (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 212.

⁹Vern L. Bullough, "Heresy, Witchcraft, and Sexuality," Journal of Homosexuality 1 (1974): 187, 184.

already killed one bishop with this nefarious sin.”¹⁰ While one should not doubt that sexual acts between men took place in Muslim society, and that, perhaps, Christian and Muslim men had both consensual and non-consensual sex together, nevertheless, the political invective of the above statement is clearly apparent. Because the list of alleged victims is so sweeping it would appear that no type of Christian male escaped sexual attack from a Muslim. Jacques de Vitry is even more venomous in his Historia Orientalis referring to Mohammad as “the enemy of nature ... [who] popularized the vice of sodomy among his people,” and painting a scathing portrait of Muslims: “[they] sexually abuse not only both genders but even animals.... Sunk, dead, and buried in the filth of obscene desire, pursuing like animals the lusts of the flesh, they can resist no

¹⁰Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 279-80: “Totius aetatis et ordinis viros, id est pueros, adolescentes, juvenes, senes, nobiles, servos, et, quod pejus et impudentius est, clericos et monachos, et heu pro dolor! et quod ab initio non dictum neque auditum est, episcopos Sodomitico peccato deludunt, et etiam unum episcopum sub hoc nefario peccato jam crepuerunt.” Guibert de Nogent, in Dei Gesta per Francos, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, vol. 127A (Turnholti: Brepols, 1996) 102, offers another version of this letter which is less sweeping in its list of Christian victims but, nevertheless, condemns the Muslims for their beast-like lust: “in masculinum, pecualitate transgressa, solutis humanitatum legibus itur. Unde, ut unius execranda et penitus intolerabili auribus maiestate flagitii illa, quae in mediocres et infimos defurebat, petulantia panderetur, dicit quendam eos abusione sodomitica interemisse episcopum [they became worse than animals, breaking all human laws by turning on men. Their lust overflowed to the point that the execrable and profoundly intolerable crime of sodomy, which they committed against men of middle or low station, they also committed against a certain bishop, killing him].” English translation is taken from Guibert de Nogent, The Deeds of God through the Franks: A Translation of Guibert de Nogent’s Gesta Dei per Francos, trans. Robert Levine (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997) 37. For an excellent discussion of Guibert’s text, see Steven F. Kruger, “Medieval Christian (Dis)identifications: Muslims and Jews in Guibert of Nogent,” New Literary History 28 (1997): 185-203.

vices but are miserably enslaved to and ruled by carnal passions.”¹¹ Although de Vitry is apparently using sodomy in its broader definition, including heterosexual anal intercourse as well as the sexual abuse of animals, nevertheless, since much of the anti-Muslim literature focuses on male-male intercourse, we can assume that most Christian readers of de Vitry’s book would probably understand “obscene desire” to mean, at least in part, sexual acts between men. Boswell insightfully observes that as a result of connecting Christian Europe’s most feared enemy with “minority sexual preferences,” antipathy of Christian sodomites increased in the popular mind.¹² Thus, I would suggest that it is not surprising that in the wake of the disastrous end of the crusading movement -- Christians having been beaten by the “sodomitical” Muslims-- we find two instances where European kings, apparently drawing on negative public opinion regarding deviant sexuality, attack their political opponents by leveling charges of sodomy against them.

¹¹Qtd. in Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 281: “Per hoc latenter vitium Sodomiticum hostis nature in populo suo introduxit. Unde ipsi ex maxima parte non solum in utroque sexu, sed etiam in brutis turpitudinem abusive operantes.... Unde more pecudum post carnis concupiscentias abeuntes, in luto voluptatis obscoene infixi, mortui, et sepulti, nullis vitiis resistere norunt, sed carnis passionibus miserabiliter subiecti et suppeditati.” Boswell offers as an additional illustration two passages from William of Ada’s De modo sarracenos extirpandi. William scathingly describes effeminate male prostitutes and also makes the charge that Christians sold young boys to the Saracens who then abused them.

¹²Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 279. Brundage notes that during the second half of the thirteenth century there was an increase in legislation prescribing extremely harsh penalties for homosexual activity. He suggests that “[t]he new hostility toward homosexuals may have stemmed in part from fear that their presence might trigger a salvo of divine wrath against the whole community” (Law, Sex, and Christian Society 472). Although he does not discuss Christian depiction of Muslims, it would seem that the popular association of Muslims as sodomites would underscore fears of divine punishment to Christian communities harboring such sexual deviants.

After nearly ten years of continuous conflict and animosity between King Philip IV [the Fair] of France and Pope Boniface VIII, Philip called a great assembly of barons and prelates at the Louvre on 13-14 June 1303 where Guillaume de Plaisians read charges against the pope which included heresy, simony, violation of the secrecy of confession, and sodomy.¹³ Regarding the crime of sodomy, Guillaume states that it was widely known that Boniface committed sodomy on a regular basis.¹⁴ I do not agree with Joseph Strayer, who maintains that “the truth or even the reasonableness of the charges was of little importance to the assembly.”¹⁵ because it would be highly unlikely that Philip would act so publically against his enemy if all of the charges were “unreasonable.” That is not to say that Boniface was necessarily guilty of frequent acts of sodomy. However, as Brundage points out, in the popular mind sodomy was considered a common vice among the clergy: thus, whether or not Boniface was guilty of this charge, there were undoubtedly clergy who were.¹⁶ And so, the political

¹³On the longstanding conflict between Philip IV and Boniface VIII, see Joseph R. Strayer, The Reign of Philip the Fair (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 237-85. The entire act of accusation is printed in Georges Picot, Documents Relatifs aux États Généraux et Assemblées Réunis sous Philippe Le Bel (Paris, 1901) 36-45.

¹⁴ “sodomitico crimine laborat, tenens concubenarios secum. Et de hoc est publice et vulgarissime diffamatus” (qtd. in Picot 40).

¹⁵Strayer 276.

¹⁶Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society 472. Brundage notes that deviant sexual practices apparently remained relatively common despite the harsh legislation of the later Middle Ages. He supports this, in part, by drawing attention to Pierre de La Palude’s Lucubrationum, which, according to Brundage, “explain[s] at length why the Church did not allow homosexuals to marry one another, which may indicate that he was aware, or at least fearful, of attempts to extend social recognition to same-sex relationships through some type of wedding ritual” (473-74).

effectiveness of Philip's action hinges on a social context in which acts of sodomy were imagined to be relatively common.

Brundage cites the following incident as an illustration of how an accusation of sodomy is used as a political weapon. On 6 August 1311, King James II of Aragon accused his political enemy, Pons Hugh IV, Count of Ampurias, of committing sodomy: "Since through [common] fame and [general] knowledge certain matters have come to the attention of Us, James, ... [w]e can no longer ignore [this situation] without scandal or tolerate [it] without danger. [We have learned that] it has happened often, indeed, very often, that some persons in the Diocese of Gerona cultivate that sort of debauchery which is against nature."¹⁷ The evidence consists of a number of witnesses who maintained that Hugh made sexual advances to them. Only one, who was threatened with torture, acknowledged having actual sexual relations with the Count. Although the accusations could, of course, be true, one must, nevertheless, be skeptical of the claim made by witnesses that they were merely innocent victims in the said encounter. Whatever James thought personally about the crime of sodomy, it is unlikely that his actions were motivated solely by moral indignation.

In his discussion of this case, Brundage notes that Hugh offended James when he captured a Venetian ship and proved a formidable opponent to James when he

¹⁷Qtd. in James A. Brundage, "The Politics of Sodomy: Rex V. Pons Hugh De Ampurias (1311)," *Sex in the Middle Ages*, ed. Joyce E. Salisbury (New York: Garland, 1991) 239, 244n.2: "Cum ad audienciam nostram Jacobi ... per famem ... et c[lam]orem ... quam et quem diuicius sine scandalo dissimulare non possemus vel sine periculo tolerare sepe ac sep[ui]s pervenisset ut nonullos in diocesis Gerundensis illa incontinentia laborare que contra naturam est."

procured the pope's support of his action. Earlier, Hugh had earned the king's disfavor by resisting his actions against the Templars. Thus, Brundage suggests that James drew up the sodomy charge against Hugh in order to wrest Hugh's lands away from him, because a person convicted of sodomy "was tainted with infamy" and could, therefore, lose all the public offices he held.¹⁸ That James was playing on the popular association of sodomy and divine retribution is evident in his warning that such acts of "debauchery" which are "against nature" cause destruction of cities and their inhabitants: "[f]or, on this account, earthquakes, famine, and pestilence increase."¹⁹ Brundage is justified in assuming that James, whom he refers to as a "seasoned skeptic," probably did not himself believe that acts of sodomy "caused earthquakes or that the cities of Aragon and Catalonia were in imminent danger of destruction because of the deviant sexual preferences of the Count of Ampurias." And thus, he rightfully concludes that James's prosecution of Hugh "represents yet another episode ... in the political use of sodomy."²⁰ Politically-motivated discourses of male same-sex behavior also include more descriptive scenarios.

II. The Knights Templar: Guilty of Indecent Acts

¹⁸Brundage, "The Politics of Sodomy" 239-42.

¹⁹Qtd. in Brundage, "The Politics of Sodomy" 239, 244n.2: "ciuitatis cum hominibus periculum perisse leguntur et terre motus fames et pestilencie multiplicare increscant."

²⁰Brundage, "The Politics of Sodomy" 240, 243.

The Order of the Knights Templar, once a highly respected military order, came under serious attack in the early fourteenth century and in the course of a few years was disbanded.²¹ That the motivation of Philip IV of France, who led the persecution of the order, was governed by economic and political issues is unanimously attested to by historians. Boswell notes that with the Templars' "international treasury" sitting in Paris, it is not surprising that Philip "cast his eye hungrily upon the prosperous order."²² Malcolm Barber neatly sums up Philip's position: "the Templars were particularly obnoxious to Philip the Fair as a wealthy, exempt and predominantly aristocratic enclave in a country whose king had made considerable progress towards subduing the pretensions of the feudal nobility."²³ Thus, it was a combination of wealth and immunity that stimulated Philip's actions. In addition, the fact that charges of heresy and "indecent

²¹There is a good deal of literature on the Templars. For a general history of the order, see Malcolm Barber, The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), and Edith Simon, The Piebald Standard: A Biography of the Knights Templars (London: Cassell, 1959). The most recent full-length study of the Knights Templar in England is Thomas M. Parker, The Knights Templars in England (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1963). For a study of the trial in England, see Clarence Perkins, "The Trial of the Knights Templars in England," English Historical Review 24 (1909): 432-47. Henry Charles Lea offers a rather full account of the persecution of the Templars in Europe in A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages, vol.3 (New York: Harper, 1887) 238-334. For a more recent, detailed study of the events leading up to the trials as well as facts regarding the trials themselves, primarily in France, see Malcolm Barber, The Trial of the Templars (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978). Anne Gilmour-Bryson offers an interesting discussion of the charges of sodomy leveled against the Templars in "Sodomy and the Knights Templar," Journal of the History of Sexuality 7 (1996): 151-83. Her article is also extremely useful for its wealth of references to primary sources of the various trials.

²²Boswell, Chrsitianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 296.

²³Barber, The Trial of the Templars 246.

acts” were at the center of the subsequent trials of the Templars suggests that Philip was tapping into the ongoing persecution of “sodomitical heretics.”²⁴ In fact, according to Boswell, because of the current harsh penalties for those found guilty of committing it, sodomy was the most politically effective accusation to bring against the order. He goes on to point out that in France, “mere suspicion of the act was considered sufficient to warrant such torture that many of the knights died under it.”²⁵ That Philip’s motivation was governed by economic and political issues rather than moral outrage at the Templars is also evident in that not all European kings shared Philip’s enthusiasm. For instance, when Philip urged his future son-in-law, Edward II of England, to mount a similar action, Edward dismissed Philip’s charges against the order as “incredible,” and only after much prompting from the pope did Edward finally order the Templars’ arrest.²⁶

Anne Gilmour-Bryson offers a neat summary of the most important accusations made against the Templars:

1. That the members denied Christ, God, the Virgin or the saints during a secret ceremony.
2. That the members committed a variety of sacrilegious acts upon the cross or the image of Christ.
3. That the members practised obscene kisses.

²⁴Barber, The Trial of the Templars 44.

²⁵Boswell Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 297.

²⁶Parker 91.

4. That the members encouraged and permitted the practice of sodomy.
5. That the priests of the Order did not consecrate the Host.
6. That the members did not believe in the sacraments.
7. That the members practised various sorts of idolatry.
8. That the grand master, or other dignitaries, absolved brethren from their sins.²⁷

There has been much discussion among historians regarding whether or not the Templars were guilty of the charges. Gilmour-Bryson has recently suggested that since it was standard practice during the medieval Inquisition to include sodomy with charges of heresy, then, perhaps, "homosexual accusations [were] added to the other charges simply because the authors of the allegations hoped that some of them would fit."²⁸ A look at the order in which the accusations were listed would seem to support Gilmour-Bryson's suggestion in that the charges of obscene kisses and incitement to commit sodomy are sandwiched between other charges typically directed at heretics, namely, paying homage to a cat and worship of idols such as human heads.²⁹ Both of these charges are also associated with accusations of witchcraft. In fact, as Vern Bullough points out, the charge that those being initiated into the Templar order were forced to kiss the mouth, navel, and anus of the preceptor is very much related to the *osculum*

²⁷ Anne Gilmour-Bryson, The Trial of the Templars in the Papal State and the Abruzzi (Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1982) 17.

²⁸Gilmour-Bryson, "Sodomy and the Knights Templar" 165.

²⁹The complete list of charges in English is printed in Barber, The Trial of the Templars 248-52.

infame, which was allegedly performed during heretical or witchcraft ceremonies and involved kissing the anus of an animal.³⁰

The articles of accusation against the Templars that I want to investigate are the following:

Item, that in the reception of the brothers of the said Order or at about that time, sometimes the receptor and sometimes the received were kissed on the mouth, on the navel, or on the bare stomach, and on the buttocks or the base of the spine.

-- Item [that they were kissed] sometimes on the navel. -- Item, [that they were kissed] sometimes on the base of the spine. -- Item, [that they were kissed] sometimes on the penis.

.....

Item, that they told the brothers whom they received that they could have carnal relations together.

Item, that it was licit for them to do this.

Item, that they ought to do and submit to this mutually.

Item, that it was not a sin for them to do this.

Item, that they did this, or many of them [did]. -- Item, that some of them [did].³¹

³⁰Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* 395.

³¹Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* 249. Gilmour-Bryson, *Trial of the Templars*, prints the original Latin text: "Item, quod in receptione fratrum dicti ordinis vel circa interdum recipiens [et] receptus aliquando [se] deosculabantur in ore, in umbilico seu

Gilmour-Bryson notes that “there is a very close correlation between the use of torture, which appears to have been widely used in France and Italy, and confessions of guilt.”

In countries where torture was not used, such as England, very few confessed.³²

Regarding the charges that newly initiated brothers were given permission to commit sodomitical acts, even after torture had been applied, only two out of 138 witnesses questioned in the Paris trials admitted to having actually engaged in same-sex activity. However, 107 admitted that such sexual behavior was permitted but they themselves never took part in it.³³ While I do not question the accuracy of these statistics and thus agree with Gilmour-Bryson that there is a lack of actual, documented evidence to support the charges, nevertheless, the trials offer a wealth of hearsay testimony which forms a discourse of illicit same-sex behavior allegedly occurring somewhere.

Before we look at various depositions regarding the charges that brothers of the order were permitted to engage in sexual acts with one another, and that some did so, I

<in> ventre nudo et in ano seu spina dorsi. Item, aliquando in umbilico. Item, aliquando in fine spine dorsi. Item, aliquando in virga virili.... Item, quod fratribus quos recipiebant dicebant quod ad invicem poterant unus cum al[io] com[misceri] carnaliter. Item, quod hoc licitum erat eis facere. Item, quod debebant hec facere ad invicem et pati. Item, quod hec facere non erat eis peccatum. Item, quod hec faciebant ipsi vel plures eorum. Item, quod aliqui eorum” (76-77). The two groups of charges are numbered 30-33 and 40-45 respectively.

³²Gilmour-Bryson, “Sodomy and the Knights Templar” 153-54.

³³Gilmour-Bryson, “Sodomy and the Knights Templar” 175. Note: “witness” is generally the term used to describe the person, either Templar or non-Templar, giving testimony at the trial. Gilmour-Bryson explains that testimony was generally given in the vernacular which the notary took down in note form. Then, some time later it was written up in Latin using “standard formal notarial language.” She also points out that the manuscripts of the trials were generally quite lengthy, which demonstrates the care the notaries took in writing up the proceedings (“Sodomy” 166-67).

want to examine diverse testimony given at the trials in Poitiers concerning the accusation that indecent kisses took place during the initiation ceremony. Gilmour-Bryson notes that the trials at Poitiers were very important in that they were intended to convince Pope Clement V that Philip IV was justified in demanding the prosecution of the Templars. According to Gilmour-Bryson, torture was used and “[t]he witnesses appearing seem to have been handpicked, perhaps trained in their answers, in order to convince the pope of the Templars’ guilt.”³⁴ If this is the case, then it is difficult to explain why some of the witnesses offer different versions of the initiation ceremony -- particularly in light of the fact that the overwhelming majority of testimonies at different trials offer strikingly similar responses.³⁵ I would suggest that because the witnesses wished to placate the inquisitors, they made sure they provided the *right* answers by drawing on rumors circulating among the various Templar households or, possibly, their own experiences: in either case, these diverse testimonies -- whether they represent the truth or not -- together form a discourse of illicit conduct.

Johannes de Joviniaco, a witness at the Poitiers trial, reports that the normal procedure at the initiation ceremony involved the initiated knight kissing the receptor on the mouth, the navel, and the base of the spine (anus).³⁶ Another witness, Clemens de

³⁴Gilmour-Bryson, "Sodomy and the Knights Templar" 172, 175.

³⁵I am referring here only to statements concerning charges of indecent kisses. Although I do not claim to have examined all of the testimonies, I have read a sample of depositions from trials in France, the Papal States, and England upon which I base my observation.

³⁶ “Item de osculis dixit, quod recipiens dixit ei, quod punctus ordinis erat, quod dictus receptus oscularetur recipientem in ore, et in umbilico et in fine spine dorsi” (qtd.

Pomar, offers quite a different version of his own initiation ceremony: "they [i.e. the brothers who received him] led him behind the altar where they made him take off his secular clothes, and the other brothers who were there kissed the master on the mouth, and afterwards, he, himself [Clemens], naked, kissed the master first on the anus, second on the penis, third on the navel, and fourth on the mouth."³⁷ Two additional witnesses present accounts of the initiation ceremony which deviate from both the "normal" procedure and that described by Clemens de Pomar. Iohannes de Villaribus claims that he was undressed and then kissed by two brothers in the usual three places, mouth, navel, and anus, and afterwards led to the preceptor with whom apparently no kisses were exchanged. And, Iacobus de Castilhione states that the receptor kissed him on the anus, navel, and mouth, in that order.³⁸ The official charges brought against the Templars do not explicitly state that the initiate was naked at the initiation ceremony.

in Konrad Schottmüller, Der Untergang des Templer-Ordens, vol. 2 [Berlin: Mittler, 1887] 43). James Noel Adams, The Latin Sexual Vocabulary (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982) notes that the "back or its lower part could ... be used ... for anus" (qtd. in Gilmour-Bryson, "Sodomy and the Knights Templar" 157n22).

³⁷ "Duxerunt eum retro altare, ubi fecerunt eum [exire] suis vestibus secularibus, quo denudato dicti magistri et alii fratres, qui erant ibidem, osculati fuerunt [in] ore, et ipse postea eum in fine spine dorsi, secundo in virga virilli, tertio in umbilico et quarto in ore" (qtd. in Schottmüller, vol. 2, 20).

³⁸ Iohannes de Villaribus: "Gonterius et Ymbrius fratres dicti ordinis ... duxerunt eum ad partem camere, ubi fuit receptus et fecerunt eum spoliari et ambo unus post alium osculati sunt ipsum in ore, in umbilico et in fine spine dorsi et duxerunt ipsum ad preceptorem." Iacobus de Castilhione: "De osculis dixit, quod recipiens osculatus fuit eum in fine spine dorsi, secundo in umbilico, tertio in ore." All quotations are taken from Heinrich Finke, Papsttum und Untergang des Templerordens, vol. 2 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1907) 329-31. Gilmour-Bryson's "Sodomy and the Knights Templar" was very useful in pointing me to those particular witnesses whose testimony was relevant to my study.

although it is implied in that either the receptor or initiate was allegedly kissed on the navel or "bare stomach." Thus, in claiming that they were undressed (by eager hands?) and then brought to the preceptor naked, some of the witnesses at the Poitiers trial offer testimony which, in effect, eroticizes the initiation ceremony. These novices are in a sense "raped" by experienced (deviant?) Templars, and whether the witness is the one kissed or the kisser in the initiation ceremony, the fact that he is first "made to take off his clothes"/"undressed" suggests he is not naked by choice. The conflicting testimony at this trial -- whether true or not -- forms a multifarious discourse of illicit male-male interactions which implies that individual preceptors drew up their own initiation ceremony rather than follow a standard procedure. Also implied from these multiple versions of the initiation ceremony is that some preceptors, in deviating from the "norm" (which in itself was condemnatory), had their own reasons (pleasures?) for their actions which actually implicate the Templars more deeply in illicit, sexually-informed conduct.

There is also a great deal of conflicting testimony regarding the accusation that because the statutes of the order allegedly permitted and even encouraged sexual acts among the brothers, some took advantage of this. Typical of the testimony given at the Poitiers trial is that offered by Hugo de Guamaches, who maintains that although he, too, was given permission to satisfy his natural urges with brothers of the order "he never did this, nor did anyone require him to do this, nor did he hear of anyone taking

advantage of this.”³⁹ This testimony nevertheless adds to the discourse of alleged sexual misconduct because in admitting that permission was given, Hugo suggests the possibility that, unknown to him, some brothers of the order might have “required” their fellow knights to engage in sexual acts. And evidently some did. Clemens de Pomar states that the master commanded him not to refuse other brothers of the order who wished to have sexual relations with him. Interestingly, rather than presenting himself as a victim of the master’s command, he says that he, in fact, engaged in sexual acts with brothers whenever he wished.⁴⁰ Although the command suggests that other men in the order might wish to have sexual relations with Clemens, since there is no indication that the particular brothers with whom Clemens engaged in sexual acts willingly took part, he offers a narrative of apparently one-sided sexual conduct between men. At the same trial, another witness, Iacobus de Castilhione maintains that the master told him that he could not consort with women, but, if the “heat of nature” moved him, he could seek comfort with brothers of the order. Iacobus then states that because he refused the sexual advances of other brothers and, more specifically, his refusal of a certain Iohannes de Loringia, he was sent away.⁴¹ What I find most significant about this

³⁹ “Set ipse dixit, quod non faceret nec unquam fecit nec fuit requisitus, nec audivit, quod fratres abuterentur se ipsis” (qtd. in Finke, vol. 2, 331).

⁴⁰ “Item dixit, quod dictus magister in presentia dictorum fratrum injunxit ei, quod ipse non recusaret aliquem de fratribus ipsius ordinis, si vellet cum eo carnaliter commisceri, et quod ipse finaliter commisceatur cum fratribus, quando vellet” (qtd. in Schottmüller, vol. 2, 20).

⁴¹ “recipiens dixit ei, quod de cetero non haberet consortium mulierum, set si calor naturalis eum moveret, commisceret se cum fratribus ordinis. Et dixit, quod aliqui fratres requisiverunt eum super hoc, set numquam voluit consentire, et quia se denegavit

testimony is not that this incident might actually have occurred -- since I am not concerned here with uncovering evidence of actual same-sex encounters -- but rather that Iacobus *claims* this occurred. For, Iacobus' narrative offers a specific example of how brothers of the order might attempt to carry out what was allegedly permitted. Thus, all three witnesses support the accusations made against the order and their conflicting testimony forms a discourse of alleged or potential illicit sexual conduct between men -- conduct that is in each case presented as one-sided encounters.

A witness at the Auvergne trial provides actual details of sexual activity at a particular Templar community. Guillaume de Born claims that, following the statute, he and the brothers with whom he shared a dwelling had regular sexual contact and presents a scenario of a typical sexual encounter. He describes how the brothers would lie face down on the floor, holding themselves up with feet and hands, and Guillaume would then climb on top of one of them and anally penetrate him. He admits to having done this more than fifty times.⁴² Guillaume's narrative, thus, depicts same-sex activity as being carried out between an "aggressor" and a "victim" (or "victims") with no

super hoc cuidam fratri vocato Iohanni de Lotingia, fuit missus in Alamaniam propter hoc, ut credit, non alia de causa" (qtd. in Finke, vol. 2, 330).

⁴² "dixit quod ipse cohabitavit cum quatuor fratribus ejusdem ordinis, videlicet, cum fratre Stephano de Bosco ... et cum tribus aliis fratribus jam defunctis de quorum nominibus non recolit, dicens quod jacebat et cognoscebat eos, ipsi cogniti ponebant os versus terram et cum pedibus et manibus sustinebant se, et ipse qui loquitur ascendeat supra illum quem carnaliter volebat cognoscere et intromitebat virgam suam virilem per anum ipsius sic prostrati, dicens etiam quod quinquagesies et pluribus vicibus cognovit predictos" (qtd. in Roger Sève and Anne-Marie Chagny-Sève, Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne (1309-1311) [Paris: Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 1986] 148).

indication that the victim willingly assumed his position or that these roles were ever reversed. For Guillaume does not admit that he himself ever lay on the ground on all fours while another brother penetrated him. While the “victim” in such an apparently regularly performed act might very well derive pleasure from the encounter, the narrative does not offer that as a possibility. Although Guillaume’s testimony strikingly contradicts other testimony given at this trial,⁴³ and is certainly the exception rather than the rule, with the two testimonies from the Poitiers trial examined above, it generates a discourse of aggressive same-sex conduct in which evidently only the desire of the brother initiating the encounter is considered.

The trials in England did not produce damaging testimony on a par with that provided by witnesses on the continent. One witness after the other denies the charge of indecent kisses, admitting only to a kiss on the mouth, and each also denies having been given permission to have sexual relations with other brothers.⁴⁴ Of course, the series of repeated questions itself creates a narrative of alleged illicit behavior. Moreover, a trace of potential guilt remains in the denials recorded at the English trials because, since

⁴³Other witnesses admit that permission was given to engage in sexual acts with other brothers but they themselves neither required anyone to do this nor did anyone require it of them.

⁴⁴I offer the following testimony of Radulphus de Barton to serve as a model since after surveying additional testimony at the English trials, I have found that most conform closely to Radulphus’ deposition: “Item super 30. articulo, qui sic incipit: ‘Item, quod in receptione fratrum,’ etc. respondit, quod osculantur in ore, et caetera contenta in articulo negavit.... Item interrogatus super 40. articulo, qui sic incipit: ‘Item, quod fratribus,’ etc. dicit, quod nec audivit, nec scivit, nec intellexit. quod contentum in articulo fuit praeceptum, vel super hoc licentia data” (qtd. in David Wilkins, Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, vol. 2 [London, 1737] 336).

some brothers on the continent did admit to wrongdoings (or having been given permission to engage in sexual activities with one another), there is the possibility that the English Templars were lying. Nevertheless, some sensational testimony regarding sexual acts surfaces in the documents of the trials in England; but, this comes from witnesses who are not members of the order. Some historians dismiss these testimonies as hearsay. Clarence Perkins vehemently attacks these “stories,” describing them as “extremely fantastic and improbable in character, remarkable productions of overheated imaginations.”⁴⁵ Konrad Schottmüller gives little credence to such “old wives tales” and rumors spread by a few members of minority orders who did not report first-hand experiences but rather what they had heard from someone else.⁴⁶ While Perkins and Schottmüller might be correct in finding the English Templars innocent of these charges, I believe the “stories” are significant in that they offer us an illustration of the discourse regarding same-sex behavior that might circulate within clerical and secular circles in early fourteenth-century England.

Robertus le Dorturer, a notary in London, offers testimony based on direct experience. He claims that Guido de Foresta, the high preceptor of the English order, wanted to sodomize him but he ran away.⁴⁷ This is especially interesting because the

⁴⁵Perkins 440.

⁴⁶ “Mit besonderer Breite aber wird das Gerede alter Weiber und einzelner Minoritenmönche berichtet, welche nicht aus eigener Kenntnissnahme, sondern aus dem Gerede Anderer, die wiederum berichten, dasselbe von Anderen gehört zu haben” (Schottmüller, vol. 2, 77).

⁴⁷ “Robertus le Dorturer notarius London, qui dicit, quod frater Guido de Foresta, magnus preceptor Anglie voluit ipsum opprimere per sodomiam, ipse tamen

alleged statute permitted sexual intercourse only between brothers of the order. Thus, Robertus raises the possibility that same-sex encounters took place between Templars and outsiders. Like similar accusations made by brothers of the order on the continent, Robertus' testimony depicts potential male-male sexual relations as a failed act of sexual violation -- the failure of an "aggressor" to penetrate his "victim" -- thus underscoring the violence or aggression which informs the narratives of same-sex desire I have been examining here. Another non-Templar witness, Johannes de Presbur, a member of the Carmelite order, reports that a Templar wanted to sodomize a relative of his. Although he produces the name of his relation and specific information about the Templar, he neglects to mention if the act was consummated.⁴⁸ It is possible that the inquisitor did not pursue the matter since the charge that the Templar merely propositioned Johannes' relation was considered damaging testimony. One must ask what these two witnesses stood to gain by offering such evidence. Did they hope to ingratiate themselves with the inquisitors? Did they have personal reasons for attacking the Templars? According to Perkins, the inquisitors, despairing over the lack of confessions from the imprisoned Templars, collected stories such as the ones I presented above.⁴⁹ Because the inquisitors might very well have intimidated people, threatening

aufugit" (qtd. in Schottmüller, vol. 2, 89).

⁴⁸ "frater Johannes de Presbur ordinis Carmelit., qui dixit, quod audivit a quodam consanguineo suo, vocato Wilhelmo de Winchub, quod quidam Templarius de Templo Guite Gaynggls dioc. Wigorniensis predictum consanguineum suum opprimere voluit vicio sodomie" (qtd. in Schottmüller, vol. 2, 89).

⁴⁹Perkins 439-440.

them with eternal damnation if they did not reveal what they knew, it is certainly possible that these witnesses gave the inquisitors exactly what they wanted to hear -- whether the stories were true or made up. In any case, these two testimonies, in exposing alleged sexual encounters enacted by two Templars, not only add to the discourse of same-sex behavior circulating around the Templars but also might call into question the veracity of the overwhelming majority of witnesses testifying at the English trials who claimed that such behavior did not occur.

What I find most significant about the Templar episode is not that a small number of Templars reportedly engaged in homosexual behavior, but rather that the charges that they regularly performed homoerotic kisses and sodomitical acts arose from a longstanding association between heresy and sodomy.⁵⁰ Thus, the records of the various Templar trials offer a further illustration of the politicization of same-sex desire in the fourteenth century. The attack on the Templars by the King of France and his allies was certainly politically and economically motivated. Despite the fact that the majority of damaging testimonies regarding the charges of illicit kisses and sexual behavior contain unsubstantiated allegations, not to mention the number of conflicting accounts from witnesses, the prosecutors succeeded in bringing down the entire order.⁵¹

⁵⁰I accept Gilmour-Bryson's conclusion that while homosexual acts did occur among the Templars, as they did in most religious orders, the evidence does not substantiate the charge that this behavior was widespread within the order ("Sodomy and the Knights Templar" 183).

⁵¹One should not of course underestimate the importance of the other more serious charges of heresy, sacrilegious acts, and idol worship in bringing about the dissolution of the order. Nevertheless, considering the not insignificant amount of space these charges occupy in the testimonies, I think it is fair to assume that the accusations

The various testimonies I have examined together constitute a discourse of same-sex relations in which one individual is (potentially) acted upon by another. There is no indication in any of these accounts that both parties derived, or would have derived, pleasure from the interaction. And thus, it is not a discourse of same-sex love and affection but rather a collection of narratives of alleged one-sided encounters exclusively serving the sexual needs of the "aggressor." The following will offer a variation of this discourse.

III. Sodomy in Pamiers

In 1323, Arnold of Verniolle, a sub-deacon and apostate from the Franciscan order, was tried for the crimes of heresy and sodomy allegedly committed in the parish of Pamiers. Although the inquisition carried out by Bishop Jacques Fournier was primarily concerned with heresy -- specifically the charge that Arnold was illegally performing the duties of a priest -- the testimony by young men whom Arnold seduced, as well as his own confession, offers a striking picture of the sexual habits of several men in a small French town. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie positions Arnold in early fourteenth-century French provincial society, suggesting that he "conformed to the urban, clerical, comparatively élitist model, non-peasant and non-domestic, of homosexuality in Ariège and Toulouse." He also maintains that had Arnold not been accused of illegally performing mass, something, according to Ladurie, which was common practice for a sub-deacon in the 1320s, Arnold's sexual habits might have been

intensified the case against the Templars.

overlooked. For, Ladurie claims that “[i]n both Pamiers and Toulouse, other sodomites less impudent or luckier than Arnold carried on undisturbed.”⁵² But, it is precisely Arnold’s impudence which I find particularly intriguing. As will be evident from the testimony, Arnold quite openly practiced sodomy.

Michael Goodich, in the introduction to his translation of the proceedings, neatly sums up Arnold’s activities:

[D]espite a few episodes of minor resistance, Arnold seemed to experience little difficulty in convincing a large number of local youths to frolic with him and satisfy his stated need for sexual gratification at least once every two weeks. These youths, despite their clerical background, were equally willing to express their sexual urges freely and a veritable lavender underground arose in the small village of Montaillou.⁵³

Despite Goodich’s anachronistic use of “lavender underground,” he does, I believe, accurately depict the remarkably free-and-easy lifestyle of those engaging in homosexual acts as recorded in the proceedings. What is also interesting is that despite a rather wide age difference between Arnold and the youths -- Arnold is 30-32 years old at the time of the trial and the youths range in age from 16 to 20 -- Arnold was apparently successful in attracting and seducing young men.

⁵²Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294-1324, trans. Barbara Bray (London: Scolar, 1978) 147-48.

⁵³Michael Goodich, The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1979) 92.

The first youth to testify, Guillaume Roux, states that Arnold invited him to his house on the pretext that he wanted to show him some books. While they were there, Arnold read a passage from a book, translating it into the vernacular (Provençal), which said that it was not as grave a sin to have sex with a man as it was to have sex with a woman because "nature demands this [i.e. emission of semen] and a man is made healthier as a result."⁵⁴ According to Guillaume, Arnold then removed Guillaume's clothing, told him to spread his thighs, and after undressing, had anal (or interfemoral) sex with him. Guillaume's testimony is recorded as follows:

Arnold then threw the speaker down on the ground, placed his hands on his back, and lay on Guillaume. He then removed the speaker's clothes and told him to spread his thighs or some evil would befall him. The speaker then spread his thighs, and Arnold got completely undressed, embraced the naked youth, kissed him, placed his penis between Guillaume's buttocks, and, moving himself as with a woman, his semen flowed between the speaker's legs.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Goodich 95. The original text is in Jean Duvernoy, ed., Le Registre d'Inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318-1325), vol. 3 (Toulouse: Privat, 1965) 17: "dictus Arnaldus in vulgari dixit ei quod ibi erat scriptum quod si homo cum homine iaceat et ex calore corporum eorum semen effundat, non est tam grave peccatum sicut si homo carnaliter cognosceret mulierem, quia, ut dicebat, hoc natura requirit, et homo ex hoc efficitur magis sanis."

⁵⁵Goodich 96. Duvernoy 18: "Arnaldus proiecit ipsum loquentem ad terram, positus manibus ipsius loquentis ad tergum, et ponens se super eum exuit vestibus ipsum loquentem, et postea dixit ei quod abstraheret sibi femoralia sua, alioquin [sic] ei malum eveniret. Et ipse loquens, ut dixit, abstraxit sibi femoralia sua, et deinde dictus Arnaldus se etiam totaliter expoliavit, et deinde amplexatus ipsum loquentem nudum et ipsum osculando posuit membrum virile suum inter coxas ipsius loquentis, et movens se

What is most striking about Guillaume's testimony is that it presents a scenario of seduction characterized by the use of force and aggression. Arnold allegedly "threw" the youth on the ground and restrained him by lying on top of him. Also suggested is that Arnold forcibly removed Guillaume's clothes while maintaining this dominant position. While it is possible that Arnold was strong (and dexterous) enough to perform this action, it is also plausible that Guillaume is making an effort to present himself as a helpless victim. In any case, the narrative renders same-sex activity as a form of rape. However, the scenario includes details not generally associated with either "homosexual" or "heterosexual" rape in that 1) Arnold compromises his position of aggressive seducer by making himself naked and, thus, vulnerable; 2) Arnold is not merely using Guillaume for the "manly" release of sexual energy but also embraces and kisses his victim. Thus, in Guillaume's narrative, the seducer relates to his victim as an equal. This is further supported by Guillaume's admission that he reciprocated Arnold's actions on this and on at least two other occasions which suggests that in sexual relations between men the aggressive, active partner also might enjoy occupying the passive position, and, furthermore, the "victim" does not avoid his attacker but apparently allows himself to be "raped" again.

Unsurprisingly, Arnold offers a different version of the above encounter. He depicts Guillaume as a very willing participant. He maintains that after warning Guillaume about the habits of a certain Mourand, prior of Lavelanet who, according to Arnold, sometimes sodomized youths, Guillaume replied that he would be willing to

ac si haberet rem cum muliere effudit semen inter crura ipsius loquentis."

engage in such acts and that he had already done so “with a certain squire of his country.”⁵⁶ Arnold also states that when he asked Guillaume to demonstrate what the squire had done, Guillaume replied that he was willing. They subsequently engaged in mutual sexual acts and we can infer from Arnold’s account that Guillaume apparently enjoyed their encounters as much as Arnold did.⁵⁷ By including a greater number of participants, Arnold’s testimony, in effect, offers a broader survey of same-sex behavior. For the matter is no longer confined to an isolated series of encounters between two men, but rather, includes sodomitical acts allegedly occurring on a regular basis between the prior of Lavelanet and an undocumented number of youths, as well as between a squire and Guillaume. That Arnold occupies the active role of “sodomizer” yet also consents to be “sodomized” suggests that other sexual aggressors, such as the prior and the squire, may equally be willing to exchange roles with their “victims.” Thus, both Guillaume’s and Arnold’s testimonies, while offering different versions of the event, nevertheless present a discourse of sodomy in which both participants apparently derive pleasure.

Interestingly, Arnold’s testimony includes an example where he decided *not* to

⁵⁶Goodich 113. Duvernoy 41: “et tunc ipse loquens interrogavit dictum Guillelmum si consimilem peccatum comiserat cum aliquo homine; qui Guillelmus respondit quod sic, cum quodam scutifero terre sue, cum quo in uno lecto iacuerat, et addidit quod bene sciebat modum qualiter dictum peccatum perpetrebat.”

⁵⁷Goodich 113. Duvernoy 41: “ipse loquens dixit dicto Guillelmo: ‘Vis quod ego ostendam tibi dictum factum, et quod etiam tu michi ostendas qualiter dictus scutifer dictum factum comitebat?’ Et dictus Guillelmus respondit ei quod bene placebat ei; et tunc ambo se exuerunt vestes, et nudos se posuerunt in dicto lecto, et modo supradicto ipse loquens cum dicto Guillelmo et dictus Guillelmus, vel prius vel postea, cum ipso dictum peccatum sodomie comiserunt semel uterque eorum.”

have sex when it was offered. He relates how an eighteen-year-old from Mirepoix wanted to demonstrate to Arnold another method for performing the sexual act, namely, standing side by side. The youth told Arnold that he knew many good men who did it that way. Arnold, however, informed him that he was already quite familiar with that method and declined to have sex with him.⁵⁸ In depicting a young man who does not merely respond to Arnold's advances but rather offers to have sex with Arnold, this example underscores what I have demonstrated above, namely, that the youths in this narrative -- the alleged victims -- are not opposed to having sex with men. In addition, this episode illustrates that Arnold did not engage in sexual acts with every available young man, thus implying that he selected his partners according to physical qualities he is attracted to or some other criteria.

The harsh sentence that Arnold receives -- perpetual imprisonment -- is no doubt a result of having been found guilty of both charges brought against him. And despite Ladurie's plausible assumption that had it not been for Arnold's widespread habit of performing mass and hearing confession his sexual activities might have been overlooked, we are faced here once again with an example of the inextricable connection between heretical acts and sodomy. Yet, the narratives contained in Arnold's trial, unlike the Templar testimonies where physical encounters between men are all one-sided (i.e. an aggressor acting on a victim), form a discourse of same-sex relations

⁵⁸Goodich 117. Duvernoy 45: "dictus iuvenis dixit ipsi loquenti quod adhuc ipse doceret alium modum, scilicet quoad stando ambo ad latus poneret virgam virilem inter crura ipsius loquentis, ut sic perpetraret dictum peccatum, et ad hoc faciendum se paraverunt. Ipse tamen loquens hoc noluit sustinere, dicens quod bene dictum modum sciebat."

which balances aggressive acts committed on “victims” with a willingness of the participants to exchange roles, thus suggesting that mutual pleasure is involved.

Discourses of same-sex desire were hardly restricted to France. And thus, it is time to cross the channel and examine accounts of the personal relations of Edward II.

IV. Vilifying Same-Sex Intimacy: The Attack on Edward II and his Court Favorites

John Boswell refers to Edward II of England as “the last openly gay medieval monarch.”⁵⁹ Although one may question whether or not Edward can be considered “gay,” historians have not been able to ignore the intimate personal relationship which evidently existed between Edward and Piers Gaveston, the son of a Gascon knight whom Edward made Earl of Cornwall, much to the irritation of the landed nobility.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality 272.

⁶⁰For a good survey of the important events during the reign of Edward II, see May McKisack, The Fourteenth Century 1307-1399 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959) 1-96; Anthony Tuck, Crown and Nobility 1272-1461: Political Conflict in Late Medieval England (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1985) 50-83. For a detailed study of political and administrative affairs in Edward II's reign, see T. F. Tout, The Place of the Reign of Edward II in English History (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1914). There are also several biographies of Edward II. Hilda Johnstone, Edward of Carnarvon 1284-1307 (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1946), offers a study of Edward's early years. A well-illustrated but undocumented study of Edward's life is Caroline Bingham, The Life and Times of Edward II (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973). The most recent biography of Edward II is Mary Saaler, Edward II 1307-1327 (London: Rubicon, 1997). For a very readable, but undocumented, account of the events leading up to the death of Edward II, see R. Perry, Edward the Second: Suddenly at Berkeley (Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire: Ivy House, 1988). There are also two fairly recent studies of Gaveston: Pierre Chaplais, Piers Gaveston: Edward II's Adoptive Brother (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) and J. S. Hamilton, Piers Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall 1307-1312: Politics and Patronage in the Reign of Edward II (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1988). The two authors have opposing views on the relationship between Edward and Gaveston: Chaplais is not convinced that it was sexual, while Hamilton maintains that it was.

For instance, Anthony Tuck concedes that Edward's "emotional obsession with his favourite" aroused the wrath of the nobles.⁶¹ Caroline Bingham, while not convinced that Edward and Gaveston actually engaged in homosexual acts, acknowledges that Edward's behavior encouraged accusations of sodomy.⁶² Mary Saaler, however, concludes that "the evidence points to a homosexual relationship between these two men."⁶³ My purpose is not to attempt to settle this question once and for all, but rather to examine the discourse concerning the relationship between Edward and Gaveston as reported in the chronicles of the period. That these primary historical sources cannot be viewed as objective reports makes them all the more interesting. For they offer valuable recordings of various contemporary personal opinions -- those of the chroniclers themselves, the nobles, and the general public. The verbal assault on the relationship between Edward and Gaveston demonstrates the politicization of same-sex intimacy in the early fourteenth century, and, more important for my study, bears striking parallels to attacks made later in the century on Richard II and his court favorites.

There are a number of chronicles covering the reign of Edward II that were written either contemporaneously or shortly after the events they are recording. These include Annales Londonienses, Annales Paulini, Vita Edward II, Trokelowe's Annales, and Robert of Reading's continuation of the Flores Historiarum. These chronicles, voicing the concerns of the powerful nobles, do not wage an attack on same-sex

⁶¹Tuck, Crown and Nobility 53.

⁶²Bingham 54.

⁶³Saaler 35.

relations per se, but rather on the “immoderateness” and, above all, the exclusive nature of Edward’s relation with Gaveston. For, in excluding the nobles from his inner circle of advisers, the king did not make decisions which served the nobles’ best interests. There are also several chronicles composed, or compiled from earlier sources, during the reign of Edward III, such as Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan and Higden’s Polychronicon.⁶⁴ I will draw on all of these chronicles in my discussion of the relationship between Edward and Gaveston and then briefly examine some comments made by chroniclers at the end of the century.

Charles Wood notes that the reason we do not find explicit accounts of Edward’s sexual behavior in the chronicles is because “sexual acts are normally private, hidden from the gaze of others; further, medieval chroniclers, despite a frequent willingness to purvey the most wild and unlikely tales, generally displayed a remarkable restraint when dealing with such matters.”⁶⁵ While Wood’s explanation is plausible, and historians are justified in observing that there is little *direct* evidence in the chronicles that Edward and Gaveston had a sexual relationship, there are many indications that this same-sex partnership was of such an intimate nature that it became a topic of national concern.

One chronicler describes how Edward, then prince, became enraptured with Gaveston: “when the king’s son gazed at Gaveston, he immediately felt so much love

⁶⁴For a thorough discussion of all the major chronicles of the reign of Edward II, see Antonia Gransden, Historical Writing in England II: c. 1307 to the Early Seventeenth Century (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982) 1-42.

⁶⁵Charles T. Wood, “Personality, Politics, and Constitutional Progress: The Lessons of Edward II,” Studia Gratiana 15 (1972) 524.

for him that he entered into a compact of brotherhood with him and chose and decided to tie himself to him, against all mortals, in an unbreakable bond of affection.”⁶⁶ Given the chronicler’s observation of Edward’s sudden heartfelt attraction for Gaveston it is difficult to accept Pierre Chaplais’s interpretation that this chivalric bond was free of emotional feelings.⁶⁷ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, chivalric male bonds are often depicted as being affectionate and loving relations.⁶⁸ Although there is no *direct* evidence that this brotherhood included sexual intimacy, Edward’s immediate recall of Gaveston following the death of Edward I, who had banished Gaveston from England because of what he saw as his son’s dangerous attachment to his friend, suggests that he could not bear the absence of his “brother.” For their part, the chroniclers were quick to comment on the inordinate intimacy between the reunited friends.

One contemporary chronicler notes that Edward II “immediately” summoned

⁶⁶British Museum, MS. Cotton Cleopatra D. IX, fols. 83-85 in George L. Haskins, “A Chronicle of the Civil Wars of Edward II,” *Speculum* 14 (1939) 75: “Quem filius regis intuens in eum / tantum protinus amorem iniecit quod cum eo firmitatis fedus iniit, et pre ceteris mortalibus indissolubile dileccionis vinculum secum elegit et firmiter disposuit innodare.” Except for the first phrase, the English translation is taken from Chaplais 12-13.

⁶⁷Chaplais maintains that Edward’s later favors towards Gaveston are in keeping with this agreement and thus not based on love per se. I think Chaplais’s argument is weak and is not strengthened by his reference to adoptive brotherhoods in the eleventh and twelfth centuries because he simply assumes, on no evidence, that these associations were void of physical intimacy. For his discussion, see 14-19.

⁶⁸Fictional same-sex bonds such as those between Lancelot and Galehot, or Amys and Amylion, while not necessarily reflecting actual chivalric relationships do, nevertheless, demonstrate that love was very much a part of at least some idealized friendships recorded in literature of the time.

Gaveston back to England, keeping him close at his side and loving him exclusively.⁶⁹

That this “unbreakable bond” was viewed as one informed by intense affection is suggested by the chronicler above who remarks that after Edward recalled Gaveston from exile in 1307, the “flame of love” between Edward and his friend was renewed.⁷⁰ The months immediately following Edward’s reunion with Gaveston provoked a great deal of negative commentary. A major accusation made against the young king was that he “clung” to the advice of his intimate friend, Gaveston, rejecting the traditional sources for counsel, namely, the nobles. And while one chronicler notes that Edward also turned to young men with whom he had associations since his youth, the nobles clearly felt most threatened by the exclusive nature of Edward’s relationship with Gaveston.⁷¹ For at the base of this charge is the suggestion that Edward was blinded by his excessive love for Gaveston. Johannes de Trokelowe observes that “from an early age, of all the men in the world, Edward loved Gaveston beyond the bounds of

⁶⁹Annales Paulini, Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, ed. William Stubbs, vol. 1 (1882-83; Wiesbaden: Kraus, 1965) 257: “Hic statim Petrum de Gavastone ab exilio in Angliam revocavit.” Annales Londonienses, Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, ed. Stubbs, vol. 1, 151: “quem revertentem rex retinuit secum et unice dilexit.”

⁷⁰ “Petrus reuocavit ab exilio et in / statum pristinum restituit solitque flaminam amoris in frunita mente renouavit” (British Museum, MS. Cotton Cleopatra D. IX, qtd. in Haskins 75). I am reading flaminam as flamman.

⁷¹Annales Paulini 257: “statim spreto consilio senum, sicut Roboam, adhaesit consilio juvenum qui secum ab adolescentia fuerant conversati, et praecipue et super omnia consilio Petri de Gavastone.”

moderation.”⁷² He also reports how Edward, upon returning to England following his marriage to Isabella of France, greeted Gaveston with unrestrained affection before the eyes of the nobles who were also present: “running to meet Gaveston, who was among them [i.e. the nobles], he gave him kisses and repeated embraces: He [Edward] adored him with a singular familiarity.”⁷³ It is this observed “singular familiarity” between Edward and Gaveston which greatly disturbed the nobles. Although none of the chronicles contemporary with Edward II specifically accuses Edward of committing sodomy with Gaveston, there are comments which imply that there was, indeed, a physical relationship.

The author of the Vita Edwardi Secundi reports that he has never heard of one man loving another so much, noting that even Jonathan’s love for David or Achilles’ for Patroclus was not so immoderate.⁷⁴ Given that Jonathan and Achilles expressed their love for their friends quite effusively, the chronicler thus characterizes Edward’s love

⁷²Johannis de Trokelowe, Annales Edwardi II, Angliae Regis, ed. Thomas Hearne (London, 1729) 4: “Petrus de Gavestone, quem a primaeva aetate prae omnibus hominibus mundi rex dilexerat ultra modum.” I am using Saaler’s translation of *ultra modum* (35).

⁷³Johannis de Trokelowe 5: “Inter quos Petrus occurrentem, datis osculis & ingeminatis amplexibus, familiaritate venerabatur singulari.” I have drawn on Hamilton’s translation of this passage (47).

⁷⁴Vita Edwardi Secundi Monachi Cuiusdam Malmesberiensis, ed. and trans. N. Denholm-Young (London: Nelson, 1957) 15: “Sane non memini me audisse unum alterum ita dilexisse. Jonathas dilexit David, Achilles Patroclum amavit: sed illi modum excessisse non leguntur.” All English translations of the Vita Edwardi Secundi are taken from Denholm-Young. Denholm-Young maintains that this work is a memoir not dependent on other historical accounts (xiv). Thus, we can assume that the author actually witnessed (or received information from those who had) some of Edward’s actions which demonstrated his excessive love for Gaveston.

for Gaveston as extremely intense -- a love that outdoes two of the most celebrated stories of love between men. Edward's "immoderate" love for Gaveston was clearly visible to contemporary observers who noted Edward's actions following his marriage to Isabella. It was alleged that Edward sent the wedding gifts received from the king of France (Isabella's father) to Gaveston. Among these gifts was an extremely beautiful marriage bed.⁷⁵ Whether or not this is true, the chronicler implies that Edward was going to consummate his marriage with Gaveston rather than with Isabella. Somewhat later, the nobles refused to attend a parliament, fearing it was unsafe for them because their "chief enemy ... was lurking in the king's [bed]chamber."⁷⁶ The author's use of *thalamus*, with its connotation of marriage bed, implies that Gaveston is not merely the king's valet or chamber knight but also his bed-companion.

According to the St. Paul chronicler, at the banquet immediately following Edward's coronation, the queen's uncles observed that on the dining-couch Edward paid more attention to Gaveston than to Isabella, prompting them to return indignantly to France.⁷⁷ As the medieval sense of *triclinium* (dining-couch) appears to be the same as the classical meaning, one can imagine Edward reclining with Gaveston at the banquet.

⁷⁵Annales Paulini 258: "Rex Franciae dedit regi Angliae genero suo annulum regni sui, cubile suum quam pulcrum oculis non videt aliud, destrarios electos et alia donaria multa nimis. Quae omnia rex Angliae concito Petro misit."

⁷⁶Vita Edwardi Secundi 9: "capitalis inimicus eorum ... regio lateret in thalamo."

⁷⁷Annales Paulini 262: "Karolus et Ludowicus patru reginae, cementes quod rex plus exercebat Petri triclinium quam reginae, cum indignatione ad Franciam remigarunt." William Stubbs maintains that because of the minute details of his description of the ceremony and banquet, the author is reporting contemporary opinions and was undoubtedly an eyewitness of the events (lxxvi).

openly displaying intimate affection.⁷⁸ He goes on to report that a rumor was spreading everywhere that the king loved “an evil sorcerer” more than his beautiful wife.⁷⁹ The idea that Gaveston held Edward under a spell, and thus “seduced” him from reason is a central charge made by the nobles which I will turn to shortly. The chronicler’s comments on Gaveston’s prominent role at the coronation offer further clues of the nature of the relationship between Edward and Gaveston. He notes that the fact that Edward allowed Gaveston to carry St. Edward’s crown at the coronation -- a task normally executed by an earl or high noble -- caused outrage from both the public and the clergy.⁸⁰ The chronicler reviles Gaveston’s character, remarking that he carried the crown in his “foul/sordid hands,”⁸¹ which in light of the criticism of Edward’s excessive love for Gaveston implies that Gaveston’s relation with Edward is somehow “foul” or “sordid.” Robert of Reading (at Westminster), regarded by Henry Richard Luard as an independent authority equal to other chroniclers of the time, also condemns the relationship between Edward and Gaveston as a result of what was witnessed at the

⁷⁸I conclude that the classical Latin sense of *triclinium* is still current in the Middle Ages since this word is not included in either J. F. Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus (Leiden: Brill, 1976) or R. E. Latham, Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources (London: Oxford UP, 1965).

⁷⁹Annales Paulini 262: “In omnem igitur terram exiit rumor iste, quod rex plus amaret hominem magum et maleficum quam sponsam suam elegantissimam dominam et pulcherrimam mulierem.”

⁸⁰Annales Paulini 261: “Ex quo non immerito indignati sunt populus atque clerus.”

⁸¹Annales Paulini 261: “coronam Sancti Edwardi tradidit Petro ad portandum manibus inquinatis.”

coronation and banquet: "the English, and other men similarly, considered it an abomination and completely contemptible that the new king loved him beyond measure and reason."⁸² I would suggest that the chronicler is deploying "abomination" in its biblical sense -- an act extremely odious to God -- and since he is referring here to the relationship between two men, he is possibly interpreting Edward and Gaveston's relationship as one that is informed by sodomy.⁸³

These thinly veiled allegations that the king was involved in an illicit relationship with his favorite are inextricably linked to political concerns. If Edward had merely kept Gaveston as a minion and maintained good relations with the nobles, it is unlikely that anyone would have strongly objected to the king's sexual life. After all, he did what was expected of him and produced a male heir. However, he antagonized the magnates of England by naming Gaveston earl of Cornwall, and, perhaps even more infuriating to the nobles, he excluded them from his inner circle of advisers and confidants. Johannis de Trokelowe traces the development of Edward's relationship with Gaveston, beginning with the period when Edward was still prince: "after Gaveston had openly attended to the king's son for some time, he procured so much favor in his eyes that Edward, having rejected [the counsel of] the magnates of the land

⁸²Robert of Reading, Flores Historiarum, ed. Henry Richards Luard, vol. 3 (1890; Wiesbaden: Kraus, 1965) 331: "Angliae et caeteros similiter habuit in abominationem et totaliter in despectum, quia praedictus novus rex eum ultra modum et rationem amavit."

⁸³Leviticus 18:22, Biblia Sacra Latina ex Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1970): "Cum masculino non commiscearis coitu foemineo, quia abominatio est [You shall not lie with a male as with a woman because it is an abomination]."

without restraint, clung to Gaveston alone; and neither the command of his father nor the advice of the nobles could separate them in spirit from one another not even in death.”⁸⁴ While Trokelowe represents a typical view of chroniclers reporting on the early period of Edward II’s reign, he underscores the strength of the bond between the two friends by linking Gaveston to Edward both as prince and king in a seamless continuum. Although Edward was also accused of bestowing lavish gifts on Gaveston, and Gaveston, in turn, of openly scorning the nobles, a central reason why this male-male relationship became a political matter was, as noted in the above observation, that Edward’s “immoderate” love for Gaveston caused him to exclude the nobles from their traditional influential role as advisers to the king. Implied in this charge is that Edward’s inseparable attachment to his favorite worked against the interests of the nobles because Gaveston, a foreigner who often demonstrated his contempt for the English aristocrats, turned the king away from them. Thus, as far as the nobles were concerned, Gaveston’s relationship with the king had to be permanently severed.

In 1311 the king’s opponents drew up a list of ordinances demanding an extensive reform of royal policy. Although, as Tuck points out, “the Ordinances amounted to a great deal more than an attack on the king’s favourite,” he, nevertheless, admits that in emphasizing the ordinance dealing with Gaveston, the chroniclers reflect

⁸⁴Johannis de Trokelowe 5: “Qui cum aliquanto tempore coram regis filio ministrasset, tantam gratiam in oculis suis invenit, quod, spretis magnatum terrae liberis, sibi soli in tantum adhaesit, quod nec patris sui praeceptum, aut suasio magnatum, eos ab invicem usque ad mortem animo saltem potuit separare.”

both public opinion and the views of some of the Ordainers.⁸⁵ Included among the charges made against Gaveston in ordinance #20 is that “Piers Gaveston has led the lord king astray, counselled him badly and persuaded him deceitfully and in many ways to do evil ... more especially by turning away the lord king’s heart from his liege men.”⁸⁶ Thus implied is that Edward is a passive victim of Gaveston’s evil designs. The author of the Vita, who reports ordinance #20 in its entirety, maintains that because of his immoderate love for Gaveston, who was considered a sorcerer, the king subsequently “forgot himself.”⁸⁷ This idea that Edward was a helpless victim of the bewitching machinations of his favorite is echoed in another chronicle which refers to Gaveston as a *seducer* of the king. While the chronicler is not necessarily referring to seduction in a sexual sense, it is, I would suggest, clearly implied. The chroniclers are unanimous in their reading of the inseparable intimacy between Gaveston and the king -- an intimacy based on “immoderate” love -- and Gaveston’s alleged manipulation of Edward is successful because the king is blinded by his love for his favorite. That some chroniclers implied that this intimacy involved sexual relations has already been pointed out. Thus,

⁸⁵Tuck, Crown and Nobility 62-63.

⁸⁶Vita Edwardi Secundi 19: “quod Petrus de Gauestone dominum regem male duxit, domino regi male consuluit, et ipsum ad male faciendum deceptorie et multiformiter induxit ... specialiter elongando cor domini regis a suis legiis hominibus.” The Ordinances also called for the permanent exile of Gaveston. That he disobeyed the Ordinances and returned to England in early 1312, presumably on Edward’s orders, is the official reason for his execution at the hands of Edward’s opponents.

⁸⁷Vita Edwardi Secundi 15: “Modum autem dilectionis rex noster habere non potuit, et propter eum sui oblitus esse diceretur, et ob hoc Petrus maleficus putaretur esse.” I am drawing on the definition of *maleficus* found in Niermeyer.

the charge that Gaveston deceived and manipulated, or, in other words, seduced the king is inextricably linked to this personal (sexual?) relationship.⁸⁸ Years later, similar charges were to be made against the Despensers, particularly Hugh the younger, who became an intimate companion of the king and was accused of giving him evil counsel. The nobles reportedly condemned both father and son as “seducers” (as well as “conspirators” or “disinheritors”) of Edward.⁸⁹ The king’s excessive love for Hugh, the younger, was acknowledged by one chronicler who warns Edward that “He perishes on the rocks who loves another more than himself.”⁹⁰

That Edward’s intimate associations with his favorites were the root of his political troubles is aptly expressed by Robert of Reading, who interrupts his narrative of events occurring in 1324 to lash out at the king: “Oh! the insane stupidity of the king

⁸⁸Annales Londonienses 204: “Emericus de Valencia comes Penbrochie et Johannes comes Warenniae adiret versus, ut seductorem Petrum caperent et regem informarent.” R. E. Latham, Revised Medieval Latin Word-List, defines *seductor* as being used in a biblical sense, meaning “seducer, deceiver, traitor.” The first two meanings, which are, in effect, complementary, are clearly appropriate for describing how chroniclers, and reportedly some of the English nobles, viewed Gaveston.

⁸⁹Vita Edwardi Secundi 114: “Nam uterque tanquam malus et falsus domini regis consiliarius, tanquam seductor et conspirator uel exheredator corone ... condemnatur, proscribitur et exheredatur.”

⁹⁰Vita Edwardi Secundi 113: “Alpibus ille perit qui plus se diligit ullum.” In her excellent study of Froissart’s narrative concerning the persecution and execution of Hugh Despenser, Claire Sponsler points to the politicization of this same-sex relationship. Referring specifically to Froissart’s account of Despenser’s execution, which was orchestrated by Isabella, Sponsler observes that “Froissart shows not just how effectively scapegoating could work as a form of public spectacle, but also how vilification of same-sex desire could be enlisted in the cause of political power struggles.” See “The King’s Boyfriend: Queer Politics and Edward II,” forthcoming in Queering the Middle Ages / Historicizing Postmodernity, ed. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P).

of the English, condemned by God and men, who should not [have] love[d] his own infamy and illicit copulations, full of sin, and should never have removed from his side his noble consort and her gentle wifely embraces, in contempt of her noble birth."⁹¹ Heterosexual love was, undoubtedly, far less threatening than same-sex love. Although, as Gransden points out, Robert of Reading's political sympathies are clearly with Isabella and his chronicle "can ... be best understood as a *pièce justificative* for Isabella and Mortimer."⁹² Robert is not the only chronicler to condemn Edward's sexual behavior. As I have demonstrated above, from the moment Edward recalled Gaveston from exile in 1307, chroniclers vilified the immoderate love Edward felt for his friend. Robert, however, offers a more sweeping view of Edward's behavior, one that includes Gaveston, Hugh Despenser, the younger, and possibly other men. In painting this summary portrait of Edward, Robert presents at least one person's view that the current political turmoil in England -- and Edward's increasingly precarious position -- is directly linked with the king's "illicit copulations, full of sin." While the alleged illicit personal relationships that Edward II had with Gaveston and Hugh Despenser, the

⁹¹Robert of Reading, Flores Historiarum 229: "O versana stultitia regis Anglorum, a Deo et hominibus cunctis reprobanda, qui sibi propriam infamiam et concubitus illicitos peccatis plenos non dilexisset, nequaquam tam generosam regni consortem et dulces amplexus conjugales in contemptum generis sui a latere suo removisset!" Translation taken from Gransden (21), except that I have substituted "copulations" for "bed" in her translation and, as indicated above, emended "should not love." While in classical Latin, *concubitus* could mean lying together (for sleeping or dining) or copulation, it is apparently the latter sense which had currency in the Middle Ages. For, in R. E. Latham, Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources (London: Oxford UP, 1975), the word is defined as "lying together (sexual)."

⁹²Gransden 22.

younger, did not cause the deaths of all three per se, the chronicles indicate that same-sex intimacy played a crucial role in the political crises which culminated in their executions.

Chronicles that were written later in the fourteenth century also had something to say about Edward's relationship with Gaveston and are extremely relevant for my study because they demonstrate that this particular same-sex partnership had some currency in the latter part of the century. The Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan, first composed probably in the 1360s but, according to Stubbs, not finally shaped before 1377, describes how the earls condemned Gaveston for *seducing* his feudal lord and king.⁹³ Here again we should read the nobles' charge against Gaveston, as reported by the chronicler, as meaning that because the king was so in love with Gaveston and clung to his advice in all matters, Edward was *seduced* into actions that were not in the interests of the nobles. The chronicler acknowledges the depth of the intimacy which existed between Edward and Gaveston in that he urges "lovers" of the present day to use that relationship as a mirror to correct their own behavior: "Behold! now that era is as a mirror for lovers wishing to see circumspectly; but rarely do we see anyone who wishes to be castigated by someone else."⁹⁴ These remarks are quite significant for two reasons:

⁹³Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan Auctore Canonico Bridlingtoniensi, Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, ed. Stubbs, vol. 2, 34: "comites praefatum Petrum, tanquam ligii domini sui et regni seductorem, convictum et dampnatum pronuntiarent." For Stubbs's discussion of the date of composition, see xxvi.

⁹⁴Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan 35: "Ecce! nunc qualiter saeculum ejus amatoribus est speculum circumspecte volentibus intueri; sed raro videmus quempiam

1) the chronicler presents Edward and Gaveston's relationship as a negative example for the present day, which suggests that it was in some ways illicit; 2) the intended readers of the chronicle -- ones nearly contemporary with Chaucer -- apparently need to learn from such an example, but probably will choose not to.

Ranulf Higden composed his Polychronicon during the reign of Edward III, and thus his portrait of Edward II (and Gaveston) is not the result of direct observation. His work is very much a compilation, drawing on various sources. Quite relevant for the central focus of my study is the fact that at about the same time that Chaucer was composing Troilus and Criseyde John Trevisa was translating the Polychronicon into English. Although I am not suggesting that Chaucer was aware of Trevisa's project, or that he had read Higden's original text -- which he might well have, given its enormous popularity -- it does indicate that Edward and Gaveston's relationship was known in the 1380s.⁹⁵ In fact, Gransden points out that Trevisa's translation was quite popular at the

velle per alium castigari."

⁹⁵Similarly, Edward's relationship with Hugh Despenser was both known and commented upon. Claire Sponsler observes that Froissart, in describing how Despenser's genitals were cut off and, furthermore, accusing him (and Edward II) of being a heretic and a sodomite, offers a version of Despenser's execution that differs from other chronicles, including the contemporary Annales Paulini. Sponsler notes that Froissart's Chroniques were begun in the 1360s but not completed before 1377 (and possibly not until the 1390s). Thus, Froissart's reinterpretation of Edward's relationship with Despenser illustrates that this particular male same-sex relationship had currency in the late fourteenth century. And, considering Froissart's close association with the court of Richard II, his narrative possibly reflects the views of others living in Chaucer's society.

time and even “retained some influence throughout the fifteenth century.”⁴⁶

Higden/Trevisa’s observation of Edward’s relationship with Gaveston, like comments found in the earlier chronicles, highlights the politicization of the excessive love between them: “[Edward] loved strongliche oon of his queresters, and dede him grete reverence, and worschipped and made hym greete and riche. Of þis doynge fel vilenye to þe lovyer, yvel speche and bacbitynge to þe love.”⁴⁷

Thomas de Burton, author of Chronica Monasterii de Melsa, writing at the very end of the fourteenth century or early fifteenth century, does not use such vague terms as “excessive” or “immoderate” to describe Edward’s love for Gaveston, but rather states very clearly that “Edward, indeed, took too much delight in the sodomitic vice.”⁴⁸ His chronicle is first and foremost a history of the Meaux monastery and other events are provided merely as historical background. While Thomas undoubtedly drew on earlier

⁴⁶Gransden 221. Trevisa completed his translation in 1387. Regarding the popularity of Higden’s work in its original Latin version, according to Gransden, “no medieval history book rivalled the Polychronicon in popularity.” She notes that more than 120 manuscripts survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (43).

⁴⁷Ranulf Higden, Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis, ed. Joseph Rawson Lumby, vol. 8 (1857; Wiesbaden: Kraus, 1964) 298: “Ad unum aliquem familiarem ardenter affectus, quem summe coleret, ditaret, praeferret, honoraret. Ex quo impetu provenit amanti opprobrium, amasio obloquium.” Trevisa’s English translation is printed alongside Higden’s Latin text.

⁴⁸Thomas de Burton, Chronica Monasterii de Melsa, ed. Edward A. Bond, vol. 2. (London, 1867) 355: “ipse quidem Edwardus in vitio sodomitico nimium delectabat.” This comment occurs following his report of Edward’s death and thus he apparently draws this conclusion as he looks back over Edward’s life. For a discussion of the possible date of Thomas’s chronicle see Bond’s introduction, vol. 1. lxi-lxix. Bond notes that Thomas used Higden as a source for historical events, and, in fact, Thomas inserts Higden’s general description of Edward II’s lifestyle and character (vol. 2, 280-81) Compare Higden 298-99.

chronicles for his comments on the reign of Edward II, it appears that his conclusion regarding Edward's sexual habits is his own. For, although they certainly imply it, none of the major historical sources contemporary with Edward II *directly* states that Edward was guilty of committing sodomy. I would, therefore, suggest that Thomas's observation reflects a late fourteenth-century view of Edward II.

Another chronicler contemporary with Thomas de Burton, but writing in a very different part of England, was Thomas Walsingham. Although Walsingham generally relies on Trokelowe's Annales for his depiction of the early years of Edward's reign (and Edward's relationship with Gaveston), he varies the language and occasionally adds his own comments. For instance, after presenting a description of how Edward's love for Gaveston resulted in the king "clinging" exclusively to him, which follows Trokelowe nearly verbatim, Walsingham inserts what appears to be his own reading of Gaveston: "Truly, although as far as his outward appearance he loved Edward in return, but, not to be mistaken, he loved rewards more."⁹⁹ In viewing Gaveston as a type of male prostitute -- pretending to love Edward in exchange for gifts and favors -- Walsingham situates this same-sex relation in the realm of the sexual. In other places as well, Walsingham, while undoubtedly drawing on the earlier chronicles, adds what appear to be his own interpretation of Gaveston's character and motivation regarding his

⁹⁹Thomas Walsingham, Historia Anglicana, ed. Henry Thomas Riley, vol. 1 (London, 1863) 120: "Ille vero, etsi eum facie tenus reamaret, ejus, ni fallor, munera plus amavit."

relationship with Edward.¹⁰⁰ This suggests that Walsingham was not merely copying information from previous sources but also expanding on the events he was reporting.

Thus, in the late fourteenth century, during the reign of Edward II's great grandson, Richard II, at least three chronicles were being written (or translated) which in varying degrees reinterpreted reports of a notorious same-sex relationship from the early part of the century. It should also be noted that another notorious case of alleged illicit sexual behavior from the early fourteenth century, namely, the trials of the Knights Templar, apparently had currency at this time as well. In commenting on the Templars, Walsingham, as in his treatment of Edward II, does not merely copy information gleaned from earlier chronicles, but rather summarizes the events in his own words.¹⁰¹ He also reveals his personal opinion by intensifying the charge of sodomy which was made against the Templars. While the actual accusations (# 40-45) listed in the Annales

¹⁰⁰For instance, regarding the nobles' hostility towards Gaveston because of Edward's favoritism, the following appears to be Walsingham's own observation: "indignati sunt pro eo maxime, quod idem Petrus plus dilexit pecuniam quam aequitatem, plus respexit munera quam causarum qualitates, et ipsam pecuniam quam nequiter adquisivit" (Historia Anglicana, vol. 1, 122-23).

¹⁰¹It is possible that Annales Londonienses was a source for Walsingham because of all the major chronicles for this period it is the only one that provides extensive information on the affair, listing the specific charges made against the Templars. There is, however, one curious point. In describing the initiation ceremony, Walsingham states that "they led him [i.e. the initiate] to a private place, and completely undressed him and then one approached him and kissed him on his rear end [adduxerunt illum ad locum privatum, et totaliter denudaverunt; et tunc unus accederet ad eundem, et eum oscularetur in posteriori parte]" (Historia Anglicana vol. 1, 127). Neither the Annales Londonienses nor the original articles of accusation (# 30-33) state that the initiate was naked at the time of the illicit kisses. While some of the witnesses do confess that this was the case, this is generally found in testimony from trials in France. Thus, either Walsingham actually read these foreign trial records or, more likely, is repeating what was the general rumor in his day.

Londonienses state that brothers of the order were permitted to practice sodomy, and many, in fact, did so. Walsingham reports that “it was charged against them, that they *were defiled* by the sodomitic vice.”¹⁰² Thus, the notion that the Templars were “defiled” by sodomy appears to be Walsingham’s own evaluation.

Chroniclers of the late fourteenth century were not merely concerned with reporting and commenting on alleged sexual relationships between men during the early years of the century; they had much to say about the same-sex friendships of the present king, Richard II, who in some ways followed the footsteps of his great grandfather. And thus, we will now turn to an examination of the politicization of same-sex desire in the late fourteenth century.

¹⁰²Annales Londonienses 192: “De hoc genere, quod est Sodomia, deponunt plures.” Walsingham, Historia Anglicana, vol. 1, 128: “depositum est contra eos, quod vitio foedabantur sodomitico” (emphasis added). The original articles of accusation do not actually use the word “sodomy,” but rather refer to sexual relations among the brothers of the order. For the exact wording of the accusations, see my earlier discussion of the Templars.

Part Two: Richard II and his Court Favorites: Politics and Desire

Nigel Saul notes that when Richard II reached the age of fourteen in 1381, he “passed from ‘pueritia’ to ‘adolescentia’,” which, according to medieval tradition, signified a person’s entry into adulthood.¹ Richard’s full majority was reached in 1388 - a sobering year for the young king. For it was at the Merciless Parliament in the early part of that year that the party of nobles later referred to as the Lords Appellant succeeded in removing all of Richard’s court favorites from his side.² The underlying theme of the thirty-nine articles of appeal was that Richard was unduly influenced by his favorites. Thus, the king’s personal relations with other men was at the center of the nobles’ charges.

Anthony Tuck draws a parallel between Richard II’s development of a “personal government” in the years between 1382 and 1386 in which he relied solely on the counsel of his close associates, excluding the high nobles, and the policy of Edward II: “Once again, as in Edward II’s reign, men who thought themselves the

¹Nigel Saul, Richard II (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997) 108. Saul’s thorough study of Richard II is the most recent one. Other major studies are Anthony Tuck, Richard II and the English Nobility (New York: St. Martin’s, 1974), and Anthony Steel, Richard II (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1941). See also Gervase Mathew, The Court of Richard II (London: John Murray, 1968).

²The Lords Appellant were Thomas, duke of Gloucester, Henry, earl of Derby, Richard, earl of Arundel, Thomas, earl of Warwick, and Thomas, earl of Nottingham (later duke of Norfolk). For a detailed examination of each of the Lords Appellant, see Anthony Goodman, The Loyal Conspiracy: The Lords Appellant under Richard II (Coral Gables: University of Miami P, 1971). Richard’s relation with the nobles throughout his reign is studied in Richard H. Jones, The Royal Policy of Richard II: Absolutism in the Later Middle Ages (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968). Simon Walker, The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361-1399 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), offers a wider historical view of the Lancastrian affinity which centered on John of Gaunt.

natural counsellors of the king found their place usurped by others.” He goes on to point out that Richard’s close associates monopolized access to the king and “Richard, like Edward, rewarded his closest friends and supporters with lavish grants of lands, offices, and titles.”³ A reference to the fate of Edward II was chillingly made by the nobles at the Parliament of 1386:

They have an ancient law, which not long since, lamentably, had to be invoked, which provides that if the king, upon some evil counsel ... estrange himself from his people, and will not be governed and guided by the laws of the land ... but wrong-headedly, upon his own unsound conclusions, follows the promptings of his untempered will, then it would be lawful with the common assent and agreement of the people of the realm to put down the king from his royal seat, and raise another of the royal lineage in his place.⁴

As I demonstrated earlier, the central charge made against Edward II during his early years was that he blindly followed the “evil counsel” of his favorites, ignoring the advice of the nobles. In addition, young Edward was vilified for his attachment to one

³Tuck, Richard II, 58, 71.

⁴Henry Knighton, Knighton’s Chronicle 1337-1396, ed. and trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 360-61: “Habent enim ex antiquo statuto, et de facto non longe retroactis temporibus experienter (quod dolendum est habito), si rex ex maligno consilio quocumque ... se alienauerit a populo suo, nec uoluerit per iura regni et statuta ... set capitose in suis insanis consiliis propriam uoluntatem suam singularem proterue exercere, extunc licitum est eis cum communi assensu et consensu populi regni ipsum regem de regali solio abrogare, et propinquiorem aliquem de stirpe regia loco eius in regni solio sublimare.” Historians agree that this is unmistakably a reference to the deposition of Edward II. See Saul 158, Tuck, Richard II 102, Martin 360n.1.

courtier in particular. Gaveston, upon whom he bestowed gifts and favors -- actions which revealed, according to the chroniclers, an "untempered will." The nobles' invoking of Edward II is significant in that it reveals that Edward II's "disgrace" was circulating within the discourse of the 1380s. Moreover, Richard's same-sex attachments were being compared to Edward's and, likewise, they became a political issue.⁵

Although Richard's court favorites during the 1380s included Michael de la Pole, Simon Burley, Robert de Vere, and John Beauchamp of Holt, it was to the youngest member of the group, de Vere, that Richard was evidently most emotionally attached.⁶ As Tuck observes, "of all the king's favourites, he was the most lavishly rewarded."⁷ Saul echoes Tuck and points to what was clearly the central issue, namely, that the favors bestowed on de Vere in the way of land grants "contrasted sharply with the parsimony shown by the king to other more deserving lords."⁸ What further fueled the lords' rage was that Richard blatantly favored a young man who was not exceptional on account of high social rank or military prowess, and thus, one who did not deserve

⁵Richard's relationship with Robert de Vere bears striking similarities to that of Edward and Gaveston. I will focus on how chroniclers describe this relationship in the next section.

⁶For a discussion of each of the court favorites, see Saul 112-34; Tuck, Richard II 73-86.

⁷Tuck, Richard II 77.

⁸Saul 182.

the rewards that historically belonged to them.⁹ It is not surprising that the nobles' envy of the privileges Richard's friends received, together with their frustration at being excluded from the king's inner circle, escalated to a full-blown attack on the king's favorites in 1388. Modern historians have not focused on what is, I would suggest, clearly implied in the nobles' agenda, namely, the severance of Richard's most personal ties with other men. For the nobles (and the chroniclers reporting the events) did not disregard the intertwining of personal and political affairs: Richard rewarded those men whom he cared for, and, in the case of de Vere evidently, loved.

I will draw on the major chronicles covering the reign of Richard II for my study of the politicization of Richard's same-sex relations. After first drawing a general picture of Richard's emotional attachments to other men, I turn to what chroniclers had to say about his relationship with Robert de Vere. I then study how the language chroniclers use to depict Richard's relations with his court favorites in effect sexualizes these associations, particularly by portraying the king as the passive victim of his seductive friends. Finally, I explore charges made by chroniclers near the end of Richard's reign that the king was guilty of committing sodomitical acts -- the endpoint in the politicization of Richard's same-sex friendships. The chapter ends with a consideration of Chaucer's connection to Richard's court during the 1380s, which will serve as a bridge to my study of Troilus and Criseyde in the remaining chapters.

⁹Saul 182. This view held by the nobles that de Vere was too "ordinary" to receive exalted titles is clearly expressed by Walsingham, which I will discuss in the next section.

I. Richard II's Male Attachments: Loving the Wrong Man

The major historical sources for the reign of Richard II during the 1380s include the Westminster Chronicle, Thomas Walsingham's Chronicon Angliae and his later Historia Anglicana, Henry Knighton's Chronicle, and the Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi.¹⁰ With the exception of the Historia Anglicana, which reflects revisions Walsingham made to his earlier Chronicon Angliae, the above chronicles were written soon after the events they recorded.¹¹ The chronicles are, however, not only valuable records of what took place during these years but also offer evidence of what influential people *thought about* these events. Even the Westminster chronicler, who is relatively sympathetic toward Richard II, presents direct testimony of the nobles' animosity towards Richard and his court favorites, particularly in his recording of the thirty-nine articles of appeal at the Merciless Parliament of 1388. Walsingham, who is

¹⁰For a detailed discussion of the major chronicles of the reign of Richard II, see Gransden, who devotes a chapter to Thomas Walsingham and his chronicles, 118-56, and studies all the other chronicles in the following chapter, 157-93. Louisa D. Duls, Richard II in the Early Chronicles (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), concentrates on how the events that occurred between 1386 and 1388 are reported in the major chronicles. Her most thorough discussion is of Knighton's chronicle, 35-51. Two other valuable studies are provided by George B. Stow. See his article, "Richard II in Thomas Walsingham's Chronicles," Speculum 59 (1984): 68-102, and essay, "Chronicles Versus Records: The Character of Richard II," Documenting the Past: Essays in Medieval History Presented to G. P. Cuttino, ed. J. S. Hamilton and P. Bradley (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989) 155-76. Walsingham's chronicles are also briefly discussed in John Taylor, English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 64-70.

¹¹Although V. H. Galbraith proposed a rather late date of composition for the Chronicon Angliae, c. 1394-97, historians have recently argued for a date closer to the events reported, namely, c. 1388. See Stow, "Richard II" 77-79. While the Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi was completed c. 1402, in the introduction to his edition of the text, Stow suggests that the first half of the work was written c. 1390-92 (14).

decidedly unsympathetic toward Richard and his friends, offers both his personal view and, as Gransden suggests, the opinion of his contemporaries: "Walsingham's great gift was as a reporter of current events. He was excellently informed and wrote close in time to the events he recorded -- and thus reflects the opinions of at least some of his contemporaries."¹² As my purpose is not merely to restate the events leading up to the Parliament of 1388 but rather to investigate how the chroniclers' reports of these events create a discourse that depicts Richard's same-sex relations as emotional, immoderate, and, most of all, dangerous to the well-being of the realm, Walsingham's (and other chroniclers') venomous attacks on Richard and his friends are extremely useful in that they echo the views of the powerful nobles -- views which may or may not reflect the *actual* situation.

While one modern historian admits that Richard's young friends "stood high in his affections," and that the young king "appears to have revelled in the company of them all,"¹³ we do not really get a sense of the intense emotional bond that linked Richard to his closest friends -- an intensity that is suggested in the Westminster chronicler's report of two incidents. While the king was at Ely in the spring of 1383, a knight who was travelling in the royal party, one "who was on terms of the closest intimacy with" the king, was struck by lightning and blinded. Richard's response certainly indicates that this man was, indeed, someone to whom he was particularly close. For, according to the chronicler, "the king therefore gave orders that the clergy

¹²Gransden 149.

¹³Saul 120.

should go in reverent procession to the tomb of St. Etheldreda the Virgin so that through the people's devout prayers of intercession the blinded man might recover his sight."¹⁴

That the chronicler provides the information that Richard was "on terms of closest intimacy" with the stricken knight parenthetically serves to explain the king's reaction. Apparently, the king would not have responded in this concerned manner had another one of his knights with whom he was not so "intimate" been similarly injured. We can therefore read from this incident that, for whatever reason, Richard desired to be more intimate with this particular knight. That the chronicler offers no indication that this relationship, or the king's reaction to his friend's situation, was criticized suggests that, in the absence of political issues, such intimate relationships between men were not unusual.

Another indication of the intensity of Richard's male friendships is found in the Westminster chronicler's report of the king's reaction to the murder of a longtime friend, the son of the earl of Stafford, in 1385: "When the death of the earl's son was made known the king abandoned himself for some time to tears and mourning, since he had loved the lad all the more tenderly for having been a contemporary and comrade in

¹⁴Westminster Chronicle, 1381-1394, ed. L. C. Hector and Barbara Harvey, 1966 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 42: "Contigit ipso die quod quidam miles regis, nomine Jacobus Beernes, regi summe familiaris, ictu fulminis cecus efficeretur in presencia regis.... Ob hoc rex jussit clerum processionaliter ad tumbam Sancte Ethelthrethe Virginis devotissime pergere quatinus interveniente populi devota oracione excecatus visum recuperaret." All English translations of this chronicle unless otherwise indicated are by Hector and Harvey.

the heyday of his own youth.”¹⁵ Here again, there is no hint of condemnation of the king for shedding tears upon learning that he lost a friend whom he had loved “tenderly [*corditer*].” Both incidents, as reported by the Westminster chronicler, therefore highlight Richard’s proclivity for forming intimate ties with men and reveal that when these relationships did not threaten the interests of the nobles, no one apparently objected.¹⁶

The Westminster chronicler also reports a curious request that Richard made of the pope in 1385: “In the course of the year 1385 the king of England sent a special letter to the pope in favour of the canonization of King Edward II, who lies in Gloucester; but he did not get his wish.”¹⁷ It is strange that of all his ancestors Richard should single out one whose reign was hardly marked by glorious achievements, indeed one who was deposed. While Tuck presents a reasonable argument for Richard’s admiration for his great-grandfather, pointing out that “the king’s approach to government in the 1380s, and especially in 1385 and 1386, is notable for its

¹⁵Westminster Chronicle 122: “Publicata vero morte filii comitis predicti rex diucius vacavit in lacrimis et lamentis, quia illum quasi coevum et sodalem sue juventutis in flore magis corditer diligebat.”

¹⁶One can, perhaps, argue that the Westminster chronicler is generally sympathetic to Richard and thus if no observer criticized Richard’s behavior, the chronicler would hardly take it upon himself to do so. However, Knighton, who is clearly not sympathetic to Richard, merely reports in regard to the second incident that the king exiled the offender, Sir John Holland, and confiscated his property. See Knighton 338-39.

¹⁷Westminster Chronicle 158: “Item anno domini millesimo ccclxxxv ... rex Anglie misit speciales literas domino pape pro canonizacione regis Edwardi secundi post conquestum, qui jacet Glovernie; nec tamen optinuit quod optavit.”

resemblance to the methods adopted by Edward II in the last decade of his reign ... [and that] [t]he resemblance was in all probability intentional."¹⁸ there is, I would suggest, another reason why Richard admired his great-grandfather. Tuck observes that "[b]oth Richard and his baronial opponents were well versed in and highly conscious of the English political past."¹⁹ Thus, if Richard was aware of Edward's method of government, he would most likely also have been aware of the criticism directed toward him by the nobles early in his reign for the favors he extended to his beloved Gaveston. It is precisely at this time that Richard was showering grants and titles on his most intimate court favorite, Robert de Vere -- actions which bear a striking similarity to Edward's.²⁰ Therefore, part of Edward's method of government that Richard apparently sought to emulate was rewarding one's closest friend despite the objections of the nobles.

In 1395, Richard repeated his efforts to arrange for the canonization of Edward, sending a book to Pope Boniface IX that described miracles which had occurred at Edward's tomb.²¹ It is, perhaps, not a coincidence that in the same year, Richard arranged for the body of Robert de Vere to be brought to England for reburial. Thus,

¹⁸Tuck, Richard II 71. Tuck cites the following as indications that Richard turned to Edward as a model: "his use of the chamber, its close connection with the secret seal, and his realization of the ability and administrative potential of the clerks of the chapel royal ..." (71).

¹⁹Tuck, Richard II 71.

²⁰I will draw attention to the nobles' reactions to Richard's promotions of de Vere in my following discussion which centers on this particular same-sex relationship.

²¹Saul 323.

while John Bowers might be correct in assuming that Richard “gloss[ed] over Edward’s reputation as a sodomite” because he wished to conceal his own sexual tendencies,²² it is also possible that part of Richard’s identification with and respect for Edward was precisely his recognition that they both engaged in sexual encounters with men and, more specifically, they both lost their most intimate male companions as a result of actions taken by a hostile and threatened nobility.

Modern historians, although falling short of recognizing the possibility of physical intimacy between Richard and Robert de Vere, do, nevertheless, admit that the relationship was extremely close. Anthony Steel notes that de Vere “seems to have been in continual attendance on Richard from perhaps as early as 1381,” and “Richard’s devotion to him knew no bounds.”²³ Gervase Mathew, pointing out that de Vere “was a magnate in his own right” -- thus not technically a “mignon” or “favourite” -- speculates that “Richard conceived of the relationship as a passionate and equal friendship.”²⁴ But, Nigel Saul, while characterizing the association between the two men as “close

²²John M. Bowers, “Chaste Marriage: Fashion and Texts at the Court of Richard II,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 30 (1995): 20. Although I agree with Bowers that Richard’s “natural” proclivities were towards men, rather than seeking to prove whether or not Richard engaged in sodomitical acts, I am concerned with examining how and why Richard’s same-sex relations were politicized. Bowers supports his claim by pointing to the apparently chaste marriage between Richard and Anne -- a marriage unlike that of a king and a child princess where physical intimacy was not expected. Bowers, drawing on Caroline Barron’s argument that Richard wished to emulate the ascetic and chaste Edward the Confessor, suggests that Richard “offered a chaste arrangement to his wife under pretext of elevated spiritual devotion” (20).

²³Steel 112.

²⁴Mathew 19.

friendship and no more.” rightly observes that “[a]ll the same, it gave rise to widespread resentment among the nobility.” And, he adds, “[w]hat caused particular annoyance was its exclusivity.”²⁵

Tuck offers an excellent example of the special closeness that existed between Richard and de Vere. In 1384, after granting de Vere several valuable endowments, Richard bestowed on his friend the castle and lordship of Queenborough. The terms of this grant illustrate that Richard evidently viewed his friendship with de Vere as an enduring one -- one which is not unlike the same-sex unions I discussed in the previous chapter. Tuck paraphrases the grant as follows: “de Vere was to hold the castle and lordship for the term of the lives of the king and himself. If he died first, it was to revert to the king, and if the king died first de Vere was to have it in tail male.”²⁶ Tuck goes on to point out that since Queenborough provided a strategic defense of the Thames, Richard’s decision to grant it to de Vere, who was not regarded as an expert in military matters, is a telling example of Richard’s policy of awarding favors based on personal considerations rather than practical ones -- a policy that echoes that of Edward II.²⁷

Although the chronicles do not offer an indication of how the nobles reacted to these grants, they do clearly register criticism of Richard’s appointment of de Vere to the position of marquis of Dublin in 1385, and, one year later, to the higher title, duke of

²⁵Saul 121.

²⁶Tuck, Richard II 79. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “tail male” as “limitation of an estate to male heirs.”

²⁷Tuck, Richard II 79.

Ireland. The charge that de Vere was unworthy of these honors certainly applies to the earlier favors he received. The Historia states that at the parliament held on 20 October 1385, "the king, desiring to honor the earl of Oxford [de Vere], whom he loved intimately, and to add to the hill of honors [already received], established and made him marquis of Dublin in Ireland."²⁸ The writer undoubtedly voices the nobles' indignation by noting that the king desired to add to the "hill of honors" that had already been bestowed on de Vere. Also, in adding the parenthetical information that Richard "loved" de Vere "intimately," the writer draws attention both to the reason for the promotion and the intensity of the king's feelings for de Vere. For while it is not uncommon for a king to "love" his subjects, this love, however, was regarded as particularly strong or "intimate," which clarifies why this relationship posed a threat to the nobles: the king was blinded by his love for de Vere to such an extent that he could not see what, in their view, was best for the realm. This is clearly reflected in the nobles' outrage at this appointment. In their eyes, de Vere is a man "who appeared superior to others neither in arms nor in wisdom."²⁹ In the following year, when Richard raised de Vere even higher, naming him to the position of duke of Ireland, the nobles echoed the above sentiments, condemning the promotion of a man they considered "so ordinary and one who could

²⁸Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi, ed. George B. Stow, Jr. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1977) 92: "Nam dominus rex, cupiens dominum comitem Oxon', dominum Robertum de Veer, quem intime diligit, honorare, ad tumulum sui honoris ipsum marchionem Dublinie in Hibernia constituit atque fecit."

²⁹Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi 92: "nec prudencior ceteris nec armis ualencior uidebatur." The identical phrase appears in Thomas Walsingham, Historia Anglicana, ed. Henry Thomas Riley, vol. 2 (London: Longman, 1864) 140.

not be recommended more than others because of either his noble birth or virtuous qualities.”³⁰ Thus, what they are saying in a sense is that the king loved and rewarded the wrong man.

Two additional incidents reported in the chronicles offer splendid illustrations of just how “intimately” Richard loved de Vere. When de Vere fled the nobles’ forces at Radcot Bridge in 1387, he left behind a pack-saddle which contained letters addressed to him from the king. One letter stated that de Vere “should come quickly to London with a great force and that the king pledged [lit. placed his heart near] to live and die with him.”³¹ Since de Vere was in the process of leading a group of the king’s supporters against the nobles (soon to be Lords Appellant), this message from the king urging him to come to London with a great force clearly demonstrates the king’s active support of de Vere’s cause. That Richard pledges “to live and die” with his intimate friend only confirms the nobles’ worst suspicions, namely, that the king’s love for de

³⁰Thomas Walsingham, Chronicon Angliae 1328-1388, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson (London: Longman, 1874) 372: “submurmurantibus ceteris nobilibus et baronibus ac indigne ferentibus tantae promotionis appetitum in viro dudum tam mediocri, quem non plus ceteris commendabant vel generis sui sublimitas vel reliquarum virtutum dotes.” I am following Stow, “Richard II,” in attributing the Chronicon Angliae to Walsingham. Tuck notes that the nobles were especially furious at this appointment because de Vere “had received ... an honour which had hitherto been bestowed upon only one man who was not of royal blood, and he was the greatest of magnates at Edward III’s court.” In addition, Tuck observes that de Vere had been promoted to a status that equaled that of the duke of Lancaster, which, as indicated above, the nobles believed de Vere was unworthy of (Richard II 85).

³¹Walsingham, Chronicon Angliae 385: “inter multa repererunt regis ad eum directas literas, in quibus continebatur, ut venire festinaret Londoniis, cum magna potestate, et rex cor apponeret ad vivendum et moriendum cum eo.” Saul offers a concise summary of the events leading up to de Vere’s escape, see 185-91.

Vere is so exclusive as to prompt him to give his support for an upstart who is threatening the highest nobles in the realm.

The other incident concerns Richard's behavior at de Vere's funeral, after the body had been brought to England at the king's request in 1395. According to Walsingham, Richard had the casket opened, "looked intently at the face, handled his finger, and openly showed love to the dead man as he did formerly to the living man."³² This passage reads like the report of an eyewitness and it clearly demonstrates that Richard's love for de Vere lasted long after his escape in 1387. Although Walsingham does not present details of how Richard "showed love" to his dead friend, he does offer us a glimpse of the love and affection that had apparently once existed between the two men. It is also, I believe, significant that the description is free from the invective Walsingham hurls towards the relationship when reporting events of the 1380s. It appears that once Richard's relationship with de Vere posed no threat to the nobles. Walsingham, who clearly supported the Lancastrian position in the 1390s, no longer felt the need to stigmatize this particular same-sex relationship.³³ We return now, however, to the 1380s when Richard's male friendships were very much a topic for the chroniclers.

³²Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, vol. 2, 219: "Curavitque ... faciem considerare digitoque tractare, et publice monstrare dilectionem defuncto quam impenderat prius vivo."

³³Stow discusses Walsingham's changing sympathies during the 1380s and 1390s in his article, "Richard II in Thomas Walsingham's Chronicles."

II. Richard and his Court Favorites in the Chronicles: Tales of Seduction and Perversion

The Westminster chronicler reports that at the parliament of November 1383, “a serious quarrel arose between the king and the lords temporal, because, as it seemed to them, he clung to unsound policies and for this reason excluded wholesome guidance from his entourage.”³⁴ This observation points to the central reason why Richard’s intimate friendships became a political matter, namely, that, according to the nobles, Richard was under the control of his favorites whose “unsound” counsel was not in the best interest of the realm. The political nature of the charge is clearly evident from the parenthetical addition, “as it seemed to them.” Thus, the distinction between “unsound” and “wholesome” counsel was a subjective one, based on the interests of the nobles. They point out that former illustrious kings, in following the good counsel of the lords made England “a land of plenty and brilliant prosperity.”³⁵ One cannot doubt that in a prosperous England the upper nobility prosper as well. Moreover, the nobles, echoing their predecessors who levied similar charges against Edward II, accuse Richard’s favorites of monopolizing access to the king, thereby supplanting the lords from the position they traditionally occupied. It is, therefore, not surprising that the lords “strove

³⁴Westminster Chronicle 54: “inter regem et dominos temporales magna dissencio est exorta; nam prout eis videbatur rex insano consilio adherebat et propter hoc bonum regimen circa se non admisit.”

³⁵Westminster Chronicle 54: “predecessores sui reges nobilissimi temporibus retroactis dominorum consilio regebantur, et quamdiu illorum gubernacio fuerat acceptata regnum Anglie magnificis prosperitatibus affluebat.”

to take the full burden of control upon themselves.”³⁶ In reporting the events leading up to the Merciless Parliament of 1388 -- the culmination of the nobles’ campaign to wrest Richard’s court favorites from their powerful influence on the king -- chroniclers describe the relations between Richard and his intimate friends in a sexually-charged discourse that presents the king as the passive, “seduced” victim of the machinations of evil, perverse men.

In the course of his account of the conflict between the nobles and Richard’s favorites in 1387, Henry Knighton refers to the king’s closest friends -- Robert de Vere, Michael de la Pole, Alexander Neville, Robert Tresilian, and Nicholas Brembre -- as “the king’s five [abominable] seducers.”³⁷ And, commenting on Michael de la Pole’s influence on the king during the French invasion scare of 1386, the author of the *Historia* observes that “the king was completely deluded, seduced, and overthrown.”³⁸ Even more revealing is Walsingham’s rubric for his report on the events directly

³⁶*Westminster Chronicle* 54: “nitebantur totum onus gubernacionis supra se assumere.”

³⁷Knighton 392: “quinque nephandi seductores regis.” Martin oddly omits “abominable” from his translation. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), defines *nefandus, a, um* as “wicked, impious, heinous” when referring to persons, and “abominable” for “other things involved in wicked conduct.” I am reading *nephandi* here as “abominable” since the chronicler is referring not merely to the men’s character but also the actions they perform on the king. Furthermore, it situates the term in a biblical/religious context which is perhaps closer to the meaning Knighton had in mind given that he was an Augustinian canon who devotes many pages to the Lollard controversy.

³⁸*Historia* 98: “rex circumquaque delusus, seductus et subplantus est.” See Saul, 135-47 for a discussion of Michael de la Pole’s policy of appeasement in the years 1383-85, and concerning 1386, 151-58.

following the Parliament of 1386: “the king is encircled by seducers.” Walsingham writes that “the king, against the wishes of the nobles [who voted to impeach de la Pole because of illegal acts he committed], made him [de la Pole] live with him, and with the duke of Ireland and the archbishop of York, Alexander Neville, who then incited the king against the nobles.”³⁹ Walsingham’s language not only suggests that the king is harboring a criminal but also that this criminal is sheltered under the king’s roof together with de Vere and Neville. The picture Walsingham creates of Richard “encircled” by his favorites, inciting him against the nobles, presents the king in a situation where he is physically in the presence of his intimate friends who assume an active role vis-à-vis Richard. In fact, physical contact between Richard and his intimates is suggested in that *commovere* not only means “to incite” but also “to move violently,” “to shake.”

Walsingham’s scenario also includes a report of how these men “seduce” the king: “they whispered that the king was not, in effect, king but only in name, and in the

³⁹Walsingham, *Chronicon Angliae* 374: “Rex a seductoribus circumvenitur ... rex, contra vota procerum, fecit eum [Michael de la Pole] cohabitare sibi, una cum duce Hiberniae et archiepiscopo Eboracensi, domino Alexandro Nevyle; qui extunc commoverunt regem contra dominos.” The Westminster Chronicle, in contrast, merely reports that “The king ... not only allowed Michael de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, to enjoy his freedom but kept him in his own society, so that wherever circumstances took the king he was henceforward joined by the earl [Rex ... permisit dominum Michaellem de Poole comitem Southfolchie libertate gaudere et penes eum retinuit, et ad quemcumque locum se divertere contingebat deinceps fuit ipse cum eo]” (178-79). Thus, in the discussion that follows, I point out how Walsingham’s language creates a particular picture of Richard’s relations with his favorites at this time. For the actual articles of impeachment brought against Michael de la Pole, see Knighton, 362-69. For an in-depth study of the affair, see J. S. Roskell, *The Impeachment of Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, in 1386 in the Context of the Reign of Richard II* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984).

future, none of his own laws would come forth if the nobles were to enjoy so much power."⁴⁰ Although he does not directly state it, Walsingham implies that de Vere and the others were "whispering" the above *to* the king; otherwise it is difficult to understand why Richard would take a stand against the nobles. That the men "whispered" these remarks to him suggests a secretive communicative environment in which the interlocutors are in close proximity with one another; that they manage to "incite" him assumes that these intimately spoken words are emotionally charged. Thus, we are given a picture of Richard surrounded by his most intimate friends who, while positioning themselves very near the king, convince him to follow their advice -- advice from men who are depicted elsewhere as "traitors." Since it is unlikely that Walsingham (or his source) was present during these conversations, it is a clear illustration of how a chronicler creates a particularly negative scenario of male-male intimacy.

Walsingham goes on to observe that "from that time the king estranged himself from meeting together with the nobles, but with those men [i.e. his favorites] he walked and jested continuously and cultivated unions."⁴¹ Here again, Walsingham renders Richard's relations with his favorites in language that highlights male-male intimacy. It is interesting to note that *coetus* means not only "meeting together" but also "sexual union." While Walsingham is not necessarily suggesting that Richard instead of

⁴⁰Walsingham, *Chronicon Angliae* 374: "susurrantes regem non in effectu esse regem, sed nomine tenus, futurumque, ut nihil sui juris exsisteret, si domini tanta potestate gauderent." Additional meanings of *susurrare*, "to murmur or mutter," do not contradict the substance of my argument.

⁴¹Walsingham, *Chronicon Angliae* 374: "Ab illo ergo tempore abalienavit se rex a coetu procerum, et cum istis jugiter gradiebatur, jocabatur, et consilia exercebat."

engaging in sexual union with the nobles is cultivating such unions with his favorites, he nevertheless draws attention to the very personal and intimate nature of the king's relations with his closest advisers. I would, therefore, suggest that "meeting together" and "cultivated unions" connote an association informed by emotional intimacy. That the king is said to have "estranged" himself from the nobles implies that a king normally should be coupled with his advisers in a form of marriage. Thus, as I discussed in the previous section, Richard is not being condemned for cultivating close unions with other men, but rather, with the *wrong* men. It is unlikely that Walsingham would have commented on the extent of Richard's playful activities with his advisers if they had been the right ones.

Thomas Favent, in his narrative of the events surrounding the Merciless Parliament, describes the actions of Richard's counsellors: "they blinded the natural character of the king with their snakelike mouths, their desires for office, their flatteries, wanton words, and allurements to such an extent that [the king] was entrapped in all of their poisonous conspiracies and desires."⁴² Like Walsingham, Favent creates a sexually-charged scenario where Richard's favorites employ "wanton words" and "allurements" -- words with strong romantic/sexual connotations -- to manipulate him. The young king's "natural" -- untainted, pure -- character is corrupted -- even, in a

⁴²Thomas Favent, Historia sive Narracio de Modo et Forma Mirabilis Parliamenti apud Westmonasterium, ed. M. McKisack, Camden Miscellany 14 (London: Offices of the Society, 1926) 3: "eorum serpentini oris colloquiis, ambicionibus, adulacionibus, laciuiis verbis, et blandimentis indolem regem obcecarunt in tantum quod omnibus eorum venenosis conspiracionibus et desideriis illaqueatus." I am reading "obcecarunt" as a variant spelling of *occaecarunt*.

sense, violated -- by the cunning, "poisonous" desires of his intimate friends. He is helpless, "entrapped" in their self-serving plans. Although Richard's position as seducer is implied in this narrative because, as king, he can distribute offices and other favors. Favent's scenario clearly focuses on Richard as a passive, seduced victim.

Some of the articles of appeal brought forth by the Lords Appellant at the "Merciless" Parliament of February 1388 focus on the personal relations between Richard and his favorites. Richard is consistently presented as the innocent victim of manipulating men. While the articles do not actually state, or even imply, that sexual acts transpired between the king and his closest friends, they, nevertheless, describe a scenario of intimacy that has sexual undertones. The first article states that these men took advantage of the young, innocent king, "entirely engross[ing] in all things his love and firm faith and belief," turning him against his "loyal lords."⁴³ Furthermore, by "impairing and diminishing his royal prerogative and regality *they made him so far obey them that he was sworn to be governed, counselled, and guided by them.* By virtue of which oath *they kept him so long in obedience* to their false thoughts and imaginations and actions."⁴⁴ Thus, the opening article sets the scene: the youthful king is acted upon

⁴³Westminster Chronicle 240: "veiantz le tendresce del age nostre seignur le roi et la innocence de sa roial persone luy firent entendre com pur verite tantz de faux choses par eux countre loialte et bone foy ymaginez et controvez qe entierement eux luy firent de tout a eux doner son amour et ferme foy et credence." The thirty-nine articles of appeal are printed in their entirety in this edition of the Westminster Chronicle which the editors have collated with the text of the Rotuli Parliamentorum.

⁴⁴Westminster Chronicle 240: "emblemissantz et amenussantz sa roial prerogative et regalie, luy firent si avant obeiser qil fuist jurre destre gouverne, conseille et demesne par eux. Par vertue de quele serement eux luy ont si longement tenuz en obeissance de lour faux appensementz et ymaginacions et faitz" (emphasis mine).

by more experienced men. The language suggests that force of some kind was used to make Richard yield to their “false thoughts and imaginations.” While this force need not have been physical (or sexual), these men apparently exercised some power of persuasion on the impressionable young king. Since chroniclers are unanimous in observing that Richard was beguiled by flattery, I would suggest that this article accepts as given that the king’s favorites used pleasurable means to “keep him” so long under their control. In addition, this article ironically evokes chivalric fidelity in that the king is said to have sworn an oath to obey men who were in fact his social inferiors, thus presenting Richard as a vassal to his favorites. The text suggests that Richard’s emotional vulnerability allows such an “unnatural” relation to occur -- unnatural in the sense that the king “of right ... ought to have been governed” by his “loyal lords.”⁴⁵ In this latter instance, Richard would not be a vassal forced to comply with the wishes of his “lords” but rather a king who merely accepted wise counsel.

The subject of oaths between Richard and his intimates is taken up again in the second article, stating that Robert de Vere, Michael de la Pole, and Alexander Neville “made him [Richard] swear and assure them that he will maintain and support them, to live and die with them. And so ... they have put him more in servitude against his honour, estate, and regality.”⁴⁶ As in the first article, Richard is depicted as a passive

⁴⁵Westminster Chronicle 240: “ses loialx seignurs et lieges par queux il duist de droit pluis avoir este governe.”

⁴⁶Westminster Chronicle 242: “ont fait luy jurrer et asseurer envers eux qil les meintiendra et sustiendra a viver et a morir ove eux. Et ... ils luy ont mys pluis en servage encountre son honour, estat et regalie.”

partner in the relationship, having been “made” to enter into a life-long bond -- a bond expressed in terms associated with chivalric brotherhood. However, chivalric bonds, as presented in romances at least, do not generally involve forcing one of the partners to enter into this type of relation. The articles, while drawing on the language of chivalric brotherhood, offer a view of same-sex relations strikingly different from that idealized in romances. Both articles, rather than describe the solemn accord allegedly entered into by Richard and his favorites as one that serves the needs of both parties, view Richard as having been placed firmly under the control of his friends. Richard’s “brothers” do not allow the king to meet with the lords except in their presence.

The bond which linked Richard and his favorites is further vilified in the fourth article which states that de Vere et al. “by their false covin and accroachment of their false wickedness, led and evilly advised our lord the king so that his personal presence which he ought of his duty show to the great lords ... was not so shown save at the pleasure and allowance of the said [favorites].”⁴⁷ This implies that de Vere and the other men not only control the movements of the king but also are constantly in his physical presence. Otherwise, how could they prevent the lords from approaching the king at some time? By describing Richard’s intimate homosocial relations as “false covins,” this article situates them within the realm of unlawful, conspiratory (immoral?)

⁴⁷Westminster Chronicle 242: “par lour faux covyn et accrochement de lour faux malveistes mesnerunt et mal conseillerent nostre seignur le roy si qe sa presence quell’ il doit de soun devoir moustrer a les grandes seignurs ... ne le fist point forsque a la volunte et a la taille des ditz Alexandre ercevesqe Deverwyk’, Robert de Veer etc., Michel de la Pole etc., Robert Tresilian etc., Nichol Brembre etc.” While *covin* here does not denote an assembly of witches, nevertheless, the assembly is stigmatized by the modifier, *faux*.

perverse?) associations.

Walsingham offers a scathing portrayal of the courtiers surrounding Richard II during the French invasion scare of 1385-86: "the military were once hard-trained but now effeminate, once full of courage but now full of fear, once prudent but now foolish and weak."⁴⁸ And, in another passage, he is equally condemning: "these men were truly knights more of Venus than of Bellona, more capable in the bedchamber than on the battlefield, more vigorous with words than with weapons, wakeful in speaking but sleepy in the performing of the acts of war."⁴⁹ Thus, according to Walsingham, these men do not merely fall short of being exemplary models of chivalry but they are the very antithesis of manly men. By referring to them as "effeminate," fearful, and weak, Walsingham clearly calls their masculinity into question. And while he implies that their sexual activity is expressed within the heteronormative courtly tradition -- a tradition that, however, positions men in a passive role -- he clearly taints them with the mark of "other-than-normal" men. Moreover, considering that England was threatened with invasion at this time, these men are, in a sense, depicted as pacifist traitors. Directly following the above passage, Walsingham specifies more clearly which men he is

⁴⁸Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, vol. 2, 127: "milites, olim exercitati, sed modo effoeminati, olim animosi, sed modo meticulosi, olim cordati, sed nunc excordes et enervati."

⁴⁹Walsingham, *Chronicon Angliae* 375-76: "hi nimirum milites plus erant Veneris quam Bellonae, plus potentes in thalamo quam in campo, plus lingua quam lancea viguerunt, ad dicendum vigiles, ad faciendum acta martia somnolenti." A nearly identical passage is found in the *Historia Anglicana*. However, here as in previous instances where passages are found in both texts, I use the *Chronicon Angliae* because it is believed to have been written earlier. See note 11.

referring to: “therefore, these men who are encircling the king care to conceive of nothing which is fitting only for a soldier.”⁵⁰

Two literary works of the period draw attention to fashion and thus also offer a picture of the men at Richard’s court. The author of “On the Times,” composed c. 1388, offers the following observation:

A strayth bende hath here hose,
 They may noght. I suppose.
 Qwen oder men knelys.
 Thei stond at here helys,
 For horting of here hosyn.⁵¹

The “strayth bende” of their hose clearly implies that it fits tight to their skin and thus could tear if the men kneeled. Patricia Eberle’s comments on male fashion of this time support my reading of the poem. She notes that in addition to “doublets ... which were worn tight to emphasize a man’s waist,” men wore “tight-fitting fashions like ornamental hose and the cod-piece.”⁵² In wearing tight-fitting ornamental hose, these

⁵⁰Walsingham, Historia Anglicana, vol. 2, 156: “Hii igitur. circa Regem conversantes, nihil quod deceret tantum militem informare curabant.” This passage is not found in the Chronicon Angliae.

⁵¹Thomas Wright, ed., Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History Composed During the Period from the Accession of Edward III to that of Richard III, vol. I (London: Longman, 1859) 275.

⁵²Patricia J. Eberle, “The Politics of Courtly Style in the Court of Richard II,” The Spirit of the Court: Selected Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Robert A. Taylor (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985) 170-71.

men were certainly displaying their bodies. Moreover, the cod-piece, which Eberle points out was probably introduced during the reign of Richard II, both hides and draws attention to the genitals of the wearer. Although probably composed a decade after "On the Times," Chaucer's "Parson's Tale" contains an intriguing passage which underscores not only the exhibitionism of the wearers of contemporary fashions but also highlights the sexually-provocative nature of the clothes.⁵³ The Parson condemns "thise kuttid sloppes, or haynselyns, that thurgh hire shortnesse ne covere nat the shameful membres of man, to wikked entente."⁵⁴ Apparently not all men wore cod-pieces, for the Parson dwells on how mens' genitals were prominently displayed: "somme of hem shewen the boce of hir shap, and the horrible swollen membres ... in the wrappyng of hir hoses" (422). That these men chose to exhibit their private parts (i.e. that it was not an accident of fashion) is suggested by the active verb, "shewen." The sense that fashionable courtiers of the time exhibited themselves in a nearly naked manner for all to see is also suggested by the Parson's observation that "the buttokes of hem faren as it were the hyndre part of a she-ape in the fulle of the moone" (423). While the Parson might condemn the courtiers' "wikked entente" in exposing themselves in this way, another person might find such display provocatively pleasing. And, apparently some were pleased, if one accepts Walsingham's claim that contemporary knights served

⁵³For a discussion of the probable date of the "Parson's Tale," see Helen Cooper, Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) 398-99, and The Riverside Chaucer, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 956-57. Most recent scholars suggest a very late date.

⁵⁴Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, The Riverside Chaucer, X, 421. Additional citations will be given in the text.

Venus more than Bellona.⁵⁵ Although there is admittedly nothing in these two works which suggests that men were attracted to one another, nevertheless, both literary examples in illustrating the sensual atmosphere of the court offer a social context in which to read the chroniclers' observations -- a context that underscores what I have identified as the chroniclers' sexually-charged scenarios.

Despite the fact that it is highly unlikely that all of Richard's intimate friends wore such fashions, particularly Alexander Neville, archbishop of York, and the late middle-aged Michael de la Pole, Walsingham situates Richard's inner circle within this society of unmanly, indecently-clad, licentious courtiers. He views them as men who cannot even appreciate -- let alone carry out -- an exemplary act of military prowess such as that performed by the earl of Arundel who destroyed French forts at Brest in 1387: "those men who were with the king, the duke of Ireland, the earl of Suffolk, Michael de la Pole, and Simon Burley, cast an evil eye at so much uprightness, while perverting their own actions and telling him [the king] that he [the earl of Arundel] performed no extraordinary work."⁵⁶ Walsingham was, however, not the only chronicler to verbally malign the character of Richard's favorites. Knighton refers to them as "abominable seducers" which not only connotes seduction/manipulation but also

⁵⁵Although the Parson is much more condemnatory of men, he does charge some women with displaying "likerousnesse and pride" in their dress (429).

⁵⁶Walsingham, *Chronicon Angliae* 375: "invidebant tantae probitati qui cum rege erant, dux Hiberniae, et comes Southfolchiae, M[ichael] atte Pool, et Symon de Burleya, depravantes acta sua, et dicentes eum nullum opus egregium perpetrasse." *Depravare* can mean to corrupt/pervert in a verbal or moral sense. As I will discuss shortly, the chroniclers' language conflates the two.

implies something sinful, not-to-be-named. In another place he attaches the modifier “abominable” to the already vilifying label, “predators.”⁵⁷ And, Favent refers to the king’s nearest advisers as men who were “living perversely [*viciose*]” and “deluding the king.”⁵⁸ The “perverse acts” that Walsingham refers to or this comment by Favent does not, of course, necessarily suggest perverse *sexual* acts. However, in both instances, the writers are charging Richard’s favorites with diverting from what they and, by implication, the noble faction, consider respectable behavior for men of their rank.⁵⁹ Moreover, in using “perverse” within a discourse that accentuates the intimate association between Richard and his friends -- an association whereby these men seduce the innocent king into opposing what is good and right for England -- the chroniclers are clearly suggesting “perverse” in its immoral sense. That Richard himself was viewed as one of the “perverse” is illustrated by John Gower, who, writing about the removal of Richard’s favorites in 1388, observes that the Lords Appellant “thus molded a reformed and reinvigorated King.”⁶⁰ Implied here is that the king, no longer the passive, seduced

⁵⁷Knighton 393: “nephandi seductores;” “istorum nephandorum predonum” (416). In this latter instance, Martin translates “nephandorum” as “wicked” (he omits it altogether in the former). I would suggest that “abominable” is a better choice. See note 37.

⁵⁸Favent 1: “viciose viuentes, dictum regem deludentes.”

⁵⁹I have drawn on Jonathan Dollimore’s discussion of perversion in Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) 104.

⁶⁰John Gower, Cronica Tripertita, The Complete Works of John Gower, ed G. C. Macaulay, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902) 220: “Sic emendatum Regem faciunt renouatum.” English translation is taken from The Major Latin Works of John Gower, trans. Eric. W. Stockton (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1962) 297.

victim of “abominable” men, is now “manly” according to the standards imposed by the nobles.

III. The Specter of Sodomy

In the revised version of his Chronicon Angliae, Walsingham adds the following sentence to his commentary on the elevation of Robert de Vere to the position of duke of Ireland in 1386: “he [Richard] was pleased with him [de Vere] so much, he worshipped and loved him so much, not without the disgrace, as it is said, of an *obscene intimacy*.”⁶¹ Why did Walsingham insert this sentence at least ten years after the fact?⁶² I am not concerned with proving whether Walsingham’s charge is true or not; the fact that he stated it is, however, quite significant because Walsingham now blatantly accuses Richard of engaging in behavior which he and other chroniclers have implied right along in what I have identified as their sexualized depictions of the relations between Richard and his favorites.⁶³ How could homosocial relations be more stigmatized, how could one taint the image of a political foe more than to raise the specter of sodomy? That the pro-Lancastrian Walsingham alluded to the unnameable sin

⁶¹Walsingham, Historia Anglicana, vol. 2, 148: “tantum afficiebatur eidem, tantum coluit et amavit eundem, non sine nota, prout fertur, *familiaritatis obscoenae*” (emphasis mine).

⁶²Stow, “Richard II” dates the manuscript, Royal 13.E.ix, at 1397 (83).

⁶³Bowers disagrees with modern historians, such as Stow and Steel, who dismiss Walsingham’s charges as Lancastrian propaganda, and, I believe, justly argues that “there is no sound logic leading to the conclusion that an unflattering report, motivated by political sides-taking and personal spite, is necessarily a false report” (20). See Steel 112; Stow, “Richard II” 86-87.

during the time when Richard was waging a campaign against the former Appellants cannot be overlooked.⁶⁴ Other writers critical of Richard's actions during the latter part of his reign also suggest that some of the king's personal relations were indecent.

John Gower, in the revised version of his Vox Clamantis (c. 1386), addresses the king: "O king, banish your indolence, withstand your carnal passions, and stoutly take the path of righteousness."⁶⁵ He suggests that Richard is not performing his duty as husband: "O king, avoid letting blind lust of the flesh arouse you toward its allurements. Instead, you as a husband should enjoy your own wife according to law."⁶⁶ Although Gower implies that Richard's lust was directed at the opposite sex, particularly in his reference to King David's womanizing,⁶⁷ the chronicles offer no indication that Richard's affections were directed towards women. In fact, in his later Chronica Tripertita, Gower, like the chroniclers, refers only to same-sex relations. He observes

⁶⁴In July 1397, Richard called for the arrest of the earl of Arundel, earl of Warwick, and duke of Gloucester. For a discussion of Richard's tyrannical rule in the late 1390s, see Saul 366-404.

⁶⁵John Gower, Vox Clamantis, The Complete Works of John Gower, ed. G. C. Macaulay, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902) VI. 841-42: "Rex, tibi pigriciem pellas et motibus obsta / Carnis, et ad mores arripe fortis iter." English translation taken from Stockton 239. According to John H. Fisher, John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer (New York: New York UP, 1964), the b version of Vox Clamantis was completed by 1386 (102).

⁶⁶Gower, Vox Clamantis VI. 853-55: "O super omne fuge, pie rex, ne ceca voluptas / Carnis ad illicebra prouocet acta tua; / Sponsus set propria de legibus vtere sponsa." Stockton 240.

⁶⁷Gower, Vox Clamantis VI. 862-64: "Look at the doings of king David which the Bible has shown: as time passed, sin enveloped him until [i.e. to the extent that] love of woman ravaged his heart [Biblia que docuit, respice facta Dauid: / Involuit regem processu temporis error, / Eius dum rapuit cor mulieris amor]." Stockton 240.

that Sir John Beauchamp “infatuated the heart of the King.” and that, regarding Nicholas Brembre, “the King had cherished this man like a consort.”⁶⁸ Thus, Gower’s two accounts depict Richard as one who indulged in illicit “carnal passions” and only names men as possible participants in such acts.

The Historia offers a summary description of Richard. Although written in the early fifteenth century, its attention to physical details and behavior suggests a firsthand account:

Indeed, this king Richard was of average stature. His hair was gray, face white, round, and feminine, occasionally changed by blushing, speech brief and stuttering, inconstant in character ... devoted to excessive and riotous living, he was a great reveler so that sometimes he spent half the night without sleeping, sometimes even the entire night until the early morning in drinking bouts and other *unnameable things*.⁶⁹

While the physical description is apparently of the king in the late 1390s, the portrait is not limited to one particular moment. For the writer also refers to Richard’s clinging to the counsel of youths, excessive spending on elaborate feasts and clothing, as well as his

⁶⁸Gower, Chronica Tripertita 149: “cor regis et infatuauit;” “Hunc quasi consortem dilexit rex” (156). English translation taken from Stockton 295, 296.

⁶⁹Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi 166: “Iste nempe rex Ricardus stature erat communis. Inerant enim ei crines glauci, facies alba et rotunda et feminia, interdum sanguinis fleumatice uiciata, lingua brevis et balbuciens, moribus inconstans ... cupiditate detentus, luxurie nimis deditus, uigilator maximus, ita ut aliquando dimidiam noctem, non nunquam usque mane totam noctem in potacionibus et aliis *non dicendis* in sompnem duceret” (emphasis mine). English translation is taken from Ordelle G. Hill and Gardiner Stillwell, “A Conduct Book for Richard II,” Philological Quarterly 73 (1994) 322.

unsuccessful foreign military campaigns.⁷⁰ The “unnameable things” can certainly be interpreted as a reference to sodomy and since it is unlikely that the writer or his source actually witnessed such activities, he is undoubtedly drawing on contemporary rumor. That this unique and neatly constructed portrait of the soon-to-be-dethroned king ends with an account of illicit behavior suggests that, according to the author, the final word on Richard -- what will be remembered most about him -- is a hint of sodomy.

Adam of Usk was evidently present when “a number of doctors, bishops and others” discussed the reasons for deposing Richard II.⁷¹ He reports the following: “they decided that perjuries, sacrileges, *sodomitical acts*, dispossession of his subjects, the reduction of his people to servitude, lack of reason, and incapacity to rule, to all of which King Richard was notoriously prone, were sufficient reasons ... for deposing him.”⁷² The charge of “sodomitical acts” is not given any more prominence than “perjuries” or “sacrileges” -- it is merely another example of the misconduct of which

⁷⁰*Historia* 166: “iuuenibus adherebat, magis eorum quam illorum [i.e. antiquorum procerum] consilium sequens ... in conuiujs et indumentis ultra modum splendidus, ad bella contra hostes infortunatus et timidus.”

⁷¹Adam of Usk, *Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377-1421*, ed. and trans. Chris Given-Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 63: “per sertos doctores, episcopos et alios, quorum presencium notator unus extiterat, deponendi regem Ricardum ... committebatur disputanda.” Given-Wilson accepts Usk’s claim that he was present at the meeting because elsewhere in the chronicle “Usk refers to himself as *compiler presencium* -- ‘the compiler of the present work’.” Given-Wilson goes on to explain that “‘Notator’ had more of the meaning of a notary or scribe, a person publicly authorized to draw up memoranda and so forth” (lxxxiv).

⁷²Adam of Usk 62: “Per quos determinatum fuit quod periuria, sacrilegia, *sodomidica*, subditorum exinnanatio, populi in seruitutem redactio, uecordia, et ad regendum inutilitas, quibus rex Ricardus notorie fuit infectus ... deponendi Ricardum cause fuerant sufficientes”(emphasis mine).

Richard was “notoriously prone.”⁷³ Chris Given-Wilson notes that Usk is quoting from the deposition of Frederick II by Pope Innocent IV at the Council of Lyons in 1245. However, he points out that Usk has substituted “sodomitical acts” for “heresy.”⁷⁴ While Usk might very well have taken the initiative in making this substitution, it is more likely that the “doctors, bishops and others” at that meeting included the charge of sodomy in their discussion of Richard’s misdeeds, and Usk, as *notator*, merely reported what was discussed.⁷⁵ Interestingly, in the actual process of deposition, as reported in the Annales Ricardi Secundi, there is no mention of sodomitical acts.⁷⁶ While Richard was not deposed because he allegedly committed sodomy, Usk suggests that at the meeting this charge was as substantiated as Richard’s “perjuries” and “incapacity to rule.”⁷⁷ Usk’s chronicle should be viewed together with the other chronicles I have

⁷³Similarly, in my earlier discussion of the Templars, indecent acts are included among other charges such as heresy and the worship of idols. Thus, in both cases the accusation of sodomy is used politically to further denigrate the character of a particular individual or group.

⁷⁴Adam of Usk 63n.4.

⁷⁵Given-Wilson concludes that Usk was probably “entrusted with the task of drawing up an official record of the deliberations or decisions of the deposition committee” (lxxxiv).

⁷⁶See Annales Ricardi Secundi, Regis Angliae, in Johannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneфорde, Monachorum S. Albani, Chronica et Annales, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longmans, 1866) 252-87. An English translation of the thirty-three articles of the deposition is printed in Chris Given-Wilson, ed. and trans., Chronicles of the Revolution 1397-1400: The Reign of Richard II (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993) 172-84.

⁷⁷For a discussion of Henry of Bolingbroke’s dispute with Richard and his supporters, see Chris Given-Wilson, “Richard II, Edward II, and the Lancastrian Inheritance,” English Historical Review 109 (1994): 553-71.

examined, and in stating openly what is merely hinted at in the other narratives, it is a fitting conclusion to the politicized discourse of Richard's same-sex relations.

Thus, the specter of sodomy hovers over historical narratives of the reign of Richard II as it did earlier in the century with Edward II. There is no actual proof that sodomitical acts took place between either king and one or more of his intimate friends. Nevertheless, in both cases, chroniclers, in their condemnations of each king's personal conduct with his favorites, create scenarios of same-sex relations that are viewed as detrimental to the realm. In this manner, a king's intimate associations become politicized -- associations which under different circumstances might have been not only tolerated, but also viewed as normal. For, chivalric treatises having currency in the fourteenth century encouraged close contact between knights in that young men were urged to study the behavior and skills demonstrated by more experienced "model" knights, which, as I discussed in the previous chapter, left open the possibility for affectionate and eroticized associations to be formed between student and teacher. In addition, chivalric romances such as Amys and Amylion and the French Prose Lancelot valorize male same-sex love. Thus, fourteenth-century England should not necessarily be viewed as homophobic regarding relations between men of the upper class. And, I would add that this holds true for intimate associations between a king and his court favorites -- as long as those favorites are the *right* men. For when a king's personal relations interfere with the interests of powerful nobles, same-sex love is vilified by the chroniclers of the time who, in aligning themselves with the threatened nobles, reduce male-male affection to blind seduction of an innocent king by evil men.

My survey of discourses of same-sex desire in the fourteenth century reveals how readily sodomy, and physical intimacy between men in general, is used to taint the character of those men who are viewed as political opponents or, as in the case of the Templars, convenient victims of a politically and economically-motivated campaign. Historical documents, whether testimonies of some of the witnesses at the Templar trials, chronicle narratives of the reigns of Edward II and Richard II, or the rather detailed accounts of Arnold of Verniolle's sexual activities, offer evidence that there was a richly varied language readily available for expressing the unnameable -- a language that was all the more effective in maligning the characters of the alleged offenders because it arose within a cultural context partly defined by strong homosocial bonds. In the texts I have examined, male-male attachments are presented as either excessive and exclusionary (Edward II, Richard II), aggressive attacks on unwilling victims (the Templars), or, encounters characterized by unstable role-switching (Arnold of Verniolle), and thus, in a sense, viewed as threatening by those representing authoritative institutions or the interests of powerful men. While these various fourteenth-century discourses of same-sex desire all find expression in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, the narratives focused on Edward's and Richard's relations with their court favorites are most relevant in contextualizing what I read as the politicization and subsequent destruction of the intense bond between Troilus and Pandarus. As in the attacks on Edward and Richard, the move against homosocial affection in Chaucer's text is not an expression of homophobia per se, but rather an illustration of how, in a culture characterized, in part, by strong homosocial ties, homophobia easily surfaces in

response to particular political situations -- situations where same-sex intimacy is viewed as dangerous to the realm.

Epilogue: Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, and Richard's Court Favorites

During the years Chaucer was composing Troilus and Criseyde, namely, 1382-1386, he was an esquire in the king's household and controller of the petty custom for the port of London.⁷⁸ Most relevant for my study is the fact that Chaucer knew, to varying degrees, most of Richard's "seducers." On October 12, 1385, Chaucer was appointed one of the justices of the peace for Kent, and served under Simon Burley.⁷⁹ Burley, who fell victim to the purge of Richard's favorites by the Lords Appellant, had earlier been Richard's tutor and allegedly first brought Robert de Vere into the young king's company.⁸⁰ Given his proximity to Burley, Chaucer would have been well positioned to hear of criticism directed at Richard's relations with de Vere and the other favorites. Moreover, he had contact with de Vere himself. Strohm notes that since de Vere occupied the position of the king's chamberlain, he might very well have been the

⁷⁸Regarding the date of composition of Troilus and Criseyde, see Strohm, Social Chaucer 207n.41 and Patterson, Chaucer and the Subject of History 156n.149.

⁷⁹Donald R. Howard, Chaucer: His Life, His Works, His World (New York: Dutton, 1987) 383-84.

⁸⁰This is stated in the twelfth article of appeal: "by the contrivance of the said Simon, Robert de Vere, then earl of Oxford, was brought into the king's society [par procurement du dit Simond, Robert de Veer adonque conte Doxenford fuist mesne au compaignie du roy]" (Westminster Chronicle 276-77).

one who signed Chaucer's petition for a permanent deputy in 1385.⁸¹ While Strohm concedes that "the connection may have been nothing more than official business, and Vere himself was more often than not absent from his post, he and Chaucer must have had some direct contact."⁸² Strohm also maintains that Chaucer would have known the other favorites, particularly Nicholas Brembre, who "[a]s collector of the wool customs ... [was] Chaucer's immediate superior throughout most of the latter's term as controller [i.e. 1382-86]."⁸³

Although Troilus and Criseyde was most likely completed by the time of the Parliament of 1386, which Chaucer attended as M.P. for Kent, he had undoubtedly caught wind of the storm of protest by the powerful nobles -- the murmurings referred to by Walsingham -- against Richard's favored treatment of his intimate friends.⁸⁴ That Chaucer was well-informed of the political situation is suggested by Derek Pearsall, who speculates that "Chaucer was 'elected' as a reliable king's man in anticipation of

⁸¹Strohm, Social Chaucer 27-28. This is supported by a document printed by Martin Crow and Clair C. Olson, eds. Chaucer Life-Records (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966). "Royal Assent to Chaucer's petition for a permanent deputy in the office of controller," which is signed "Oxen'." Crow and Olson comment that "the current hand which added the notification of assent and the name 'oxen' below is probably that of Robert de Vere, the ninth earl of Oxford, who was then Chaucer's superior in the royal household" (169).

⁸²Strohm, Social Chaucer 28.

⁸³Strohm, Social Chaucer 28. For a thorough discussion of Chaucer's circle of acquaintances, see 24-46.

⁸⁴Walsingham, Chronicon Angliae 372. See my earlier discussion.

some difficult passages in the October Parliament.”⁸⁵ Of course, even if Chaucer was possibly viewed “as a reliable king’s man” it does not necessarily mean that he wholeheartedly and consistently supported the king’s faction or that he sympathized with the victims of the nobles’ campaign. My reading of Troilus and Criseyde does not hinge on settling the question of Chaucer’s affinity, but rather I would propose that the tumultuous political events which Chaucer himself witnessed or at least heard about find expression in his work. That Troilus and Criseyde is, in part, a translation of an earlier work does not, I believe, diminish its topicality.⁸⁶ Given the long association between England (and London) and Troy, Chaucer’s decision to “translate” the Filostrato in the 1380s can in itself be viewed as politically informed.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Derek Pearsall, The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 203. It was at this parliament that Richard’s chancellor, Michael de la Pole, was impeached.

⁸⁶Similarly, Gardiner Stillwell, “The Political Meaning of Chaucer’s Tale of Melibee,” Speculum 19 (1944), admits that “Melibee, being a translation of a foreign work, cannot be said to have an exclusive bearing upon any one political situation of Chaucer’s time ... [yet] certainly all men would hear in the tale echoes of the problems which were buzzing in everybody’s ears” (433). For a more general survey of Chaucer’s political position during the last fifteen years of his life, see S. Sanderlin, “Chaucer and Ricardian Politics,” Chaucer Review 22 (1988) 171-84.

⁸⁷John Clark, in “Trinovantum -- Evolution of a Legend,” Journal of Medieval History 7 (1981), observes that the association goes back at least as far as Geoffrey of Monmouth who established the connection between London and Trinovantum, the legendary Trojan settlement on the banks of the Thames (143). This connection also surfaces in literature of the fourteenth Century such as St. Erkenwald, Gower’s Vox Clamantis, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Patterson notes that “[s]ubstantial and specific political value was ... invested in the idea of Trojan origins -- a fact that gives the literary initiative undertaken by Chaucer, who remained loyal to his beleaguered monarch throughout the factional 1380s, an inevitably political dimension” (Chaucer and the Subject of History 94). In addition, the fact that England was faced with invasion by the French, particularly in 1385 and 1386, also adds to the topicality of the

In the discussion of male same-sex desire in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde which occupies the remaining chapters, I will draw on the sociocultural and political homosocial contexts I have outlined thus far.

Trojan story. For a discussion of the invasion panic during these years, see John Barnie, War in Medieval Society: Social Values and the Hundred Years War 1337-99 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) 43-48. I explore how these contemporary concerns find expression in Troilus and Criseyde in "A Trojan Knight at the Ricardian Court: Chaucer's Troilus Engaged in Fourteenth-Century Contexts," M. A. Thesis, Queens College of the City University of New York, 1995.

Chapter 4

Troilus and Criseyde in Chivalric Contexts: Dramatizing Same-Sex Interactions

In reworking Boccaccio's Filostrato, Chaucer, intentionally or not, situated his text in various chivalric contexts not present in the source text.¹ One may therefore refer to Chaucer's *chivalrization* of The Filostrato.² In the discussion that follows, I will explore how Troilus and Criseyde exemplifies, complicates, and dramatizes some of the key homosocial interactions illustrated or suggested in the chivalric texts I studied in the chapter two. I will begin with an investigation of male-male spectatorship in Chaucer's poem, paying particular attention to how Troilus is, at times, presented to the reader as a model knight. In addition, I will draw attention to instances where the narrative offers

¹I do not claim that Troilus and Criseyde is a romance but rather that it illustrates some characteristics of chivalric romances (as well as treatises), particularly expressions of chivalric ideals and homosocial relations. Chaucerians tend to agree that Troilus and Criseyde is generically a tragedy rather than a romance. For example, Paul Strohm, "Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives," Speculum 46 (1971), maintains that *tragedie* is the correct generic classification for Troilus and Criseyde, and observes: "often described as a romance, the narrative itself offers little support for this description in its vocabulary or its form ... *romaunce* appears to mean nothing more for Chaucer than narrative in Latin or Old French" (357). While accepting this generic classification, Monica E. McAlpine, The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978), problematizes it by situating Chaucer's poem in various contexts of medieval tragedy. See also Andrea Clough, "Medieval Tragedy and the Genre of Troilus and Criseyde," Medievalia et Humanistica 11 (1982): 211-27.

²Although in referring to Chaucer's *chivalrization* of the Filostrato I am drawing on C. S. Lewis's formulation, however, unlike Lewis, who argues that Chaucer's "medievalization" of Boccaccio's work includes the process by which Chaucer made his poem conform more accurately to "the orthodox erotic code" (25), I highlight how Troilus and Criseyde engages chivalric mores -- both reflecting and problematizing them.

readers the possibility of forming “imaginary” sadomasochistic identifications with Troilus. I will move on to an examination of homosocial intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus. After contextualizing Chaucer’s work with the treatises on friendship, I will delineate how the developing heterosexual love story serves to intensify the same-sex bond. The chapter then takes a psychoanalytical turn, in that I will study how Troilus and Criseyde dramatizes the process of identification presumably taking place between a novice knight and the model figure he wishes to emulate -- a process at the heart of chivalric society as presented particularly in the treatises. Drawing on Freud and his modern commentators, I will explore the interplay between identification and desire as Pandarus proceeds to construct an image of Troilus as a model knight and lover. I explore this phenomenon further in a detailed study of the consummation scene of book III, offering two readings, both from Pandarus’ point of view. First, I interpret the scene as a series of triangular configurations of desire, illustrating how, as the scene unfolds, Pandarus’ objects of identification and desire do not remain stable, and, thus, we are afforded a vivid depiction of the interplay between homoeroticism and heterosexual desire -- an interplay not uncommon in chivalric romances. Then, I review the scene as a dramatization of Pandarus’ fantasy, suggesting how it can be read as the culmination of his identification with Troilus’ pursuit of love. Throughout the chapter I endeavor to uncover various forms of homoeroticism -- all in some way belonging to chivalric tradition -- which surface in Chaucer’s text.

I. Observing a Model Knight

Troilus is periodically presented as a model chivalric knight, bearing many of the ideal qualities praised in chivalric treatises. As in other chivalric texts, several forms of male-male spectatorship are operative.³ In explaining the change that has occurred in Troilus since succumbing to love, the narrator describes how men have previously observed Troilus on the battlefield:

And yet was he, where so men wente or riden,
ffounde on the beste, and lengest tyme abiden
Ther peril was, and dide ek swich trauaille
In armes that to thenke it was merueille.⁴

This passage exemplifies what I have earlier referred to as the “implied gaze.”

³As in my discussion in chapter 2, I am not denying that there were female readers/listeners of chivalric texts. And I am certainly not suggesting that Troilus and Criseyde speaks only to male readers (the text itself contradicts such a claim). I am, however, limiting my study here to an examination of spectatorship in Chaucer’s text, operating both internally and externally, which, as in chivalric treatises and romances, invites some male readers to observe another male as a model knight. Paul Strohm, “Chaucer’s Audience,” Literature and History 5 (1977), notes that “Chaucer’s poetry found a ‘point of attachment’ in the support of a loyal audience,” which consisted primarily of knights, esquires, and gentlewomen, “because its content and form must in crucial ways have reflected or embodied their attitudes and social experiences” (34). In referring to a “point of attachment,” Strohm is drawing on Arnold Hauser; see Arnold Hauser, Philosophy of Art History (1958; New York: Meridian Books, 1963) 230. See also Strohm’s more detailed discussion of Chaucer’s audience in Social Chaucer 47-83. We can thus assume that at least some of Chaucer’s male readers responded to chivalric moments in the poem.

⁴Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, ed. B. A. Windeatt (London: Longman, 1984) 1.473-76. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition and will be documented in the text by book and line number. For printing purposes, here and in subsequent places, I render the Middle English “yogh” as “y.”

According to the narrator, men judge Troilus to be “on the beste” because they have actually seen him perform so exceptionally in battle. The text does not offer a detailed account of Troilus displaying military prowess but rather presents a composite sketch of several events from which the reader is invited to visualize the action. If we apply the concepts of visual reading put forth by Augustine and others to Chaucer’s text, then by summoning memories of observing an outstanding performance by a knight either in actual battle or in previous images created from other texts, the reader here visualizes Troilus fighting a protracted battle. The narrator’s own admission that “to thenke it was merueille” suggests the emotionally-informed quality of the visualization process.

Pandarus, whose emotional investment in Troilus’ image will be studied later in this chapter, also offers the reader material for constructing a mental picture of a model knight. He, too, reports what others have observed: “wel he wist, as fer as tonges spaken, / Ther nas a man of gretter hardinesse/ Thanne he, ne more desired worthinesse” (1.565-67). This passage is significant because it not only illustrates the operation of the implied gaze, thus demonstrating that male-male spectatorship informs the text, but also suggests that Troilus’ exemplary “worthinesse” is a quality that men *desire* to have. Recalling the passage in Charny’s Book of Chivalry which highlights how seductive the image of a model knight is for a novice who, too, wants to achieve “the highest honor in prowess,” this presentation of Troilus is that of a model knight embodying a quality which both implied and actual readers wish to emulate.⁵

Passages at the end of the first book exemplify all of the above characteristics of

⁵The passage in Charny’s text I am referring to is 16.38-43.

male-male spectatorship found in chivalric texts. The reader is invited to visualize a scenario where “in the feld he [Troilus] pleyde the leoun; Wo was that Grek that with hym mette a-day” (1.1074-75). The narrator reports how the people of Troy gaze lovingly at Troilus, the exemplary chivalric knight: “And in the town his manere tho forth ay / So goodly was, and gat hym so in grace, / That ecch hym loued that loked on his face” (1.1076-78).⁹ The list of superlatives describing Troilus’ ideal chivalric qualities reveals the narrator’s emotional investment in the object of his gaze:

he bicom the frendlieste wight.

The gentilest, and ek the mooste fre.

The thriftiest, and oon the beste knyght,

That in his tyme was or myghte be ... (1.1079-82)

These passages, although confined to the first book, nevertheless firmly position Chaucer’s text within the tradition of male-male spectatorship found in chivalric literature by inviting the reader to visualize a scenario, offering examples of the implied gaze, and suggesting the emotional involvement/seduction of the narrator and, by implication, the reader.

Although Pandarus is addressing Criseyde, he, like the narrator, offers the reader a picture of Troilus, the model knight: “In whom that alle vertue list habounde, / As alle trouthe and alle gentillesse, / Wisdom, honour, fredom, and worthinesse” (2.159-61). His portrait not only serves as a picture to be visualized by a reader but also illustrates the

⁹The attention to goodness and grace, and the fact that this is reflected in Troilus’ face, echo the Christian undertones of chivalric treatises such as Charny’s and Lull’s.

visualizing process itself because Pandarus is at that moment conjuring an image of Troilus for Criseyde -- an image which, since no other source is named, is apparently based on his own observation.⁷ Although Criseyde does not offer a picture of Troilus based on her own direct observation, she nevertheless presents a picture of Troilus based on authoritative male sources:

men tellen that he doth
 In armes day by day so worthily,
 And bereth hym here at hom so gently
 To eueri wight, that alle pris hath he
 Of hem that me were leuest preysed be. (2.185-89)

This passage demonstrates the three characteristics of chivalric spectatorship discussed above in that the reader is offered a scenario of action to visualize, and both the implied gaze and the attraction of the object are suggested. Yet Troilus and Criseyde differs from chivalric treatises and at least some romances in that Criseyde facilitates male-male spectatorship.⁸

⁷That Chaucer's text operates differently for male and female readers is suggested by Criseyde's reaction to Pandarus' description. Rather than agree with Pandarus on the basis of her own observation which would involve visualization on her part, she merely comments that she believes a king's son should embody such qualities (2.164-66). Of course, there is nothing preventing a female reader from actually visualizing Troilus according to Pandarus' description, but the text does not offer an example here of a female visualizing a knight.

⁸Criseyde, of course, also facilitates female-male spectatorship for the female readers of the poem. Of the romances discussed in chapter 2, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight offers the most sustained female-male spectatorship operating within the text. However, the Lady does not offer the reader a description of Gawain's chivalric prowess (and Guinevere's view of Gawain at Arthur's court is not expressed) but invites the

Pandarus presents what is perhaps the most colorful scenario of chivalric action in the text in his subsequent conversation with Criseyde:

ffor yesterday who-so hadde with hym ben.
 He myghte han wondred vp-on Troilus;
 ffor neuere yet so thikke a swarm of been
 Ne fleigh as Grekes fro hym gonne fleen;
 And thorough the feld in eueri wightes eere
 Ther nas no cry but 'Troilus is there!'
 Now here, now ther, he hunted hem so faste.
 Ther nas but Grekes blood and Troilus.
 Now hym he hurte and hym al down he caste:
 Ay wher he wente it was arayed thus:
 He was hire deth, and sheld and lif for vs.
 That, as that day, ther dorste non withstonde.
 Whil that he held his bloody swerd in honde. (2.191-203)

Interestingly, since Pandarus' words directed to his niece are also material for a male reader's visualization of a model knight in action, Criseyde is here, in effect, a channel through which male-male spectatorship occurs. She is, however, also an object of identification for both female and male readers who, like Criseyde, might visualize a model knight. This passage clearly demonstrates that Chaucer's text is firmly rooted in conventions of chivalric literature, offering the reader the opportunity to visualize vivid

reader to view him as a potential lover.

descriptions of exceptional chivalric qualities. Moreover, it is, perhaps, more effective than those chivalric treatises and romances where only the narrator presents a view of the hero/model knight in action because here 1) the reader has a more defined observing figure with whom to identify, and 2) Pandarus' recall of events he has witnessed might stimulate the reader to engage in similar memory-induced visualization of exemplary conduct observed on the battlefield or in other texts.

Somewhat later Criseyde, too, illustrates the visualizing process, calling to mind an image of Troilus whom she has just seen pass by:

And gan to caste and rollen vp and down

With-inne hire thought his excellent prowesse.

And his estat and also his renown.

His wit, his shap and ek his gentilesse ... (2.659-62)

She thus offers readers, both male and female, the possibility of viewing Troilus through her eyes. The mental image she creates of Troilus is multidimensional in that she views him as an exemplary chivalric warrior, a member of the royal family, and a social being. She also envisions his physical form in action. For in order to imagine his "wit" and "gentilesse," she would have to "see" him interacting with other people. Unlike the previous illustration, here Criseyde is actually engaging in and, thus, exemplifying the process of visualizing a model knight. Moreover, readers are offered several possibilities for forming identifications. In addition to identifying with Criseyde as a desiring subject, female readers might also identify with Troilus as desired object of another's gaze; in turn, male readers could possibly identify with Criseyde as a "novice

knight"/gazer and, at the same time, identify with the object of Criseyde's gaze -- the desired model knight. Because identification and desire are inextricably linked, this spectatorial scenario suggests both heterosexual and (male and female) homoerotic desire.⁹

Although there are other instances in the text where visualization occurs, particularly Troilus visualizing Criseyde, the passages discussed above are very much in keeping with spectatorship in chivalric texts whereby the object of imagination is a model knight. Although not actually described in the text, the mental process underlying Pandarus' colorful narration of Troilus on the battlefield is similar to the visual activity Criseyde engages in. Such visualization is also implied in chivalric texts where the narrator reports what he has not actually seen himself. The author/narrator of the Ordene de Chevalerie visualizes the bathing ritual of Saladin based on a story he has been told: the Chandos Herald was not at the battle of Crécy, yet he describes how "he [the Black Prince] behaved so valiantly that it was a wonder to see."¹⁰ In both cases, the narrator evidently "sees" the scene he is narrating in his mind's eye and the reader is invited to follow the same process and thus visualize the object -- a model knight. Similarly, the narrator in Chaucer's text offers a detailed description of Troilus triumphantly returning from battle -- a description that he reports not from direct observation but rather from his written source:

⁹I will explore the interrelationship between identification and desire later in this chapter.

¹⁰English translation by Richard Barber. Original in Pope and Lodge: "Si vaillantment se gouvernoit / Que merveille fu a veïr" (326-27).

So lik a man of armes and a knyght
 He was to *seen*, fulfilled of heigh prowess.
 ffor bothe he hadde a body and a myght
 To don that thing, as wel as hardynesse.
 And ek to *seen* hym in his gere hym dresse.
 So fressh, so yong, so weldy semed he.

It was an heuen vp-on hym forto *see*. (2.631-37, emphasis mine)

What is particularly significant here is that the narrator not only “sees” what he is reporting but also reveals his emotional investment in the image he presents to the readers -- an emotional investment that is not as apparent but is, nevertheless, suggested in the chivalric texts mentioned above. He gushes with enthusiasm for Troilus’ powerful body which has just displayed prowess on the battlefield. Interestingly, the narrator does not offer an account of the battle; instead, his visual attention is focused solely on Troilus, the “fressh,” “yong” knight dressed in armor. The narrator’s voyeuristic gaze moves over Troilus’s body as an object to be studied and praised. The narrator creates an image of Troilus which is informed by his own fantasy of what a model chivalric knight should be and invites the novice knight/reader to draw likewise a fantasy image of a knight whom he desires to be like.¹¹ Thus, Troilus and Criseyde, like other chivalric works, reveals that emotions and potential eroticism inform male-male spectatorship.

The above passage is also an excellent example of the chivalric gaze so

¹¹I will later demonstrate how Chaucer’s text dramatizes the operation of fantasy underlying the identification process in my discussion of Pandarus’ relationship with Troilus.

characteristic of chivalric texts. Chaucer's poem, like "orthodox" chivalric texts, presents the fiction that the model knight does not know he is being studied. Even though many eyes are upon Troilus as he rides down the street -- eyes, undoubtedly, as enthusiastic as the narrator's -- Troilus does not acknowledge his observers until they shout directly to him. And then, "he wex a litel reed for shame. / When he the peple vp-on hym herde cryen" (2.645-46). While chivalric treatises do not indicate how a model knight might react to his observers, it is plausible that he, like Troilus, might indeed "wex a litel reed" at receiving such attention from an admiring novice.¹² The scene also offers an illustration of the effect the object exerts on the gazer. For Criseyde, who is gazing at Troilus from her window,

gan al his chere asprien.

And leet it so softe in hire herte synke.

That to hire self she seyde, "who yaf me drynke?"

ffor of hire owen thought she wex al reed ... (2.649-52)

Drawing on Stanbury's observation that Criseyde's "gaze ... participates in and is in part constructed by the [masculinized] gaze of the crowd," I would suggest that Criseyde's reaction illustrates how a crowd admiring a model figure might intensify a novice knight's attraction to this same object, heightening (eroticizing?) his desire to be this

¹²Here and in the following discussion of ocular dynamics, I am referring to spectatorship presumably occurring in chivalric society rather than the imagined gaze of readers visualizing model knights. Of course, as discussed in chapter 2, the virtual gaze in some ways parallels the interactions between subject and object in actual spectatorship.

model knight.¹³

Chaucer's text not only reveals the potential eroticism underlying chivalric spectatorship but also dramatizes medieval concepts of visual dynamics. In the palladium scene in book I, although Troilus' "eye percede, and so depe it wente. / Til on Criseyde it smote, and ther it stente" (1.272-73), the object apparently emits a powerful "species"; for "sodeynly he [Troilus] wax ther-with astoned" (1.274). The scenario continues to accentuate the powerful effect of the object on the gazer:

And of hire look in him ~~ther~~ gan to quyken
 So gret desire and swich affeccioun.
 That in his hertes botme gan to stiken
 Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun:
 And though he erst hadde poured vp and down,
 He was tho glad his hornes in-to shrinken:
 Unnethes wiste he how to loke or wynke. (1.295-301)

This is, I would suggest, a splendid illustration of the ocular concept of intromission.¹⁴

For the object of the gaze is the active force which stimulates the observer's desire.

Criseyde's "look" or, to use Bacon's term, "species" (not her return gaze) becomes deeply impressed in Troilus' "hertes botme." Furthermore, Troilus' former "masculine"

¹³Stanbury, "The Lover's Gaze" 237. Stanbury goes on to suggest that Criseyde's spectatorial position which appears to be a controlling (male) one, "is subtly undermined by a complex set of ocular trajections that deflect and restructure the dynamics of control" (237).

¹⁴See my discussion of medieval optics in chapter 2, part one.

agency as gazer is rendered inactive.¹⁵ The text positions Criseyde, in a sense, parallel to a model knight in chivalric texts -- a "knight" who enraptures the observer. Despite the fact that the scene is situated within courtly love convention, the spectatorial dynamics illustrated here are certainly applicable to a novice knight's emotionally-charged gaze at a desired model figure. Thus, in addition to vividly depicting the erotic effect of the observed on the observer -- an effect which is potentially homoerotic when occurring between two men -- the text here also blurs the boundary between active and passive positions consistent with medieval ocular theory.

Troilus and Criseyde also illustrates how a chivalric text invites the reader to form sadomasochistic identifications with the characters. As discussed earlier, Freud and Laplanche (with some modifications) argued that initial sadistic impulses become sexualized in the masochistic stage, once the subject turns the sadistic instinct upon himself, inviting someone else to act violently on him. The masochist can then take up a sadistic position in which he will enjoy inflicting pain on someone else through a masochistic identification with the person he is attacking. Freud stresses that "it is not the pain itself which is enjoyed, but the accompanying sexual excitement."¹⁶ Thus, the masochistic stage and the sadistic position that can develop from it, according to Freud, offer sexual pleasure through suffering or identification with the sufferer. Before I demonstrate how the text invites the reader to enjoy pleasure-in-pain through

¹⁵My reading of this scene in some ways parallels recent feminist interpretations. See Hansen 145-48, Margherita 114, and Stanbury, "The Lover's Gaze" 229-32.

¹⁶Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 93. See my more detailed discussion of sadomasochism in my reading of the Stanzaic Morte Arthur in chapter 2, part one.

sadomasochistic identifications with Troilus, let us observe how the reports of Troilus' martial activities in book II offered by Pandarus and the narrator illustrate the three stages outlined above.

In a passage examined earlier, Pandarus describes how Troilus ruthlessly attacked the Greeks: "he hunted hem so faste, / Ther nas but Grekes blood and Troilus. / Now hym he hurte and hym al down he caste" (2.197-99). Troilus here occupies the first position in the sequence -- a sadist acting out aggression that is not (yet) sexually informed. Although this is not the battle scene from which Troilus emerges triumphantly, as described in the following passage, it is apparent that he has just fought in a similar encounter. For the intensity of the military fight in which Troilus engaged is reflected in the narrator's vivid depiction of his battered accouterments:

His helm to-hewen was in twenty places.

That by a tyssew heng his bak byhynde:

His sheeld to-dasshed was with swerdes and maces.

In which men myghte many an arwe fynde

That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rynde. (2.638-42)

Although Troilus appears unhurt, he was repeatedly attacked by the Greeks and it is highly unlikely that in the process of having his helmet "to-hewen" or his shield "to-dasshed" he experienced no pain. Although the text offers no narrative of this battle scene, the one narrated by Pandarus a few hundred lines earlier contains analogous details which, in effect, connect to the present scene. I would suggest that Chaucer, avoiding narrative repetition, leads the reader to believe that the "scarmuch" from which

Troilus appears is similar to the encounter so vividly presented shortly before. We can thus read Troilus as occupying the position of masochist -- the second stage in Freud's scenario -- because the text presents Troilus as sadist *before* it offers a glimpse of his "wounds." That Troilus moved on to the third stage -- sexually-charged sadist -- is implied by the fact that at the end of the battle he is victorious. Despite receiving numerous blows it is understood that in the final stages of the battle he occupied the position of the attacker. Because the text actually presents evidence of Troilus' victory before it reveals the extent of the blows he received, the victory becomes erotically charged only *after* the passage describing Troilus' battered helmet and shield. While this deviates from the linear sequence outlined by Freud, it nevertheless highlights the interrelation between the erotically-charged second and third stages. For a victorious knight bears traces of masochism which in turn, according to Freud, implies that the pleasure of victory involves a masochistic identification with the defeated. Chaucer's text, unlike the Stanzaic Morte Arthur, does not offer details of fight scenes as they unfold, but nevertheless provides ample descriptive material with which some readers might imagine and, thus, participate in fight scenarios. Moreover, since Troilus is presented as a model chivalric figure, male readers would be invited to identify with him. In picturing the action described by Pandarus and the narrator, readers would move through the stages together with Troilus and vicariously experience the erotically-charged pleasure of victory as a result of identifying with the pleasure-in-pain of being attacked by the Greeks. The admiration Troilus receives from the crowd (and his reaction to it) during his triumphant ride through the city reinforces the eroticized

pleasure afforded readers who engage in sadomasochistic identifications with Troilus.

A further example of chivalric sadomasochism is found in book V. However, on this occasion, the homoeroticism underlying the clash between two knights is informed by mutual desire for a woman. After Troilus learns that Criseyde has indeed betrayed him for Diomedes, he engages in repeated clashes with his rival. The narrator reports that

ofte tyme ... they mette

With bloody strokes and with wordes grete.

Assayinge how hire speres weren whette:

And god it woot, with many a cruel hete

Gan Troilus vp-on his [Diomedes'] helm to bete. (5.1758-62)

The narrator's description of the fight may be sketchy, but he manages to reveal several features of sadomasochism. Both Troilus and Diomedes evidently alternate occupying the position of heteroaggressive sadist in that they test the sharpness of their spears on each other. That each one also falls into the position of masochist is implied by the "bloody strokes" that are exchanged. It appears, however, that Troilus alone moves into the third stage in the sadomasochism scenario. Although it is certainly plausible that Diomedes also beat upon Troilus' helmet, the narrator, in presenting the scenario from Troilus' point of view draws attention to the homoerotic impulses underlying his repeated attempts to engage Diomedes in battle (5.1757). The "cruel hete" driving Troilus to beat repeatedly on Diomedes' helmet is his desire for Criseyde, whom he would, in a sense, win again if he killed Diomedes. Thus, in attempting to reunite with Criseyde by way of Diomedes, Troilus' physical interaction with Diomedes is informed by

his desire for Criseyde. At the same time, the “hete” of rage Troilus directs towards his rival is also directed at Criseyde. But, if we follow Freud here, this hatred is erotically charged because love and hate are often inextricably linked. Freud maintains that “[w]hen a love relationship with a given object is broken off, it is not infrequently succeeded by hate, so that we receive the impression of a transformation of love into hate.” But Freud goes on to argue that this hatred, reinforced by a regression of love to a preliminary sadistic stage, serves to eroticize the feelings of hatred.¹⁷ Similar situations whereby the homoeroticism informing a physical struggle between knights is in part due to the desire for a female can be found in chivalric literature.¹⁸

For the reader, what is particularly pleasurable, besides identifying with Troilus’ erotically charged sadomasochism, is envisioning repeated encounters in which the climax is delayed.¹⁹ The pleasure here is actually two-dimensional. Troilus and Diomedes “act out” the eroticism afforded by deferred climax which readers then play out on their mental screens. Although the ongoing struggle between Troilus and Diomedes is mentioned only briefly, readers, in order to visualize the narrator’s

¹⁷Freud, “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” 103.

¹⁸In the Stanzaic Morte Arthur, for instance, while Lancelot does not actually fight a rival for Guinevere, he does fight other knights on her behalf and is rewarded sexually for his efforts. Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale offers a closer analogy to the triangular configuration illustrated in Troilus and Criseyde, but one in which the love/hate interconnection is more apparent between Palamon and Arcite than between either one and Emily.

¹⁹I am drawing on my discussion in chapter 2 of how Lancelot’s fights with Mador and later with Gawain in the Stanzaic Morte Arthur can be pleasurable/erotic for the male reader.

description, would be drawing on a vast range of chivalric material (as well as actual events) in which knights engage one another in battle over and over. In fact, it is plausible that Chaucer did not offer a detailed account of the clash between Troilus and Diomedes precisely because readers would be expected to know *exactly* what he was referring to.²⁰ That many of the chivalric descriptions discussed above are not found in Boccaccio's Filostrato suggests not only Chaucer's "chivalrization" of his source text but also his intended audience's familiarity with chivalric conventions.

II. The Dynamics of "frendes loue"

Some of the features of ideal friendship found in the writings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Aelred of Rievaulx find expression in Troilus and Criseyde.²¹ By situating Chaucer's text against the treatises on friendship and other literary examples of male-male love examined in chapter 2, one can better understand the intimacy and homoeroticism which characterize the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus. Aristotle's concept of ideal friendship posits two friends steeped in mutual warmth and affection. Cicero emphasizes the love which binds one friend to another. The love and affection which defines the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus is expressed in

²⁰Despite the narrator's claim at the end of book V that "if I hadde ytaken forto write / The armes of this ilke worthi man, / Than wolde ich of his batailles endite" (1765-67), he offers throughout the text brief outlines of chivalric battle scenarios that the reader can be trusted to fill in.

²¹For a fine discussion of how Chaucer's poem is situated within medieval concepts of ideal friendship, see Cook. See also Gaylord, particularly for his comparison of Troilus and Criseyde and the Romance of the Rose.

their initial scene together in book I. Pandarus reaffirms his love for Troilus: "I haue and shal. for trewe or fals report. / In wrong and right i-loued the al my lyue" (1.593-94).

Troilus' reciprocal love for Pandarus is clearly implied from his statement that he will reveal the truth about his condition so as not to let Pandarus think he does not trust him (1.601). Although Troilus does not here express his love as directly as Pandarus, there is no indication that Pandarus' feelings for his friend are one-sided. That Pandarus could slip silently into Troilus' bedchamber attests to the intimacy which exists between the friends. The idea that intimacy is based on mutual love is expressed in each of the treatises.²²

Both Aristotle and Cicero stress the advantages of close friends "living together" which, as I pointed out earlier, does not necessarily mean that friends were urged to live permanently under the same roof. However, since it was recommended that friends spend much time together, engaging in similar leisure activities and fighting in the same campaigns, there were certain to be occasions when friends might spend the night together and there is nothing in the treatises that warned against it. In fact, given travel conditions in the ancient world, it might have occurred quite regularly. That it was not uncommon for intimate friends in the late Middle Ages to spend a great deal of time together and occasionally sleep in close proximity to one another is clearly suggested in Chaucer's text. Since no explanation is offered as to why Pandarus spends the night with Troilus when his own house is nearby, we can assume that this form of male-male intimacy is socially acceptable in the world of the poem.

²²It is, however, most clearly expressed by Cicero and Aelred.

The concept of two friends joined together in a permanent union is central to the treatises on ideal friendship. This idea carries over into chivalric romances as well. Amylion reminds Amys that they have pledged their "trowth" to each other forever. Galehot is buried in Lancelot's tomb so that the two friends will be united eternally. Boswell offers evidence of "actual" same-sex unions taking place particularly in the early Middle Ages. And, prior to the consummation scene, Troilus expresses his gratitude to Pandarus in language which stresses the permanence of their union: "I wol the serue / Right as thi sclaue, whider so thow wende, / ffor euere more vn-to my lyues ende" (3.390-92). Although the bond does not appear equal in that Troilus swears to serve Pandarus as a "sclaue," Pandarus has proven his "trouth" to Troilus in diligently serving Troilus' needs.

Chaucer's text does not, however, merely serve as an example of classical and medieval concepts of ideal friendship, but rather, it engages these traditions and reveals the homoeroticism that, as I suggested earlier, informs these concepts. In addition, it offers a dramatization of male-male dynamics within a world that includes women.²³ In the discussion that follows, I will explore how the developing relationship between Troilus and Criseyde effects an even *greater* intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus.

Despite the fact that Criseyde is his niece, Pandarus treats her with far less love and respect than he does Troilus. The contrast is indeed striking in book II when Pandarus attempts to persuade Criseyde to accept Troilus as her lover. He refers to his

²³For a related study of the dynamics of homosocial affection within heteronormative society, see Sedgwick's reading of selected Shakespeare sonnets, 28-48.

friend, who he claims will die if Criseyde does not acknowledge his plight, as “my lord so deere. / That trewe man, that noble, gentil knyght,” a “beaute” sent from God (2.330-31, 336). In the very next line he warns Criseyde that, if by her neglect Troilus should die, she would be guilty of cruelty so irreversible that her beauty could never make amends for such a deed (2.337-38, 341-42). He goes on to deny her the right to live if she proves herself so “routheles” (2.346): “If therwith-al in yow ther be no routhe. / Than is it harm ye lyuen, by my trouthe” (2.349-50). He further verbally tortures her by drawing attention to the unstoppable deterioration of her beauty:

Thenk ek how elde wasteth euery houre

In eche of yow a partie of beautee;

And therfore, er that age the deuoure.

Go loue, for old, ther wol no wight of the ... (2.393-97)

In stark contrast to his compassionate depiction of Troilus, who, he claims, heroically “hasteth hym with al his fulle myght / fforto ben slayn,” (2.334-35), Pandarus taunts his youthful niece with a horrifying picture of slow physical degeneration. He further indicates his lack of respect for her in switching from the more polite “yow,” which he usually uses when addressing her, to the familiar “the.” Rather than effecting a positive familiarity, it actually reinforces the abusiveness of his remarks by lowering her social status from an eligible, beautiful woman who has lost only “a partie of beautee” to one whom no man -- particularly a worthy man -- would want because she is old and

unattractive.²⁴

Whereas Pandarus' earlier coercion of Troilus serves to stop the flow of tears, the unrelenting pressure he applies on Criseyde actually triggers tears. For almost immediately after the passage quoted above, she "began to breste a-wepe a-noon. . . And seyde, 'allas, for wo why nere I deede?'" (2.408-09). That Pandarus sets Troilus' needs above those of his niece is apparent in that he does not consider the possibility that Criseyde's acquiescence might jeopardize her already delicate position in Troy. Criseyde, however, alludes to this possibility in her gentle reprimand of her uncle: "Allas, what sholden straunge to me doon, / Whan he that for my beste frende I wende Ret me to loue, and sholde it me defende?" (2.411-13). Although she expects Pandarus to have her interests at heart and considers him her "beste frende," the feelings are apparently not mutual, for Pandarus' heartfelt concern is directed only on Troilus. Later, when Pandarus forces her to respond to Troilus' letter, she openly accuses him of placing more importance on Troilus' "lust" than on her safety: "To myn estat haue more rewarde, I preye, / Than to his lust" (2.1133-34). Thus put in danger by her uncle, Criseyde turns to Athena, the virgin goddess, for protection: "O lady myn, Pallas, / Thow in this dredful cas for me purueye, / ffor so astoned am I that I deye" (2.425-27). Rather than empathizing with Criseyde's fears, Pandarus accuses her once again of

²⁴While Windeatt rightly points out that this has a persuasive effect like that found in earlier exchanges with Criseyde, Pandarus' tone here is far more brutal than in the other passages he refers to. See 171n.396.

“wikkedly” bringing about the deaths of Troilus and himself (2.441).²⁵

During the above scene, Pandarus repeatedly links his fate with Troilus’, claiming that if Criseyde does not consent to accept Troilus’ love, “ffor certeyn I [Pandarus] wol deye as soone as he” (2.446). Criseyde, who “saugh the sorwful ernest of the knyght” (2.452), does not apparently question the veracity of Pandarus’ claim. In fact, she actually juxtaposes her personal concerns with her uncle’s fate, considering that her “estat lith now in iupartie” and Pandarus’ “lif is in balaunce” (2.465-66), and chooses to save both her honor and his life (2.468-69). As there is no evidence that Criseyde reads Pandarus’ contention that he will share Troilus’ fate as a hyperbole of courtly convention, her acceptance of Pandarus’ “ernest” is also a recognition of the intense bond which links Pandarus and Troilus -- a homosocial bond that, within the chivalric society of the poem, is evidently privileged over familial bonds.

That male friendship is also privileged over same-sex family ties is illustrated in the scene at Deiphebus’ house. Deiphebus and Helen not only believe that Pandarus is genuinely concerned that “To brynge in prees ... myght don hym [Troilus] harme, / Or hym disesen” (2.1649-50), but also accept his role as caretaker of Troilus -- a role that Deiphebus occupies before Pandarus arrives (2.1541-45). I would, therefore, suggest that in illustrating how Deiphebus, Troilus’ blood brother who claims to love Troilus above everyone else (2.1410-11), allows Pandarus to take control of Troilus’ well-being in his own home, the text tacitly acknowledges that the bond between Troilus and

²⁵The motivation behind Pandarus’ concerns for Troilus and his identification with his plight are explored in the next section.

Pandarus is more intimate than that which links Troilus and Deiphebus.

However, more than offer a portrayal of an intimate male friendship, Chaucer's text illustrates how a female presence heightens homoeroticism. That Criseyde effects a growing intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus is first clearly evident towards the end of book I:

Whan Troilus hadde herd Pandarus assented
 To ben his help in louying of Cryseyde,
 Weex of his wo, as who seith, vntormented,
 But hotter weex his loue and thus he seyde,
 With sobre chere, although his herte pleyde:
 "Now blisful Venus help, er that I sterue,
 Of the, Pandare, I mowe som thank deserue." (I.1009-15)

Interestingly, Pandarus' promised "*help* in louying of Crisedye" and not Criseyde herself stimulates the "hotter" growth of Troilus' love. In addition, rather than asking Venus for help in winning Criseyde, he calls on her to assist him in performing a good deed for Pandarus. While one could argue that Troilus has no need of Venus' help in procuring Criseyde because Pandarus fulfills that role, it is, nevertheless, odd that Troilus not only fails to evoke Criseyde in his request but also turns his "playful" heart and gaze to Pandarus. Although winning Criseyde's love is, indeed, Troilus' goal, this passage, in effect, directs Troilus' love toward Pandarus.

In the dialogue which follows, although Troilus does refer to Criseyde, he displays increasing affection for Pandarus: "Tho Troilus gan down on knees to falle, /

And Pandare in his armes hente faste" (1.1044-45). The erotic positioning of Troilus vis-à-vis Pandarus should not be overlooked. This heightened eroticism between Troilus and Pandarus is, however, situated within a chivalric framework because Troilus' thoughts are not on Criseyde, nor are they focused directly on Pandarus, but rather on military activity that both friends will presumably take part in together. Apparently still kneeling with his hands around Pandarus, he says: "now, fy on the Grekes alle! / ... god shal helpe vs atte laste: / ... / And god to-forn, lo, som of hem shal smerte" (1.1046-47, 1049). Thus, while Criseyde is the catalyst for this expression of male-male intimacy, she is, in effect, excluded from the world of homosocial affection.

Although Troilus, with Pandarus' help, is poised to become Criseyde's lover, the following words addressed to Pandarus reveal that quite a different type of bond is to be solidified: "thow wis, thow woost, thow maist, thow art al. / Mi lif, my deth, hol in thyn honde I leye" (1.1052-53). Troilus submits himself completely to Pandarus, who is in the position here normally occupied by the lady in courtly romance. Similarly, Troilus, in asking Pandarus to recommend him "to hire that to the deth me may comande" (1.1057), prepares to follow Criseyde's commands. One important difference is that Criseyde's presence is limited to an oblique reference while Troilus repeatedly addresses Pandarus by name (1.1015, 1030, 1051) thus implying a face-to-face encounter between the two friends. Moreover, if Troilus is still on his knees (with his arms around Pandarus), which given the fact that the above passages directly follow one another is not an unreasonable assumption, then Troilus' words ring very much like a sort of "marriage" proposal -- one that combines elements of a vassal's lifelong pledge

of loyalty to his lord and that of a courtly lover's submission to his lady.

After Troilus returns home from his triumphant ride through Troy in book II, he immediately sends for Pandarus to find out if Criseyde has agreed to accept him as her lover. The initial exchange between the two friends in the privacy of Troilus' bedchamber is, I would suggest, sexually charged. Not only is Troilus so excited to see Pandarus that he sends two or three messengers to find him (2.936-37), but Pandarus is evidently also excited to see Troilus. Pandarus "com lepyng in attones" and finding Troilus in bed, teases him mercilessly:

who hath ben wel i-bete

To-day with swerdes and with slynge stones

But Troilus, that hath caught hym an hete?

. . . lord, so ye swete! (2.940-43)

Pandarus exhibits a sort of sadomasochistic pleasure in observing Troilus' in his "beaten" state, withholding the news that he so desperately wants to hear. Pandarus' repeated remarks about Troilus' sweat suggests that he actually enjoys *watching* his friend suffer the heat of passion. Pandarus' playful control over Troilus is further illustrated in the mock-formal tone of the last line. Troilus, helplessly dependent on the whims of Pandarus, defers to him completely: "do we as the leste" (2.945). Pandarus prolongs the (sexual?) tension in that he does not offer Troilus the information (release of tension?) until after dinner when they are in the (dark?) seclusion of Troilus' bedchamber. And still, he lets Troilus, who "thoughte his herte bledde / ffor wo til that he herde som tyding" (2.950-51), burn in anticipation. The two friends are apparently

both in bed and while not necessarily in the same bed they are in such close proximity that Troilus' fidgeting would disturb Pandarus; for he tells Troilus to "ly stille and lat me slepe" (2.953). Although Pandarus finally informs him that his "nedes spedde be" (2.954), the text, in effect, prolongs the tension in that Troilus' reaction to this long-awaited news (the climax?) is deferred for another nineteen lines. Moreover, Troilus' "release" is cloaked in the imagery of springtime awakening:

But right as floures, thourgh the colde of nyght
 Iclosed, stoupen on hire stalkes lowe.
 Redressen hem ayein the sonne bright.
 And spreden on hire kynde cours by rowe.
 Right so gan tho his eighen vp throwe
 This Troilus and seyde, "O Venus deere,
 Thi myght, thi grace, y-heried be it here." (2.967-73)

While flowers drooping in the cold night seem a more appropriate expression of Troilus' earlier cold sorrows than of his present heated state, the image of reawakened flowers standing up straight in the warm sunlight suggests not only the literal action of Troilus casting his eyes up to Venus but also the implied rising of his sexual organ.²⁶ And in this heightened sexual state, Troilus addresses not Criseyde but Pandarus to whom "he held vp bothe his hondes, / And seyde, 'lord, al thyn be that I haue'" (2.974-75). While I am not suggesting that Troilus is making a sexual offer to Pandarus, this formal gesture of union does, however, occur within the warm aftermath of the recent

²⁶I am drawing here on Windeatt's gloss of "stoupen" and "redressen hem."

release of tension. Troilus is so exuberant that he claims his “herte. / ... spredeth so for ioie it wol to-sterre” (2.979-80). The union is, in a sense, “consummated” in that Troilus and Pandarus spend the entire night together.²⁷

Early in book III, in language strikingly similar to the above pledge to Pandarus, Troilus offers himself completely to Criseyde: “I haue. / ... / Ben youre al. god so my soule saue. / And shal. til that I. woful wight. be graue” (3.100, 102-03). Interestingly, this next step in the developing relationship between Troilus and Criseyde stimulates yet another intimate encounter between the two friends. Immediately after the scene at Deiphebus’.

Pandarus. as faste as he may dryue.

To Troilus tho com as lyne right;

And on a paillet al that glad nyght

By Troilus he lay with mery chere

To tale. and wel was hem they were yfeere. (3.227-31)

Pandarus does not visit his friend merely to fulfill an obligation. Similar to the earlier scene where Pandarus tantalizes Troilus with his news, Pandarus here, too, apparently enjoys Troilus’ company -- particularly when Troilus’ heart is joyful. In fact, the narrator focuses on Pandarus’ “mery chere” as he lay beside his friend. Noticeably absent from this picture of homosocial intimacy is Criseyde. Although Troilus’ recent

²⁷A parallel situation can be found in the Prose Lancelot in that Galehot and Lancelot also spend a night together and Galehot serves as an intermediary between Lancelot and Guinevere. However, Guinevere’s agency is more direct than Criseyde’s because she gives Galehot permission to have Lancelot’s company.

encounter with Crisedye is ostensibly the reason for Pandarus' visit. the two friends spend a "glad nyght" on adjacent beds (or the same bed?), taking pleasure in *each other's* company.²⁸

During this night, Pandarus pledges that Troilus shall always find him "trewe" (3.333), thus balancing the union initiated earlier by Troilus. In addition, Pandarus' words of advice regarding keeping the affair secret as well as his assurance that he will make the necessary arrangements (3.239-343) have a powerful physical effect on Troilus -- an effect that once again is explained in sexually-charged language:

But right so as thise holtes and thise hayis.

That han in wynter dede ben and dreye.

Reuesten hem in grene whan that May is.

Whan euery lusty liketh best to pleye.

Wax sodeynliche his herte ful of ioie ... (3.351-56)

In the wake of this *sudden* reaction, eroticized by situating it in the time of year when "euery lusty liketh best to pleye," Troilus directs his gaze to Pandarus, to whom he offers an elaborate promise not to betray him. In doing so, he swears to Pandarus: "I wol the serue / Right as thi sclauie, whider so thou wende, / ffor euere more vn-to my lyues ende" (3.390-92).²⁹ Once again, the union between Troilus and Pandarus is highlighted

²⁸We are told: "on a paillet al that glade nyght / By Troilus he [Pandarus] lay with mery chere" (3.229-30). It is unclear whether Troilus and Pandarus are lying on the same "paillet" or if Pandarus' bed is merely next to Troilus'. In any case, the two are evidently lying very close to one another.

²⁹I will explore the political implications of this pledge in the next chapter.

immediately following a significant event in the developing relationship between Troilus and Criseyde. A second "consummation" occurs that night as the two friends "held hym ech of other wel apayed, / That al the world ne myghte it bet amende" (3.421-22). Moreover, since we are informed that in the morning they get dressed, they evidently experience this perfect happiness not only in close proximity but also not fully clothed (3.423). And thus, a second night of male-male intimacy takes place before the heterosexual consummation scene of book III.

While heterosexual love is ostensibly the dominant subject of book III -- for the book opens with an elaborate invocation to Venus -- Troilus' relationship with Pandarus figures prominently in the early and latter portions of the book, serving as sort of homosocial "bookends" for the heterosexual love story. After Troilus returns home from his night of love with Criseyde, he eagerly desires Pandarus' company, sending word "to com in al the haste he may" (3.1586). And Troilus once again expresses his heartfelt gratitude to his friend: "This Troilus, with al thaffeccioun / Of frendes loue that herte may deuyse, / To Pandarus on knowes fil a-down" (3.1590-92). It is telling to compare Boccaccio's presentation of this same scene: "Troilus ... threw himself upon his [Pandarus'] neck with eagerness ... and kissed him lovingly on the forehead."³⁰ Thus, whereas Boccaccio merely describes one friend's exuberant display of affection to another, Chaucer situates Troilus' response in the greater context of male-male friendship. Although Troilus is more restrained than Troilo, I would suggest that

³⁰Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. and trans. Nathaniel Edward Griffin and Arthur Beckwith Myrick (New York: Octagon, 1978) 56: "Troilo ... con disio gli si gittò al collo ... E nella fronte con amor baciollo."

Chaucer offers a more erotically-charged scene. Troilus is on his knees as he expresses “al thaffeccioun ... [o]f frendes loue.” and while there is no indication that he is embracing Pandarus as he did on an earlier occasion (1.1044-45), the two men are, evidently, in close proximity with Troilus’ gaze directed at Pandarus. He attempts to inform his “alderbeste” friend how much he appreciates him: “though I myght a thousand tymes selle / Up-on a day my lif in thi seruise. / It myght naught a moote in that suffice” (3.1601-03). Thus, such “frendes loue” cannot even be adequately measured in the extravagant language of courtly love. Although Troilus then declares that he belongs to Criseyde until he dies (3.1607), he follows this with a similar statement of lifelong commitment to Pandarus, pledging that he will be obliged to him for all his life (3.1612).

In juxtaposing two types of love -- “frendes loue” and Venerian love -- Chaucer’s text, wittingly or not, privileges the homosocial one. While Troilus’ love for Criseyde is, indeed, the motivating force for the intensification (and eroticization) of the bond between Troilus and Pandarus, the foundation for this male friendship is not based on the whims of the God/Goddess of Love but rather the chivalric tradition of brotherhood -- a tradition steeped in classical ideas of the gradual development of love between friends. Chaucer’s *chivalrization* of Boccaccio’s text, therefore, not only situates Troilus and Criseyde within the context of brotherly bonds expressed in chivalric romances such as Amys and Amylion and the Prose Lancelot, but also offers a dramatization, more compelling than that found in either of these texts, of the dynamics of male-male affection within a society that is not exclusively male.

III. Desiring To Be a Model Knight and Lover

In urging novice knights to closely observe and emulate a model figure, chivalric treatises are, in effect, recommending that a young man identify with another knight. In the second chapter I suggested that such male-male spectatorship was informed by potential homoeroticism. Although Freud sought to separate the processes of identification and desire -- relegating them respectively to homosocial and heterosexual spheres -- some theorists have recently argued that the desire *to be* an object is inextricably linked with the desire *to have* that object. Pandarus' relationship to Troilus in the first three books parallels that of a novice knight and an observed model in that Pandarus first identifies with Troilus' situation and then constructs an image of him as a model knight and lover. That Pandarus, in a sense, incorporates this image indicates how being and having are interrelated processes. Moreover, similar to a novice knight's visualization of a model figure, Pandarus' image of Troilus is, in part, based on fantasy, thus illustrating how identification is emotionally (erotically?) charged.

Freud referred to identification as "the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person."³¹ He goes on to explain that "[a] little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father: he would like to grow like him and be like him, and take his place everywhere. We may simply say that he takes his father as his ideal."³² Although Freud is concerned here with primary identification, occurring before the onset of the Oedipus

³¹Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1959) 37.

³²Freud, Group Psychology 37.

complex, the process of identification is not limited to these early years. For he asserts that “the mutual tie between members of a group is in the nature of an identification ... based upon an important emotional common quality.”³³ This statement is clearly applicable to chivalric society where both novice and model knights shared the same broad cultural values.

Commenting on Freud’s concept of “mourning,” Diana Fuss explains how mourning is inherently involved in identification: “[a]ll identification begins in an experience of traumatic loss and in the subject’s tentative attempts to manage this loss.” She goes on to observe that, according to Freud, a subject “strives to preserve a lost object relation while simultaneously searching for a substitute gratification.”³⁴ While male readers of chivalric treatises were, as I mentioned earlier, presumably motivated to identify with model knights in the hope of receiving the honor bestowed upon such “men of worth” and thus not obviously in search of a “substitute gratification” for a prior loss, in a Lacanian sense, these novice knights/readers were in fact operating from a position of lack in that they sought wholeness/power. Pandarus offers what is, perhaps, a more obvious illustration of traumatic loss.

In book I, Troilus reminds Pandarus of his repeated failure in matters of love: “Thow koudest neuere in loue thi seluen wisse: / How deuel maistow brynge me to blisse?” (1.623-24). Pandarus admits that he has “in loue so ofte assayed / Greuances” (1.646-47). Thus Pandarus is presented early in the text as one with a history of

³³Freud, Group Psychology 40.

³⁴Diana Fuss, Identification Papers (New York: Routledge, 1995) 38.

unsuccessful pursuits of love. Although one could ask how, if he has "neuere" succeeded in love, he can have experienced traumatic loss; he has, in a sense, repeatedly lost what might have been. The fact that he has often had "greuances" in love indicates that he has repeatedly attempted to fulfill an image of requited love and in each case has lost the possibility for this fulfillment. Thus, Pandarus turns to Troilus, not as a substitute for the lovers he has failed to win but rather as an object of identification. While, like a novice knight, he, too, seeks someone with whom to identify in order to recover from a state of "loss," his aim, however, is not to emulate Troilus; instead, as I will demonstrate shortly, he "incorporates" Troilus, experiencing *through* him the fulfillment he has thus far missed.³⁵

As stated above, according to Freud, members of a group identify with one another because they share "an important emotional ... quality." Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen aptly summarizes Freud: "group members ('brothers') identify with one another by virtue of their common love for the *Führer* (for the father, who thus occupies, oddly enough, the place of the Oedipal *object*)."³⁶ Thus, I suggest that Troilus and Pandarus

³⁵Louise Fradenburg draws on the psychoanalytical concepts of mourning and melancholy in her readings of expressions of loss and grieving in Chaucer's poetry; see her essays, "Voice Memorial: Loss and Reparation in Chaucer's Poetry," *Exemplaria* 2 (1990): 170-202, and "Loss, Gender and Chivalry in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Shoaf, 88-106. For a reading of Chaucer's depiction of Troilus and Criseyde in terms of Freud's theory of narcissism, see Douglas B. Wilson, "The Commerce of Desire: Freudian Narcissism in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*," *English Language Notes* 21 (1983): 11-22.

³⁶Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988) 190, emphasis in original. He offers a detailed reading of Freud's *Group Psychology* in his chapter, "The Primal Band," 127-239.

already identify with one another as “brothers” as the story opens in that they are both knights in the chivalric society of Troy, and furthermore, they both love and serve King Priam. However, Pandarus attempts to achieve a more specific emotional bond with Troilus in offering to share his pain: “I desyre with the forto bere / Thyn heuy charge” (1.650-51). He emphasizes that they both “pleyne” about love (1.711), and, in order to convince Troilus that they are, in fact, equal sufferers, he goes on to describe his condition: “So ful of sorwe am I, soth forto seyne, / That certainly namore harde grace / May sitte on me, for why ther is no space” (1.712-14).³⁷ That he successfully sets a foundation for his subsequent identification with Troilus’ pursuit of love is evident in the following admonishment: “*I may nat endure* that thou dwelle / In so vnskilful an oppynyoun / That of thi wo is no curacioun” (1.789-91, emphasis mine).

The sexual underpinning of Pandarus’ motivation is revealed in this confession to Troilus: “I haue no cause, I woot wel, forto sore / As doth a hauk that listeth forto pleye; / But to thin help yet somewhat kan I seye” (1.670-72). Since he has just acknowledged that he is currently suffering the pains of unrequited love (1.667), his admission that he is unable to “sore” like a *playful* hawk immediately situates the analogy within the realm of desire. The sexual connotation of “pleye” is further

³⁷I am not suggesting that Pandarus requires Troilus’ consent in order to identify with him. However, before Pandarus can construct an image of Troilus as a successful model knight and lover -- an image that, as I will later illustrate, he identifies with in order to share Troilus’ experiences of love -- he first needs to persuade Troilus to accept his help.

reinforced by the parallel construction with “sore.”³⁸ Although he bemoans his sorry state regarding love, his comparison with the playful hawk suggests that he, nevertheless, still harbors thoughts of soaring sexual flight. His readiness to help Troilus “sore” is, therefore, inextricably linked to his own frustrated desire. I would suggest that, in identifying with Troilus’ situation and helping him succeed in love by molding him into a model knight and lover, Pandarus is also, in a sense, seeking his own fulfillment in love. Thus, Pandarus develops a homosocial identification with Troilus and maintains an ostensibly heterosexual desire parallel to Troilus’.

Freud maintains a separation between identification and desire. As Fuss aptly summarizes:

Freud distinguishes identification (the wish to be the other) from sexual object- choice (the wish to have the other). For Freud, desire for one sex is always secured through identification with the other sex; to desire and to identify with the same person at the same time is, in this model, a theoretical impossibility.³⁹

Yet, in recognizing the similarity between “love” and “eros,” Freud admits the possibility of the two collapsing into one relation. He maintains that “the Greek word ‘Eros’ ... is in the end nothing more than a translation of our German word *Liebe* [love]” and “love relationships (or, to use a more neutral expression, emotional ties) ...

³⁸One example of “pleye” connoting sexual activity can be found in “The Miller’s Tale:” “this hende Nicholas / Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye” (l.3272-73).

³⁹Fuss, Identification Papers 11.

constitute the essence of the group mind."⁴⁰ He thus implies that the love which members of a group feel for one another -- and group members are bound to one another through identification -- is not necessarily divorced from erotic desire. While I do not claim that Troilus and Criseyde provides a complete dramatization of Freud's concept of group identification/desire, in illustrating how Pandarus directs Troilus' pursuit of love, Chaucer's text brilliantly illustrates that the distinction between identification and desire is, as Fuss rightly claims, "a precarious one at best."⁴¹

After Pandarus obtains Troilus' complete confidence, he warns his friend that "drerinesse, / Or ouere-haste, *oure bothe labour* shende," for he hopes "of this to maken a good ende" (1.971-73, emphasis mine). His concern that Troilus' actions might destroy "the work of us both" suggests that they are equally invested in the outcome. This shared interest is further demonstrated in Pandarus' subsequent prayer that "god spede vs bothe two!" (1.1041). Reading these lines simply as an expression of Pandarus' altruistic wishes that his friend succeed in love simplifies the dynamics between the two. For if we view Pandarus' prayers for success within the context of his hopeless failings in matters of love and, as a result of identifying with Troilus' situation, his

⁴⁰Freud, Group Psychology 23.

⁴¹Fuss, Identification Papers 11. Fuss takes up different aspects of Freud's theory of identification, looking at "ingestion," "incorporation," and "contagion," providing examples from literature and film. She argues that "Freud summons and reworks the concept of identification to keep firmly in place a normative theory of sexuality based upon oedipal relations" (12). Elizabeth B. Keiser, Courtly Desire and Medieval Homophobia: The Legitimation of Sexual Pleasure in Cleanness and Its Contexts (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997), problematizes the boundary between identification and desire for male readers interacting with the figure of Christ in Cleanness; see 165-68.

assumption of the role of lover, his hopes and prayers also contain the desire that he himself succeed in love. Pandarus' relation with Troilus thus moves beyond merely identifying with his friend's situation: for he comes to identify with Troilus so completely that he, in effect, "incorporates" him, desiring what he desires.

Fuss notes that, according to Freud, "[t]he cannibalistic pregenital phase, in which sexual activity is still indistinguishable from food ingestion, provides the prototype for identification as a form of oral sadism." She goes on to explain that "[i]dentification operates for the subject as the primary means of gaining control over the objects outside itself."⁴² And thus the subject, in effect, "ingests" or "incorporates" the object of identification: however, we should not take this literally. Otto Fenichel clarifies how a subject "ingests" an object by defining identification as "changes in the ego, in which characteristics which were previously perceived in an object are acquired by the perceiver of them."⁴³ Returning to Chaucer's text, Pandarus does not actually *become* Troilus, but rather he assumes certain characteristics of Troilus' situation and in doing so acts as though he and Troilus were pursuing the same goal.

In book II, Pandarus startles Criseyde by his demeanor. In response to his jovial request that they dance and "don to May som obseruaunce" (2.111-12), she cries, "ye maken me ryght soore adradde. / ye ben so wylde, it semeth as ye raue" (2.115-16). His behavior is apparently very different from the last time she saw him, which clearly

⁴²Fuss, Identification Papers 35. Fuss is drawing on Freud's account of the totem meal in Totem and Taboo, Standard Edition 13.

⁴³Qtd. in Fuss, Identification Papers 46.

suggests that his newfound "lust" is a result of the recent partnership he has entered into with Troilus. This alteration is all the more striking when compared with the description of his bout (relapse) of lovesickness just prior to this visit in which "loues shotes keene ... / ... / made his hewe a-day ful ofte greene; / ... / for which in wo to bedde he wente" (2.58, 60, 62). However, as a result of remembering "his grete emprise" (2.72-73), he is transformed from a hopeless sufferer of unrequited love to an eager and hopeful celebrant of May.

That Pandarus has, in effect, taken on Troilus' role as lover is clearly illustrated in his repeated claims to Crisedye that if Troilus dies from unrequited love so will he. He warns his niece: "But if ye late hym deyen, I wol sterue -- / Haue here my trouthe, Nece, I nyl nat lyen -- / Al sholde I with this knyfe my throte kerue" (2.323-25). Although one could argue that Pandarus is merely exaggerating and that he really has no intention of cutting his throat should Troilus die because of Criseyde's neglect, it is necessary to view this hyperbole within the cultural context of courtly love -- a context within which lovers suffered a variety of physical symptoms associated with lovesickness and *believed* they would die from it.⁴⁴ In addition, Pandarus formally swears to Criseyde that this will occur. As noted earlier, knights often formed an intimate bond by pledging their "trouthe" to one another. Although it is inappropriate for Pandarus to pledge his "trouthe" to Criseyde, particularly in this context, the fact that he uses the language of

⁴⁴Lovesickness is not merely a phenomenon confined to courtly literature. Apparently "real" people suffered from it as well as is evident from the number of medical treatises which focused on the symptoms and treatment of this disease. See Mary Wack's studies of ancient and medieval medical treatises.

chivalric brotherhood to give credence to his threat suggests that his words are to be taken seriously.

As he continues his persuasive argument, he not only emphasizes how his fate is inextricably tied with Troilus' but also that he is, in effect, living Troilus' situation. He admonishes Criseyde: "I se ful wel that ye sette litte of vs. / Or of *oure* deth; alas, I woful wrecche! / Might he yet lyue, of me is nought to recche" (2.432-34, emphasis mine). Although Troilus is ostensibly the suffering lover, the "woful wrecche" according to Pandarus is himself, not Troilus. He goes on to explain in a matter-of-fact tone that, "sith I se my lord mot nedes dye, / And I with hym, here I shryue and seye / That wikkedly ye don vs bothe deye" (2.439-41). And finally, he states that "ffor certeyn I wol deye as soone as he" (2.446). As Pandarus presents his argument we can observe a gradual synchronization in the time of death of the two friends. After first claiming that he will bring about his own death presumably some time after Troilus', he then says that he will die "with" Troilus but it isn't clear if this will occur at the same time; however, in the last line he predicts that he will die "as soone as" Troilus does. As I argued above, although we might dismiss Pandarus' claims as comic exaggeration, given the fact that Criseyde accepts the veracity of her uncle's threats (2.466, 469, 472, 487), in the world of the poem the idea that *both* Pandarus and Troilus could die as a result of Troilus' unrequited love is presented as a possibility. His argument does succeed in persuading Criseyde to, at least initially, accept Troilus as a suitor. Yet, Pandarus responds as though he were the lover: "But may I truste wel therto ... / That of this thyng that ye han hight me here, / ye wole it holden trewely vn-to-me?" (2.491-93). While Pandarus, in

identifying so closely with Troilus, could desire whom Troilus desires. I am not necessarily suggesting that he desires Criseyde *per se*; rather, as I will argue later in this chapter, he merely desires to be satisfied in love.

In examining how Pandarus, in a sense, assumes Troilus' position, one needs to focus on the role imagination plays in this process. Immediately after learning the details of Troilus' situation, Pandarus proceeds to construct Troilus into a model knight/lover:

Now loke that a-tempre be thi bridel.
 And for the beste ay suffre to the tyde,
 Or elles al oure laboure is on ydel;
 He hasteth wel that wisely kan abyde.
 Be diligent and trewe, and ay wel hide;
 Be lusty, fre, perseuere in thy seruyse --
 And al is wel, if thow werke in this wyse. (1.953-59)

This passage reveals that Pandarus holds a detailed image in his mind of how a courtly lover should act. Since Pandarus has known only failure in matters of love, this image is based on ideal behavior which he apparently has not successfully practiced himself. Moreover, we see evidence of Pandarus' investment in molding Troilus into a model lover. For if Troilus fails to carry out his friend's prescribed actions, *both* of their efforts will be "on ydel." Pandarus, thus, identifies with the model image he constructs -- he would like to be Troilus, the model knight and lover. He conjures an image of Troilus in his mind:

I haue right now of the
 A good conceyte in my wit ...

 That thou shalt ben the beste post, I leue.
 Of al his [the God of Love's] lay, and moost his foos to greue.
 (1.995-96, 1000-01)

Unlike his own recurring misfortunes in love, he envisions Troilus as an exemplary lover, an ally to the God of Love himself. Pandarus follows through in his imagination, visualizing a multidimensional scenario where Troilus, exhibiting the ideal qualities he describes earlier (1.953-59), goes on to become “the beste post” for all lovers. And because of his identification with Troilus, the success he imagines is also his own. Therefore, the image of Troilus that he “incorporates” is not simply that of a lovesick knight with whom he can identify because of being in a similar situation; rather, it is an emotionally-charged imaginative picture of a model knight. That Pandarus at times assumes this role has been demonstrated above. However, the question that remains is whether his desire to be Troilus, the model lover, also involves a desire *for* him.

Laplanche and Pontalis define fantasy as an “[i]maginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish ... in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes.”⁴⁵ They go on to explain

⁴⁵Laplanche and Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-Analysis 314.

that a prohibited desire informs this wish.⁴⁶ However, it is important to add that the fantasizing subject does not seek to obtain the desired object: for as Elizabeth Cowie aptly states, “the pleasure of fantasy lies in the setting out, not in the having of the objects.”⁴⁷ Although I will take a more in-depth look at how fantasy operates in Troilus and Criseyde in my discussion of the consummation scene, we can observe how fantasy informs Pandarus’ identification with Troilus.

In book II, Pandarus constructs a scenario in which Troilus, in his “beste gere” (2.1012), is to ride past Criseyde’s house when Pandarus and Criseyde are sitting at a window. His instructions to Troilus read like a scripted scene: “ryd forth by the place as nought ne were. / And thow shalt fynde vs, if I may, sittynge / At som wyndow in-to the strete lokyng” (2.1013-15). Thus, Pandarus not only imagines Troilus as a model knight, but he also places himself in the scenario. He goes on to direct the imagined action:

And if the list, than maystow vs salue,

And *vp-on me make thow thi countenaunce*,

But by thi lif be war and faste eschue

To tarien ought -- god shilde vs fro meschaunce!

Rid forth thi wey and hold thi gouernaunce ... (2.1016-20, my emphasis)

While Troilus may greet both Criseyde and Pandarus, he is to focus his attention solely on Pandarus. The gazer fantasizes being seen! The potentially homoerotic two-way

⁴⁶Laplanche and Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-Analysis 318: “what is *prohibited (l’interdit)* is always present in the actual formation of the wish” (emphasis in original).

⁴⁷Cowie 133.

gazes between the model and the observer avoided in the chivalric treatises are here actualized. It is important to read this scenario in the context of Pandarus' emotional investment in Troilus. Pandarus has labored to transform Troilus from a hopeless sufferer of love's sorrows into a model knight/lover whose mere appearance before his beloved lady should have the power to win her. However, while Criseyde's reaction should be of prime importance -- since she is ostensibly the reason for the staged meeting --, Pandarus does not give her a prime position in his imagined scenario. In insisting that Troilus look at him, Pandarus not only reveals a desire to be acknowledged by his own model knight, but moreover seeks to transfer Troilus' amorous gaze from Criseyde to himself. Criseyde is, thus, figured here as Pandarus' "rival" for Troilus' attention. If we consider that an observed object might have an emotive effect on the observer -- an effect clearly illustrated in book I --, then Pandarus seeks to avoid letting an erotically-charged "species" be emitted from Criseyde to Troilus, choosing to occupy that spectatorial position himself. Could this be an example of "prohibited" desire which, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, informs fantasy?⁴⁸ Are we therefore offered a glimpse of Pandarus' subconscious wishes? Pandarus explains to Troilus how the scenario will end: "we shal speek of the somewhat, I trowe, / Whan thou art gon, to don thyn eris glowe" (2.1021-22). It is implied that Pandarus intends to initiate the discussion (as he has on former occasions) and, furthermore, his enthusiasm (love?

⁴⁸I am distinguishing here between culturally acceptable same-sex desire, which *could* include homoeroticism, and sodomy, which within the heteronormative society of the poem (and fourteenth-century England) is "forbidden." In the next chapter I will examine how the text politicizes the former by hinting that it is informed by the latter.

desire?) for Troilus is the motivating force for the praises that will cause Troilus' ears, though out of hearing range, to "glowe." One might read this imagined erotically-charged effect as a result primarily of Criseyde's words of admiration; yet, it is, after all, Pandarus' fantasy, and his exuberant praises as well as Criseyde's are intended to stimulate Troilus. Pandarus thus not only appears in his fantasy but also imagines exerting a physical (sexual?) effect on Troilus. While the fantasy itself ends here, the actual scene offers a further glimpse of Pandarus' (unconscious?) desire.

Troilus performs according to Pandarus' wishes: "he gan ... [Criseyde] humbly to saluwe, / ... / And vp his look debonairly he caste / And bekked on Pandarus" (2.1257, 1259-60). What is particularly striking in this scene is that the narrator, Criseyde, and Pandarus are all, in a sense, enraptured with Troilus' appearance. The narrator gushes how Troilus "goodly was biseyn" and exclaims: "God woot wher he was lik a manly knyght!" (2.1262-63). "Criseyde, which that alle thise thynges say, / ... hire liked al in fere, / His persoun, his aray, his look, his chere" (2.1265-67). Pandarus, having received Troilus' "look," views his model knight through Criseyde's admiring eyes. For he "stood hire faste by / ffelte iren hoot and he bygan to smyte" (2.1275-76). The heat of the "iren" is undoubtedly informed by Criseyde's passionate reaction to Troilus' appearance -- an appearance nurtured and orchestrated by Pandarus. His model knight, therefore, proves to be a success, which, I would suggest, serves to heighten his desire to *be* Troilus. We should not overlook the fact that Troilus is performing for both Criseyde and Pandarus. While Pandarus' reaction might differ from Criseyde's in kind, he, nevertheless, like Criseyde, reveals a desire *for* Troilus. As a result of Troilus'

successful performance. "right for ioye he felte his herte daunce." and in this excited state he rushes to his friend whom "he fond allone a-bedde" (2.1304-05). Pandarus' fantasy and its actualization, therefore, offer a telling glimpse of the "subconscious" forces motivating his "help" for his friend.

Kaja Silverman defines "sodomitical identification" as "a variant of narcissistic object-choice ... where what one would like to be coincides with what one would like to possess ... in other words, the convergence of identification and desire upon the same object."⁴⁹ This can occur, perhaps, as a result of incomplete incorporation of the object with whom one identifies. Fuss points out that "identification is always also about what cannot be taken inside, what resists incorporation."⁵⁰ Or, in other words, "identification could result in a longing because of ... [a] gap between actual and ideal."⁵¹ In Chaucer's text, Pandarus desires to be a successful knight/lover and sets up Troilus as an ideal. Although he comes to identify with (incorporate) Troilus to such an extent that he, at times, acts like Troilus, he cannot completely assume Troilus' role -- something eludes his grasp. And it is, I would suggest, this missing element that fuels his desire *for*

⁴⁹Silverman 179. Freud, in "On Narcissism: An Introduction," General Psychological Theory, identifies four types of narcissistic object-choice: one desires "What he is himself.... What he once was.... What he would like to be.... Someone who was once part of himself" (71).

⁵⁰Fuss, Identification Papers 39.

⁵¹Michael Warner, "Homo-Narcissism; or, Heterosexuality," Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism, ed. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden (New York: Routledge, 1990) 197. Warner, drawing on Freud's remarks in Group Psychology, asks whether a "boy might both identify with the father and yet desire his image."

Troilus.

In depicting the process in which Pandarus establishes a bond of identification with Troilus, and, moreover, how he constructs an image of Troilus as a model knight and lover whom he desires to be, Chaucer's text offers a dramatization of a type of same-sex relationship implicitly recommended in the chivalric treatises. However, in exposing the emotional dynamics that inform the spectatorial association between observer and observed, the poem draws attention to what is avoided in the treatises, namely, the potential homoeroticism between the novice and the model. Chaucer's text goes on to situate the observing, "novice" knight in scenes that further illustrate the slippery boundary between identification and desire.

IV. Sliding Identifications and Triangular Desire

A Prelude to the Consummation Scene: Pandarus' Ambidextrous Identifications

In the scene at Deiphebus' house early in book III, Troilus, in his role of model courtly lover, is the object of the gaze of both Pandarus and Criseyde. In fact, this is the first time all three protagonists are in the same place for an extended period. By examining the spectatorial dynamics in this scene and monitoring how Pandarus shifts his identification between Troilus and Crisedye, we can observe not only the interrelation between identification and desire but also how Chaucer's text operates within a "medieval" understanding of active/passive positions.

As the book opens, Troilus is lying in bed as Pandarus leads Criseyde into the

room (3.50, 59). Whether Troilus is feigning sickness, or is, as he claims, "sik in ernest" (2.1529), he is in any case observed in a weak, passive state. Pandarus, however, occupies a doubly active position in that he peeps at Troilus through the bed-curtain (3.60) and is, as he promised earlier, driving the deer into Troilus' bow (2.1535). His identification here is divided between Troilus, with whom he identifies as a model courtly lover, and, I would suggest, Criseyde, with whom he shares a spectatorial position. Although the text does not always draw attention to Pandarus, he is a close observer of the scene and, as in the staged scene discussed above, "stood hire [Criseyde] faste by" (2.1275), thus seeing Troilus through her eyes. He, therefore, observes how she "gan bothe hire hondes softe vpon hym [Troilus] leye," and asks for his continued "lordshipe" (3.72, 76-77). He views Troilus then as both a courtly lover, receiving Criseyde's soft touch, and a chivalric knight, providing protection for a vulnerable woman. I would suggest that not only Criseyde "aspied wel ynough" how Troilus "wex sodeynliche rede" (3.85, 82) but also Pandarus, who, in presumably directing his gaze alongside Criseyde, identifies with her position and is thus implicated in causing Troilus' erotically-charged reaction; yet, at the same time, he also identifies with Troilus, the model lover on his way toward fulfillment. As will become evident, Pandarus' spectatorial association with Criseyde does not negate his identification with Troilus but actually eroticizes it.

Pandarus' dual identifications blur the boundaries between being and having Troilus. He would like to be Troilus, model lover and knight; yet, at the same time, he acts, in effect, as Criseyde's accomplice, guiding her to Troilus' bed, provoking her to

act, and standing nearby as she receives Troilus' words of devotion: "I haue / ... / Ben youres al, god so my soule saue, / And shal, til that I, woful wight, be graue" (3.100, 102-03). Despite the fact that these words are, as I pointed out above, similar in kind to those addressed earlier to Pandarus, they are clearly meant for Criseyde. For Troilus goes on: "Thus muche as now, O wommanliche wif, / I may brynge, and if this yow displese, / That shal I wreke vp-on myn owen lif" (3.106-08). What is intriguing here is that Pandarus (and the narrator), not Criseyde, reacts immediately to these heartfelt words of love: "Ther-with his manly sorwe to biholde, / It myghte han made an herte of stoon to rewe, / And Pandare wep as he to water wolde" (3.113-15). Criseyde is evidently not the only one observing Troilus' "manly sorwe," which also implies that other eyes have been watching the entire scene thus far. Moreover, Pandarus, in effect, identifies here with Criseyde, occupying the role of the addressee; yet, he also provokes her into responding to Troilus as he believes she should. Thus, Pandarus has a mental picture of Criseyde's role as beloved lady.

Freud characterizes a male homosexual as one who, a few years after puberty, identified strongly with his mother and sought a narcissistic object-choice similar in age to himself to replace the love he had formerly experienced from his mother.⁵² Thus, in identifying here with Criseyde, Pandarus, too, could be viewed as a "homosexual."

⁵²Freud states in "Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality," *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Macmillan, 1963): "a few years after the termination of puberty the young man, who until this time has been strongly fixated to his mother, turns in his course, identifies himself with his mother, and looks about for love-objects in whom he can re-discover himself, and whom he wishes to love as his mother loved him" (157).

which could, in part, explain his desire for Troilus: for Pandarus is “giving up” Criseyde who is, in effect, transferring her love from Pandarus to Troilus. But, in addition to obvious differences, Chaucer’s text, unsurprisingly, does not fit Freud’s heterosexist identification scheme for homosexuals. While Pandarus here and, as I shall demonstrate, in the consummation scene, at times, identifies with Criseyde’s position, he concurrently identifies with Troilus, the ideal knight and lover -- an image informed by Pandarus’ fantasy. His reactions throughout this scene are both *like* Criseyde’s, thus revealing a desire to be Criseyde in her interactions with Troilus (i.e. Freud’s homosexual male), and *like* Troilus, illustrating homosocial “incorporation.” Therefore, Freud’s concept of male homosexuality is, in context of his theory of identification discussed in the previous section, useful in delineating the dynamics between identification and desire within a triangular configuration.⁵³

Pandarus’ identification with Troilus is clearly illustrated as he pokes Criseyde “new and newe” (3.1.16), coercing her to accept Troilus as her lover: “wo bygon ben hertes trewe; / ffor loue of god, make of this thinge an ende. / Or sle vs both at ones, er ye wende” (3.1.17-19). Whose heart besides Troilus’ is “wo bygon?” Is he referring to Criseyde? But she does not appear to be suffering from lovesickness. Thus, he identifies so completely with Troilus that *his* heart suffers together with his friend’s; he expects to die along with Troilus. However, unlike the earlier situation where his threats of double

⁵³In fully identifying with Troilus, Pandarus could assume Troilus’ desire and, thus, desire Criseyde. While I do not deny that Chaucer’s text offers material for this line of approach, I am focusing on how Freud’s theory can be used to study how homoeroticism operates within the poem.

death were made to Criseyde alone, here, Troilus is present as well. Because Pandarus has acted on Troilus' behalf earlier, and Criseyde has already agreed to accept his love so long as Pandarus does not urge her to go "depper" in the affair (2.477-80, 484-89), the fact that she expresses doubts which should have been allayed in her earlier conversations with Pandarus suggests that confronting the two men together leads her to suspect that Pandarus and Troilus are involved in a plan -- which they, in fact, are -- and she is the outsider. The friends appear interchangeable. Criseyde addresses Pandarus: "I wolde hym preye / To telle me the fyn of his entente / yet wist I neuere wel what that he mente" (3.124-26); however, Troilus responds. Immediately after Troilus' explanation of his intentions in the lofty language of courtly love (3.127-47), Pandarus continues, interpreting the essence of Troilus' speech in everyday language (3.148-54). Interestingly, it is Pandarus' speech, and not that of the lover proper, that elicits the long awaited response from Criseyde -- a response that is directed first to Pandarus and then Troilus. The transition is smooth: "if I may don hym gladnesse, / ffrom hennes-forth, I- wys, I nyl nought feyne. / Now beth al hool, no longer ye ne pleyne" (3.166-68). Although I am not suggesting that Criseyde confuses Pandarus and Troilus, the fact that she includes Pandarus in the proceedings merely underscores his ongoing intimate involvement in Troilus' affairs. Thus, by giving in to Troilus' request, Criseyde is also, in effect, giving in to Pandarus.

Pandarus closely follows Criseyde's response to Troilus, particularly since, as already mentioned, she begins by addressing him; he also undoubtedly witnesses how she "hym [Troilus] in armes took and gan hym kisse" (3.182). Significantly, the text,

rather than focusing on Troilus' reaction, instead reports Pandarus' immediate ecstatic (orgasmic?) outburst: "ffil Pandarus on knees and vp his eyen / To heuen threw and held hise hondes highe" (3.183-84). He also hears bells: "With-uten hond me semeth that in towne / ffor this merueille ich here ech belle sowne" (3.188-89). The sexual connotation of the ringing bells is underscored by his promise that he will bring Troilus and Criseyde together secretly, at which time he will judge "which of ... [them] shal bere the belle / To speke of loue aright" (3.198-99). Pandarus' reaction is further evidence of the extent of his identification with Troilus. He has not only previously behaved like a knight in love, but in the present scene he is able better to express the meaning of a lover's words. His ecstatic outburst cannot, however, be interpreted solely within the realm of his identification with Troilus because he is also engaged in a spectatorial identification with Criseyde. Thus, he not only shares the kiss and pleasure enjoyed by Troilus but also, in a sense, kisses Troilus. This climactic moment, therefore, offers a brilliant illustration of the interweaving forces of identification, spectatorship, and desire.

This scene also offers insight into the active/passive position occupied by the chivalric object of the gaze. Although in the beginning of the scene, Troilus is, as indicated above, depicted in a passive position, he is also implicitly the active "hunter" in his "triste" waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting deer (2.1534-35). Like a model knight, Troilus attracts the gaze of his observer, which positions him as passive object, yet at the same time this attraction is directly related to the very "active" quality of chivalric prowess that he has demonstrated earlier. In addition, similar to a model knight

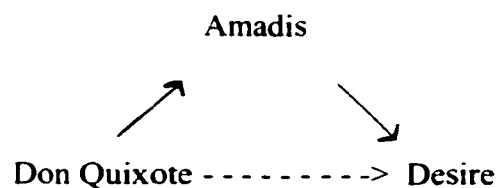
as represented in the treatises, Troilus does not return the gaze of his observer. Although Criseyde “aspied” Troilus’ blush (3.85), when he finally responds, he turns to her “With look down cast” (3.96). Throughout this scene, the text situates Troilus as the object of Criseyde’s (and Pandarus’) gaze. She “gan hire eyen on hym caste” as she accepts him as her lover and finally “hym in armes took and gan hym kisse” (3.155, 182).⁵⁴ Troilus is apparently only the recipient. Yet, in Roger Bacon’s theory of optics, discussed in chapter 2, the observed object does not play an exclusively passive role; nor does the observer occupy solely an active position. That Troilus, despite his “passivity” is also exerting an active force on his observer is clearly evident in Pandarus’ reaction to Troilus being kissed. The observed image, thus, is not only received by Pandarus’ observing eye, but it also generates an erotically-charged response.

The Consummation Scene: Variations on an Erotic Triangle

René Girard’s theory of triangular desire provides a useful methodological tool for examining the dynamics of desire at work in the consummation scene. In his discussion of Cervantes’ Don Quixote, Girard notes that Don Quixote seeks to imitate Amadis of Gaul, a perfect knight errant. According to Girard, Don Quixote does not choose his own object of desire, but rather “pursues objects which are determined for

⁵⁴One can draw a striking parallel with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. At Bertilak’s castle, the lady comes into Gawain’s bedchamber on three occasions and gazes at him in bed. Although he has earlier cast his gaze on her (like Troilus in book I), he is here rendered in a passive position and, like Troilus, he receives, rather than bestows, a kiss. Gawain’s underlying “activity” as a model knight is also suggested in that the lady refers to his “prys and the prowes that pleses al other” (1249).

him ... by the model of all chivalry." He calls this model figure the "mediator of desire."⁵⁵ However, in Troilus and Criseyde the model does not *determine* the desire of the subject. Pandarus is the agent of his desire and Troilus acts out Pandarus' ideal of a desiring subject. Nevertheless, Girard's concept is applicable in that Troilus serves as both model (ideal lover) and mediator (means for Pandarus to experience vicarious pleasure).⁵⁶ The triangular relation outlined by Girard can be represented as follows:



Since Don Quixote is far removed from the legendary Amadis, according to Girard, this is an example of "external mediation," where both subjects do not share the same desire despite the fact that Don Quixote's desire is mediated through his model. However, in the case of "internal mediation," the desiring subject and his mediator inhabit the same sociocultural world thus raising the possibility of "competing desires"; in other words, the subject and his mediator could both desire the same object.⁵⁷ Girard goes on to suggest that the mediator could, therefore, be an obstacle for the subject in that "the impulse toward the object [of desire] is ultimately an impulse toward the mediator; in

⁵⁵René Girard, Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965) 2.

⁵⁶While this is the dominant configuration, with Criseyde occupying the position of "desire," I will be illustrating variant configurations which represent specific moments in the consummation scene.

⁵⁷Girard 7, 9.

internal mediation this impulse is checked by the mediator himself since he desires, or perhaps possesses, the object."⁵⁸ Although Girard identifies the conflicting feelings of reverence and malice which the subject holds towards his model/mediator as "hatred," I would suggest that it could equally be viewed as "love."⁵⁹ Moreover, Girard's observation that in triangular desire the desiring subject's movement towards the object of desire involves a concomitant movement toward the mediator raises the possibility of a homoerotic relationship between the male subject and his model figure.

The rivalry between subject and model/mediator that Girard identifies can be viewed in an oedipal framework. In his discussion of identification between group members, Borch-Jacobsen points out that "although the identificatory bonds are not in themselves libidinal, the fact remains that they *depend* on the libidinal object bond: just as the little Oedipus identifies with his father *because* he wants to possess the mother, so the members of the group identify among themselves *because* they love the leader."⁶⁰ In Chaucer's text, Troilus and Pandarus are, in a sense, rivals for Priam's love. As I discussed earlier, they are both "brotherly" knights serving to protect Priam's kingdom of Troy. Although this rivalry is not acted out in the poem, an oedipal relationship is implied in the chivalric subtext.⁶¹ According to Freud, feelings of hatred between

⁵⁸Girard 10.

⁵⁹Girard 10. See Freud's discussion of the relationship between love and hate in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 102-03.

⁶⁰Borch-Jacobsen 191, emphasis in original.

⁶¹Pandarus is apparently very close to the royal family. Deiphebus considers him an extremely close friend (2.1408-14). In addition, Pandarus spends a day with Priam

brotherly rivals can eventually be repressed and transformed into "homosexual love." He offers the scenario of a mother praising one boy, setting him up as a model: "the tendency to a narcissistic object-choice was thus stimulated, and after a short phase of keen jealousy the rival became a love-object."⁶² Again, this is not directly presented in Chaucer's text; however, the oedipal rivalry underlying the relationship between Pandarus and Troilus could inform and, thus, eroticize the rivalry (in a Girardian sense) between the two as, respectively, desiring subject and his model/mediator.

While both forms of rivalry operate in Chaucer's text, I would suggest that homoerotic impulses within the triangular configurations of the consummation scene are most clearly explained in terms of Pandarus' identification/rivalry with his model/mediator. Girard defines "Proustian homosexuality" as "a gradual transferring to the mediator of an erotic value which in 'normal' Don Juanism remains attached to the object itself." He goes on to explain that this transfer can occur in "the acute stages of internal mediation, characterized by a noticeably increased preponderance of the mediator and a gradual obliteration of the object."⁶³ I would suggest that a similar "transferring" occurs in Chaucer's text. For, at times, it appears that Pandarus' model/mediator is his object of both identification and desire.

While the chivalric romances discussed in chapter 2 do not necessarily

without Troilus (5.281-84).

⁶²Freud, "Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality" 159.

⁶³Girard 47.

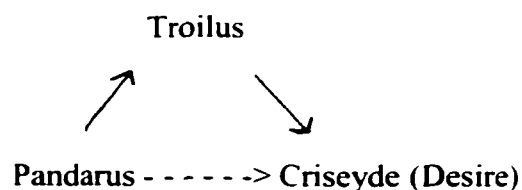
correspond to the Girardian model regarding desiring subject, mediator/model, and object, they do, nevertheless, offer various configurations of triangulated desire. In Amys and Amylion, the steward's desire for Amys effects a greater intimacy between Amys and Amylion. For in switching places, each friend *becomes* the other. In addition, when Amylion's wife, formerly an object of desire for Amylion, expels her leprous husband, she indirectly brings about the eternal union of the two friends. The Prose Lancelot not only illustrates that the rivals in a triangle -- Guinevere and Galehot -- need not be both male but also that the mutual object of desire can be a model knight. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, there is an underlying rivalry between Bertilak and Gawain in relation to the lady; for if Gawain gives in, wouldn't he engage in sexual activity similar to that which occurs between husband and wife? In addition, the lady, although not a model, is, in a sense, a mediator for Bertilak's desire for Gawain. Chaucer's text, however, differs from the above romances in that it offers a variety of configurations of triangulated desire, some of which conform more closely to the Girardian model while others deviate from it.

Eve Sedgwick, commenting on Girard, notes that the rivals need not be both males, for "any relation of rivalry is structured by the same play of emulation and identification." She goes on to point out that the object of desire in a triangular constellation could be male.⁶⁴ The above romances and, as we shall see, Chaucer's text offer examples which illustrate Sedgwick's point. What is particularly interesting to

⁶⁴Sedgwick 33, emphasis in original. In Sedgwick's reading of Shakespeare's sonnet 144, both the fair youth and the dark lady are objects of desire for the speaker. She does not, however, indicate which one is the mediator of desire for the speaker.

note is how the triangular configurations alter during the consummation scene, thus revealing a dynamics of desire which is not easily contained within exclusively same-sex or heterosexist spheres. In the discussion which follows, I will be focusing on Pandarus as the desiring subject since his motivation is, as I have demonstrated earlier, clearly dramatized in the text.⁶⁵

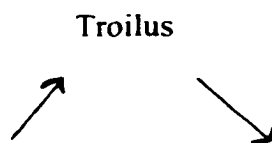
Just before the consummation scene, Pandarus assures Troilus that his desire will be satisfied: "it shal be right as thow wolt desire; / So thryue I. this nyght shal I make it weel" (3.709-10). It is, therefore, implied that Pandarus *knows* exactly what Troilus desires. That Pandarus is emotionally invested in the scene he is planning is evident in his impatience at Troilus' hesitation: "thow wrecched mouses herte. / Artow agast so that she wol the bite?" (3.736-37). He then leads Troilus into Criseyde's room, holding him "by the lappe" (3.742). The relationship between the three protagonists can be represented in the following triangle:



Following the Girardian model, Pandarus, in the position of desiring subject, can reach his object of desire, possibly Criseyde, "unconsciously," but more likely an image of

⁶⁵I am not denying the possibility of viewing the scene from Troilus' or Criseyde's point of view. For Pandarus has traditionally been viewed as the mediator of the lovers' desire. However, my discussion of the consummation scene is a logical continuation of my earlier examination of the dynamics of identification and desire, particularly in that I am situating Pandarus within the chivalric tradition of a "novice knight" seeking a model.

another woman, by means of his model/mediator, Troilus. According to Girard, Troilus would then be Pandarus' rival for he, too, desires Criseyde, and, thus, he would check Pandarus' impulse toward his object. While it is possible to view Pandarus and Troilus here as "rivals" for Criseyde/object of desire, I am more concerned with examining how the model/mediator, in this configuration, Troilus, *enables* rather than hinders Pandarus' impulse toward his desired object. In addition, I agree with Sedgwick that it is important to consider how gender affects the symmetry of a particular triangular configuration.⁶⁶ In the above triangle, Troilus occupies the position of model knight/lover and mediator for Pandarus' desire.⁶⁷ However, the homosocial bond of identification linking Pandarus to Troilus is not directly comparable to the heterosexual desire linking Troilus to Criseyde. As I demonstrated earlier, in the scenes leading up to the consummation, the text privileges the homosocial relationship -- a privileging that is not uncommon in chivalric romances. I would, therefore, propose the following as a more accurate rendering of the relationship among the three protagonists:



⁶⁶Sedgwick observes that "both Girard and Freud (or at least the Freud of this interpretive tradition) treat the erotic triangle as symmetrical -- in the sense that its structure would be relatively unaffected by the power difference that would be introduced by a change in the gender of one of the participants" (23).

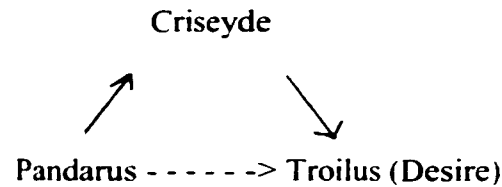
⁶⁷The convergence of these roles is well expressed in Pandarus' reminder to Criseyde how she has pledged her love "To Troilus, the worthiest knyght, / Oon of this world" (3.781-82). Thus, Pandarus views Troilus as both the "worthiest" knight (model) and one who, having received his lady's pledge of love, is about to fulfill his desire (mediator).

Pandarus -----> Criseyde (Desire)

While the circulation of desire is the same, this configuration more clearly expresses the relative distances among the three protagonists in accord with the sociocultural framework of the poem. Although this configuration changes during the consummation scene, it is, nevertheless, the one that best describes the overall interrelationship between Pandarus, Troilus, and Criseyde.

Before Troilus actually enters the scene, Pandarus, in his attempt to persuade Criseyde to see Troilus immediately, accuses her of not caring about Troilus: "If that ye suffre hym al nyght in this wo. / God help me so, ye hadde hym neuere lief" (3.863-64). She defends herself by reversing his accusation: "Hadde I hym neuere lief? by God, I weene / ye hadde neuere thyng so lief" (3.869-70). Although it is unclear what "thyng" she is accusing him of not holding dear, Pandarus interprets her remark as engaging him in a sort of competition regarding each one's concern for Troilus. He responds that since she has made an "ensaumple" of him, if he is, in fact, guilty of wishing to see Troilus suffer all night, he renounces any further joy in life (3.872-75). He then attempts to shame her into demonstrating that she likewise would never wish to make Troilus suffer, telling her: "if ye that ben his loue. / ... / ... suffre hym in destresse. / ye neyther bounte don ne gentillesse" (3.876, 881-82). Since Pandarus needs to convince his niece to receive Troilus at that moment in order to bring about their consummation -- a goal informed by his own search for pleasurable fulfillment --, Criseyde is here, in a sense, a mediator for Pandarus' desire. Criseyde, like Troilus, is a subject of desire. And, in prodding her to assume an active position, Pandarus reveals his dependency on her. The

actions Criseyde performs shortly on Troilus, in effect, bring Pandarus closer to his desired object. The circulation of desire from Pandarus' point of view can thus be represented as follows:

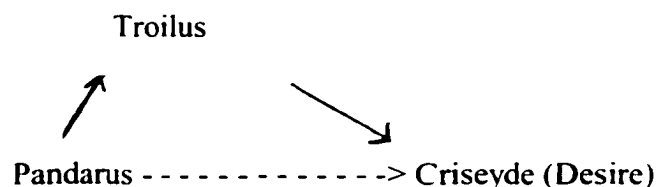


In her position as mediator, Criseyde is also an object of identification for Pandarus. We have already seen how in the dialogue discussed above Pandarus draws a parallel with Criseyde regarding their respective relations with Troilus. In addition, he reveals that he has an image of how one who is Troilus' "loue" should behave. He goes on to situate himself in Criseyde's position by taking the hypothetical role of a lady accused by her jealous lover: "if a fool were in a ialous rage, / I nolde sette at his sorwe a myte, / But feffe hym with a fewe wordes white" (3.899-901). Although his example is intended to highlight how "this thyng stant al in another kynde" (3.903), he effects an identification with Criseyde as the accused lady. Moreover, in describing Troilus as one who is "so gentil and so tendre of herte" (3.904), he offers a view of Troilus which *she* should have. This, in addition to his earlier admonishments, reveals how he identifies with Criseyde by constructing what he considers to be the correct image of Troilus' beloved -- an image he persuades Criseyde to embody.

Pandarus' identification with Criseyde here is not, however, equal to his identification with Troilus because it is not based on the sociocultural foundation of chivalric brotherhood; nor is it informed by the relationship between a "novice knight"

and his model. But, while Criseyde is not a model in a chivalric sense, she does, as indicated above, occupy the role of model beloved who also serves as a mediator for Pandarus' desire.⁶⁸ Following Freud and Girard, we can draw the following scenarios: Pandarus' identification with Criseyde could cause him to "assume" her desire for Troilus; or Criseyde as Pandarus' rival for Troilus/desire -- and thus an obstruction -- could become his love-object. Both situations involve an "unstable" interaction between homoerotic and heterosexual desire. In the former instance, identification could slip into desire; in the latter situation, the rivalry is based on a preliminary same-sex desire.

Immediately after Troilus swoons, Pandarus rushes to the bed and takes control of the situation: "he in-to bed hym [Troilus] caste. / And seyde, 'O thef, is this a mannes herte?' / And of he rente al to his bare sherte" (3.1097-99). The circulation of desire in this action can be configured once again as:



That Pandarus literally throws Troilus into bed and strips him to his bare shirt, makes it appear that he is preparing to rape Troilus. In the previous chapter I examined how the

⁶⁸That Pandarus identifies with Criseyde in her role as gazer or model beloved -- within the framework of a male-male bond of identification/desire -- and not as a close relative, Chaucer's text again privileges homosocial relations over familial bonds.

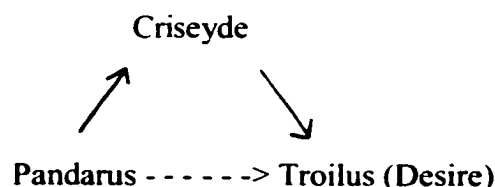
action whereby one male acts aggressively against another in a sexual situation is illustrated in historical accounts of alleged and admitted sexual acts. Following through in this reading, then, Troilus serves as both mediator and endpoint of Pandarus' desire. In Girardian terms, this is an illustration of "Proustian homosexuality," whereby the mediator becomes erotically invested. The consummation scene thus appears to be a forum for the expression of Pandarus' homoerotic desire. Nevertheless, while Chaucer's text is evidently informed by contemporary sociocultural contexts of same-sex desire, the triangular configuration is not abandoned. For immediately after the above action, Pandarus brings Criseyde into the scene: "Nece but ye help vs now, / Allas, youre owen Troilus is lorn" (3.1100-01, emphasis mine). Not only is heterosexual desire reinstated but also the scenario again includes all three protagonists. Although the positions will later alter, this moment clearly illustrates how Pandarus, the subject of desire, seeks fulfillment in the consummation scene. By physically preparing his model/mediator to have sexual intercourse with Criseyde, he assures that he will derive his vicarious pleasure as well.

Pandarus and Criseyde both attempt to revive Troilus: "Therwith his pous and paumes of his hondes / They gan to frote, and wete his temples tweyne" (3.1114-15).⁶⁹ Troilus who is lying in bed wearing nothing but his "bare sherte" is acted upon equally by both. The Girardian triangle thus appears to break apart into two parallel.

⁶⁹Maud Burnett McNerney, "'Is this a mannes herte?': Unmanning Troilus through Ovidian Allusion," *Masculinities in Chaucer*, ed. Beidler, observes that Pandarus and Criseyde are here "performing a sort of sexual first aid" (223). She goes on to suggest that throughout the scene Pandarus occupies the role of "sex therapist" (224).

unobstructed, streams of desire -- one homoerotic, the other heterosexual. At this moment, reviving Troilus is the desired goal; and both the action itself and the endpoint are erotically informed. For only if Troilus is awake can he receive Criseyde's words of love (3.1110-12) and perform his role as (desired) model lover for Pandarus. Yet, at the same time, because Criseyde and Pandarus depend on each other's actions, they are positioned as mediators for each other's desire -- a positioning which also implies a potential collapsing of identification and desire between subject and mediator. The various concurrent movements of desire illustrated at this moment in the text point to the unstable and, as demonstrated throughout the poem, interwoven relationship between heterosexual and homoerotic desire.

But then, Criseyde "ofte hym [Troilus] kiste and, shortly forto seyne, / Hym to reuoken she did al hire peyne. / So at the laste, he gan his breth to drawe" (3.1117-19). Pandarus and Criseyde are, therefore, no longer acting equally on Troilus. Criseyde emerges as subject of desire, and Pandarus, who has, in part, enabled this action, occupies the position of mediator for Criseyde. Although Pandarus could still be rubbing Troilus' palms and wetting his temples as Criseyde kisses him, the text privileges Criseyde's actions in that Troilus revives apparently as a result of her efforts. Taking Pandarus' point of view, however, Criseyde is here the mediator of Pandarus' desire, which suggests the following configuration:



For in awakening Troilus, she brings Pandarus closer to his desired goal, namely, the consummation. As in the earlier illustration of this configuration, Pandarus' identification with his model/mediator is based on parallel spectatorial positions rather than sociocultural tradition. Criseyde is a model for Pandarus in the sense that she occupies the active role of lover gazing at and "pursuing" her beloved. Pandarus is evidently standing very close to Criseyde as she kisses Troilus.⁷⁰ and thus, he is, in effect, performing these actions as well.

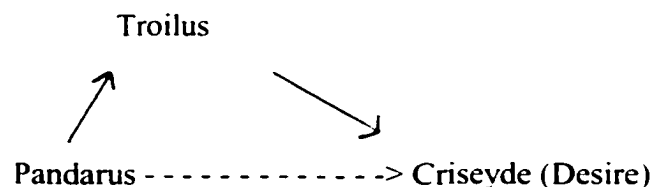
This configuration continues to illustrate the interrelationship among the three even after Troilus awakens. After he asks why Criseyde and Pandarus are troubling themselves so, Criseyde reprimands him: "Is this a mannes games? / What, Troilus, wol ye do thus for shame?" (3.1.126-27). Criseyde is either accusing Troilus of swooning merely as a ploy to seduce her (i.e. this is shameful "manly conduct") or she is, in a sense, emasculating him, charging him with shameful *unmanly* conduct.⁷¹ In either case Criseyde assumes an active, subject position. For "therwith-al hire arme ouere hym she leyde. / And al foryaf and ofte tyme hym keste" (3.1.128-29). She also, however, continues to occupy the position of model/mediator for Pandarus because she is here the pursuing lover taking the appropriate steps toward consummation, while Troilus is not at this moment fulfilling Pandarus' ideal of a model lover; for the swoon was not part of

⁷⁰Here as often in Chaucer's text, one can only speculate on details of position. However, since the series of actions performed on Troilus are reported as a continuum, the dual actions and Criseyde's solo efforts connected by "And" (3.1.116), we can assume that Pandarus is still in the direct vicinity of Troilus.

⁷¹I am following Windeatt's gloss of "mannes game" (305n.1126) as "manly conduct."

his construction. Criseyde maintains her aggressive stance, dismissing Troilus' weak accusation (3.1159-60): "Swiche argumentes ne ben naught worth a beene" (3.1167). She then jokingly threatens to beat him: "Wol ye the childissh ialous contrefete? / Now were it worthi that ye were y-bete" (3.1168-69). Although this threat is cloaked in the image of beating a naughty child, considering the fact that Troilus is lying undressed in her bed, there is a clear sexual implication here. And thus in this instance Criseyde, poised to act (sexually?) upon Troilus, is Pandarus' object of identification.⁷²

However, after Criseyde assumes a more passive role, asking Troilus to forgive her (3.1182-83), Troilus takes the initiative: "This Troilus, with blisse of that surprised, / ... / sodeynly auysed, / He hire in armes faste to hym hente" (3.1184, 1186-87). The circulation of desire changes accordingly to:



Troilus here acts the role of model/mediator for Pandarus.⁷³ While Troilus' action might not illustrate ideal chivalric/courtly conduct, he does, as far as Pandarus is concerned, take a major step towards effecting the consummation; and thus, Pandarus' vicarious pleasure is closer to being realized. Pandarus is, in a sense, linked with Troilus' actions.

⁷²Although at the time Criseyde makes this "threat" Pandarus has again retreated to the fireplace (3.1141), it is unlikely that he is beyond the range of sight and hearing. Earlier when Troilus swoons, he is "vp as faste" at the bedside.

⁷³Troilus can, of course, also be viewed as subject here, thus situating Pandarus as mediator. For, in tossing him in Criseyde's bed, Pandarus positions Troilus to make this move.

In the very next line, we are informed that “Pandarus with a ful good entente / Leyde hym to slepe” (1188-89). His work completed, Pandarus can leave the bedroom scene: his model/mediator is finally positioned to reap the rewards -- rewards that he, too, will somehow enjoy. But how might the consummation scene offer satisfaction to Pandarus since he apparently does not observe it?⁷⁴

V. Pleasure in the Eyes of the Beholder: Pandarus’ Fantasy of Consummation

As discussed earlier, fantasy does not involve actually obtaining the desired object. In fact, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, the fantasizing subject “forms no representation of the desired object.” In addition, they point out that the subject is a participant in the imagined scene which contains a sequence of images.⁷⁵ It is important to note that the most satisfying moments are found in observing/participating in the events leading up to the climax of the fantasized scene. As Cowie aptly states: “[t]he pleasure is in how to *bring about* the consummation, is in the happening and continuing

⁷⁴I am assuming that Pandarus does actually leave the bedroom because there are no indications that he doesn’t. Since there is apparently only one bed in the room and no additional chair (for Pandarus *stands* by the fireplace), it seems unlikely that we are meant to suspect that he stands all night listening and watching. In addition, we are told that the next morning he comes “Unto his Nece” (3.1556), thus implying that he enters the room. While one could argue that he might have slipped out sometime during the night, the text, I believe, exits him from the bedroom after his final remarks to the lovers: “if ye be wise, / Swouneth nought now, lest more folk arise” (3.1189-90). Even if he does remain in the room (which is suggested in The Riverside Chaucer 1042n.1189), he is, in effect, written out of the scene.

⁷⁵Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, “Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality,” The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis 49 (1968): 17.

to happen; is how it will come about, and not in the moment of *having happened*, when it will fall back into loss, the past.”⁷⁶ The notion that fantasy represents the subject’s effort to recover a lost object is well expressed by Judith Butler, who neatly observes the interrelationship between subject and desired object:

[F]antasy seeks to override the distinction between a desiring subject and its object by staging an imaginary scene in which both positions are appropriated and inhabited by the subject.... Insofar as fantasy orchestrates the subject’s love affair *with itself*, recovering and negating the alterity of the lost object through installing it as a further instance of the subject, fantasy delimits an auto-erotic project of incorporation.⁷⁷

Thus, the subject does not desire an object in the fantasy because this object is merely an extension of the fantasizing subject. However, it is only while the scene is playing that the subject experiences this sense of “wholeness.”⁷⁸ Once it is over, as Cowie points out, the divided self or a feeling of “loss” returns. A fantasy, therefore, sets up the *possibility* of recovering full pleasure -- a possibility that is, in a sense, realized during the sequence of images moving towards but never actually reaching consummation.

⁷⁶Cowie 133, emphasis in original. See 123-65 for her excellent, detailed discussion of fantasy, including its expression in film.

⁷⁷Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex” (New York: Routledge, 1993) 268n.7, emphasis in original.

⁷⁸Although “wholeness” in psychoanalytical terms generally refers to an original wholeness prior to the division of the subject, it can also denote the imagined (or, according to Lacan, illusory) union between subject and object experienced in sexual acts. It is this imagined satisfaction that concerns me here.

Although not directly stated by Butler, the “auto-erotic” incorporation of the desired object is a form of identification.

The above explanation of how fantasy offers the subject pleasurable satisfaction, albeit temporary, is useful in examining the consummation scene in Troilus and Criseyde from Pandarus’ point of view.⁷⁹ As discussed earlier, lack of success in love is the “loss” which motivates Pandarus’ fantasy. His staging of the consummation scene can be read as his attempt to experience the “wholeness” of sexual union which has consistently eluded him. Pandarus participates in his fantasy by directing the action and, at times, directly taking part, such as undressing and casting Troilus in bed. During the sequence of scenes, he identifies with whichever protagonist is leading events towards consummation. He does not necessarily desire to obtain either player, however:⁸⁰ his pleasure is derived from orchestrating and observing the action prior to consummation. Although fantasy is essentially an internal process, playing only in the mind of the subject, Chaucer’s text dramatizes it through Pandarus.

Pandarus, we are told, “euer did his myght” to bring Troilus and Criseyde

⁷⁹Although she does not explore this in depth, Dinshaw likewise observes how Pandarus “reads the lovers’ persons as characters in a script he has himself written -- reads them as if *they* constituted ‘an old romaunce’” (Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics 49, emphasis in original). Evan Carton, “Complicity and Responsibility in Pandarus’ Bed and Chaucer’s Art,” PMLA 94 (1979), increases the number of spectators, rightly suggesting that the narrator and reader are also observers: “All have performed as partners in a cozy ménage à cinq, founded upon the shared activity of speaking and hearing” (56).

⁸⁰This does not contradict my earlier discussion regarding the interrelationship between identification and desire because fantasy, in a sense, suspends subject/object duality. Thus, the fantasizing subject does not regard the protagonists as objects to “have.”

“yfare” (3.512, 515). He prepares very carefully for the scene: “he with gret deliberacioun / Hadde euery thyng that herto myght auaille / fformcast and put in execucioun” (3.519-21). His acute attention to details suggests that more is at stake than simply helping his friend.⁸¹ And while Pandarus’ fevered preparations are, indeed, evidence of his continued investment in Troilus’ pursuit of love, unlike his earlier efforts, such as the staged scene in book II, here, as we shall see, he participates more directly in the action. Setting up the scene is only the beginning. After situating the players in their respective positions and seeing that “alle thyng was wel,” Pandarus, like an efficient director, “thought he wolde vp-on his werk bigynne” (3.696-97).

Pandarus coaches his “actors.” He orders Troilus: “make the redy right anon, / ffor thou shalt in-to heuene blisse wende” (3.703-04). While Criseyde is prepared to follow his directions, telling him “doth her-of as yow liste” (3.939), she attempts to stage her own position: “er he come, I wil vp first arise” (3.940). Pandarus, however, has his own concept of how the scene will begin. He directs her to stay in bed: “liggeth stille and taketh hym right here” (3.948). He then instructs both of them to relieve “otheres sorwes smerte” (3.950). As the scene is now ready to begin, Pandarus is focused on the pleasure the coming events will bring: “ffor soone hope I we shul ben alle merye” (3.952). The juxtaposition of the first person singular and plural pronouns splendidly illustrates how *his* fantasy incorporates the protagonists in the scene: for he is inextricably linked to the joy about to be experienced by Troilus and Criseyde.

⁸¹Unlike in Boccaccio’s text, Criseyde is not eager to consummate her relationship, at least at the outset. Thus, Pandarus is acting solely on Troilus’, and, as I have been arguing, his own behalf.

Pandarus not only sets up the fantasy scene but also periodically makes minor adjustments during the scene to ensure that it follows the desired course. He prods Criseyde to assume her proper role: "Nece, se how this lord kan knele: / Now, for youre trouthe, se this gentil man" (3.962-63). Although Troilus is already on his knees (3.953), Pandarus seeks to make Troilus' gesture more effective in moving the action forward by fetching a cushion for him to kneel on (3.964-66). Before retreating to the fireplace and letting his players proceed, he carefully positions them for action: "Now doth hym sitte, goode Nece deere, / Up-on youre beddes syd al ther with-inne, / That ech of yow the bet may other heere" (3.975-77).

That Pandarus does not merely play the role of observer in his fantasy is evident from his actions immediately following Troilus' swoon. He actually steps into the fantasy scene as the action is occurring, undressing and tossing Troilus in bed. Although Pandarus' move here is in one sense homoerotically informed, as I argued above, in that it illustrates the "slippage" of identification into desire, it can also be interpreted as auto-erotic. Following Butler here, Pandarus does not seek to "have" Troilus as an object of desire because Troilus is an extension of himself. Thus, he derives pleasure from re-positioning *himself* within his fantasy scenario.⁸² He also once again sets Criseyde on the path he expects her to follow: "Nece, wol ye pullen out the thorn / That stiketh in his herte? ... / ... Sey 'al foryeue,' and stynt is al this fare" (3.1104-06). She

⁸²The two interpretations are, in fact, not contradictory. Chaucer's text, in offering a dramatization of a fantasy with actual players, allows one to read the scene as both an illustration of an internalized fantasy, whereby the subject is not separated from his object, and, as I examined earlier, a scenario in which the three participants interact with one another as subject, model/mediator, and object.

obeys him and, after she makes the active move elaborated on above (3.1128-29), since events are moving in the right direction, Pandarus removes himself once again to the fireplace. Although one cannot be sure he can see his players beyond the curtain of the bed, he can, undoubtedly hear them. For immediately after Troilus suddenly grabs Criseyde, Pandarus bids them good night (3.1184-90).

He leaves (or, at least, retreats from the scene) at the very moment that the lovers are poised for consummation. That the mood is about to change dramatically is evident in the very next stanza with its sexual references and the narrator's embarrassment:

"What myght or may the sely larke seye, / Whan that the sperhawk hath it in his foot? / I kan namore" (3.1191-93). The "sely larke" and the "sperhawk" apparently refer,

respectively, to Criseyde and Troilus.⁸³ Thus, Troilus and, shortly after, Criseyde are about to "sore."⁸⁴ But Pandarus does not witness this because *his* satisfaction reaches its peak just prior to the consummation. With the climax comes the end of his fantasy. That Pandarus has, indeed, derived pleasure from his fantasy scene is clearly expressed in the "mury morwe" he spends with Criseyde the next day.⁸⁵

⁸³Aers, Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination, suggests that Troilus, depicted here as a "sperhawk," can be compared to the eagle in Criseyde's earlier dream: see 127-28.

⁸⁴I am drawing on my earlier discussion of Pandarus' reference to his own loveless condition: "I haue no cause, I woot wel, forto sore / As doth an hawk that listeth forto pleye" (1.670-71). At this point, Criseyde has not yet "yielded" to Troilus. However, soon she, too, prepares for "flight" (3.1233-39).

⁸⁵His erotically-charged behavior with Criseyde could be viewed as his attempt to continue the fantasy of the previous night; for Troilus, although not present, is clearly referred to. However, it is also possible that he is merely in a good mood, having at last experienced a form of sexual gratification. The nature of Pandarus' relationship with

Pandarus' identification with Troilus' pursuit of love, in effect, culminates with the fantasy scene. It is here that he most completely "incorporates" Troilus, thus combining "being" and "having." For within the fantasy scenario, Pandarus can experience "union" with his object of identification without actually consummating a sexual act.⁸⁶ That this is pleasurable for the fantasizing/identifying subject is evident both from Pandarus' careful preparations for the scene and the apparent satisfaction he derives from its successful realization. In dramatizing a process which normally occurs within the confines of the subject's imagination, Chaucer's text therefore reveals the auto-eroticism which is at the very base of identification.

Troilus and Criseyde illustrates a variety of male-male interactions which are found in chivalric texts. It presents Troilus, at times, as an exemplar of chivalric prowess and invites readers to observe him in their minds' eyes. While it situates him in a battle scenario which stimulates sadomasochistic identifications for the readers, in

Criseyde -- and the possibility that he acts on sexual desire for her -- has attracted a fair amount of critical attention. See Richard W. Fehrenbacher, "'Al That Which Chargeth Nought to Seye': The Theme of Incest in Troilus and Criseyde," Exemplaria 9 (1997): 341-69; H. Ansgar Kelly, "Shades of Incest and Cuckoldry: Pandarus and John of Gaunt," Studies in the Age of Chaucer 13 (1991): 141-58; T. A. Stroud, "The Palinode, the Narrator, and Pandarus's Alleged Incest," Chaucer Review 27 (1992): 16-30.

⁸⁶I do not deny the fact that, within the fantasy scenario, Pandarus effects a "union" with Criseyde as well. However, since Pandarus' identification with Troilus is socioculturally-based and figures so prominently in motivating the fantasy in the first place while his identification with Criseyde is limited to situations informed by parallel spectatorial positions or situations where Criseyde serves as a mediator for his homoerotic (and heterosexual) desire, I am focusing here (and throughout the study) on his relationship with Troilus.

presenting this scene as a reconstructed mental image, it also demonstrates the actual process of visual reading -- a process readers of chivalric treatises and biographies were encouraged to engage in. In addition, Chaucer's text delineates homosocial intimacy commonly found in chivalric romances, neatly bringing together the traditional language of brotherly love and physical demonstrations of affection. And by situating same-sex encounters in the privacy of the bedchamber, it allows the homoeroticism often suggested in chivalric texts more clearly to surface.

Moreover, the process of identifying with a model figure, central to the chivalric lifestyle as presented in the treatises, is dramatized in Chaucer's poem. In illustrating this process within the realm of a conventional courtly love story, Troilus and Criseyde offers a glimpse of what is not usually apparent in chivalric texts, namely, the novice knight's emotional investment in his object of identification. In addition, the poem draws attention to the significant role imagination plays. For Pandarus actually constructs an image of a model knight/lover based on his particular taste. Chaucer's text allows for two concurrent illustrations of identification: one taking place in the "actual" world, where because the object cannot be completely incorporated, this "gap" stimulates desire; and a dramatization of a fantasy scenario in which incorporation of the object offers auto-erotic pleasure to the subject/novice knight. In the former instance, we are afforded a view of a series of changing triangular configurations in which homoeroticism and heterosexual desire interact more vividly than in such romances as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Prose Lancelot. In the latter case, the internal process of fantasizing a model figure -- whether based on an imagined

figure or an actual one -- suggested by chivalric treatises is depicted in a scenario which links the subject/novice knight and his object in an erotically-charged union. Although a proper chivalric fantasy would undoubtedly consist of a model knight engaged in some form of combat rather than lovemaking, Chaucer's scenario is relevant in a chivalric context. For, the auto-erotic pleasure derived from observing/experiencing one's fantasmatic self display ideal qualities of prowess is not, I would suggest, inherently different.

Troilus and Criseyde, while clearly informed by a late-medieval cultural understanding of homosocial interactions as depicted in chivalric texts, is also a literary work steeped in sociopolitical issues of its time. Thus, I will now focus on how Chaucer's text politicizes the relationship between Pandarus and Troilus.

Chapter 5

The Politicization of Male Homosocial Intimacy in Troilus and Criseyde

Part One: Reading Books I - III through a Homophobic Lens

Two expressions of male-male intimacy run side by side through the first three books of Troilus and Criseyde: one illustrates what is culturally acceptable, the other reveals homophobic distrust. Because the latter becomes dominant in books IV and V, however, the text invites a rereading or reappraisal of the former. Like Thomas Walsingham's politically-motivated addition to his earlier chronicle regarding the nature of Richard II's relationship with Robert de Vere, Chaucer's text destroys the homosocial bond between Troilus and Pandarus in book V, thus exposing a homophobic political agenda which, in effect, reinterprets the positive depiction of this same-sex friendship in the first three books. As homosocial intimacy increases, so does Pandarus' influence on his vulnerable friend -- an influence that the text depicts as negative since the vulnerable friend is a royal prince and Pandarus' counsel does not serve the best interests of the royal family or a city-state threatened with invasion.¹ In the discussion which follows, I will focus on how the poem offers a reading of Troilus and Pandarus' relationship that situates it within discourses of male-male seduction and aggression, reminiscent of the historical accounts discussed in chapter 3. Moreover, I will demonstrate how Chaucer's poem enters the contemporary political arena in that, by depicting Pandarus and Troilus as adviser and advisee, respectively, it suggests the highly criticized relationship between Richard II and his court favorites (as well as Edward II and Gaveston). I go on

¹Derek Brewer, "Troilus's 'Gentil' Manhood," Masculinities in Chaucer, ed. Beidler, draws attention to the penchant for military activity and displays of excessive emotions of fourteenth-century English kings and princes and notes that "Troilus fits well into this pattern of behavior of royal princes" (241).

to highlight instances where the specter of sodomy hovers over the developing intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus.

I. Advising a Royal Prince: A Diagram of Seduction, Power, and Influence

In chapter 3, I examined how chroniclers present the young Richard II as a passive, “seduced” victim of the machinations of his intimate friends who were also his closest advisers. Considering the fact that these alleged “seductions” occurred at roughly the same time that Chaucer was composing his poem, it is not insignificant that Troilus and Criseyde dramatizes the process by which an adviser seduces and influences a royal prince.² Pandarus attempts to wrest out of Troilus the truth about his secret love by stating his credentials: “Though I be nyce, it happeth often so / That oon that excesse doth ful yuele fare / By good counseil kan kepe his frend ther-fro” (1.625-27). It is possible to draw a parallel between Pandarus and Richard II’s (and Edward II’s) court favorites who advised the young king, generally against the interests of the nobles. Pandarus, like Robert de Vere, is presented as an unsuitable advisor for a prince/king. Although he claims that because he is “nyce” and prone to “excesse” he can help Troilus avoid making mistakes, by this very admission he reveals himself as someone decidedly unqualified to give sober counsel. In addition, because Pandarus’ emotions have caused him to have ill luck in the past, he is in need of *good* fortune and, thus, the

²Although the chronicles were composed after Chaucer completed Troilus and Criseyde, some of the events they refer to were unfolding during the period in which Chaucer was working on his poem, namely 1385-86.

text suggests that he has a personal agenda.³ While I demonstrated in the previous chapter that Pandarus seeks to advise his friend in matters of love so that he himself will derive vicarious pleasure, this is only one reading of his motivation offered by the text. Viewing his motives through a politically-informed lens reveals his quest for power over Troilus -- a power to influence his trusting friend in a way that might not be consistent with the interests of the royal family and Troy, in general.⁴

In his attempts to win Troilus' trust, Pandarus focuses on his friend's weakness by offering several analogies:

The wise seith, 'wo hym that is allone,
 ffor, and he falle, he hath non helpe to ryse';
 And sith thow hast a felawe, tel thi mone:
 ffor this nys naught, certein, the nexte wyse.
 To walwe and wepe as Nyobe the queene.
 Whos teres yet in marble ben yseene. (1.694-700)

First, it is significant that Pandarus, who only shortly before admits that he is "nyce" now positions himself as one who speaks the words of the "wise." And, by suggesting that Troilus is not only prone to falling down -- which could have catastrophic implications in a society where princes and kings actually fight in battles -- but also

³I am drawing on Windeatt's gloss of line 626: "That somebody whom an excess of feeling causes to get on very badly."

⁴It is also possible to read Pandarus' actions as illustrating his concern for his "ailing" friend which is in keeping with the text's affirmation of homosocial intimacy. For a discussion of Pandarus' role as healer, see Mary Wack, "Pandarus, Poetry, and Healing," Studies in the Age of Chaucer, Proceedings 2 (1986): 127-33.

needs Pandarus in order to stand up again, he implies that Troilus is weak, vulnerable, and, therefore, dependent on him. Moreover, while cloaking his counsel in the “masculine” authority of the “wyse” he “feminizes” Troilus, drawing a parallel between his weeping friend and Nyobe. By placing himself on the side of “masculine” authority and support while stressing Troilus’ “feminine” need for help, Pandarus’ desire to counsel his friend could also be interpreted as a wish to dominate him. That Troilus, in eventually giving in to Pandarus, in effect, accepts these gendered positions indicates that Pandarus’ view is accurate. And Troilus, like the youthful Richard, who was, according to the chroniclers, seduced by the counsel of his favorites, follows Pandarus’ advice in all matters during the first three books. In fact, he does not engage in any activity that is not informed by Pandarus’ counsel. In illustrating Pandarus’ understanding of the power relations between Troilus and himself, the text here casts a suspicious shadow over his motives.

As his attempts to get to the truth of Troilus’ love secret do not succeed, Pandarus becomes increasingly aggressive. After Troilus fails to respond to Pandarus’ protracted speech (1.624-735), merely casting his eyes up, Pandarus, fearing that his friend might fall into a “frenesie,” “cryde ‘awake,’ ful wonderlich and sharpe, / ‘What! Slombrestow as in a litargie?’” (1.729-30). While Pandarus’ sharp words can be viewed as a therapeutic attempt to save Troilus from a sleepy madness,⁵ his scolding tone and

⁵Wack (“Pandarus, Poetry, and Healing”) observes a parallel between Pandarus and Lady Philosophy in Boethius’ Consolation of Philosophy. In Book I, Prose 2, the speaker informs us: “whan sche say me nat oonly stille, but withouten office of tunge and al dowmb, sche leyde hir hand sooftly uppon my breest, and seide: ‘Here nys no peril,’ quod sche, ‘he is fallen into a litargye, which that is a comun seknesse to hertes

the following insulting remarks suggest other motives are involved:

Or artow lik an asse to the harpe.
 That hereth sown whan men the strynges plye.
 But in his mynde of that no melodie
 May sinken hym to gladen. for that he
 So dul ys of his bestialite? (1.731-35)

Thus, having failed to startle Troilus into a response, he attempts to provoke him by comparing him to an ignorant ass, too “dul” to hear the (seductive) wisdom of Pandarus’ arguments. While Pandarus’ insulting analogy can be read as playful banter between friends, this very playfulness is at the same time a seductive ploy -- one that implies a movement toward physicality. Since his previous intellectual arguments based on the “wise” elicit no response from Troilus, he now aims at Troilus’ emotions, hoping to jolt him into reacting to his words, perhaps, even heatedly. For in the heat of the moment, Troilus might relax his defenses, thus allowing Pandarus to extract from him the information he so desperately seeks. Although Troilus’ response is neither heated nor emotional, he does awaken and, furthermore, gives evidence that he has, indeed, heard all of Pandarus’ words (1.752-60). Pandarus, therefore, not only succeeds in provoking Troilus to respond but also assures himself of having Troilus’ attention; and doesn’t the process of seduction involve holding the attention of the potentially seduced until the

that been desceyved” (qtd. in Wack 130-31). Wack concludes that “[t]o compare Pandarus’s healing role with Lady Philosophy’s ... demonstrates that Pandarus uses language not as a path to stable knowledge, as she does in the Consolation, but as a strategy to effect sexual solace” (132).

final effect is achieved?

Troilus' long silence is actually an act of resistance to Pandarus' efforts. We are told that "Troilus yet hym no thyng answerde, / ffor why to tellen nas nat his entente / To neuere no man, for whom that he so ferde" (1.737-39). The accentuated negatives in these lines attest to Troilus' determination not to reveal his secret. That Troilus sees Pandarus as potentially aggressive (and seductive?) is suggested in the following: "ffor it is seyde, 'men maketh ofte a yerde / With which the maker is hym self ybeten / In sondry manere'" (1.740-42). In other words, by telling Pandarus everything Troilus would give his friend the power to "beat" him with that knowledge. The "sondry manere" of the beating could in fact take the form of seduction in that Pandarus, using this newly gained information, might persuade Troilus into performing actions he would not otherwise do. While I am not suggesting that Troilus foresees Pandarus' schemes, it is telling that his determination not to reveal information to Pandarus is juxtaposed with a fear of being "beaten."

That Troilus is too weak to resist Pandarus' "seduction" is first illustrated when he breaks his defiant silence and begs Pandarus to leave him in peace:

frend, though that I styлле lye,

I am nat deaf; now pees, and cry namore,

ffor I haue herd thi wordes and thi lore;

But suffre me my meschief to bywaille,

ffor thy prouerbes may me naught auaille. (1.752-56)

Troilus is clearly positioned here as a victim, not only of love but also, more important,

of Pandarus' relentless badgering. He is physically vulnerable, lying "style" in bed while Pandarus hovers over him. He implicitly acknowledges Pandarus' coercive power in that he asks his friend to *allow* him to bemoan his misfortune. Although Troilus' rejection of Pandarus' "prouerbes" might be interpreted as defiance, the following repetition indicates otherwise: "Lat be thyne olde ensaumples, I the preye" (1.760). That he begs Pandarus to cease taunting him with "olde ensaumples" indicates that his resistance is actually rather weak. And this weakness is underscored by Pandarus' refusal to grant Troilus his wish: "No, ... therfore I seye, / Swych is delit of foles to by-wepe / Hire wo, but seken bote they ne kepe" (1.761-63). He, in effect, walks right over Troilus' pleas.

Chaucer's text, thus, illustrates how a potential victim of seduction attempts to resist his seducer. Troilus clearly states that he does not intend to tell anyone about his secret love and, moreover, does not want to be "cured" by Pandarus (1.758). While Pandarus' goal is not to engage in a sexual act with Troilus, he nevertheless exerts pressure on his friend to reveal private information that will bring pleasure to Pandarus - both in the act of wresting the information from Troilus and the power afforded him by knowing it. Troilus and Criseyde is, in a sense, informed by discourses of one-sided same-sex encounters such as generated by the records of the Templar trials which suggest that knights were forced to perform obscene kisses against their will or engage in sexual relations with another brother of the order. As I suggested earlier, the language of the testimonies offer no indication that knights easily consented to get undressed at

the initiation ceremony and then kiss or be kissed by the preceptor.⁶ In addition, although some knights claim that they did, in fact, refuse to take part in same-sex activity (whether kisses or sodomitical acts), thus resisting some form of seduction, others apparently did not. While the records do not offer testimony which outlines a victim's attempts to resist performing undesired actions, it is plausible that some, at least at first, refused to submit to their "seducer."⁷ I do not claim that the encounters described in the records of the Templar trials are "acted out" in Troilus and Criseyde; however, I suggest that Chaucer's text presents a scenario of male-male seduction -- seduction that is, as I will demonstrate shortly, erotically informed -- and dramatizes the attempt by a vulnerable "victim" to resist his "seducer."

Because Troilus does not give in easily, Pandarus assumes a tactic that is both more aggressive and manipulative. He strengthens his position of power by negating Troilus' resistance: "But oones nyltow, for thy coward herte, / And for thyn ire and folissh wilfulnesse, / ffor wantrust, tellen of thy sorwes smerte" (1.792-94). He dismisses Troilus' heartfelt suffering as "cowardly," his willful stubbornness and, by association, his anger, as "folissh." Moreover, he accuses him of distrusting his "felawe" (1.696) and "brother" (1.773). Obtaining Troilus' trust is at the center of

⁶While joining any order of knighthood would undoubtedly involve demanding initiation ceremonies, the fact that the Templars were on trial for, among other issues, illicit same-sex conduct, the implied coercion here is particularly significant.

⁷Despite the fact that the testimonies I examined present same-sex encounters, such as those described by Guillaume de Born at the Auvergne trial, in language that suggests violent acts of one-sided pleasure, we needn't assume that the "victim" did not enjoy the sexual act. The testimonies given at the trial of Arnold of Verniolle supports this speculation.

Pandarus' efforts; for, as we shall see, in gaining Troilus' trust, Pandarus also gains power over his friend. That Pandarus is presented as a clever manipulator of a vulnerable young prince is evident in the following scenario he offers Troilus:

If thow dost deye and she not why it is,

But that for feere is yolden vp thy breth

ffor Grekes han biseged vs. i-wys?

Lord, which a thonk than shaltow han of this!

Thus wol she seyn, and al the town attones,

'The wrecche is ded, the deuel haue his bones.' (1.800-05)

In drawing attention to both the siege and Troilus' public image, the text allows for a parallel to be drawn with contemporary political concerns. Besides the more obvious analogy between besieged Troy and England, which is a subtext throughout the poem, this passage posits a friend advising a royal prince to take a course of action that would, according to him, benefit his public reputation.⁸ Although the situations are quite different, nevertheless, the relationship illustrated here between adviser and advisee is strikingly similar to that of the court favorites and Richard II, as depicted in the

⁸Despite the fact that the invasion panic reached a peak in 1385 and 1386, when Chaucer was presumably completing Troilus and Criseyde, England was actively at war with France throughout the period of Chaucer's composition. For a study of the historical association between London and Troy, see John Clark, "Trinovantum -- The Evolution of a Legend," Journal of Medieval History 7 (1981): 135-51. I explore the idea of a historical subtext in Chaucer's poem in "A Trojan Knight at the Ricardian Court: Chaucer's Troilus Engaged in Fourteenth-Century Context."

chronicles.⁹ One of the charges made against de Vere, de la Pole, and others, was that they deceived the young king, distorting his views of the nobles. Not unrelatedly, in the above passage, Pandarus' counsel while acknowledging Troilus' higher social position also demonstrates (dangerous?) intellectual superiority in that he taunts his friend by making an improbable situation sound plausible. Although there is no indication that Troilus is receptive of this painted picture, the fact that Pandarus presents it suggests that he *thinks* Troilus might believe it.

Pandarus' aggressive and manipulative tactics undoubtedly wear down Troilus' resistance, but his soothing words of promised requited love bring Troilus even closer to his eager grip. Pandarus persuades Troilus of the need to make his love known to the lady in question, offering a tempting picture of a lover who is "euere in oon ... fresshe and grene / To serue and loue his deere hertes queene, / And thynk it is a guerdon hire to serue" (1.816-18). At last, Troilus succumbs: "And of that word took hede Troilus, / And thoughte a-non what folie he was inne, / And how that soth hym seyde Pandarus" (1.820-22). The direct correlation between confiding in Pandarus and submitting to him is well illustrated in the following exchange. In response to Troilus's question, "what is me best to do?" (1.828), Pandarus, not surprisingly, suggests "if the like, / The beste is that thow telle me *al* thi wo" (1.829-30, emphasis mine). In giving Troilus the impression that the decision to reveal all the details of his secret is his own, Pandarus

⁹While one can also draw a parallel with Gaveston and Edward II, I am concentrating here on the relationship between Richard and his court favorites because, as in Chaucer's poem, there is an age difference between adviser and advisee. Although Pandarus' age is not revealed, the fact that he is Criseyde's uncle and evidently has had relations with women -- albeit unsuccessful ones -- imply that he is older than Troilus.

demonstrates his skill as an effective seducer. In addition, his tactic reveals a key component of seduction, namely, the promise of pleasure, which he offers to Troilus cloaked in the formal language of chivalric oaths: "And haue my trouthe, but thow it fynde so / I be thy boote er that it be ful longe, / To pieces do me drawe and sithen honge" (1.831-33). Nevertheless, the seduction is not yet successful. Pandarus needs to take a more physical approach.

In stating his desire to be Troilus' "leche," Pandarus also focuses on Troilus' body, telling him that he can only heal him if he "first vnwre his wownde" (1.857-58).¹⁰ By revealing his "wownde" to Pandarus, Troilus would not only expose his secret but also leave himself vulnerable to Pandarus' "healing" technique. That Pandarus can already taste success is evident from his impatient command: "Look vp, I seye, and telle me what she is / Anon, that I may gon aboute thy nede" (1.862-63). Without being asked, he assumes control over Troilus' affairs. He persists in this direct approach: "Knowe ich hire aught? for my loue, telle me this: / Thanne wolde I hopen rather for to spede" (1.864-65). And, finally, he elicits a physical response from Troilus: "Tho gan the veyne of Troilus to blede, / ffor he was hit and wax al reed for shame" (1.866-67). This brief passage offers a step-by-step illustration of a seduction about to be successfully performed. Significantly, Pandarus begins by insisting that Troilus look at him. And with the eyes of his "victim" focused on him he makes a tempting offer to

¹⁰Although Chaucer echoes Boethius here, the context is quite different. For Pandarus' role is not as benevolent as Lady Philosophy's in that his wish to heal Troilus is inextricably linked to his desire to exert control over Troilus' pursuit of love. See Windeatt 137n.857-8 for the relevant passage from Chaucer's translation.

take care of his “nede.” Given the fact that Troilus’ “nede” is sexually informed, Pandarus’ promise eroticizes the moment. Having secured Troilus’ gaze, Pandarus pushes further, adding the incentive of offering his love if Troilus reveals the lady’s identity:¹¹ “for my love, telle me this [i.e. the lady’s name]” (1.864): for this line can be read: “if you love me, tell me her name.” While Troilus’ blush is certainly in part a reaction to Pandarus’ stumbling so near the truth, it is also, I suggest, an indication of the heightened eroticism between the seducer and his object. For Troilus’ eyes are evidently focused on Pandarus as he closes in on his secret, apparently not waiting for Troilus to reveal his “wownde.” Pandarus’ excited (erotic?) reaction to Troilus’ blush, “A ha! ... here bygynneth game” (1.868), paves the way for his final maneuver: “And with that word he gan hym for to shake, / And seyde, ‘thef, thow shalt hyre name telle’” (1.869-70). Pandarus’ seductive power building up over the last 240 lines reaches its climax in an expression of physical force, and Troilus, at last, succumbs, shaking, “As though men sholde han led hym in to helle, / And seyde, ‘allas, of al my wo the welle, / Thanne is my swete fo called Criseyde’” (1.871-73). Despite the role that heterosexual desire plays in Pandarus’ successful act, Troilus is, nevertheless, depicted as one who is unwillingly seduced by another man, giving in merely because he is not powerful enough to resist. Thus, Pandarus obtains what he so diligently seeks and is now, as trusted counsel, about to assume complete control over Troilus’ pursuit of love.

In addition to dramatizing a form of same-sex seduction, Troilus and Criseyde

¹¹While Chaucer follows Boccaccio here, there are two important differences. In Boccaccio’s text, Pandaro tells Troilo to “get up,” rather than look at him, and does not offer his love as an incentive. See Filostrato 2.17.

offers an illustration of a confession scene. In the first volume of his History of Sexuality, Foucault notes that “[o]ne confesses -- or is forced to confess. When it is not spontaneous or dictated by some internal imperative, the confession is wrung from a person by violence or threat.”¹² While the context of Troilus’ confession is quite different from those of the Templars and Arnold of Verniolle, nevertheless, in each case secret knowledge of a sexual nature is sought by the inquisitor.¹³ Chaucer’s text, however, offers an illustration of the dynamics between examiner and examined which one can only speculate about in the other texts. Foucault describes the intermingling of pleasure and power: “pleasure ... comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, pleasure ... kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it.... [P]ower ... lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it, power assert[s] ... itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing, or resisting.”¹⁴ Pandarus, like an inquisitor, questions, “searches out” the truth of Troilus’ secret love. That the examiner might actually derive pleasure from wringing out a sexually-related confession is aptly illustrated in Pandarus’ excited exclamation, “A ha! ... here bygynneth game” (l.868). And after giving in enough to ask Pandarus what he should do (l.828), might Troilus’ continued resistance be informed by pleasure -- pleasure in keeping his friend/examiner

¹²Foucault 59.

¹³Although Arnold’s confession reads in a matter-of-fact tone thus implying that it was given without coercion from the inquisitor, this might not have been the case. On the other hand, torture was often used in extracting confessions from the Templars.

¹⁴Foucault 45.

in the dark? Although the content of Troilus' confession is not "scandalous" in the sense that Arnold's or some of the Templars are, nevertheless, Chaucer's depiction of the process leading up to Troilus' divulgence of his secret is, I would suggest, informed by the discourse of sexual confession.

Foucault goes on to point out that "confession is a ritual of discourse ... that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence ... of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it."¹⁵ In the previous chapter I examined how Pandarus' motivation for involving himself in Troilus' affairs is inextricably linked to his own desire for pleasure. A politically-informed reading of his actions, however, draws attention to his desire to *influence* his friend in ways that somehow serve his needs. Thus, Pandarus' quest for knowledge about Troilus' inner secret can also be viewed as a quest for power/authority. Although Pandarus' role as counsel is not clearly established during the early stages of the scene discussed above, evident from his failure to convince his friend that his advice is sound, he displays a certain authority in that Troilus eventually gives the prescribed confession. Pandarus then uses the confession to bolster his position as counsel. By securing Troilus' trust as well as privileged knowledge, he solidifies his power to influence his young friend. Immediately after receiving Troilus' confession, Pandarus chides him for his former behavior and then

¹⁵Foucault 61. Karma Lochrie, Covert Operations: The Medieval Use of Secrecy (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999) questions Foucault's view of confession in the Middle Ages. For her discussion of how the practice of confession developed in the Middle Ages, see 24-42.

orders him to ask the god of love for forgiveness (1.932-34); and Troilus does what he is told: "a. lord. I me consente. / And preye to the my iapes thow for iue. / And I shal neuere more whyle I liue" (1.936-38). His submission to the god of love is also a submission to Pandarus.¹⁶

How might the following words which Troilus, on his knees, addresses to Pandarus read when viewed through a lens colored by politically-informed homophobia: "thow wis. thow woost. thow maist. thow art al. / Mi lif. my deth. hol in thyn honde I leye: / Help now!" (1.1052-54)? Does the fact that Troilus begs Pandarus to "help" him conduct a clandestine love affair limit its political relevance? Quite the contrary. Far from his earlier resistance to Pandarus' counsel, Troilus now not only embraces it but also, more significantly, submits fully to his adviser. Having confessed "al," Troilus puts his life in Pandarus' hands. This newly established power relationship is not without an emotional (erotic?) component. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, Troilus' acceptance of Pandarus' help in obtaining Criseyde's love effects a growing intimacy between the two friends. While this intimacy can be viewed as socially acceptable within a homosocial chivalric context, it can also be interpreted as dangerous in a political context. For the advisee, a royal prince, is emotionally dependent on his adviser -- one whose interests are not necessarily compatible with other members of the royal family, and Troy in general. In fact, he might influence his young, inexperienced

¹⁶The idea that Troilus is submitting to both the god of love and Pandarus is underscored by the fact that he later addresses Pandarus as "lord" (2.975, 981). I will discuss shortly how this relates to the contemporary political situation. I am drawing on the translation of "consente" (refl.) listed in Norman Davis et al., A Chaucer Glossary (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).

charge to engage in deceptive activities.

The same-sex union that forms between Troilus and Pandarus, discussed in the previous chapter, need not be viewed solely as an illustration of chivalric brotherhood, such as found in Amys and Amylion, where each “brother” regards the other as his equal. For the feudal gesture Troilus makes in holding up his hands while addressing Pandarus as “lord” (2.974-75) suggests that this relationship is more like that between a vassal and his lord.¹⁷ And the “vassal” is eager for advice, asking his friend/superior: “lord, how shal I doon, how shal I lyuen?” (2.981). Even if one dismisses Troilus’ address to Pandarus as mock reverence, this relationship echoes a similar close bond between a royal prince and an intimate friend/favorite which triggered fears in the eyes of some. As we recall, one chronicler describes how Edward II, when still prince, “entered into a compact of brotherhood” with Gaveston.¹⁸ Edward I, fearing that his son’s attachment to Gaveston was dangerous, exiled Gaveston. When the two friends were later reunited, chroniclers were unanimous in their condemnation of Gaveston’s influence on Edward.¹⁹ That Chaucer’s text illustrates not only the sociocultural normality of the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus but also the power dynamics

¹⁷Troilus offers everything he has to Pandarus. “al thyn be that I haue” (2.975), and while this extravagance does not typify a vassal’s pledge to his lord, it reflects his complete devotion to serving his superior.

¹⁸Qtd. in Chaplais 12.

¹⁹The comparison is not negated despite the fact that Gaveston influenced Edward on matters that were directly related to the interests of the nobles, and England in general (the same holding true for Richard II’s court favorites), while Pandarus is merely advising Troilus on how to procure Criseyde. For, as I shall argue throughout this chapter, Pandarus’ influence extends into the realm of Troilus’ public duty.

between a prince and his intimate friend/adviser is evident in the following statement Pandarus makes to Troilus: “I haue euey yit / Ben redy *the to serue* ... / ... / *Do now as I shal seyn* and fare aright” (2.995-96, 999, emphasis mine). The lines neatly juxtapose the dual roles of an adviser socially inferior to his advisee: to serve yet command/influence.²⁰ And, depending on the point of view, this influence could be interpreted as negative.

In describing his plan to bring Troilus in contact with Criseyde at Deiphebus', Pandarus assures Troilus that his brother will be helping him “vnwist of it hym selue” (2.1400). While the text presents Pandarus as a loyal friend simply offering to do a good deed, it also illustrates that this “good deed” undertaken for Troilus involves manipulating another member of the royal family of Troy. In the encounter between Pandarus and Deiphebus, Chaucer's poem calls attention to the different levels of intimacy Pandarus enjoys with Troilus and Deiphebus. Although Deiphebus is Pandarus' “grete frend” whom “saue Troilus, no man he loued so” (2.1403-04), he addresses him in a formal manner (“sire,” “youre lordship,” “my lord” [2.1416, 1420, 1431]), which unlike his earlier address to Troilus (“lord, so ye swete!” [2.943]) does not lend itself to being interpreted as mock formality. In addition, he consistently uses the formal pronoun of address while Deiphebus speaks to him using the familiar form. I

²⁰An interesting example of how Chaucer, in effect, politicizes Boccaccio's text is that after Troilus writes the letter to Criseyde, as Pandarus counsels him to do, he seals the letter by setting “[t]he rubie in his signet ... / Up-on the wex” (2.1087-88). In the *Filostrato*, Troilo simply “quindi suggellolla [sealed it]” (2.107). While the ruby itself may, as Windeatt points out, signify healing qualities (21 ln.1087), the fact that Troilus seals the letter with his “signet” implies royal authority and thus underscores his social position.

would, therefore, suggest that the text, in offering two illustrations of intimate friendships between a knight/nobleman and a royal prince, draws attention to their differences.²¹ Moreover, it casts a suspicious shadow over one of them. As a result of Pandarus' intimate bond with Troilus -- a bond that is clearly *more* intimate than that between Pandarus and Deiphebus -- Pandarus is in the process of deceiving someone whom he considers a "grete frend." And since Troilus does not indicate his disapproval when Pandarus informs him "how that he Deiphebus *gan to blende*" (2.1496, emphasis mine), he becomes, in effect, an accomplice in the deception.

Pandarus gives Troilus detailed instructions to follow, telling him that, after claiming to feel sick, he should lie down, saying that he can no longer stand up, and wait there for his "aventure" (2.1517-19). Despite Troilus' protests that he needn't be counseled to feign illness because he is, indeed, sick (2.1527-29), he does, in fact, later groan "[h]is brother and his suster forto blende" (3.207). Although it is, perhaps, easy to dismiss this deception as harmless because it is motivated by a young knight's pursuit of love, it is not easy to disregard the potential significance of the rumors that Pandarus interjects into his scheme. He presents a fabricated story to Deiphebus and Helen in a serious manner: "he rong hem out a proces lik a belle / Up-on hire [Criseyde's] foe, that highte Polophete, / So heynous that men myghte on it spete" (2.1615-17). His false charges brought against a fellow Trojan have a powerful effect on his listeners:

"Poliphete they gonnen thus to warien: / 'Anhoned be swich oon, were he my brother, /

²¹Pandarus' social status is not actually revealed. Given the fact that he enjoys close relations not only with Troilus but also with other members of the royal family, however, he probably belongs to the upper class.

And so he shal, for it ne may nought varien"" (2.1619-21). Pandarus' "harmless"

scheme thus stirs up dangerous divisiveness at a time when Troy is under siege.

Although Chaucer's text does not follow up on the consequences of these charges, it does, I suggest, offer a clear illustration of an intimate adviser to a prince concocting a potentially dangerous rumor solely to serve his private interests.²² By invoking the historical subtext of the poem, in that it draws attention to Criseyde's status in a city at war, the text invites a reading of Pandarus' influence on Troilus that in some ways parallels the perceived negative influence of court favorites on Edward II and Richard II.²³ Although Pandarus does not instruct Troilus to support this rumor, the fact that he is in a position to orchestrate a deception which serves Troilus' needs, without bothering to secure Troilus' approval and using whatever means he sees fit, indicates that he wields significant power -- power that does not serve the best interests of the royal family, apart from Troilus, and may, indeed, endanger them.

While Pandarus' seduction of Troilus is not explicitly sexual, it depicts a process whereby one male attempts to penetrate another male's privacy using manipulation, temptation, and aggression and, thus, is informed by discourses of unidirectional same-

²²Pandarus' interests are ostensibly those of his niece but actually those of Troilus and, as I argued in the last chapter, his own.

²³This negative influence was generally expressed as turning the king's heart away from the nobles by excluding them from the king's inner circle. Of course, in excluding the nobles, the court favorites influenced their respective kings to award them favors and gifts which otherwise might have gone to the nobles. While the negative influence from a court favorite is differently expressed in Chaucer's text, a parallel can, nevertheless, be drawn in that Pandarus' actions put Troilus' (and his own) needs before those of Troilus' family. The idea that he turns Troilus' love away from his brother(s?) will be discussed in the next section.

sex behavior as found in the trial records of the Templars and Arnold of Verniolle. However, Troilus and Criseyde not only dramatizes a scenario of seduction but also illustrates the direct relationship between seduction and the power to influence. Directly after Pandarus successfully draws out Troilus' confession, he proceeds to dominate him, assuming the role of an adviser whose counsel is unquestioningly followed. Since Troilus, the advisee, is a royal prince, this same-sex relationship echoes that of the contemporary highly criticized association between the young Richard II and his favorites/advisers. Rereading the developing intimacy between Pandarus and Troilus during the first three books from a point of view informed by concerns voiced in the chronicles of the 1380s (as well as earlier in the century), renders the friendship a "dangerous" attachment, thus exposing the specter of sodomy.

II. The Specter of Sodomy in Troilus and Criseyde

That Chaucer's text intentionally raises the *possibility* of sodomy is suggested by the fact that the depicted intimate moments shared by Troilus and Pandarus in the seclusion of Troilus' bedchamber deviate considerably from Boccaccio's text. In the previous chapter I discussed how in book II, after Troilus returns home from his triumphant ride through the city, Pandarus seems to enjoy making Troilus sweat, prolonging his friend's agony before telling him the good news that Criseyde is willing to accept him -- news which he gives when they are both in bed.²⁴ Boccaccio presents this scene as follows: "Pandarus ... repaired directly to Troilus, and began *from afar* to

²⁴See chapter 4, 258-59.

say to him: 'Comfort thyself, brother, for I have, I believe, accomplished a great part of thy desire.' And he sat down and *straightaway* told him *quickly* what had happened."²⁵

In striking contrast, Chaucer's text, in expanding into four stanzas what Boccaccio concisely expresses in one, draws attention to the same-sex relationship and, in effect, marginalizes the heterosexual love story. While the analogy made between springtime awakening and Troilus' reaction to Pandarus' words closely follows Boccaccio, the homoeroticism of the moment is heightened in Chaucer's text as a result both of the deferred, sexually-inflected climax and the fact that the two friends are in bed when it occurs.

While Chaucer renders Troilus less demonstrative than Troilo in his thanks to Pandarus, in that instead of embracing and kissing him "a thousand times,"²⁶ he holds up both his hands to his friend in a formal, feudal gesture and says, "lord, al thyn be that I haue" (2.975), this formality actually renders the friendship more dangerous. For Troilus' friendly devotion to Pandarus expressed in the contemporary language of chivalric brotherhood draws attention to the political subtext of the poem: it not only suggests an analogy with brotherly bonds between young Edward and Richard and their respective court favorites, but also, most significantly, situates this act of devotion in

²⁵Filostrato 2.79: "Pandar ... / ... / A Troilo diritto se n'era ito, / E di lontano gli cominciò a dire: / Confortati fratel, ch' i' ho fornito / Gran parte, credo, del tuo gran disire. / E postosi a seder, gli disse ratto, / Senza interpor, com'era stato il fatto" (emphasis mine).

²⁶Filostrato 2.81: "Poi Pandaro abbracciò ben mille fiate. / E baciollo altrettante [Then he embraced Pandarus fully a thousand times, and kissed him as much again]."

the bedchamber, with both men in bed.²⁷ Furthermore, Troilus, whose heart “spredeth so for ioie it wol to-sterne” (2.979-80), remains in bed alongside Pandarus, while in Boccaccio’s text the two friends go immediately to Cressida. While the *Filostrato* is vague regarding the setting of Pandarus’ promise to aid his friend, Chaucer clearly situates this in the bedchamber. For Pandarus tells Troilus, “also siker as thow list here by me, / ... / [I] Ben redy the to serue” (2.991, 996). Moreover, as I pointed out earlier, Chaucer’s Pandarus/court favorite, while ostensibly serving his friend/royal prince, primarily gives him orders: “Do now as I shal seyn and fare aright” (2.999). Because the promises, vows, and orders between the two men are exchanged in bed in an atmosphere of inexpressible “ioie,” the text, here, brings together homoerotic intimacy and politics. Thus, Chaucer’s additions to Boccaccio’s text highlights a homosocial intimacy that is rooted in chivalric tradition, while it also calls attention to the political subtext, and therefore invites a homophobic-informed reading of same-sex relations.

In the previous chapter I examined how Pandarus treats Criseyde with far less love and respect than he does Troilus. While the privileging of a homosocial relationship over that of an uncle and his niece might merely reflect the chivalric cultural world of the poem, the text, at times, suggests that there is something illicit about the relationship between Pandarus and Troilus. For instance, Criseyde’s reprimand of her uncle for having more regard for Troilus’ “lust” than her “estat” (2.1133-34) also, in a sense, condemns her uncle’s involvement with Troilus. That

²⁷As I stated earlier, while Troilus and Pandarus are not necessarily in the same bed, they are apparently lying in close proximity to one another.

Criseyde's charges are to be taken seriously is evident from the fact that they are presented in a rhetorically sophisticated manner:

And loketh now if this be resonable,
 And letteth nought for fauour ne for slouthe
 To seyn a sooth: now were it couenable
 To myn estat, by god and by youre trouthe.
 To taken it or to han of hym routhe.
 In harmyng of my self or in repreue? (2.1135-40)

In summoning reason, God, and "trouthe" as her allies, Criseyde is, in effect, speaking on behalf of orthodox values which are set in opposition to Pandarus' and Troilus' desire. In addition, by suggesting that Pandarus, in having "routhe" on Troilus does not exhibit "resonable" and responsible avuncular behavior, Criseyde casts a dubious shadow over this homosocial relationship.

I have already discussed how following his staged fantasy scene in book II where Troilus passes Criseyde's window, Pandarus, in an exuberant state ("right for ioye he felte his herte daunce") rushes to Troilus who is "allone a-bedde" (2.1303-04). Troilus is in bed and the room is evidently dark, since Pandarus offers him a light in order to read Criseyde's letter (2.1320). How might this scene read in the context of Criseyde's condemnatory remarks regarding Pandarus' behavior? Pandarus, who has just manipulated his niece into entering a relationship which could jeopardize her safety, celebrates this achievement by directing his joyful, dancing heart towards his intimate male friend in the dark, seclusion of a bedchamber. Pandarus' concern for Troilus

(rather than for his niece's safety) is informed by the hope of experiencing vicarious pleasure through identification and by a desire to wield sexual power over his friend, as suggested in the conversation that follows. Troilus, who at first is not as exuberant about Criseyde's letter as Pandarus, succumbs to Pandarus' "byheste," and as a result, "His grete wo foryede he at the leste" (2.1329-30). He does not forget his "wo," however; in fact, we are told that the "desire of which he brente" only began to increase (2.1337). Although Criseyde is ostensibly the object of Troilus' desire, her written words stimulate him only after Pandarus' urging. Moreover, Troilus' desire burns in Pandarus' presence and on this, and subsequent occasions, the two men are alone in Troilus' bedchamber. "[D]ay to day" in a state of heightened desire, Troilus, "by Pandarus," writes to Criseyde; and Troilus, for whom sexual satisfaction is deferred, turns to Pandarus for "reed and som socours" (2.1354). While I am not suggesting that Pandarus offers Troilus sexual relief, the text presents sufficient material for raising questions about the nature of the relationship between the two friends. The work Pandarus undertakes for Troilus apparently affords him pleasure -- pleasure that is directly linked to Troilus' burning desire. And as Troilus' desire burns more fervently, he turns to Pandarus for comfort. Same-sex encounters, even when expressing culturally-acceptable homoeroticism, can raise suspicions of illicit conduct if they are shrouded in secrecy and seclusion.²⁸

In my discussion of how the text privileges homosocial intimacy over the

²⁸One can draw a parallel between Pandarus' secret plotting with Troilus and the scenario Walsingham depicts of the secretive communications between Richard and his court favorites/ "seducers." See chapter 3, 215.

heterosexual love story. I drew attention to the “glade nyght” Pandarus and Troilus spend together after the scene at Deiphebus’. I concluded that this encounter is eroticized because the two friends exchange lifelong oaths of affection and fealty and are apparently not fully clothed when doing so. In foregrounding male-male relations, however, this scene not only reflects sociocultural values but also reveals a politically-informed agenda. It is significant that this encounter occurs only “Whan euery wight was voided but they two. / And alle the dores weren faste yshette” (3.232-33). By calling attention to these necessary precautions, the narrator implies that normally there *are* men around and the doors are *not* “faste yshette.” Thus, unusual seclusion is required for the meeting about to take place. While the occasion for this homosocial encounter is ostensibly Pandarus’ clarification and defense of his position as Troilus’ go-between in a heterosexual love affair, the text encloses it within two expressions of mutually-expressed male-male affection. The scene begins with the narrator’s comment that Pandarus “By Troilus ... lay with mery chere / To tale, and wel was hem they were yfeere” (3.230-31) and ends, after Troilus’ response, with: “Thus held hym eche of other wel apayed. / That al the world ne myghte it bet amende” (3.421-22). Although the same-sex interactions between Pandarus and Troilus often appear to be unidirectional, initiated by Pandarus, in this instance the text clearly depicts mutual pleasure. In fact, that they are satisfied “eche of other” both equalizes the pleasure each receives from the other and implies that Troilus desires Pandarus’ company as much as Pandarus does Troilus’. While I do not claim that Chaucer’s text directly points to sodomy here, it does not dispel the notion either -- and one would expect this in a scene that is so charged

with the issue of sex. In illustrating mutually-experienced same-sex pleasure, does the poem not, in a sense, echo the sodomitical discourse I identified in Arnold of Verniolle's testimony?²⁹ Similar to Arnold's encounters with his young friends, Pandarus and Troilus' intimate moments occur secretly behind closed doors. Thus, that the text privileges the same-sex love story over the heterosexual one here does not necessarily signify a reaffirmation of the sociocultural dominance of male homosocial love. For secrecy while required for the developing heterosexual love story, in keeping with courtly love tradition, actually works against the parallel homosocial love story, rendering it suspicious and possibly illicit.

The seclusion and secrecy in which the intimate encounters between Pandarus and Troilus take place do not provide the only indication of a politically-informed homophobic agenda. The text also draws attention to the exclusiveness of the bond. Pandarus acknowledges that he is the one whom Troilus trusts most (1.720), and Troilus considers Pandarus "of frendes the alderbeste / That euere was" (3.1597-98). How does this closeness compare with Troilus' relationship with his brothers? In response to Pandarus' question, "Which is thi brother that thow louest best, / As in thi verray hertes priuete?" (2.1396-97), Troilus names Deiphebus with certainty (2.1398). However, even this closest of familial ties falls far short of the intimacy Troilus enjoys with his friend. For Troilus joins Pandarus in what I have demonstrated earlier as a mutually self-serving plan -- a plan which Deiphebus is not only not informed of but also, more

²⁹I am referring here to Arnold's claim that Guillaume Roux willingly engaged in sodomitical acts -- a claim that is implicitly supported by Guillaume's testimony.

significantly, is deceived by. That Chaucer's text responds to contemporary political concerns becomes clear if we reexamine some of the criticism directed against the exclusive friendships of Edward II and Richard II. One of the ordinances drawn up by the opponents of Edward II states that "Piers Gaveston has led the lord king astray, counselled him badly and persuaded him deceitfully and ... especially by turning away the lord king's heart from his liege men."³⁰ In the late fourteenth century, Walsingham, drawing on an earlier chronicle, also notes how Edward "clung" to Gaveston in all matters out of love.³¹ The parallel between Gaveston's deceptively turning Edward's heart away from the nobles, some of whom are his blood relations, and Pandarus' persuading Troilus to engage in an act of deception against his closest brother is, indeed, striking. Walsingham, in his Chronicon Angliae, written at about the same time as Chaucer's text, claims that Richard's intimate friends "incited the king against the nobles."³² And, like Edward, some of the nobles were blood relations.³³ Thus, by evoking contemporary criticism made against exclusive same-sex bonds which undermine familial relationships, Chaucer's poem, in effect, underscores its implied disapproval of this particular example of homosocial intimacy.

Although Troilus is depicted as a willing participant in the deceptive plan

³⁰Vita Edwardi Secundi 19, trans. Denholm-Young. See chapter 3, 192n.86 for the original Latin text.

³¹See chapter 3, 197.

³²Chronicon Angliae 374. See chapter 3, 214n.39 for the original Latin text.

³³Thomas, duke of Gloucester, was Richard's uncle, and Henry, earl of Derby, was his first cousin.

discussed above, the specter of sodomy which hovers over the relationship between Troilus and Pandarus is most pervasively linked to the suggestion that Pandarus exerts a dangerous influence on his young friend -- a negative influence that renders Troilus, like Edward and Richard, a victim of sexually-inflected seduction. Like the pejorative depiction of the young kings' intimate male friends in the chronicles, Chaucer's text raises questions about Pandarus' intentions. His account of how he first learns of Troilus' secret love which he tells Criseyde is not only homoerotically charged but also reveals his desire for power over Troilus. In transferring the setting from Troilus' bedchamber to the outdoors and describing how they speak about a plan to repel the Greeks (2.508, 510-11), Pandarus depicts a homosocial interaction that evokes the politico-historical subtext rather than the courtly love story. In addition, he paints a picture of two knights practicing military skills: "Soon after that bigonne we to lepe. / And casten with oure dartes to and fro" (2.512-13). In both versions Troilus is sleeping, or at least in a sleeping position, when Pandarus arrives, but in the reworked scenario Pandarus explains: "Tho gan I stalke hym softly byhynde" (2.519). This fantasized scene, which he "clepe ayein now to ... [his] mynde" (2.521), not only draws a parallel between extracting secret information and anal intercourse but also in drawing attention to Pandarus' stealth suggests that the passive partner does not willingly submit.

Pandarus' desire for power over his friend is evident in that he, in a sense, positions himself as the god of love and receives the following confession from Troilus: "lord, haue routhe vp-on my peyne, / ... / Now *mea culpa*, lord, I me repente" (2.523, 525). Pandarus/god of love is also empowered to dole out penance: "my lowe

confessioun / Accepte in gree, and sende me swich penaunce / As liketh the" (2.528-30).

Although Pandarus admits that he does not easily learn the identity of Troilus' secret beloved, "neuere was to wight so depe I-sworn, / Or he me told who myghte ben his leche" (2.570-71), he does not allude to the aggressive, manipulative tactics he uses to extract this information. In fact, he misrepresents the original "seduction" scene in that he highlights Troilus' "woful wordes," claiming that merely repeating them would cause him to swoon (2.572-74). By editing out details of the persuasive maneuvers he exercises on his "woful" friend -- details which imply that he has a personal motivation for possessing this secret information -- Pandarus suggests that he has something to hide. Therefore, in re-presenting the story from Pandarus' point of view, the text actually underscores the negative portrayal of male-male seduction in the original version by positioning Pandarus and Troilus as, respectively, active and (unwilling) passive partners in a sodomitically-inflected scenario. Furthermore, in illustrating how Pandarus manipulates facts to suit his purpose, the poem casts a suspicious shadow over his intentions, thus rendering this particular homosocial relationship potentially "dangerous."

While Troilus is the "victim" in Pandarus' fantasized version of the confession scene, in other instances he is clearly presented as a willing participant, not only in deception but also, more significantly, in intimate same-sex encounters. The intertwining of hints of sodomy and political concerns is clearly illustrated in the latter part of book III. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, Troilus, "with al thaffeccioun / Of frendes loue" (3.1590-91), expresses his gratitude to Pandarus in a homoerotically-

suggestive position ("To Pandarus on knowes fil a-down" [3.1592]). In addition, I suggested that, in vowing that he is obliged to Pandarus "for ay" (3.1612-13), Troilus, in effect, enters into a permanent same-sex union with Pandarus. While this scene when viewed through the lens of chivalric tradition illustrates culturally normative homosocial love, it also depicts dangerous intimacy between a royal prince and his court favorite. For Troilus' love for Pandarus -- a seducer and manipulator of a young, inexperienced prince -- leads to a bond of devotion so intense that it cannot be measured (3.1601-03). When set against the politicized contexts of seduction, secrecy, exclusivity, and suspicious motives, this same-sex relationship echoes that which, according to Walsingham, existed between the youthful Richard II and Robert de Vere: "he [Richard] was pleased with him [de Vere] so much, he worshipped and loved him so much, not without the disgrace, as it is said, of an obscene intimacy."³⁴ Although I do not claim that Chaucer's text points explicitly to sodomy here, this homoerotically-charged scene lends itself to being read as illicit or threatening in a political context in which Troilus, as a royal prince, has public responsibilities in his beleaguered city-state.³⁵ As I discussed in chapter 3, Walsingham's addition of this condemnatory remark *after* the destruction of what had been considered a "dangerous" bond suggests a politically-motivated reinterpretation. For at the time it was taking place, this homosocial relationship, while condemned by voices sympathetic to the nobles, was not explicitly

³⁴Historia Anglicana, vol. 2, 148. See chapter 3, 225n.61 for the original Latin text.

³⁵In fact, Troilus' military exploits on behalf of his city are expressed towards the end of book III, thus reaffirming his public position (3.1772-75).

referred to as a relationship informed by sodomy. Similarly, since Chaucer's text ultimately depicts the destruction of the same-sex bond between Troilus and Pandarus, which I now take up, it invites a politically-informed rereading of this homosocial relationship. In exposing what is "dangerous" about this intimate male bond after the fact, the text, in a sense, justifies its destruction.

Part Two: Movements Against Troilus and Pandarus' Relationship in Books IV and V

I. Failed Seduction: Denigrating the Court Favorite

Book IV opens with a clear reference to the historical subtext of the poem:

"Liggying in oost ... / The Grekes stronge a-boute Troie town" (4.29-30).¹ Although the story is set in Antiquity, the graphic description of a decisive battle between the Greeks and the Trojans is rendered in medieval terms:

The longe day, with speres sharpe i-grounde.

With arwes, dartes, swerdes, maces felle.

They fighte and bringen hors and man to grounde.

And with hire axes out the braynes quelle ... (4.43-46)

This battle, in which Antenor and a host of prominent Trojans are captured, leaves the people of Troy fearful (4.55-56) and, thus, draws attention to the vulnerable state of the besieged city. Although Chaucer's poem is not concerned with telling the story of the destruction of Troy, it reminds readers of the city's doom. For Calchas reiterates his earlier prediction that, through the actions of the Greeks, "shal in a stownde / Ben Troie y-brende and beten down to grownde" (4.76-77). He provides further details, explaining that "fire and flaumbe on al the town shal sprede, / And thus shal Troie torne to asshen dede" (4.118-19). In returning to Calchas and the historical setting of the story, book IV parallels book I and clearly delineates the fact that Troy is involved in a protracted war

¹Jennifer Campbell, "Figuring Criseyde's 'Entente': Authority, Narrative, and Chaucer's Use of History," *Chaucer Review* 27 (1993), aptly expresses the intrusion of the historical world: "Book Four is the place where historical forces must be confronted, where desires, for everyone involved, are trammelled by reality" (342).

with the Greeks.² Thus, given the heightened presence of the historical subtext -- with its contemporary references to the invasion threat from France -- that Pandarus' seductive influence on Troilus is markedly less pronounced here than in book I suggests the operation of a politically-informed agenda in Chaucer's text.

After hearing the parliament's decision to trade Criseyde for Antenor, Pandarus, in keeping with the text's privileging of the homosocial relationship, goes not to his niece but "in a rees to Troilus he wente" (4.350). In an echo of book I, Pandarus "In-to the derke chambre, as stille as ston, / Toward the bed gan softly to gon" (4.354-55). The text, thus, sets up yet another scene for male-male intimacy. In the dark seclusion of Troilus' bedchamber the two friends share their private, secret grief. Upon seeing Troilus weep, Pandarus "Gan forto wepe as tendrelliche as he; / And specheles thus ben thise ilke tweye, / That neither myghte o word for sorwe seye" (4.369-71). This passage underscores the intimate union of the two friends, "thise ilke tweye," who are indistinguishable in the sorrow they share. The scene is erotically charged in that Pandarus, in a sense, "makes love" to Troilus through silent, heartfelt commiseration. There are clues, however, that this encounter will not be like those earlier occasions where Pandarus successfully seduces Troilus into following his advice. Although Troilus once again occupies a passive, vulnerable position, Pandarus is far less

²Although the parallels I will be pointing to in this section and the next have not, to the best of my knowledge, been addressed in other studies, I am certainly not alone in observing how sections of Chaucer's poem mirror one another. See Martin Stevens, "The Double Structure of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *CUNY English Forum*, vol. 1 (New York: AMS, 1985) 155-74. For a very different view, see Thomas Elwood Hart, "Medieval Structuralism: 'Dulcamoun' and the Five-Book Design of Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Chaucer Review* 16 (1981): 129-70.

commanding in his manner. He is “So confus that he nyste what to seye -- / ffor verray wo his wit was neigh aweye” (4.356-57). In addition, “with his chiere and lokyng al to-torne,” he directs his gaze at his prostrate friend (4.358, 361). Therefore, three important tools Pandarus effectively uses in his earlier seductions -- his words, wit, and gaze -- are debilitated.

As in book I, Pandarus’ seductive maneuvers involve chiding Troilus for his behavior: “whi listow in this wise, / Syn thi desire al holly hastow had, / So that by right it oughte ynough suffise?” (4.394-96). By implying that Troilus’ sorrow is unreasonable, Pandarus attempts to shame his friend into engaging in “rightful” behavior -- behavior that includes replacing Criseyde with any one of the ladies of Troy (4.401-04). He attempts to summon Troilus into following his plan of action: “ffor-thi be glad, myn owen deere brother; / If she be lost, we shal recouere an other” (4.405-06). Once again, the text foregrounds homosociality over filial relations, as Pandarus, casting aside his niece, seeks to involve himself in Troilus’ search for a new love object. In privileging Troilus and Pandarus’ relationship here, the poem’s ambivalence regarding homosocial relations as a cultural norm or political threat illustrated in the first three books appears resolved. However, as we shall see, a positively valued homosociality is highlighted only to be more effectively undermined. The text illustrates that Pandarus is not merely a bad uncle disregarding his niece but, more significantly, an unsuitable adviser to Troilus. And, thus, I will argue that Pandarus is depicted as losing his influence over his friend.

Pandarus’ argument that “newe loue out chaceth ofte the olde” (4.415) does not

achieve the desired effect. Troilus "Took litel heede of al that euere he mente, / Oon ere it herde, at tother out it wente" (4.433-34). Not only is Pandarus' seductive, authoritative speech far shorter than that illustrated in book I, thus suggesting his present weakened state, but, more significantly, Troilus' resistance is considerably stronger. Earlier, Troilus, while initially rejecting Pandarus' "wordes" and "lore," nevertheless, admits to having heard them (1.754). In this later episode, however, Pandarus' persuasive words pass right through Troilus' ears. Indeed, in a direct reversal of the positions occupied in book I, Troilus proceeds to lecture Pandarus. He adamantly refuses to heed Pandarus' advice and, reprimanding his friend for offering counsel that is "wel sitting" for a "fende" (4.436-37), hurls the seducer's weapon of chastisement back at the seducer. That the text supports Troilus' position is implied by the ideal chivalric values which inform it.³ Troilus maintains that "syn I haue trouthe hire hight, / I wol nat ben vntrewe for no wight" (4.445-46). I would suggest that "wight" here not only refers to a female replacement for Criseyde but also, in a sense, Pandarus. Thus, we have an early sign of the coming rupture of the bond between Troilus and Pandarus. Troilus' earlier pledge to serve Pandarus as his "sclaue" (2.391), to be obliged to him forever (3.1612-13), in effect, breaks down, suggesting that Troilus' bond with Pandarus is not an ideal chivalric bond after all. The text *un*privileges this homosocial relationship in that the same-sex bond becomes associated with contemporary short-

³See Paul Strohm's discussion, "'Trouthe' in a Postfeudal Society," in Social Chaucer 102-09. See also Diamond, who offers an admittedly "compressed attempt to see Chaucer's great epic of courtly love as a response to a period of social chaos and violence brought on by the disintegration of feudalism and exacerbated by war" (94).

term agreements entered into for mutual profit while the heterosexual courtly relationship is imbued with the qualities of chivalric ties which ideally existed between a royal prince/king and his nobles.⁴

Whereas in book I Troilus does not effectively articulate his resistance to Pandarus' unrelenting persuasive rhetoric, in this later instance he appears to be unseduceable. For Troilus not only rejects Pandarus' counsel, "I wol nat ben of thyn opynyoun / Touchyng al this" (4.453-54), but, in acknowledging that he *could* follow Pandarus' advice and "loue an other / Al fresshly newe and lat Criseyde go" (4.456-47) yet choosing not to (4.459), he also displays his ability not to succumb to Pandarus' influence. Unlike his earlier feeble attempt to silence Pandarus, here he does, in fact, succeed -- at least temporarily. As a result of Troilus' lengthy rebuff, "Pandarus gan holde his tunge stille, / And to the ground his eyen doun he caste" (4.521-22). The text, therefore, offers additional evidence of Pandarus' waning persuasive powers. Despite his resounding defeat, however, Pandarus does not give up. As in book I, he attempts a different argument with which to seduce Troilus.

After careful consideration, Pandarus entices Troilus using another line of reasoning. He prods: "Why nylyt thi seluen helpen don redresse, / And with thy manhod letten al this game? / Go rauysshe here ne kanstow not for shame?" (4.528-30). Once again Pandarus resorts to a method of persuasion that seeks to provoke Troilus into following his advice by offering an image of what Pandarus considers to be ideal.

⁴The chronicles report that the nobles accused Edward II and Richard II of forming chivalric bonds with their respective court favorites, suggesting that such relationships were appropriate only between the nobles and their king.

masculine conduct and, at the same time, chastising Troilus for not exhibiting it. He provokes Troilus further, challenging him to act: "Artow in Troie and hast non hardymente / To take a womman which that loueth the" (4.533-34). And, similar to his aggressive maneuvers in book I, Pandarus commands Troilus to follow his counsel: "Ris vp anon and lat this wepyng be, / And kith thow art a man" (4.537-38). That Pandarus has a personal investment in this proposed action is demonstrated in his assurance that "in this houre / I wol ben ded or she shal bleuen oure" (4.538-39). Pandarus, therefore, seeks to maintain the triangular configuration. He *desires* that Criseyde remain with Troilus and intends to be there as well. Although the text here echoes the earlier books where Pandarus constructs an image of Troilus as a model knight and lover -- an image he desires to be/have -- and his identification with Troilus is, as in the episodes preceding the consummation scene, motivated by his desire to experience vicarious pleasure, on this occasion the realization of that desire also involves an illegal act of abduction. Thus, in attempting to seduce Troilus into embodying a new fantasy image of model knight, lover *and* abductor, Pandarus is, in effect, urging a royal prince to perform an action that both runs contrary to the best interests of Troy and requires him to sever ties with his family.⁵

Troilus strikes a blow at Pandarus' persuasive efforts, however, rendering them superfluous, by responding that "Al this haue I my self yet thought ful ofte, / And more thyng than thow deuysest here" (4.542-43). Despite the fact that here as in earlier

⁵In the end, of course, it is not in the best interests of Troy to trade Criseyde for Antenor. Since Antenor's future betrayal of Troy is not included in the narrative world of the poem, I am taking the parliament's decision at face value.

instances Troilus is depicted as being passive and vulnerable, lying in bed lamenting his fate, he is no longer a malleable object of Pandarus' machinations. He, in a sense, beats Pandarus at his own game, considering and dismissing those same ideas Pandarus attempts to persuade him into accepting and, moreover, claims to out-think his adviser. Furthermore, in marked contrast to Pandarus' excitedly delivered speech, Troilus responds "ful softe" and in a formal, well-articulated manner, thus suggesting a growing wedge between the two friends, rendering one a supporter of actions governed by emotions and self-interest, while the other allows responsibility and reason to dictate his actions. Chaucer's poem, I would suggest, responds to contemporary politics in that, unlike the picture painted in the chronicles of the young Richard II as too weak to resist the, in the eyes of the nobles, harmful advice of his court favorites.⁶ Troilus is depicted here as a prince capable of independent thought yet not closed to receiving Pandarus' opinion: however, rather than having it forced on him, he assumes control over his adviser, telling him when he may offer his advice: "whan thow me hast yeue an audience, / Ther-after maystow telle al thi sentence" (4.545-46). The opening stanza of Troilus' speech reads like a blueprint for responsible princely conduct:

ffirst, syn thow woost this town hath al this werre
ffor rauysshynge of wommen so by myght,
It sholde nought be suffred me to erre,
As it stant now, ne don so gret vnright:

⁶This is most clearly expressed in Walsingham's Chronicon Angliae, where Richard is reportedly "encircled by seducers" who "incite ... the king against the nobles." See my discussion in chapter 3, 214-15.

I sholde han also blame of euery wight.

My fadres graunt if that I so with-stoode.

Syn she is chaunged for the townes goode. (4.547-53)

Contained within Troilus' formal rebuff to Pandarus' counsel are ideas that a prince should 1) be aware of historical events and learn from past errors; 2) respect the laws of the realm; 3) obey a higher authority; 4) act in the best interests of the public. Although the narrator periodically refers to the historical context of the story, these references are rare. Thus, it is significant that Troilus expresses awareness of his public status, recognizing that his future actions are inextricably linked to recent and present events. Since Troilus rather than the narrator recognizes the importance of learning from mistakes of the past, despite the very different contexts, the text, in effect, invites a comparison to be drawn between the Trojan prince and Richard II (who was only around nineteen when the poem was completed).⁷ I have already pointed out how Richard II evidently had knowledge of the reign of his great-grandfather -- which undoubtedly included awareness of his deposition -- yet, nevertheless, reportedly sought to emulate some of his policies. His treatment of court favorites and alienation of the nobles, while not necessarily representing conscious decisions do indicate a failure to recognize and

⁷This comparison could still be made even if Troilus' thoughts were expressed by the narrator. However, in letting Troilus speak, we are afforded a view of a self-reflective prince which more effectively simulates a historical figure. In addition, one can speculate whether Chaucer might not be hiding his political views behind a literary character. In his reading of the parliament scene, John M. Ganim, "Chaucer and the Noise of the People," *Exemplaria* 2 (1990), remarks that "[w]e do need to consider the possibility that Chaucer is engaging current political controversies surrounding the questions of advice and the prerogatives of rule, perhaps even criticizing impulsive tendencies on the part of his superiors" (75).

learn from misguided actions of the recent past. In contrast, Troilus both seeks to avoid repeating an unwise action and illustrates that it is sometimes necessary to reject the counsel of an intimate friend if in following that advice public interests and familial ties are put in jeopardy.

The scene does not end on this triumphant note for Troilus, however. After delivering his speech, Troilus breaks down in tears and, reminiscent of book I, turns to Pandarus for advice (4.575-81). Yet, in depicting Troilus once again as vulnerable to Pandarus' influence, the text actually proceeds to denigrate Pandarus' character further and, at the same time, illustrate his weakening hold on his friend. Pandarus dismisses Troilus' concerns for the well-being of the town, claiming that if he had Troilus' "estat" he would abduct Criseyde "Though al this town cride on this thyng by note" (4.585); for he, unlike Troilus, "nolde sette at al that noys a grote" (4.586). Significantly, the text here reveals that the two friends hold diametrically opposed views of what it means to be a royal prince: whereas Troilus because of his "estat" is reluctant to privilege self-interest over the public good, Pandarus views Troilus' status as a license to place self-interest before public well-being. Furthermore, in advising his friend that he should "Deuyne nat in resoun ay so depe / Ne corteisly, but help thi selue anon" (4.589-90), Pandarus attacks the foundation upon which Troilus' position is built -- a foundation which ideally should inform a prince's actions regarding matters of public concern. By thus highlighting the differences in their respective "world-views," the text not only presents Pandarus as an unsuitable and potentially dangerous adviser, but also, in effect, loosens the ties between them since Pandarus' influence on Troilus is inextricably

linked to his intimacy with him.

Pandarus takes up his earlier argument and seeks to seduce Troilus into embracing his advice by awakening his friend's masculine (sexual) instincts: "It is no shame vn-to yow ne no vice / Hire to withholden that ye loue moost" (4.596-97). In claiming that to "witholden" Criseyde is no "vice," Pandarus acknowledges that the action he is advocating could be interpreted as a form of rape. In fact, several manuscripts render the first line as: "It is no rape in myn dom ne no vice."⁸ Although he adds that "Peraunter she myghte holde the for nyce / To lat hire go thus to the Grekis oost" (4.598-99), this is merely a conjecture presented as an afterthought rather than support for his argument that Troilus may rightfully abduct the woman he loves most in order not to lose her. Further evidence that, despite his denial, the action he advocates is, in fact, a form of rape, is illustrated in his later acknowledgement that "though thy lady wolde a lite hire greue, / Thow shalt thi self thi pees here-after make" (4.603-04). He further tempts Troilus into performing what he considers proper manly conduct, reminding him that "fortune ... / helpeth *hardy man* to his enprise / And weyueth wrecches for hire cowardise" (4.600-02, emphasis mine). Thus, Pandarus endeavors to

⁸See Windeatt 387n.596. The alternative version is printed in The Riverside Chaucer. That the modern sense of "rape" (noun) is at least implied here is indicated by definition 2b in the Middle English Dictionary, "the act of abducting a woman or sexually assaulting her or both." Likewise, "rauyshe" connotes sexual violence. The MED defines "ravischen" (2b) as: "To carry off (a woman) by force, esp. for the purpose of rape." Under the listing for "rape" (n), the MED documents the following excerpt from the parliament rolls dated 1436 in which the two words appear together: "There the seid Besecher felonously and moste horribly ravysshed, and her naked, except hir Kirtyll and hir Smokke, ledde with him into the wylde and desolate places of Wales; of the which rape he to fore the Kinges Justices atte Lancastre is endited."

stimulate Troilus into performing a definitively masculine act in which sexual violence is suggested." The text, therefore, offers a stunning new version of homoerotically-informed identification -- a vivid and aggressive fantasy scenario in which Pandarus intends to take part.

As in the earlier books, Pandarus attempts to seduce Troilus into embodying an image of a model knight and lover that he himself desires to be/have. He urges him to "thynk right as a knyght" (4.617) and offers a fantasized picture informed by model knightly values such as "corage" and "myght" (4.619). He goes on to set forth an imagined scenario of Troilus performing daring, masculine action: "manly sette the world on six and seuene, / And if thow deye a martyr, go to heuene" (4.622-23). The knight that Pandarus envisions, however, exercises his "corage" and "myght," and ultimately sacrifices his life, not in the name of Christianity but rather for an illegal act motivated solely by self-interest and pleasure. In addition, unlike the earlier consummation scene where Pandarus' identification slides between Troilus and Criseyde, in this proposed scenario, Pandarus identifies exclusively with Troilus, fighting alongside him in an imagined bloody confrontation in the streets of Troy:

I wol my self ben with the at this dede.

Theigh ich and al my kyn vp-on a stownde

Shulle in a strete as dogges liggen dede.

"For a study of another act of violence against Criseyde in which Criseyde's dream (2.925-31) is set against Gower's tale of Philomela, see Carolyn Dinshaw, "Rivalry, Rape, and Manhood: Gower and Chaucer," Violence against Women in Medieval Texts, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville: U P of Florida, 1998) 137-60.

Thorough-girt with many a wide and bloody wownde;

In euery cas I wol a frend be founde.¹⁰ (4.624-28)

Thus, Pandarus also situates himself, in a sense, as a participant in the sexual violence which sets the imagined action in motion. Criseyde, although the motive for this encounter, is markedly absent from Pandarus' fantasy. He, therefore, envisions an exclusively homosocial interaction with Troilus that is eroticized because it is informed by homoerotic identification and heterosexual desire. Moreover, it brings the two men closer together.

While Pandarus succeeds in seducing Troilus who "gan with tho wordes quyken, / And seyde, 'frend, graunt mercy, ich assente'" (4.631-32), unlike in the earlier episodes, Troilus is not completely under the sway of his seducer/adviser. He qualifies Pandarus' plan: "for no cas it is nat myn entente, / At shorte wordes, though I deyen sholde, / To rauysshe hire, but if hire self it wolde" (4.635-37). In fact, in stark contrast to the "seduction scene" in book I, he tells Pandarus that he may neither "priken" nor "peyne" nor "torment" him into performing this act (4.633-34). Troilus' clearly

¹⁰When Pandarus' imagined scene is set against events reported in the chronicles of Edward II and Richard II, one finds a striking parallel. Although the circumstances are indeed different, the court favorites of both kings instigated conflicts which set the kings and their intimate friends against the nobles and, ostensibly, the interests of the realm. And, in both cases, the king and his "outlaws" acted against ordinances and complaints drawn up in parliament. (One of the outlaws Richard was harboring was Michael de la Pole, who was impeached at the Parliament of 1386.) This analogy enables us to observe how *Troilus and Criseyde*, like the chronicles, paints a negative portrait of an influential court favorite in order to justify the actions taken against him. I am not claiming that the parliament in Chaucer's text directly responds to the Parliament of 1386, but this view has been argued; see John P. McCall and George Rudisill, Jr., "The Parliament of 1386 and Chaucer's Trojan Parliament," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 58 (1959): 276-88.

articulated refusal to abduct Criseyde forcibly implies that, despite Pandarus' claim that he agrees with Troilus on this point (4.638), the text indicates otherwise.¹¹ As I have pointed out above, according to Pandarus, a man is justified in abducting the woman he loves: obtaining the woman's consent is not necessarily a precondition for carrying out this action. Troilus, therefore, not only demonstrates his ability to withstand the seductive tactics of his intimate friend and adviser but also, in thus refusing fully to occupy the eroticized role of abductor which Pandarus fantasizes, he, in effect, rejects the intimate homosocial bond that links the subject and object of identification.

The politically-informed homophobia revealed in the observed weakening of the intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus is, as already stated, inextricably connected to the text's condemning of Pandarus as an unsuitable and potentially dangerous adviser to a royal prince. While the implied sexual violence at the heart of Pandarus' original scheme is abhorrent to modern readers, the main thrust of the text's denigration of Pandarus is, I would suggest, directed at his advocating deceit and divisiveness at a time of war.¹² For he advises Troilus to go to the king and "with wisdom hym and othere

¹¹That Pandarus gives importance to Criseyde's opinion on this matter *after* he presents his fantasy scenario of abduction and violence and as a defensive response to Troilus' admonishment only underscores the impression that he at first does not consider her consent a prerequisite for the action he advocates.

¹²It is not at all certain that Chaucer or his readers would actually condemn such an action purely on sexual grounds. In her discussion of rape in the Middle Ages, Shulamith Shahar, in The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages, trans. Chaya Galai (London: Methuen, 1983), notes that despite the fact that "[i]n England and France it [rape] was a criminal act and by law a rapist might be blinded, castrated or even put to death ... the court not only took pains to verify, as the law required, whether rape had in fact been committed but even where there was no doubt as to the fact, there was a suspicion that the woman had enjoyed the act" (16). Shahar goes

blende" (4.648) while he proceeds to set his plan in motion. And Troilus, although rejecting part of Pandarus' counsel, apparently agrees to follow what is certainly the most politically disruptive piece of advice, namely, disobeying the parliament ruling and, subsequently, possibly engaging in a bloody conflict against his own family. However, Pandarus' influence on Troilus proves to be far less effective than on previous occasions.

During his visit with Criseyde, Troilus appears to have forgotten Pandarus' counsel. He listens attentively as Criseyde presents her argument regarding how she will be able to return (4.1254-1414) and "verrayliche hym semed that he hadde / The selue wit" (4.1424-25). While he does question the practicality of her plan, he does not make a strong case for escape. In fact, he offers a very different version of Pandarus' scheme. He begs her, "lat vs stele away bitwixe vs tweye" (4.1503), thus implying a private action that, in effect, excludes Pandarus. And it is significant that Criseyde, who has previously not directly offered Troilus advice -- particularly regarding sociopolitical matters -- here assumes the role of adviser to a royal prince, reminding Troilus of his public responsibilities: "Troie hath now swich nede / Of help" (4.1558-59). Despite his

on to point out that "[i]n England in the thirteenth century, judges would dismiss a charge of rape brought by a woman if she conceived as a result ... [because] pregnancy meant that she had enjoyed the rape and had no right to press charges" (17). See also Christopher Cannon's intriguing study, "*Raptus* in the Chaumpaigne Release and a Newly Discovered Document Concerning the Life of Geoffrey Chaucer," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 74-94. For a study of rape as it appears in fourteenth-century French pastourelles and court cases, see Kathryn Gravdal, "The Poetics of Rape Law in Medieval France," *Rape and Representation*, ed. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (New York: Columbia UP, 1991) 207-26; as well as her more extensive study, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991).

later feeble attempt to convince Criseyde to escape “priueliche away” (4.1601). Troilus submits to Criseyde’s counsel.

Pandarus’ seduction of Troilus actually fails twice: first, when Troilus qualifies Pandarus’ scheme, insisting that Criseyde must agree to be abducted; then again, when he allows Criseyde to dismiss the altered version of Pandarus’ plan which he presents her. The text, therefore, not only demonstrates that Pandarus’ influence and power over his friend have eroded but also, in effect, privileges the heterosexual over the homosocial relationship. For whether he allows Criseyde to leave Troy or escapes with her, Troilus chooses to maintain his link with Criseyde without Pandarus. Thus, Troilus essentially disbands the erotic triangle, eliminating Pandarus from his position as director of the relationship.¹³ This move against homosocial intimacy must be read against the concomitant denigration of Pandarus in his role as confidant/adviser. Although hints of Pandarus’ dangerous influence are, as I discussed in the previous section, suggested in the earlier books, in the present situation, Pandarus is not merely spreading divisive rumors but rather advocating an illegal course of action clearly antithetical to the interests of the royal family and the people of Troy. That Criseyde -- a woman deemed dispensable by the majority of Trojans¹⁴ -- places the city she is forced

¹³Without new possibilities for sexual encounters between Troilus and Criseyde, Pandarus is denied occasions for renewed homoerotic identification with Troilus as a model knight and lover.

¹⁴Dinshaw (“Rivalry”) keenly observes that Criseyde’s “use as a counter in the war between Greeks and Trojans tends to make of her body an ‘abstraction,’ as Irigaray would put it, a mere ‘mirror of value of and for men,’ without matter and without particulars” (148).

to leave above her own personal interests and convinces Troilus to do the same is a further illustration of how the text condemns Pandarus as an unsuitable adviser for a royal prince. And since Pandarus' power to influence Troilus is inextricably entwined with the intimacy and trust which exists between them, the text proceeds to depict the destruction of this relationship.

II. The Destruction of a Same-Sex Bond

In chapter 3, I examined how during the early reigns of Edward II and Richard II, the nobles waged a campaign against those court favorites whose privileged access to the king excluded the lords from their historical position as royal advisers. And, according to the chronicles, Gaveston and Robert de Vere, in particular, held their respective kings so completely under their sway that the safety of the realm was put in jeopardy. Consequently, as a result of both legal and physical actions, the nobles successfully deprived their king of his most intimate companions either by execution or exile. Although a clearly defined agent is lacking, we can observe a similar politically-motivated homophobic action operating in Troilus and Criseyde. For as I have suggested above, book IV witnesses the erosion of Pandarus' influence on Troilus together with a denigration of his character. I turn now to book V, where the intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus, so vividly expressed in books I - III, is barely discernible. I examine how the text moves Troilus steadily away from both Pandarus' sphere of influence and his company, leading ultimately to a final break of this bond.

Pandarus' inability to respond immediately to Troilus' call -- as he has on every

previous occasion -- because he is occupied all day with the king (5.284-85) is significant for two reasons. First, it illustrates how official/political business imposes a restraint on the relationship between the two friends; it also offers a further indication of Pandarus' duplicity toward the king and other members of the royal family. He apparently enjoys the king's trust yet, at the same time, can persuade Troilus to put his personal desire (and by implication, Pandarus') above the interests of the city and engage in an action which defies the king's orders. The next morning, Pandarus, as he has often previously done, either in response to his friend's urgent summons or on his own accord, "to [Troilus'] chaumbre streght the wey he tooke" (5.292). In recalling past occasions of male-male intimacy, however, this scene draws attention to how different the present situation is. Like his visits in books I and IV, Pandarus enters unannounced, yet this time the scene lacks any erotic charge whatever. In striking contrast with Pandarus' earlier stealthy advances into the dark room where his unsuspecting friend lies vulnerable in bed, Troilus, while apparently in bed (although it is not clear whether he is lying or sitting), addresses Pandarus as one fully in command of himself. Although the lines, "Troilus tho sobrelich he grette. / And on the bed ful sone he gan hym sette" (5.293-94), closely follow those describing Pandarus' arrival immediately after the consummation scene, Troilus does not as on that occasion "with al thaffeccioun / Of frendes loue that herte may deuyse, / To Pandarus on knowes fil a-down" (3.1590-92), but rather, dryly, without any display of affection of "frendes loue," discusses his funeral and requests that Pandarus deliver the ashes of his heart to Criseyde (5.309).

In every previous encounter between Troilus and Pandarus taking place in

Troilus' bedchamber, the two men strengthen their bond and, in some cases, Pandarus spends the night.¹⁵ Similarly, in the present scene, Pandarus tempts Troilus into engaging *with him* in homosocial activity that Criseyde, despite her removal from Troy, still informs. In order to help Troilus cope with Criseyde's absence, Pandarus seeks to persuade Troilus to spend time with him. He urges his friend: "lat vs caste how forth may best be dryue / This time, and ek how fresshly we may lyue / Whan that she comth" (5.389-91). Pandarus does not see his interactions with Troilus as a temporary convenience but rather a relation that will continue even when Criseyde returns. He wishes to rekindle former pleasurable moments spent with Troilus as well as experience new ones: "Ris, lat vs speke of lusty lif in Troie / That we han led and forth the tyme dryue: / And ek of tyme comyng vs reioie" (5.393-95). His repeated command, "Ris" (5.393, 407), illustrates not only the aggressive, seductive tactics of earlier attempts to persuade Troilus but also a stimulating summons to engage in shared physical activity that is erotically-informed. Evidence from the text suggests that the "lusty lif" with Troilus which he hopes to relive in words involves Troilus' affectionate expression of gratitude and details of his bliss with Criseyde.¹⁶ Therefore, Pandarus is, once again,

¹⁵The two friends sleep together in Troilus' chamber in book II, after Pandarus succeeds in persuading Criseyde to accept Troilus, and in book III, after the encounter at Deiphebus'. Even in those scenes where Pandarus does not spend the night, Troilus expresses his gratitude and affection for his friend. And Pandarus derives pleasure from Troilus' company. See my discussion in chapter 4.

¹⁶One such example is at the end of book III, when we are told how
 by the hond ful ofte he [Troilus] wolde take
 This Pandarus, and in-to gardyn lede,
 And swich a feste and swich a proces make
 Hym of Criseyde, and of hire wommanhede,

motivated by his own quest for (homoerotic? sexual?) pleasure. And, by noting first that "This town is ful of lordes al about. / And trewes lasten al this mene while" (5.400-01), followed by his suggestion that he and Troilus "pleye ... in som lusty route" (5.402), Pandarus is advocating a decidedly homosocial activity in which they "pleye" in a "lusty" company of men able to devote themselves to leisurely pleasure.¹⁷ What is most significantly different here from earlier private encounters between Troilus and Pandarus is that Pandarus seeks to engage Troilus in homosocial intimacy which while informed by Criseyde, nevertheless, does not further the heterosexual love story and, despite his initial success, Pandarus proves ineffective in holding Troilus' attention.¹⁸

The homosocial "pleye" that Pandarus at last convinces Troilus to join him in is

And of hire beaute, that, with-outen drede,

It was an heuene his wordes forto here ... (3.1737-42)

And the "heuene" which Pandarus (and the narrator) experiences here is certainly an illustration of vicariously realized erotic pleasure.

¹⁷Steven Kruger ("Claiming the Pardoner") points out that Chaucer often uses "pleye" to connote sexual activity. He cites "the (physical) flirtation of Nicholas and Alison toward the beginning of the Miller's Tale (I.3237), as well as the sexual act itself in the Merchant's Tale ... (IV.1839-41)" (130n.43). In a passage he quotes from the "Pardoner's Tale," one reveler tells his accomplice how to distract the third companion whom they plan to murder and rob: "Arys as though thou woldest with hym pleye / And I shal ryve hym thurgh the sydes tweye / Whil that thou strogelest with hym as in game" (VI.827-29, qtd. in Kruger 130). Kruger goes on to observe that in several other tales, Chaucer uses "game" and "struggle" in (hetero)sexual contexts. I would add that "game" can, as I suggested in my earlier discussion of Pandarus' "seduction" of Troilus in book I, also appear in a homoerotic context (I.868); and, thus, in this passage "game" intensifies the homoerotic connotation of "pleye" in a planned homosocial activity that differs in purpose but not in kind from that suggested by Pandarus to Troilus above.

¹⁸One could argue that Pandarus, by keeping Troilus occupied, at least maintains his relationship with Criseyde at a status quo, but this differs significantly from the steady developments in the love affair up to the end of book III that result from his actions.

a week of festive activities at Sarpedoun's where "Ne of ladys ek so faire a compaignie / On daunce er tho was neuere i-seye with ie" (5.447-48). But Troilus does not take part in the pleasure of gazing at these ladies together with Pandarus. "Syn that he saugh his lady was aweye. / It was his sorwe vpon hem forto sen" (5.457-58). Instead, "euere in on his herte pietous / fful bisily Criseyde, his lady, soughte. / On hire was euere al that his herte thoughte" (5.451-53). This is hardly what Pandarus has in mind when he suggests to Troilus that they "ride and pleye ... with kyng Sarpedoun" (5.431). Troilus not only rejects homosocial "pleye," but also, in effect, rejects Pandarus. In stark contrast to the earlier eroticized moments he shares with Pandarus, discussing Criseyde in the privacy of his bedchamber, he now shuts Pandarus out of his inner (sexual) world: "The lettres ek that she of olde tyme / Hadde hym ysent, he wolde *allone* rede / An hondred sithe atwixen noon and prime" (5.470-72, emphasis mine). It is, thus, implied that Troilus spends a significant part of the day away from Pandarus. In fact, the text offers no indication that Troilus takes part in any activity with Pandarus while at Sarpedoun's. Following the pattern demonstrated in the first three books, Troilus' attention to Criseyde should advance the homosocial relation, but here is it does precisely the opposite. Therefore, the text either breaks with the pattern -- disassociating homosocial from heterosexual relationships -- or offers a clue that Troilus and Criseyde's love affair is headed towards an end and with it Troilus and Pandarus' intimate bond.¹⁹

¹⁹Of course, since the narrator at the start of book IV states that "how Criseyde Troilus for-sook / ... / Moot hennes-forth ben matre of my book" (15-17), one already knows what will occur. However, at this point in the narrative, Criseyde has not yet replaced Troilus with Diomedes and, thus, the relationship, in effect, still exists.

After their return from Sarpedoun's, Troilus and Pandarus spend the night together in Troilus' bedchamber. Once again, in echoing earlier scenes of homosocial intimacy, the text, in effect, offers a contrast with those occasions, and, consequently, the current relationship between the friends appears less intense. Except for the not insignificant substitution of "reste" for "bedde," the following is a repetition of the line which introduces the eroticized scene where Pandarus teases and stimulates Troilus with news from Criseyde: "They spedde hem fro the soper vnto reste" (5.517-18).²⁰ As on the earlier occasion, "They spoken of Criseyde the brighte" (5.516). However, in contrast to that encounter which witnesses Troilus' affectionate gratitude to Pandarus (2.974-980), Pandarus' oaths of devotion to his friend (2.995-998), and repeated indications that the two are sleeping in close proximity (2.947, 953, 991), in the present scene, the text moves immediately to the next morning, passing over the night they spend together and offering only one vague reference to the fact that they sleep in the same room (5.520-21). If one reads between the lines, Troilus and Pandarus share a night of intimacy which is, as on previous occasions, informed by Criseyde; however, the sparse treatment of this same-sex encounter reveals the text's growing lack of interest in highlighting this particular male-male relation and, furthermore, when viewed against the political considerations I have outlined above, suggests that there is more at issue here.²¹

As he did at Sarpedoun's, Troilus excludes Pandarus from his emotional bond

²⁰Compare: "They spedde hem fro the soper vnto bedde" (2.947).

²¹Criseyde's absence from Troy does not, I would suggest, render this scene markedly different from earlier occasions of male-male intimacy. For she is physically absent in previous eroticized conversations between Troilus and Pandarus.

with Criseyde once they return home as well. Pandarus is not at his side "As he rood forby places of the town / In which he whilom hadde al his plesaunce" (5.563-64). Afterwards, "whan he was from euery mannes syghte" (5.635), evidently including Pandarus, he mourns Criseyde's absence. He tells his sorrow to the moon (5.649), not, as so often in the past, to Pandarus. Although the narrator maintains that "ay bisyde hym was this Pandarus / That bisily did al his fulle myghte / Hym to conforte" (5.682-84), textual evidence indicates otherwise.²² In fact, the text demonstrates a significant reversal of priorities. Previously, the poem summarizes Troilus' grief experienced alone and highlights the expressions of his "wo" to Pandarus as well as Pandarus' efforts to console him; now, however, it offers details of Troilus' lonely suffering and only a brief summary statement regarding Pandarus' participation in his friend's personal affairs.

Although the possibility of Criseyde returning on the tenth day after she departs Troy brings the two friends, once again, closer in that after Troilus sends for Pandarus, "on the walls of the town they pleyde, / To loke if they kan sen aught of Criseyde" (5.1111-12), this return to earlier intimacy proves short-lived. When Criseyde does not appear, "Troilus gan homward forto ride" (5.1182), apparently without Pandarus. And when Troilus returns to the gate the next day, and "The thridde, ferthe, fifte, sexte day" (5.1192, 1205), he is evidently alone as well. The last time Pandarus spends the night

²²Chaucer follows Boccaccio closely here -- in fact these lines are a close translation of "E con lui Pandaro era sempre mai / Che a ciò far sovente il confortava [And with him was ever Pandarus, who often comforted him in his lamenting]" (5.71) -- but the cursory treatment of Pandarus' efforts to alleviate his friend's suffering, nevertheless, reads differently in light of the political contexts which inform Chaucer's poem.

with Troilus marks the beginning of the final stage in the destruction of this same-sex bond. Troilus cries out to Pandarus after dreaming that Criseyde is kissing a boar.²³ Although he seeks further proof, he announces to his friend that "My lady bryght, Criseyde, hath me betrayed" (5.1247). The text, thus, once again presents Troilus and Pandarus in an intimate situation that is directly related to Criseyde.²⁴ Criseyde's "presence" here, however, precipitates not only the disintegration of the heterosexual relationship but also the homosocial one.

The perceived weakening of Troilus and Pandarus' friendship is once again linked with a further discrediting of Pandarus as an adviser. After Troilus relates the dream to Pandarus, in an echo of his helplessness in books I and II, he asks, "What shal I don, my Pandarus, allas?" (5.1268).²⁵ Here, as on earlier occasions, Pandarus offers Troilus advice, which he proceeds to follow, but Pandarus' counsel proves this time to be far less accurate and helpful. Pandarus dissuades Troilus from believing the message of the dream, and even in his suggestion that Troilus write to Criseyde -- recalling his advice in book II -- Pandarus wrongly predicts that "if so is that she vntrewe be, / I kan

²³Interestingly, in the *Filostrato*, Troilus sends for Pandarus (7.25). That Chaucer opts to have Pandarus spend the night could merely be viewed as a means of saving narrative time, or, it could suggest that in drawing attention to the history of intimacy between Troilus and Pandarus -- recalling those erotically-charged nights depicted in earlier books -- he, unwittingly or not, is emphasizing the break that is to come.

²⁴The last time the two friends were together was on the tenth day after her departure, when there was hope of her return. Between that occasion and this one, the text offers no indication that Pandarus has been regularly seeing Troilus (much less sleeping in the same room with him).

²⁵Compare with Troilus' previous questions addressed to Pandarus: "allas, what is me best to do?" (1.828); "But lord, how shal I doon, how shal I lyuen?" (2.981).

nat trowen that she wol write ayein" (5.1297-98). Despite vagueness regarding the chronology of events, according to the narrative, Criseyde has already betrayed Troilus for Diomedes (5.1030-57). Thus, in narrative time, Criseyde's first letter is received *after* she betrays Troilus. In fact, that her letter expresses what Pandarus says it will, namely, "She wolde come, ye, but she nyste whenne" (5.1428), suggests that he is as duplicitous as she is.²⁶ Considering that, in the eyes of Troy, Criseyde is now, in effect, an ally of the Greeks, could the text be implying that Pandarus, who is, after all, her uncle, is likewise a "Greek sympathizer" and, therefore, an unsuitable and dangerous intimate friend/adviser to Troilus?²⁷

In their final encounter, Troilus chastises Pandarus for his false advice and implies that he is somewhat responsible for Criseyde's conduct:

O Pandare, that in dremes forto triste
 Me blamed hast and wont art oft vpbreyde.
 Now maistow sen thi self, if that the liste,
 How trewe is now thi Nece, brighte Criseyde. (5.1709-12)

In upbraiding Pandarus for refusing to see earlier his niece's faithlessness despite the "proof" afforded by the dream, Troilus not only accuses his once dependable adviser

²⁶For Pandarus claims "if she write, thou shalt ful sone yse / As wheither she hath any liberte / To come ayein" (5.1299-1301).

²⁷I would like to thank Steven Kruger for calling my attention to Criseyde's "foreignness." Although Richard II's intimate friends were English, there was certainly distrust of the French, who, like the Greeks, were threatening England/Troy with invasion. In addition, the nobles' hatred and resentment of Gaveston was, in part, due to the fact that he was French.

and most intimate friend of misleading him but he also forces Pandarus to view the world as it really is. This is a direct reversal of their former roles, since Troilus has, up to now, illustrated courtly/chivalric idealism. In reprimanding Pandarus for his shortsightedness regarding Criseyde, Troilus is, in effect, attacking Pandarus' credibility as confidant/adviser. Troilus then, notably, initiates his next and final course of action without bothering to ask Pandarus for advice: "And certeynly, with-outen moore speche, / ffrom hennes-forth as ferforth as I may, / Myn owen deth in armes wol I seche" (5.1716-18). His refusal to engage in any more "speche" on the matter is a further blow to his loquacious friend/adviser. Troilus reduces the once manipulative and seductive Pandarus to silence: "He nought a word ayeyn to hym answerde; / ... / And stant astoned of thise causes tweye, / As stille as ston: a word ne kowde he seye" (5.1725, 1728-29). Pandarus at last speaks and his review of both the good and bad that has come about from his influence on Troilus can be read as his attempt to continue their former relationship: "If I dide aught that myghte liken the, / It is me lief, and of this tresoun now, / God woot that it a sorwe is vnto me" (5.1737-39). The text, however, evidently weighs "tresoun" -- a politically emotive term with strong contemporary associations -- and Pandarus' implicit guilt in this "crime" more than the pleasure he has brought, for no reconciliation takes place.²⁸ Troilus does not respond and Pandarus' final words to

²⁸The related term "traitor" is often used in the chronicles to describe Richard II's court favorites. For instance, Knighton, reporting the first article of appeal at the Merciless Parliament of 1388, refers to these men as "faux traytours et enmys au roy et a realme [false traitors and enemies of the king and of the realm]" (458-59). See Michael Hanrahan, "Seduction and Betrayal: Treason in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women," Chaucer Review 30 (1996): 229-40.

Troilus. "I kan namore seye" (5.1743), symbolize the final breaking of this bond.

Troilus, disengaged from his association with Pandarus, is presented as a "noble knyght" who heroically fights for his city, killing thousands of the enemy (5.1751-56, 1800-04). Despite the fact that in the first three books, Troilus and Pandarus' friendship has much in common with the intense same-sex bonds expressed in chivalric romances such as Amyas and Amylion and the Prose Lancelot, unlike in these texts, Troilus' bliss in death does not include Pandarus. Thus, while Chaucer's poem, in depicting Troilus once again as a model knight re-evokes its sociocultural contexts, the political agenda overshadows it.

How does Criseyde figure into the destruction of this same-sex friendship? In the sociocultural reading of the poem, Criseyde's removal from Troy and subsequent betrayal of Troilus must, in the logic of the text, exert a negative effect on the homosocial relationship, since as I demonstrated in chapter 4, the heterosexual love story and the homosocial relationship are inextricably linked. That this connection is not only valid in the developmental stages of the relationship but also in its decline is clearly evident in books IV and V.²⁹ While it is possible to read the first three books exclusively within a sociocultural context and reread them in a politically-informed one, this bifurcation is not easily accomplished regarding the final two books. The Trojan political context, and the vivid associations with events in contemporary England which it invites, dominate this portion of the poem. Nevertheless, Chaucer's text, like the

²⁹I do not delineate this because I am offering a less apparent, politically-informed reading of books IV and V.

chronicles and the trial records of the Templars, offers two readings to explain and, in a sense, justify the destruction of this homosocial bond. As we recall, the Templars were persecuted and eventually disbanded ostensibly because of alleged obscene same-sex behavior and heretical acts, but Philip of France actually undertook this action for economic and political reasons. Likewise, the nobles under both Edward II and Richard II, according to the chronicles, acted against their respective king's intimate friends in order to protect the realm from such evil "seducers," but one can also read in the chronicles the real reason motivating their actions, namely, their desire to regain and assure the continuation of their historical privileges and power. Similarly, in Chaucer's text, Criseyde's removal from Troy and her subsequent betrayal of Troilus is *ostensibly* the reason for the failure of Troilus and Pandarus' friendship. When read against contemporary events, however, the text suggests that a politically-informed agenda is also operating, *beneath* this "translation" of an Italian text.

Despite the fact that books IV and V dramatize the destruction of a particular male same-sex relationship, Troilus and Criseyde should not be viewed exclusively as a homophobic poem, since Chaucer's text also affirms the sociocultural normality of male homosocial intimacy. The two contexts are inextricably linked to one another in that a same-sex bond can only be severed within a society that encourages or, at least, tolerates the formation of such bonds. In illustrating the emotional, eroticized intimacy which develops between Troilus and Pandarus in the first three books, Chaucer's poem reveals its relationship not only to chivalric treatises and romances but also to biblical, classical, and medieval expressions of ideal male friendship. Troilus and Criseyde is, however,

also informed by contemporary political concerns in England. The chronicles of the reigns of Edward II and Richard II, as well as trial records of the Templars and Arnold of Verniolle, indicate that various discourses of same-sex relations existed in the fourteenth century, which articulate a politically-motivated negative view of such behavior. Because these two contradictory interpretations -- one affirming and celebratory, the other homophobic -- existed alongside one another in the fourteenth century, it is not surprising that both should find expression in Chaucer's text. That Troilus, like Edward II and Richard II, is, in effect, deprived of his most intimate friend/adviser does not necessarily demonstrate a movement against male same-sex intimacy per se, but rather it suggests the politicization of a particular homosocial relationship. Like both English kings, Troilus is, within the politically-informed agenda of the poem, not so much guilty of loving a man as of loving the *wrong* man.

In light of the political contexts I have outlined, it is tempting to read Troilus and Criseyde as a poem with a straightforward message, namely, warning the beleaguered young king that his intimate male friendships are an issue of national concern. While Chaucer's *specific* political intentions are difficult, if not impossible, to recover, it is possible to identify his *general* purpose. Given the long association between Troy and England/London and the invasion threat from France during the 1380s, Chaucer was evidently aware that the historical subtext of his poem evoked contemporary events. Moreover, his *chivalrization* of the Filostrato particularly his attention to the development and destruction of homosocial intimacy in a city-state at war, suggests that

he sought to engage topical issues concerning Richard II and his court favorites. Chaucer thus simply allowed his poem to generate socially and politically-inflected discourses which, as in late fourteenth-century English society, conflict with one another. Troilus and Criseyde invites its contemporary readers to interact with descriptive passages and dramatized scenes, offering vivid material for imagining homoerotic (and heterosexual) scenarios and, at the same time, drawing on fourteenth-century, politically-informed discourses of male same-sex behavior, produces its own homophobic narrative. Chaucer's poem, therefore, both reflects and instantiates a sociocultural phenomenon characterized by tension between normative male same-sex intimacy and the potential politicization of such intimacy. While general readers of Troilus and Criseyde in the 1380s and 1390s undoubtedly found a "point of attachment" to the poem, knights and esquires in particular might have discovered that Chaucer's text spoke clearly to their personal experiences and concerns -- affirming and qualifying sociocultural traditions.³⁰

For present-day readers, Troilus and Criseyde sheds light on not only what is "foreign" about male-male interactions at a historically-specific moment but also modern assumptions regarding sexuality that tend to influence our readings of premodern texts. I gladly add my voice to the chorus of Chaucerians who over the years have proclaimed Troilus and Criseyde to be a truly great poem, but I must point out that it is, indeed, worthy of praise in part because, instead of vividly presenting one tragic love story, Chaucer offers two.

³⁰I am drawing on Strohm, "Chaucer's Audience."

Afterword: Some Observations on Female Same-Sex Dynamics in Troilus and Criseyde

As my title indicates, this study focuses on the depiction of male homosocial behavior in Troilus and Criseyde and in the various texts against which I situate Chaucer's poem. Although I have illustrated how heterosexual love interacts with and, at times, intensifies male-male relations, I have not investigated the relationship between male and female homosocial behavior; nor have I touched on whether a similar symbiotic relationship between heterosexual and female homosocial bonds exists. The very brief look that I offer here of the depiction of female same-sex behavior in Troilus and Criseyde suggests that a female homophobic agenda may also be operating in Chaucer's text.

One can observe consistent moves against female same-sex interactions throughout the poem. However, these moves serve a different purpose in books II-III than they do in the last two books. Early in book II, Pandarus arrives at Criseyde's to find her sitting with two other ladies "With-inne a pauerd parlour," listening to another "mayden" read the story of the siege of Thebes (2.81-84). This intimate homosocial setting is, indeed, striking. The women are sitting in what appears to be an enclosed area and there is no indication that there are men around. Despite his acknowledgement of "al the [female] compaignie" (2.86), Pandarus apologizes only for taking Criseyde away from hearing the story (2.94-95). The text separates Criseyde from the group of women in that she immediately breaks away from the homosocial setting, telling Pandarus that she has dreamed about him three times that night, and proceeds to sit down with him, apparently away from the others (2.89-91). Later, after Pandarus' first attempts to

persuade Criseyde to accept Troilus as a lover. Criseyde “wente / In-to the gardyn with hire neces thre / ... / To *pleven*” (2.813-14, 816, emphasis mine). And, although this scene “a ioye was to see” (2.817), it is decidedly not an affirmation of female same-sex bonding per se, but rather, in a sense, the backdrop for an expression of the virtues of heteronormative love. For Criseyde’s walk “arm in arm bitwene” her “neces” leads seamlessly into Antigone’s song (2.823-25). The first lines, “O loue, to whom I haue and shal / Ben humble subgit” (2.827-28), although echoing traditional courtly love doctrine, nevertheless, considering the setting within which they are sung, brilliantly illustrate how the text privileges heterosexual love over female homosocial intimacy. The women, thus, use this occasion of female bonding to celebrate another kind of love, “the *righte* lif” which enables a woman “To flemen alle manere vice and synne” (2.851-52, emphasis mine). Wouldn’t the broad spectrum of “vice and synne” which women in embracing this “righte” lifestyle are urged to flee include not only sinful heterosexual conduct but also sexual acts between women? The song exerts a powerful effect on Criseyde, for after listening attentively, “she wex somewhat able to conuerte” (2.903). While the ostensible meaning here is that she gradually becomes a fellow “servant” of (heteronormative) love, accompanying this “conversion” is the implication that she is giving up a former lifestyle -- one that the text illustrates as being defined by close female ties.

Criseyde is never again presented spending joyful moments with other women. In fact, on Pandarus’ subsequent visits, he speaks immediately with his niece and there is no indication that Criseyde is with other women at the time of his arrival (2.1095-96;

3.554-55). In fact, at two strategic meetings between Troilus and Criseyde, Pandarus isolates his niece from other female contact, separating her from Antigone at Deiphebus' (2.1716-18) and from her "wommen" at his house (3.666-68). Chaucer's poem, therefore, reveals that in striking contrast to the concomitant development of heterosexual and male homosocial relations in the first three books which I demonstrated earlier, female homosocial intimacy suffers as a result of the developing heterosexual love story. That the text, in effect, severs Criseyde's ties with her "nieces" and other women before the consummation scene suggests that in the sociocultural politics of the poem, female-female friendship, unlike male "frendes loue," is viewed as antithetical to heteronormative love.

In situating Criseyde once again within female society in book IV, the text strikes a final blow against female intimacy. When some women of the town visit her, she ignores "Tho wordes and tho wommanysse thynges" and "herde hem right as though she thennes were" (4.694-95). Far from providing comfort to Criseyde, this "compaignie" of women make her "wery" (4.707). While admittedly because Criseyde's relationship with Troilus is secret the women could not possibly guess her current state of mind, nevertheless, in highlighting the inappropriate words of "thilke fooles" (4.715), the text reveals a sharply negative view of female homosociality. But the question remains: does this illustration serve a politically-informed male and female homophobic agenda?

In the Greek camp, Criseyde is "with wommen fewe" (5.688) and, thus, not the only woman there. However, there is no indication that she has contact with other

women. Diomedes does not need to distract Criseyde from a society of women; he has easy and direct access to her. And in accepting his overtures she demonstrates heteronormative behavior. In separating Criseyde from other women the text succeeds in reducing her options to two: either remain alone or find solace with Diomedes. If she chooses the former, it is possible that Troilus and Pandarus' friendship would survive, driven onward by hopes of Criseyde's return. Pandarus would then continue to influence his friend's life, tempting him with additional potentially "dangerous" advice. The final two books, however, even before Criseyde's betrayal of Troilus, reveal a politically-informed male homophobic agenda at work, expressed in the weakening of this male homosocial bond. Thus, in choosing the second option, Criseyde becomes, as I have already suggested, the ostensible agent in the destruction of Troilus and Pandarus' friendship -- an agent who, in effect, *supports* this action. Criseyde's "choice" is, therefore, inextricably linked to a conformity with heteronormative behavior and a rejection/absence of female homosocial alternatives. It thus appears that in Chaucer's poem there are two interlinking homophobic moves operating in books IV and V: one male, the other female.

The text distinguishes between two types of male homosocial bonds -- one potentially sodomitical and the other a patriarchal bond between father-in-law and son-in-law. While Criseyde's acceptance of Diomedes effects the destruction of Troilus and Pandarus' relationship, this affirmation of heterosexuality also implicitly strengthens the culturally normative and non-politicized homosocial bond between Calchas and Diomedes. Troilus and Criseyde, therefore, does not move against *all* male homosocial

relations, only one particular friendship which, in the poem's contemporary and Trojan political contexts, is deemed "dangerous." Chaucer's text does not, however, distinguish between different forms of female homosociality. While one specific male-male bond is destroyed, leaving another in its place, female homosociality, in effect, disappears from the world of the poem. Two interlinking homophobic moves are, indeed, operating in Troilus and Criseyde: for both Troilus and Pandarus' friendship and Criseyde's female associations are written out of the story. But, whereas the poem tacitly affirms one form of male homosociality, it offers no parallel affirmation of female bonding.

This admittedly cursory treatment of the politics of female same-sex relations in Troilus and Criseyde will I hope stimulate further in-depth investigations of female homosocial contexts against which to situate Chaucer's text. In studying representations of both male and female same-sex conduct, and the sociopolitical forces that inform these depictions, in Chaucer and other literary and nonliterary texts, we are afforded a more complete picture of homosocial intimacy in the Middle Ages -- one that may, in fact, challenge the received notion that heteronormativity prevailed. Some chivalric texts suggest that male homosocial bonds were privileged over heterosexual relations. The brief glimpses of female homosocial interactions in Troilus and Criseyde likewise suggest that women found pleasure in one another's company. Despite the moves Chaucer's text makes against female homosociality, the received impression is that female same-sex intimacy existed in its own right and, thus, did not merely serve to advance heteronormativity.

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417

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