

**„waz sol doch si nû rîten?“
Feminine Spaces and Subjectivity in Hartmann’s *Erec***

Margaret A. Maurer

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Approved by:

Kathryn Starkey

Haiko Wandhoff

Jonathan Hess

Abstract

Margaret A. Maurer: “waz sol doch si nû rîten?”
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(Under the direction of Dr. Kathryn Starkey)

This work traces the development of a new, female-friendly courtly model in Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec* through a close examination of the development of female subjectivity. I argue that female subjectivity is affirmatively realized in *Erec* through a succession of private and semi-private spaces, whose physical and/or metaphorical placement outside the purview of theretofore understood methods of gauging the acceptability of feminine behavior, promotes a simultaneously separate and equal role for courtly ruling women.

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Introduction: Development by Degrees

Hartmann von Aue's story *Erec* is a story of royal development. Having disgraced himself at court through an excess of attention to his new bride Enite, Erec, son of King Lac, seeks to regain his lost honor by riding forth on *aventure* and discovering anew what it means to fulfill a knightly role with integrity. Through a series of adventures Erec proves his worth as a knight and as a man, and triumphantly returns with Enite to Arthur's court where he is crowned king and lives happily ever after.

The development of the character of Erec as both man and ruler is the development of his more perfect understanding of the Arthurian ideal. Erec's progression is a progression toward emulation of the model of Arthur, the unassailable and infinitely benevolent king whose good will and justice provide a standard against which Erec's behavior is implicitly measured. The Arthurian model, though a positive one, is fixed and unchanging. In order to be a good king and/or a good knight, there is a distinct set and type of behaviors to which Erec must adhere. To be a good king is to behave in a manner as closely approximate as possible to the behavior of one specific king.

The contention that the story of *Erec* is chiefly Erec's story has come into question fairly recently. After all it is Erec's honor that is at stake, and Erec's understanding of the principles of benevolent rulership that must be developed before he can be crowned. Suggestions that Hartmann's romance might concern itself equally with Enite's development have been met with resistance. Joachim Bumke wrote that

Selbstverwirklichung der Frau und Entfaltung der eigenen Persönlichkeit sind keine Themen im „Erec“...Nach traditioneller theologischer Auffassung wurde das „Wesen“ der Frau aus dem Schöpfungsauftrag abgeleitet, von dem die „Genesis“ berichtet. Danach wurde die Frau „dem Mann zur Hilfe“ geschaffen. Diesen Auftrag, dem Mann beizustehen, erfüllt Enite in vorbildlicher Weise.“¹

Others have considered Enite’s development as a legitimate aspect of *Erec*, but only insofar as her struggle is similar to her husband’s. Any personal journey she undertakes has been viewed as a journey toward the understanding of the proper exercise of the traditional feminine courtly role. Francis Gentry, for example, has written of Enite’s personal development in terms of her gaining a better understanding of the wifely and womanly qualities of loyalty (*triuwe*) and obedience.² Her role is either aspect or reflection of that of her husband. Any deviant behavior or distinctive characteristics she possesses she grapples with in order that she, like Erec, become able to more perfectly fulfill the (generic) courtly ideal.

But I believe that Enite is a far more complex and subtler character than these interpretations suggest. It is the purpose of this work to show that Enite’s development over the course of the romance must be viewed not solely in terms of the degree of her adherence to the courtly model, but rather in terms of the increasing degree of subjectivity she realizes through a succession of trials that require her creation of feminine spaces. Enite’s progress toward subjectivity may be charted through an examination of the feminine spaces she occupies: she begins in a dressing room with Queen Ginover, where the women occupy a court-sanctioned feminine room. Then Enite moves toward her own, unique viewpoint in a series of dilemmas which she works out first in a semi-private space (the bedroom she shares

¹ Joachim Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue: eine Einführung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006) 81-82.

² Francis Gentry, “The Two-Fold Path: Erec and Enite on the Road to Wisdom.” *A Companion to the Works of Hartmann von Aue*. Francis Gentry, ed. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2005.

with Erec), next in a wholly private place (her own psyche). Her subjectivity is fully realized at court at Limors, where she wavers between commonly understood concepts of obedience and disobedience (or behavior that may be viewed in terms of being either inside or outside the court's guidelines for acceptable behavior), negotiating the area between these two extremes so as to create a third space. The text itself affirms this new space, offering a new space of its own with the extended description of Enite's wonderful horse that comes soon after her trial in Limors. Enite's actions at Count Oringles' court negotiate the space between obedience and disobedience, and the site of her self or ego is the locus of integration for those two extremes. In a similar manner does the horse ekphrasis act as a unifying force, a mediating site between the male-dominated world/Self of the text already in progress and the new site/Other that Enite has created via her careful negotiation of courtly custom.

But the ekphrasis does not "other" Enite; she is not the object of the extended description. Rather, a horse stands in for her to be placed in the outsider's position. She is a player in courtly life, though of an entirely different kind than a simplistic Self/Other dichotomy might allow. The text's careful realization of the ekphrasis as a realm separate yet just as enchanting as that of Erec's *aventure*, supports a view of a non-discriminatory sort of essentialism: due to the nature of the horse ekphrasis, there is another space (not an Other space) which belongs to Enite. Though her dominion is different than the one presided over by males in the world of Hartmann's text, she is nonetheless a ruling partner. The strength of her character is realized progressively and may be charted through a close examination of the feminine spaces in *Erec*, which reach their zenith in the horse ekphrasis. Though Enite begins as an individual, ("diu aller schœniste maget diu ie, sô man saget, in des kûneges hof

kam,”³ [1608-10] “So they say, the most beautiful girl that ever came to the King’s court.”⁴), she ends as a subject, asserting her own will.

For the purposes of this essay it is necessary to have a working definition of privacy. A commonly understood concept of relative privacy in the middle ages centers around one’s presence at court: things that happen at court are public; things that happen away from court are private.⁵ While fully engaging the debate regarding public and private space is beyond the scope of this paper, I would like to propose a model of medieval privacy which describes the idea in terms of degree. I agree that rooms and chambers both literal and metaphorical are in a certain sense private, as the action unfolding within them is not taking place before all of society. However, I believe that there is a greater degree of privacy, one that works to tremendous effect in *Erec*: the quality of being utterly alone, either psychologically or physically. The incidents during her trip with Erec in which Enite worries about the robbers in the forest, for example, take place inside a wholly private space—Enite’s own mind—even though she is not physically alone; through interior monologue or aside it is possible to be in a private space while one is in a semi-private space such as a bedroom, as Enite is as she quietly bemoans her role in the *verlegen*. For the purposes of this work I will use the word “privacy” in a general way to refer to spaces such as dressing rooms, bedrooms, and other places away from court. When I wish to make the distinction between the not-at-court quality of the above mentioned private spaces and the private spaces Enite assumes when she

³ *Mittelhochdeutsch und Übertragung von Tomas Cramer*. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972.

⁴ R.W. Fisher, trans., *The Narrative Works of Hartmann von Aue* (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1983) 18.

⁵ For an extensive discussion on public and private spheres at the medieval court, see Horst Wenzel’s “Offentlichkeit und Heimlichkeit in Gottfried’s ‘Tristan’.” *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 107:3 (1988) 335-61.

is entirely alone (either physically or psychologically) I will refer to the latter as *wholly* or *utterly* private.

Proportionate to the increasing danger Erec encounters on *aventure*, Enite's degree of subjectivity increases with each successive instance of her occupying a separate (feminine) space. At first the private space she occupies is *merely* private (Ginover's dressing room), and "feminine" only in the traditional courtly understanding of femininity. Subsequent episodes, however, make the spaces inside of which Enite's conscience comes to the fore increasingly private (eventually becoming *wholly* private and finally subjective). They are feminine ones by definition: she alone occupies them, and she occupies them alone.

With this increased exploration of a woman's inner life and her eventual ability to use the workings of her inner world to impact the outer world of the court, Hartmann does nothing less than create a new model of womanly behavior. Speech acts and disobedient behavior that once clung in conjunction to the disgrace of the couple's *verlegen*, are the same sorts of behaviors that bring about Enite's rescue and reunion with Erec in Limors. The flexibility of Erec and Enite's marriage which once led to shame is held up in the *joie de la curt* episode as a temperate compromise between the rigidity of Oringles' demands and the weak and compliant partnership exemplified by Mabonagrín and his lady.

It is my further contention that the text itself rewards Enite for the exercise of her subjectivity in Limors with a glorious room all her own. The space created by the horse ekphrasis in *Erec* acts as the ultimate feminine space, arrives directly after Enite's hard-won self-actualization and describes a gift given to her by descendants of the female Arthurian subject, Famurgan (Morgan le Fay). The horse description works on a variety of levels not only to provide Hartmann's audience with an actual experience of a different space such as

Enite may occupy, but also to demonstrate through sheer beauty, the text's approval of such separateness.

Enite's acceptance of the gift is in fact her receipt of a new model of womanhood in which women hold sovereignty over a separate dominion, one neither greater nor lesser than that presided over by men. *Erec*'s careful attention to and ultimate celebration of the development of Enite's subjectivity is nothing less than a gesture toward new models of marriage and of courtliness, one in which men and women are both separate yet equally capable types of people, and also subjects, equally responsible for each other's happiness.

Chapter I: The Standards

Whose Story Is This?

Erec is a story of becoming—but whose story? The world of Arthurian romance that frames *Erec* assumes that the journey toward royalty is Erec's journey. It is Erec's loss of honor at the very start of the tale that provides the catalyst for action to begin, and Erec's dishonor at his *verlegen* that forces him to seek the *aventure* that, by means of its itinerant quality alone, gives rise to more adventure. The chain of events that keeps the plotline moving, action begetting action begetting further action, is one in which Erec is the primary actor.

Though Enite is alongside Erec for the majority of events, her presence there is decidedly secondary. During the couple's courtship, Erec's triumph in the tournament with the falcon, her wedding and the challenges and conflicts Erec faces during their journey, Enite is little more than a companion. Though Hartmann takes pains to stop and mention Enite's presence at Erec's side, these asides to the reader serve as mere reminders of her; it is fair to say that her presence is of little consequence precisely because her thoughts and actions are not being heard, acted upon, or otherwise absorbed by the system of behavior and/or storytelling dominating the worlds of both character and reader.

However, even the grossest comparisons with Chretien de Troyes' original tale reveal these asides as undeniably deliberate, small efforts on Hartmann's part to include Enite more fully in the story. As a woman depicted within the norms of courtly society, Enite would have had little opportunity to partake in, say, tournaments or hand fighting or any of the other

events which unfold and give rise to more action further along. It is perhaps because of this societally-imposed/constructed impossibility that Hartmann's text takes these measures.

There are several passages in *Erec* that show Enite as their central figure, scenes in which she occupies decidedly feminine spaces. This work will discuss in depth those passages and the spaces they describe as they fall into two categories: those in which Enite's thoughts, actions and decisions as a conscious individual have consequences for an existing system, and those in which they do not. It is my intention here to explain this distinction in terms of progression: the succession of feminine spaces which Enite occupies and/or creates along her path to queenliness can be read in terms of the decreasing quality of "extraneousness" that she and the spaces she occupies possess as the romance unfolds.

While Chretien's story shows the journey of one man to one end with his woman at his side, Hartmann's text is clearly invested in the idea of dual development, that of Erec and Enite as a ruling couple. The subtle, yet persistent development of Enite's effect upon (or disruption of) the courtly matrix around her amounts to a feminine *aventure* which takes place inside of feminine spaces.

The Existing System: Arthur's Court and Erec's Perfect Imitation

In the world of the medieval romance, the Arthurian court is an all-encompassing backdrop. Arthur's credibility and integrity, as exemplified by his impeccable courtliness and by the flawless justice he exerts over his kingdom and his vassals, are absolutely unassailable. In all situations he is the gold standard against which all other expressions of courtliness are judged. His court is a model of perfection.

But the standardization created by mention of the Arthurian court also flattens his character. As Arthur's court and "character" is impeccable, he cannot truly undergo any sort of meaningful transformation. Gentry writes:

The portrayal of the great king himself, for example, as well as that of his court becomes typical. In the German tales, Arthur undergoes no development in his character, engages in no serious quests or other chivalric pursuits, and is, in general, not a very active king...he is the focal point of a static society in which no growth or progress is possible.

Certainly, Arthur functions in *Erec* more as a sign than as a character with desires, flaws, or preferences.⁶ When Arthur himself is referred to, the mention is vague and serves mainly as a means of providing proper courtly perspective. Arthur is one who lends an overarching sense of order to a smaller world (or conflict). His life is the backdrop against which other, less renowned characters with flaws, struggles (and therefore complexity) are measured. Arthur's court is "the environment in which the heroes must first prove themselves."⁷

And yet, for all that has been written by scholars such as Bumke and Gentry about *Erec* as a story of development, Erec himself undergoes little true transformation. His development as a man and as a ruler over the course of the story is retold in terms of the perfection of his outward emulation of the courtly ideals perpetually manifest in Arthur's personage, rather than as an inner development concerning his personal integrity, his moral fiber, or his resolution of unique problems.⁸ Erec's lost honor at the beginning of the romance carries meaning only when viewed within the system of courtly behavior. His

⁶ It must be noted that Arthur does not always act as a sign. In Wolfram's *Parzival*, Arthur is whole character, as engaged in conflict and development as any other minor character in the tale.

⁷ Gentry 93.

⁸ It must be noted, however, that Erec's character development in Hartmann's romance is far deeper than that portrayed in Chretien's source, wherein Erec is himself a courtly paragon in every way except for his commission of *verlegen*. In The French text there is no room for Erec's growth or development apart from the active atonement for this one mistake; in the German text Erec seems at least to pass through a series of steps toward an explanation of an enlightened understanding of courtly society in the *joie de la curt* episode.

shame at his *verlegen* reflects shame at his deviance from work toward an ideal. All of Erec's missteps are mistakes because they are steps that lead him away from a standard.

In the chapter entitled "Problematizing Identity" from his book *The Subject—Medieval/Modern*, Peter Haidu discusses the consequences of subjecthood for the world of the medieval text. He chooses for his example the French text *Silence*, whose title character is dual-gendered. Born as a female yet raised and trained as a male, Silence is a queer pioneer of sorts, an individual whose identity is not made manifest within a flawless imitation of either maleness or femaleness. Gendered models of behavior act as signs, Haidu asserts, and the individual does not make himself manifest through a perfect imitation of the model of either gender.⁹

But "the sign is made to lie with, especially when an inheritance is in question."¹⁰ That is, in order to inherit a tradition, to gain the keys to a kingdom, or simply to be called "woman" or "king" or "queen," one's personality, one's status as subject, must necessarily be subordinated to the dictates of a sign, be that sign "femaleness" or in Erec's case, "Arthurian courtly perfection." Haidu goes on to imply that a perfect imitation of any model of gender is essentially a lie, for a paradigm of gender is little more than a sign, not a true outing of an actualized subjectivity.¹¹ Though a sign may often have subjectivity bestowed upon it like a gift, Haidu implies that such is a false subjectivity, fused as it is "with the perfect performance of the lie."¹²

⁹ For a complete discussion of the relevance of gender in medieval literature, see James Schulz' *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

¹⁰ Peter Haidu, *The Subject Medieval/Modern: Text and Governance in the Middle Ages* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004) 264.

¹¹ This idea holds true not only for gender, but for any code of prescribed behavior, as I will show.

¹² Haidu 264.

The name of the title character of *Silence* is an ironic one, for Silence herself sings and acts with a troupe of jugglers. “Silence speaks,” Haidu tells us, “but only to a special kind of listener... The performative subjectivity constituted by *Silence* can only be that of a paranoid reader, the attentive decipherer of actual voices playfully aspectualized by the concrete text.”¹³ His implication is that the receptivity of an audience (either within the text or without) trained only to receive given models of gender normativity will be minimal. Silence is a true subject, gifted with the unique perspective a third space affords.

Haidu does not believe that the male gender is a given, a self against which deviations (either perversions of a set code of male behavior or femaleness itself) are necessarily evaluated as Other, as is often assumed when questions of gendering and subjectivity arise. In *Silence*, gendered male behavior is constructed and imposed upon the body of the youngster in equal measure with gendered female behavior, he maintains. And yet Silence herself avoids either model both by owning up to “what she is,” (a subject) and by being subsequently cleansed of artificial (male) trappings. She is then rewarded by the text by “...having her accede to a kingdom which neither her father [a king] nor the text had ever laid claim.”¹⁴ She marries a foreign king, becoming ruler over a land that has not yet been circumscribed in the text by any sort of system. For carving out and owning up to a figurative third space, she is rewarded with a literal third space.¹⁵

¹³ Haidu 262.

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ However, Silence does marry at the end of the tale, assuming a decidedly feminine role. Moreover, she receives the new kingdom through her husband, only as a result of her marriage. Haidu himself admits that “the reader of *Silence* witnesses the social construction of gender, from beginning to end!” (263). Moreover, he points out that although transvestitism provided a “marginal individual freedom of avoidance within an established patriarchal hierarchy,” he is quick to point to the real-life condemnation of Joan of Arc’s alleged cross-dressing, postulating that in Silence’s case the foreign king may be seen as a savior of sorts, one who rescues her from a permanent status as a transvestite (264-65). *Silence* implies that in the end all postmodern-

I argue that in contrast to the flexible gender categories offered (at least temporarily) in *Silence*, the world of courtly conduct in *Erec* is a male one at the onset, and is a given, valid in every court everywhere regardless of the characteristics of the people occupying it. This status is due partly to the leveling effect that the Arthurian model has upon the section of society depicted in the romance and partly to the focus on the chain of cause and effect that carries the reader through the story. The forward movement of the story depends upon activities that matter to the Arthurian-model court and its code and are all those in which Erec himself, as actor and as emulator of chivalric conduct as perfected in King Arthur, effects change within that code.¹⁶ This is not to say that Erec's actions change the courtly code of conduct itself, but rather that his actions take place within this given framework and are received with varying degrees of enthusiasm, approval or thoughtfulness appropriate to others also residing within the framework.

The goal of Erec's efforts is none but "the perfect performance of the lie." His attempts to regain his honor, first in a "trial run" with Iders and the dwarf, then on a larger scale through his *aventure* and his final triumph over Mabonagrin, are all geared toward repairing and asserting his courtly image in the exact manner of King Arthur. His flaws are flaws of poor imitation, his journey of becoming an entirely straightforward one in which he merely reveals himself to himself. As Gentry puts it: "Erec, like Wolfram's Parzival, achieves his goal only after his nobility by dint of birth is brought *back* into harmony with his

style wanderers must eventually "rest" somewhere; Silence is offered a resting place by her savior husband, though one that exists outside of previously circumscribed realms of the story. Enite will also rest after her "trouble," in Limors, though like Silence, in a space whose existence is at least partially due to her own creation of it.

¹⁶ I refer here to what may be informally characterized as the "plot" of *Erec*: the events selected by summaries of the romance. The necessary quality of the actions involving Erec himself, at least for the first part of the story, revolve around Erec's perfection of the Arthurian ideal.

inherent nobility of attitude, or virtue.”¹⁷ Erec’s becoming, then, is no more than a return, played out on both figurative and literal levels over the course of the story. He is merely rediscovering what stood before him in the first place; his is a character development that unfolds without meaningful conflict.¹⁸

Nonetheless, the monochromatic quality of Arthur’s court (and by extension, Erec’s “quest”) stands always as a positive model before a medieval audience. As is the model of King Arthur a given, a type of neutrality against which deviation might stand out, so is Erec’s behavior aping that standard also a standard against which a deviant Other may stand in contrast. Because by definition no aspect of Arthur’s behavior can ever conflict with the models of courtly behavior, a reader can assume that all aspects of the Arthurian court are to be imitated, including Arthur’s own marriage.¹⁹ As the story of *Erec* is the story of Erec’s journey toward royalty, it is only logical that his marriage imitates the model set forth by Arthur and that by extension, his wife aspire to a model of queenliness set forth by Ginover.

Ginover

If Arthur’s court is an unassailable model to be imitated, then it stands to reason that Arthur’s marriage to Ginover as an arm or aspect of that court, is also to be emulated. The textual world of *Erec* offers only the barest of insights into intimate exchanges between Arthur and

¹⁷ Gentry 102.

¹⁸ Though Erec faces many foes during his *aventure*, there is really no truly antagonistic element either within or without himself that he must grapple with in order to become a new man, a changed man. His struggle has no meaningful *inner* conflict.

¹⁹ Indeed, the figure of Arthur seems to serve almost to define the medieval court, rather than reflect it.

Ginover. Their relationship to each other as a married couple as presented in *Erec* is exclusively that of a ruling couple.²⁰

But though they live together, in *Erec* Arthur and Ginover are shown separately. As is often the case, Arthur himself appears only as a background figure in the early part of the tale. It is first mentioned in passing that he is on the hunt for the white stag and later that his hunt has been successful, but this is as far as it goes. His only incidents of direct speech in the romance are addressing a large group of knights after the hunt, and a group of kings at the end of the romance, as Erec is about to be crowned. In both instances he exhorts those around him to behave in a certain way:

der künec zuo den rittern sprach:
 ‚nû suln wir in ze lône
emphâhen vil schône
wir suln mit rehte einem man
derz sô wol gedienen kann
aller êren gunnen.
er hât es wol begunnen
daz er ze lobenne sol geshehen.⁷
des begunden si dô alle jehen. [1285-93]

The King said to his knights, “Now we must reward him with a splendid welcome. It is only right for us to accord every honor to a man who so fully deserves it. He has begun in a way that ought to bring him acclaim!” And they all agreed.

Arthur’s short speech here serves a clearly didactic purpose. His words act only as a reminder of what is fitting behavior or pomp when receiving a hero like Erec. It is not surprising that everyone (every man) present agrees, and thus burnishes the surface of the behaviors already in place.

Near the end of the romance, Arthur speaks again, this time to King Lac and to Erec:

²⁰ Though at one point in *Erec* Ginover addresses Arthur as “friend,” the exchange takes place in front of a room full of people. Arthur and Ginover never speak *sotto voce* to each other and are never shown inhabiting any sort of private space together.

ir herren, wir suln gân schouwen
unser niuwekomen vrouwen
und trœsten sî nâch ir leide.⁷
ûf stuonden sie dô beide. [9920-23]

“Gentlemen, let us go and see our newly arrived ladies and comfort them in their suffering.” The two then stood up.

Whether exhorting a roomful of knights or a group of kings, Arthur’s speech acts always in support of proper display of masculine behavior. And his suggestions are those with which, of course, everyone agrees.

But are his suggestions necessary? It seems unlikely that the knights of the round table in the first case, and two well-mannered kings in the second, would be unaware of the proper responses to Erec’s return and to the ladies’ entrance.²¹ Arthur’s reminders seem superfluous, acting only as reinforcement to that system already firmly in place; his words affect no real change. Two salient characteristics of Arthur’s speech emerge from this analysis: first, that his speech is flat in the same way that Erec’s behavior is flat. He is engaged in a perfect imitation of his own model: showing himself to himself, to use Gentry’s paradigm.

Secondly, though Arthur’s speech does not change or affect the courtly code of behavior itself, his speech does garner a response from those living within that system. Though his instructions have not really affected the world inside of which the characters in *Erec* live, his words have at least been heard and answered either verbally or physically. That there is no actual consequence to Arthur’s words supports the idea that he is but a given paradigm against which others are measured; a non-character.

²¹ It is interesting that Arthur’s speech acts address first the proper behavior regarding one’s fellow knights and second, proper behavior regarding women. His words act as a separating tool, giving evidence of the brand of court-sanctioned gender separateness which I will discuss in depth later in this work.

Interestingly, Ginover is a much greater presence than her husband is in *Erec*. She is seen and spoken about more frequently, and her speech is reported far more than her husband's is. In fact, her order to her lady to “rîten und ervar/ wer der ritter müge sîn,” (“Ride and find out who the knight can be,”) is the first direct speech in the romance. [25-26] Though her first speech is a command to a woman, she follows up shortly with a command to Erec:

er sprach: ‘ich will rîten dar,
daz ich iu diu mære ervar.’
diu vrouwe sprach: ‚nû rîten enwec.’
zehant huop sich Êrec... [70-73]

He said, “I wish to ride over and find out for you.” His lady said, “Ride then.”

In this exchange we see perfect examples of both emulation and effect. Erec wants to ride, he tells the queen, but only to find out for *her* what the story is with the rude dwarf. His request is because of his desire to serve her as a lady of the highest noble station. While few would argue that Erec's inherited instinct for service of noble ladies is a bad one, it must be acknowledged that his behavior is merely emulative. Nonetheless, though his speech is not groundbreaking, it is received and responded to by the queen.

Ginover's speech is decidedly not emulative. The model of the passive, silent, beautiful courtly lady is utterly absent here. Instead Ginover is portrayed as a woman who gives orders and whose command is both received by society and responded to. Though the suggestion to follow Sir Iders and his dwarf was Erec's, Ginover's part in the exchange is not only a confirmation of that suggestion, as is the case in Chretien's original.²² Erec does not

²² After Erec finishes explaining the ins and outs of the dwarf's insult, he tells Guinevere, “...I commend you to God,” Chretien's narrator merely reports that “And the queen likewise commended him to God, more than five hundred times, that He might defend him from evil” (Carroll, Carleton W., trans. *Chretien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*. William W. Kibler, ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 40).

ride until she gives her permission, showing that her commands have an effect upon those living inside courtly culture. Her actions (in this case taking the form of words) are engaged in an essential way with the chain of events in place, which, as I have stated before, involves cause and effect taking place within a male-dominated system of behavior.²³

Later on, after Erec has triumphed in the tournament and won the sparrow-hawk, he brings Iders and the dwarf back to Karidigan to apologize at court for his knavish behavior. Hartmann writes that both Arthur and Ginover were happy to hear of Erec's victory, though he does so only by way of the narrator. As a couple, they are presented at a narrative distance, more alive through their titles of king and queen than through their own personalities.

Once again, effect is rendered through Ginover's decision-making. After Sir Iders bows and scrapes, she tells him:

‘iuwer buoze diu sol ringer sîn
dan ir doch gearnet hât.
ich will daz ir hie bestât
und unser ingesinde sît.’
daz muostę ouch wesen âne strît. [1279-83]

“Your atonement shall be less then you deserve. I want you to stay here and join our retinue.” And there could be no argument about that.

Ginover, not Arthur, pronounces his sentence. Though one imagines that she does it with the agreement of her husband, Hartmann shows Ginover delivering the decision, in scene (and through direct speech) rather than in summary, a craft choice which adds to the impact of her

²³ In my analysis, a speech act may be considered “successful” if it is both acknowledged and responded to by its intended recipients. It would be incorrect to say that Ginover's (or Enite's) speech is ineffectual, though I do contend that there are varying degrees of success, which in some cases may be measured by the enthusiasm of the reception or by the degree of change brought about as a result of the speech act. Had Ginover's command contradicted the courtly code, for example, her instructions would most certainly have been met with less enthusiasm and therefore a lesser degree of success.

gesture.²⁴ It is interesting that after her decision has been made there “could be” no argument. While this information gives Ginover’s judgment a quality of inevitability, its passive construction shows her words engendering no direct supporting action, only an absence of contradiction from those around her. This approval through non-disapproval is a subtle but crucial difference in the way Ginover’s powers as ruler separate themselves from those of her husband and later, from Enite’s qualities as a queen.²⁵

Most importantly, though, Ginover’s words are received and obeyed on a small scale. She is obeyed by Iders, whose obedience in this case is really the only one upon which the success of her sentence may be gauged. It is intriguing that this speech of Ginover’s comes directly before Arthur’s exhortation to his knights to show Erec the proper ceremony. Hartmann’s juxtaposition of the two rulers’ speech acts serves to highlight the contrast between them: Arthur’s commands are not commands in the strict sense of the word, as they only reinforce behavior already in place; Ginover’s commands have an effect on individuals. But while this distinction helps highlight the respective depth of character of each ruler, the most crucial difference lies within the difference in the court’s reception of the commands and ideas from alternately, the feminine and masculine halves of the throne. While Arthur’s bland orders are universally lauded and responded to with vigor, Ginover’s commands are agreed to only in the most passive way: non-disagreement. Silence. And so in spite of the nearness of the narrator’s lens to Ginover, the greater degree of specificity of the effect of her

²⁴ The merciful nature of the judgment also indicates accord with the Arthurian model of courtly and Christian behavior.

²⁵ We must imagine that the people who were not disagreeing with Ginover are the knights at Karidigan. As the realm of knighthood is one dominated by men, it is not Ginover’s space. The gender-specific nature of her audience (and by extension, the space she occupies here) perhaps softens the effect of the lack of immediate outward agreement in this passage. This quality of being “out of one’s element,” as it were, is part of what makes Enite’s resistance in Limors so provocative: she exerts female subjectivity inside of a male-constructed and dominated space.

orders and the relative number of speech acts afforded each ruler by the world of the text of *Erec*, it seems that the world within the text throws resistance toward an idea of Ginover as a self-contained subject.

Ulrike Bethlehem claims of the Guinevere of Chretien de Troyes' original that "none of her traits defines her as an individual, or indeed as a member of her sex."²⁶ To be sure, in *Erec et Enide* Ginover is a much more passive figure than she is in Hartmann's retelling, portrayed by Chretien as acquiescent, her words and suggestions framed more as afterthoughts of those of men. For example, in Chretien's text it is entirely Erec's decision entirely to follow Iders and his dwarf at the beginning of the romance. Erec tells Guinevere "My lady, I can delay no more; I must follow the knight. I am leaving. I commend you to God."²⁷ Though she gives him her approval before he rides off, her words are hardly more than tokens; both idea and impetus have come entirely from him. While it is possible to view Erec's actions as arising out of a pure impetus toward service, Guinevere's role is subordinate, even to a man of lesser social status.

The disparity between Chretien's and Hartmann's portrayals of Ginover offers insight into each author's concept of feminine rulership. To hold a position of relative authority within a certain realm is not the same as having sovereign command over it. Should he so choose, Arthur would have the authority to order all the knights at court to dress in unconventional ways and break the rules of chivalry. Whether or not he would is another matter, but fact is the world of the court exists as though it were Arthur's creation, to be created or destroyed as he would have it. Ginover, by contrast, will be obeyed by men at court so long as her authority does not extend itself beyond the boundaries of the queenly

²⁶ Ulrike Bethlehem, *Guinevere—A Medieval Puzzle* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2005) 132.

²⁷ Carroll 40.

ideal (which, paradoxically, she helps create through her very existence). Though she is a far cry from the passive and silent courtly woman, Ginover's potency is only as strong as the matrix of the court will allow it to be.²⁸

By the point of Ider's contrition, Hartmann's audience is still entirely acclimated to a fictional world dominated by the courtly customs as delineated by men. The chain of cause and effect in motion is—and will remain for nearly the entire romance—that which Erec has started: loss of honor followed by victory and restitution. Though this male series of events is clearly the primary one, Hartmann's Ginover at least has access to it. Her words are heard by men, manifest meaning to men and carry consequences, however gently they might be received, for courtly men like Erec and Iders.

With the character of Ginover, Hartmann has carefully and deliberately shaped Chretien's docile queen into a player in courtly life. With the preservation of Ginover's words in the form of direct speech he preserves the effect of piercing through a membrane of sorts. Had her decisions been depicted in indirect speech or in summary, her consequence for the world of cause and effect in play would have been greatly lessened, placing her in a non-participatory realm similar to that of her husband: that is, standardized and very nearly redundant.²⁹ Yet by reshaping Ginover's role in the events at court by manipulating the effect of her words and actions on the world around her, Hartmann reveals her to be in

²⁸ It is possible to infer a certain measure of power contained within Guinevere's unconventional actions in other Arthurian romances; her affairs with Lancelot place her in a decidedly unique position, particularly for an Arthurian queen. However her role as an adulteress must not be viewed as a breakthrough, for her behavior is framed always in terms of the standards of the court; her adultery places her not in a new space, but only *outside* of the old one, i.e. the paradigm of the Arthurian courtly lady.

²⁹ Though there is a great deal of direct speech from Guinevere in Chretien's original, this may be due partly to the increased number of speech acts from all the characters, including Arthur, Erec, and even Gawain. Every other character, that is, except Enite, who does not speak until her monologue in the bedchamber after the couple's *verlegen*. Moreover, the increased number of speech acts from Guinevere does not make them more effective. As stated earlier, her speech often serves only as an affirmation of the ideas arising from the men who surround her.

possession of a certain measure of power. She is far more necessary to Erec's train of cause and effect than she is in *Erec et Enide*. And in *Erec*, she is more actively engaged with those present at court than Arthur is. Such a comparatively dynamic portrayal of her raises questions about Hartmann's intent in showing the female half of what must by all accounts be considered the ideal ruling couple, as wielding such ability to penetrate the affairs of the court. She has both the right and the wherewithal to engage the male-constructed matrix of courtly behavior and effect change upon those living within it, if not upon the matrix itself

And as an arm of the Arthurian model, Ginover's behavior must be considered unassailable and by extension, to be emulated by women such as Enite who would grow toward royalty. While it is never directly stated that Enite herself aspires to be like Ginover, the progress of Enite's individuality as shown in Hartmann's text indicates movement toward, and ultimately past, such an ideal.

The Emergence of Female Spaces

As my discussion of *Silence* touched upon, the idea of subjectivity suggests a new space among existing spaces. Silence's gender fits no category and therefore may be said to occupy a new space as symbolized by the faraway, formerly unheard-of kingdom of which she becomes ruler at the end of the story. In this same sense, Ginover is not a subject.

Though her role is unquestionably stronger in Hartmann's text than in Chretien's original, the limits placed upon her behavior at court by her role within the court serve to deny her of the possibility of the same sovereignty that her husband or any other male ruler may enjoy.

Ginover's behavior, however strong and admirable, may not crack the shell of the courtly matrix and find a home (either metaphorical or literal) outside of this matrix.

But though one may find scant evidence to show that her actions are coming from a specialized locus or reaching out and achieving a space “outside,” Ginover is nonetheless an individual, separated from others by her station and by her gender.³⁰ Shortly after Erec and Enite’s return to Karidigan, a unique space does open up within the text, one quite thoroughly enmeshed in the paradigm of the court and yet wholly separate from the male-constructed standard which, up until this point in the romance, has acted to encircle the bounds of the known universe.

After an extremely brief exchange in which Erec refuses both reward and hospitality for himself and clothing for Enite from the Duke her uncle, he saddles up and rides with Enite, Iders, and the dwarf back to Arthur and Ginover.³¹ Ginover delivers her pronouncement to Iders and immediately thereafter, Arthur makes his lukewarm suggestions regarding the proper reception of a hero such as Erec. As the knights are gathered around celebrating Erec’s prowess, Ginover catches sight of Enite’s shabby clothes and tells her, “vrou maget wol getân/ dirre kleider sult ir wandel hân.” [1530-31] (“My lovely young lady, you shall have something better than these clothes.”) She then leads Enite into a private dressing room, away from the men who until this point in the story have provided the

³⁰ Debates concerning the merits of poststructuralism are beyond the scope of this paper. However the essentialism that Hartmann demonstrates does indicate the presence of Enite’s ego, or at the very least a consciousness engaged in a balancing act between and among the systemic impositions placed upon her.

³¹ This section of the romance shows Hartmann making a stark departure from Chretien. In the original tale, Iders and the dwarf ride ahead to make restitution to Ginover, while Erec and Enite stay behind with the duke. A maiden at the duke’s court offers Enite her finest dress so that she may meet the queen in the proper style. Erec refuses the offer on her behalf (Enite herself has not yet spoken), telling the maiden that “she will not have a dress until the queen gives her one.” This exchange again indicates Erec’s cleverness and certitude, largely absent in Hartmann’s text, even for all his bravery. Chretien’s duke insists that Enite take something to demonstrate a measure of proper style, and eventually Erec acquiesces at the mention of a gift that may in this case stand in place of a dress: a horse.

In Hartmann’s story, Erec’s refusal of new clothes for Enite is hardly touched upon, sparse detail which points to a lesser degree of the German Erec’s ability to anticipate and act in accordance with court and custom, particularly as either pertains to the feminine domain of queenly inheritance.

narrator's entire occasion for telling. The men's story has been *the* story, until now, when Ginover and Enite break free and enter another room, both literally and metaphorically.

Hartmann writes, “nû vuorte sî diu rîche/ in ir heimliche.” [1532-33] (The mighty Queen led her into her private chamber.”) In Queen Ginover's chamber, only those trusted may come and go.³² And though it stands to reason that various servants would be entering and exiting, laying out garments and so forth, Hartmann takes care to avoid mention of any other people inside the dressing chamber apart from Ginover and Enite, using the passive voice to describe any preparation or service which the queen did not perform herself. “da was ire in bat bereit,” (“where a bath was ready for her”) Hartmann's narrator tells us (all emphases mine).

...dâ was bereite
vil rîchez gewant...
ouch wart vrouwen Ênîten
gegurt umbę ir sîten
ein rieme von Îberne:
den tragent die vrouwen gerne. [1539-40; 1556-58]

There was much splendid clothing on hand there...Lady Enite was girt round her waist with a girdle from Iberne; ladies love to wear this.

In fact, the only service in this scene actually performed by a human agent is the fastening of Enite's clothes by Ginover herself. The reader learns, “si nâte selbe mit ir hant/ in ein hemde daz magedîn.” [1541-42] (“With her own hand she herself sewed the young girl into a shift...”) This gesture, in addition to being tender, is also a clear signal of Ginover's opinion of Enite. While at this point in the story it may not be assumed that Enite and Ginover are of the same station or that Ginover stands in any way in deference to Enite, the personal responsibility that the queen takes for Enite's grooming is a subtle sign that Enite is being

³² My interpretation of the word „heimliche“ comes from Matthias Lexer's *Mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch* (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992) 84.

prepared for a life as a queen by the one person who, within the world of the text, can do so properly.

Hartmann's narrator spends a good deal of time after that describing the exquisiteness of Enite's clothing as well as describing Enite's beauty. The scene within the confines of the dressing room is 79 lines long, and at no time does the narrator mention anyone apart from Enite and Ginover inside the space, which is bracketed clearly on either side by a signal: "nû vuorte sie diu rîche," ("now the mighty Queen led her...") at the beginning and "diu küneginne si nam/ vriundlîchen bî ir hant/ und gienc dâ si den künec vant..." ("The queen took her in friendly fashion by the hand and went to where she found the King sitting...") at the end. [1532; 1611-13] The space where they get dressed is utterly private.

Furthermore, the dressing room is clearly depicted as a women's space, a feminine room. Comparisons with Chretien's original help amplify the gestures in Hartmann's text that frame the dressing room as a gender-specific area. In the French original, first and foremost, it is *Erec's* idea to have the queen dress Enite. Upon arriving at Cardigan he leads Enite to Guinevere and tells her that he is bringing Enite to her "just as she was given to me." He tells Guinevere of his refusal to let Enite's cousin dress her. "I was totally opposed," he explains, "to her being dressed in any other clothes until you had seen her." The queen answers, "You have acted very properly; it is right that she should have one of mine, and I shall immediately give her an elegant and beautiful, brand-new one."³³ Only after this exchange does Guinevere take Enite into the dressing room. Once again, Guinevere's

³³ Carroll 56-57.

actions in her capacity as queen are in the French text little more than afterthoughts to a courtly man's suggestions.³⁴

Once the two women are inside the dressing room there is in Chretien's text nowhere near the sense of privacy and intimacy that Hartmann's retelling conveys. At once a servant—a male servant—brings in a mantle for Enite to wear. Guinevere orders the garment to be adorned with ribbons and watches while a second male, a tailor, attends to the task. Once the green robe is decorated to Guinevere's satisfaction, she sends Enite into yet another chamber with two serving girls who dress Enite in a silver tunic. Only once Enite is properly dressed does she rejoin the queen. Her appearance meets with Guinevere's approval and the queen leads Enite back into the main hall where she is admired by "some of the noblest Barons among those of the Round Table."³⁵

The differences between the two author's descriptions of the dressing rooms are crucial. While Chretien's text offers the reader a small peek into the private world of the queen, and a pleasant diversion from the relentless march of events surrounding Erec, there seems to be little point to Chretien's dressing room scene other than to show Enite's grooming and arrival at court. Hartmann's text, on the other hand, creates a literal and metaphorical space that belongs only to the ruling women of *Erec*. More than anything else it is the omission of the presence of other people (and most significantly, the omission of the male servant) that suggests Hartmann's deliberate shaping of a private textual room inside of which an intimate exchange between ruling women may take place. In Chretien's scene

³⁴ Not only does this exchange subordinate the role of Queen Guinevere and further the idea of Enite as property, but it also adds to the portrayal of Erec as one already noble, and one whose journey is in a sense over before it has begun. Even at the beginning of *Erec et Enide*, his understanding of courtly conduct is impeccable and therefore needs no improvement. Erec's only antagonists in Chretien's romance are external ones. For more on the issue of Erec's development, see Gentry's, "The Two Fold Path."

³⁵ Carroll 58.

Guinevere oversees the entire dressing process; in Hartmann's text she is directly and exclusively involved in Enite's improvement. Her role in the German translation is a richer one, for her behavior as depicted there bespeaks a generous dynamic between an established queen and a nascent one.

Though Ginover could have easily ordered a servant to sew Enite's clothes, she does it herself, a gesture which suggests that she is the only one who can perform the job properly—she is the only one who fully understands Enite's needs. Inside the dressing room, the women are peers and intimates. The leveling of status that takes place as Ginover grooms Enite suggests that inside this feminine space, this private dressing room, the hierarchical roles placed upon them by the code of courtly behavior carry little meaning.

Once Enite is beautifully dressed, Ginover leads her back into the court after they have finished, as though presenting a protégé. Their entrance in the room full of men carries a metatextual quality of return, for when the women come back to court, the action of the story as the audience/reader has experienced it up until now (that is, a series of events with Erec at their center) resumes; it is almost as though the "real" story were taking place outside of the dressing room.

Indeed, when viewed strictly in terms of plot, the dressing-room scene is largely extraneous. Were the dressing room scene excised from the text of *Erec* and the events that take place in it reported to the audience in a sentence or two's worth of summary, the story in whose outcome the reader has been invested until that point would scarcely be affected. The actions within the dressing chamber affect women only; their effect on the court, like Ginover's earlier commands, extend themselves only insofar as they fill in the gaps in a male-based framework: Ginover and Enite are dressed properly—that's all that matters.

The dressing room space is a feminine space, but it is a feminine space of a certain type, as it is accessible to more than one woman. It is a women's space, not an individual space. Though there is a certain level of individualization to Ginover and Enite's identity as ruling women, there nonetheless exists a commonality inside of their small society—they are women of a common type, and therefore framed by a similar modes of behavior, similar conduct, etc. Though separated by both space and by kind, the activities taking place inside the dressing room are germane to courtly ladies and are therefore in a certain sense of women.

Enite and Ginover's actions in the dressing room serve their role as courtly women, as women at court, in a male-constructed space. It is my contention that it is precisely this collective aspect of this instance of privacy that makes it extraneous in the larger, male-dominated world of *Erec* in particular and the Arthurian court in general. The women's dressing rituals are footnotes to the action surrounding Erec, a knight. I believe that this specific superfluosness mirrors the greater superfluosness of women's role within the courtly matrix. The privacy in this scene serves merely to separate the genders, and though the women's rituals are afforded dignity, Enite and Ginover's status as a result of occupying these spaces does not change; their separateness does not afford them the autonomy afforded male subjects.

It is central to my argument that the feminine spaces created in *Erec* be grouped into two different types: those like Ginover's dressing room, which are occupied by courtly women *within their roles* as courtly women in order to perpetrate, support or improve their standing within these confines, and those created by women who manifest themselves as autonomous subjects in *Erec*. Of these women there is only one, Enite. Her individuation in

the dressing room scene is the first step in her journey toward subjecthood, a progression which will play itself out in terms of an increasing degree of autonomy. But first she must be established as an individual, separate from men at court. We will see shortly what happens when Enite speaks her first words as an independent conscience.

Chapter II: Speaking Out

Silence

“Wenn man sagt, daß Reden und Schweigen das Hauptthema des ‚Erec‘ ist, dürfte man heute kaum noch Widerspruch finden,“ writes Joachim Bumke in his comprehensive study of the romance.³⁶ Indeed, the issue of speaking and silences plays a huge role regarding any consideration of Enite’s self-actualization either within or outside the norms of the court.

Soon after they are married, Erec and Enite take to their marriage bed and stay there. Their passion for each other is so great that they are reluctant to leave even to eat or to attend mass. Erec’s neglect of his knightly duties soon sows displeasure among those at court: “si sprâchen alle: ‘wê der stunt/ daz uns mîn vrouwe ie ward kunt!’” [2996-97] (“They all said, ‘A curse on the day when my lady ever became known to us!’”) The gossip soon reaches Enite, who overhears people sullyng her husband’s name and takes the blame entirely upon herself, though it is equally Erec’s mindlessness of the duties of his station that has caused their infamy.³⁷ Enite bemoans her situation one morning in their bedchamber, when she thinks Erec is still asleep:

si sprach: wê, dir, dû vil armer man,
und mir ellendem wîbe,

³⁶ Bumke 113.

³⁷ In Chretien’s original, the disgrace is only spoken of in terms of Erec’s diminished desire to perform his knightly duties. No mention is made of Enite, except as she distracts her husband. Hartmann’s text allows Enite a measure of responsibility in the eyes of the court, though it is of a type consistent with Guinevere’s adultery: her agency is not a breakthrough of subjecthood, but rather an action that places her, simply, “out”; outside of the court’s graces and within a place of shame.

daz ich mînem lîbe
sô manegen vluoch vernemen sol.’
dô vernam Êrec die rede wol. [3029-33]

“Alas for you, poor man,” she said, “and for me, homeless, wretched woman, that I must hear so much abuse directed at me.” Erec heard her words clearly.

But Erec is awake; he overhears her complaint and demands that she explain herself:

Êrec sprach: ‘lât die rede stân
des nemet iu ein zil
daz ich die rede wîzzen wil.
ir müezet mir benamen sagen
waz ich iuch dâ hôrte klagē
daz ir mich sus habet verswigen.’ [3039-44]

Erec said, “Do not evade the issue! You can rest assured that I mean to know what you were talking about. You must certainly tell me what I heard you complain of, that you have kept from me in this way.”

In *Topographies of Gender in Middle High German Romance*, Alexandra Sterling-

Hillenbrand maintains that Enite’s role at this point in the story is an entirely passive one:

“she is the object her husband loves immoderately, an Eve figure... a negative and potentially destructive element of Erec’s consciousness.” However, Enite’s role in the bedchamber is not as empty as Sterling-Hillenbrand claims. When she maintains that “Erec should know better than Enite what consequences would ensue as a result of this neglectful behavior,” she implies on the one hand that if Enite were a fully developed lady of courtly society, she would have had some sort of idea about what might have resulted from the couple’s lounging in bed all day.³⁸ Her mistake in this scene, then, may be viewed as one of a lack of development, much in the same ways that Erec’s imperfections are flaws of poor imitation, as stated earlier.

³⁸ Alexandra Sterling-Hillenbrand, *Topographies of Gender in Middle High German Arthurian Romance* (New York: Garland, 2001) 52.

But on the other hand, Hillenbrand implies that Erec has a better idea of Enite's role as a courtly woman than she herself does, even though Erec's commanding tone ("ir müezet"; "lât die rede stân"—"you must"; "do not evade") indicates his dashed belief in Enite's powers of emulation. The passivity that Sterling-Hillenbrand assigns to Enite is incongruous with several elements of this scene, not the least of which is Erec's own trust in his wife's propriety.

Further, Enite employs the informal form of address here ("dû vil armer man"), rather than the formal "ir." In a discussion of speech acts in *Erec*, Patrick McConeghy writes that "...Enite does not employ politeness strategies" here, because she assumes "that no face-threatening situation exists."³⁹ Put simply, Enite thinks that Erec is asleep and that she is therefore in a "private" space within a private bedchamber. And as this scene shows, being wholly in private allows Enite to bend the rules of the court as she sees fit: she addresses her husband informally (going so far as to pity him), and she interprets for herself the standard of behavior which would allow or disallow her to withhold information from him, and she determines for herself how much of the blame is hers, rather than waiting for it to be assigned to her.

For Enite in this scene, "privacy" means far more than simply being out from under the watchful eye of the court.⁴⁰ Privacy here means that Enite is allowed to think for herself—a tired phrase, to be sure, but in this case highly relevant, for it is her own interpretation of the customs she will inherit that seems to incite Erec's wrath. I contend that

³⁹ Patrick M. McConeghy, "Women's Speech and Silence in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec*," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association* 102:5 (1987) 775.

⁴⁰ The orchard scene in Gottfried's *Tristan* provides a good example of a different type of privacy, one in which merely being outside of court constitutes being "in private." That Tristan and Isolde are in each other's company is not taken into account when such a moment is evaluated as "private." The model of privacy that I propose is nothing less than the existence of an individual and independently-acting conscience.

his outburst arises not only out of his wish to hear the rumors at court, but out of a genuine fear that Enite knows something that he does not. He does not appear to fear this capability in her, but rather that she might not tell him what she has just said. He simultaneously commands her to confess to him and to stand by her words ('lât die rede stân'). He seems aware of just what it is Enite has assumed for herself here, though he is concerned about it only because of the content of her speech, not because of the speech act itself.

But Enite has been shaped, at least to some degree, by the customs of courtly society (her father, after all, is noble and her uncle is a duke) and acquiesces to Erec's request. It is important to note at this point that Enite's choice to tell Erec what the court has been saying is no kind of defeat. I do not intend to suggest that Enite's independent action is a deliberate rebellion, brought about by a super-consciousness of an oppressive society. Rather, it is my intention to show how Enite assumes quite innocently for herself a place that is neither courtly perfection nor its opposite. It is precisely Enite's escape from such a dichotomy that carves the spaces that are the focus of this work. No benefit can be derived, either by Hartmann or by his characters, from the promotion or depiction of the dissolution of courtly society. However, the existence of spaces other than "inside" the court or "outside" the court (the all-inclusiveness of which categorizations shrinks them, ironically, to near nothingness) seems to be strongly in evidence in *Erec*, beginning with Enite's foray into privacy within the privacy of the bedchamber.⁴¹

I contend that this private space is a feminine one, like Ginover's dressing room. But unlike Ginover's dressing room, the room in Enite's mind and heart from which she speaks

⁴¹ Comparison between Enite's worry in this scene and her participation in the *verlegen* illustrates the difference between the emergence of a new space and the mere summoning of the space "outside" the court's good graces: in the latter situation, she is acting directly counter to the court's structure; in the former situation she is attempting to reconcile an undesirable situation within that structure.

when she is “alone” with her sleeping husband is the utterly private space of an individual woman, not of a woman-as-sign, the generic courtly lady, a category to which both Ginover and Enite belong when they are at court among men. Their separateness in Ginover’s dressing room is that of women—all women—at court. They are acting within the court, though within a separate space there.

Enite’s solitary anxiety in her bedroom, however, takes place in a space which is wholly private. She is outside of the courtly matrix not because she has been cast out or is acting deliberately and maliciously in conflict with it, but precisely because she is enmeshed in it and feels unrest within her own heart. Her interpretation of her own role as wife indicates her dissociation from the part as it is written. By her own crafting of her speech act, Enite takes it upon herself to construct the wifely role for herself, effectively engaging the stasis of courtly womanhood and grappling with it until it bends. Because she is a woman, the private consciousness is feminine; because she is an emerging subject, the utterly private consciousness is, as well.

But Erec’s anger snaps Enite back into her “proper” place, and soon she is giving him the information he requests. Interestingly enough, she does not tell him of the rumors until he promises “daz erz âne zorn lieze.” [3049] (“that he promise not to get angry at it.”) By having Enite extract a promise from Erec before she tells him of the rumor, however, Hartmann’s text gives an initial nod to a potential measure of pliability within courtly custom, using the model of marriage as a microcosm of the larger structure. Though Enite is technically acting as her husband commands her to, there is no evidence to support that she is doing so contrary either to her will or to her happiness. This is the first hint that the

heretofore accepted norms of the court and a feminine consciousness may exist and operate together without being in open conflict with each other.

Disobedience

Erec's humiliation at his own sloth propels him out into the world, determined to regain his credibility by aimlessly seeking *aventure* and thereby proving his devotion to his courtly role. He charges ahead with Enite in tow, and though the couple rides off together Enite is once again marginalized to a mere component of Erec's courtly persona. Though her behavior and her beauty can be seen (not least by Enite herself) as a major part of the reason they are leaving, the motivation and impetus for the journey belong entirely to Erec—the *aventure* is his quest to regain his courtly status and would not need to happen were Erec's development as courtly male not at stake.

At the beginning of their journey, Erec puts on his chain mail, then puts his helmet on incorrectly, though he corrects the problem himself in private. This peculiar incident shows Erec in a moment of weakness which seems rather unnecessary.⁴² However it lends extra irony to what comes next, namely Erec's restriction of Enite's speech. He tells her not to talk under any circumstances or he will kill her. This prohibition seems ridiculous in light of the mockery Erec has just made out of one aspect of his own knightly role: his attire. The juxtaposition of the two exercises serves to underscore the ludicrousness of the ban. Enite agrees to it, however, 'wan si vorhte sîne drô.' [3105] ("...for she feared his threats.")

However the couple has not ridden far before Enite sees a band of robbers who are planning to rob Erec and most likely kill him. Once she realizes that Erec is not aware of the

⁴² This is the only instance of privacy that is afforded Erec in Hartmann's text. In Chretien's original, Erec is shown arming himself in the greatest splendor.

danger at hand, she enters an utterly private space again, this time contained within her own psyche. The audience learns of Enite's thoughts through direct speech, though this time her words are spoken inside her head, directed silently at her own conscience.

nû enkan ichz wægste niht ersehen:
waz sol mir armen geschehen?
wan swederz ich mir kiese
daz ich doch verliese
warne ich mînen lieben man
dâ genim ich schaden an
wan sô hân ich den lîp verlorn.
wirt aber diu warnunge verborn,
daz ist mîns gesellen tôt. [3156-64]

I cannot decide what is best. What is to become of me, poor woman? For whichever I choose I still lose, If I warn my dear husband, I shall suffer for it, for this way I shall lose my life. If I forbear to warn him, however, it means my lover's death.

The audience is privy to Enite's deliberation over the possible consequences of her actions; she is caught in an impossible situation: either course of action will require just that: deliberate action (or inaction) on her part. The responsibility for the situation is hers, though mainly because she assumes it for herself. Though her obeying of Erec's command at the beginning of their trip would indicate to many that she is squarely back in the static realm of all courtly ladies, a close look at her deliberations reveal her to be quite out of line with such a passive role: her primary concern is for herself rather than for her husband ('waz sol mir armen geschehen?'—"What will become of me?"). Though she expresses fear that Erec might be hurt, her anguish is due primarily to her own dilemma, not because of the potential danger to Erec.⁴³

⁴³ In a discussion of *Erec et Enide*, E. Jane Burns writes of the speaking/silence issue in the French text as performing a separating function, creating a new model of storytelling separate from the typical chivalric mode employed by the men of the romance. Burns speaks of Enide's speech as "[disrupting] the most fundamental literary *conjointure* on which male adventure stories are built" (E. Jane Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993)179).

Finally she decides:

nû kam der muot in ir gedanc:
,bezzet ist verlorn mîn lîp,
ein als unklagebære wîp,
dan ein alsô vorder man,
wan dâ verlûr maneger an.' [3167-71]

Then resolution came to her thoughts. "Better my life is lost, a woman not worth lamenting over, than such an important man, for many would lose by his death."

Enite arrives at the "right" decision, given her station, but she does it only as a result of her own thoughts. The idea and the courage to speak up come to her on her own terms, having been negotiated in a wholly private space within the space of her own consciousness.

After Enite warns Erec and danger has been averted, Erec launches into a long speech about the untrustworthiness of women. He says:

daz ich von wîben hân vernomen
daz ist wâr, des bin ich komen
vol an ein ende hie:
swaz man in unz her noch ie
alsô tiure verbôt,
dar nâch wart in alsô nôt
daz sis muosten bekorn. [3242-48]

What I have heard about women is all true, I am now completely convinced of it: whatever they have previously been forbidden, no matter how strictly, they feel such an urgent need for it that they just have to try it.

Erec's speech, though directed at Enite and given as a direct response to her actions only minutes earlier, nonetheless are not about her, they are about women in general. McConeghy claims that "by removing the discussion from the personal realm to the general, Erec himself is using a negative-politeness strategy (generalization) which paves the way for pardon."⁴⁴ But this type of highly developed sense of awareness is more in keeping with an Erec such as Chretien portrays, one who knows and instinctively understands all possible consequences

⁴⁴ McConeghy 776.

for every situation, every role, every person. Such a subtle measure does not square with the type of uncertainty Hartmann's audience has seen *Erec's* title character display only a few lines earlier as he put his helmet on incorrectly.

More plausible is the idea that the gap between Erec's (read: the courtly paradigm's) expectations for Enite's motivation and her actual thought process is widening. Erec's speech about women in general acts as an indication that he believes Enite to have acted in a certain way for a certain reason, of which he has full comprehension without even investigating. Acting once again in this scene as the vanguard of all things static and courtly, Erec's worldview allows for no new ideas, no unique possibilities. He believes himself to understand Enite's wifely role better than she does, and tells her so.

But it appears that Enite recognizes her husband's inflexibility. Once Erec is done speaking, she immediately steps back into a courtly lady's role. She returns to the formal form of address as she tells him:

...herre, enhæte ichz niht getân
durch iuwers lîbes gewarheit,
ich enhætez iu nie geseit.
ich tetez durch mîne triuwe. [3259-62]

"My lord," she said, if I hadn't done so for your own safety, I would never have said anything. I did it from loyalty."

Enite's use of the formal address here indicates that she instinctively understands what is expected of her as a courtly woman. And since she finds herself here in hot water, she is wise to use the model to her advantage. Furthermore, she evokes in her excuse the principle of *triuwe*, a brand of devotion upon which much of courtly behavior is based.⁴⁵ Enite

⁴⁵ In his article "Triuwe and Untriuwe in Hartmann's *Erec*", H.B. Willson proposes that the type of *triuwe* that Erec expects from his wife is of a lesser kind than that which Enite demonstrates by disobeying him. Willson admits the presence of *caritas* as a leavening factor in Enite's disobedience and proposes that this *caritas*, having come directly from God, imposes a higher law upon Enite's behavior and therefore absolves her of any

chooses to call the very personal issues of loyalty that she has grappled with in private by a common name in her excuse to Erec. This gesture acts as a signal to Hartmann's audience that Enite understands exactly what is expected of her, and that she is drawing upon those ideals of behavior to serve her own ends.

Not surprisingly, Erec is placated by her expression of *triuwe* and agrees to let her live. He declares, however, that she take must care of their horses for the rest of the journey as punishment for saving his life. Enite agrees to this penalty in a womanly manner (“vil wîplîchen si dô leit,” [3280]—“In most womanly fashion she accepted this unaccustomed task”) and takes care of the horses as best she can.

This punishment is not the first time in Erec that Enite is closely associated with horses. Near the beginning of the tale, as Erec comes to Koralus' house seeking shelter and armor, Enite is ordered by her father to look after Erec's horse. Erec protests, insisting that “ich wæne siz selten habe getân” [345] (“I imagine she has seldom done it before”). His assumption comes not as a result of any clumsiness that Enite has displayed caring for the horses, but again from a presumption that she has never done it; that without knowing her, he knows what tasks she has and has not done. Enite's father insists that Erec leave her to the horses, and shortly after that Hartmann's narrator makes much of Enite's beauty and care as she looks after the horse, telling the audience that “wære daz got hie ûf erde rite/ ich wæne in genuoete dâ mite/ ob er solhen marschalch hæte.” [356-58] (“if God were to ride here on earth I fancy He would have been satisfied if He had such a groom.”) Erec's distrust in Enite's unseen abilities is mitigated by the narrator's assurances that her skill is beyond compare.

guilt regarding the flouting of her husband's commands. See H.B. Willson, “Triuwe and Untriuwe in Hartmann's *Erec*.” *German Quarterly* 43:1 (1970): 5-23.

This incident occurs within minutes of Erec meeting Enite; her association with the horses is directly connected to his misapprehension of her qualities, her capabilities, her role as a household female.⁴⁶ Enite's disobedience in the forest is the second time she is shown assuming an "unwomanly role," that of groom. Though Erec intends for this role to humiliate her, Hartmann's narrator reports only that she accepted his command and looked after the horses without complaint. No mention is made of any great embarrassment or chagrin; she simply attends to the work.

It is my assertion that the horses in *Erec*, particularly those associated with Enite, act as textual signifiers for a feminine space created by Enite as she exercises her individuality. Though Enite's initial association with horses at her father's house does not happen as a result of any outlandish behavior, it does stand in direct relationship to her assuming a role outside of the prescribed codes of behavior for women. Though Enite does not grapple with fixed matrices of behavior at her father's house the same way that she does later on in the tale, this scene nonetheless lays the groundwork for a direct correspondence between horses and Enite's unconventional behavior. In the forest at the beginning of the couple's *aventure*, the reader again sees Enite behaving in an unconventional way, though this time it is due to her exercise of her own conscience, her own mind, or similar subjective impetus. Enite's role as groom acts as a signpost, alerting the reader to a progressive correlation between her unconventional role at her father's house and her unconventional role as Erec's wife. Much as the space of femininity as it concerns Enite has developed from Ginover's dressing room (space for more than one woman) to Enite's own mind (one woman's space), so does her

⁴⁶ For further discussion on Enite's relationship with horses, see Ingrid Bennewitz's "Die Pferde der Enite." *Literarische Leben: Rollentwürfe in der Literatur der Hoch und Spätmittelalters; Festschrift für Volker Mertens zum 65. Geburtstag*. Matthias Meyer, et. al, eds. (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 2002) 1-17.

behavior develop, each act more sophisticated in its negotiation of expectations of womanhood than the last.

Erec is indeed a story of development. And just as Hartmann's audience watches Erec earn his way back to honor in the eyes of the court, so too may it observe Enite's development as an individual. While Erec's entire quest is to regain courtly status, Enite never really lost it. She is therefore able to travel much further, much deeper than Erec can. Her character will undergo one more trial before it reaches its zenith inside a heretofore unfathomable space, as signified by the ekphrasis that describes the world's most fantastic horse. The opening of this ekphrastic space is a textual manifestation of the new world, entirely foreign, over which Enite has earned command.

Chapter III--Ekphrasis

The Problem of Ekphrasis

In the introduction to his 1996 anthology *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts*, Peter Wagner sketches a brief history of the consideration of the ekphrastic phenomenon in an attempt to frame current investigations in terms of historical progress. He states at the onset his frustration with both the static nature of French poststructuralism and with poststructuralism's detractors, who counter the compartmentalization of genre with a belief in a possibility of absolute correspondence between genres. Wagner agrees with Stephen Bann's claim that "a good proportion of what is experienced in looking at a work of art simply cannot be expressed in visual terms."⁴⁷ The question for modern ekphrastic theorists, then is, what lies in the middle? What can ekphrasis express? What sort of interlocution does it accomplish? What mode of seeing does it access?

"In the fifth century A.D.," Wagner writes, "there was a tendency to limit the rhetorical term to (poetic or literary) descriptions of works of art."⁴⁸ In some circles, this narrow definition still endures, although literary criticism and art history have stretched the term in various ways. A central problem for scholarly consideration of ekphrasis arose in the 18th century with the publication *Laokoon*, in which G.E. Lessing maintained that each

⁴⁷ Peter Wagner, *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality* (Berlin; New York: W. De Gruyter, 1996) 7.

⁴⁸ Wagner 12.

medium should only concern itself with depictions of itself: that poets could only write narrative effectively and that sculptors could only sculpt. To attempt to describe one art form within the constraints of another was a futile endeavor.

In many ways consideration of ekphrasis still suffers from Lessing's sweeping indictments. Indeed, the prescriptive criticism found in *Laokoon* addresses (and unfortunately, compartmentalizes) what Wagner terms the "central paradox of the ekphrastic enterprise...the assumption that there is an essential difference between image and text."⁴⁹ Wagner addresses this problem in a general way by framing the ekphrastic phenomenon with the term "intermediality," and briefly discussing the idea that images can be "read" like texts (and presumably vice versa). He maintains that texts, like images, are at their heart, rhetorical sign systems, simultaneously both verbal and iconic, used to express meaning and are therefore different only to an aesthetically or situationally determined degree. Wagner's intermediality may then loosely be understood as the inter-genre counterpart to intertextuality: the phenomenon of a work of art bridging media to achieve a third space; a hybrid effect of "seeing" or "reading."

W.J.T. Mitchell gives ekphrasis similar consideration in his essay, "Ekphrasis as Other," from his 1994 work, *Picture Theory*. He speaks of the ekphrastic reception/problem in terms of three attitudes germane to beholders and scholars: Ekphrastic indifference, ekphrastic hope and ekphrastic fear. Ekphrastic indifference is characterized by the same blunt and dismissive certainty that Lessing expressed, that words may only cite, never "sight," in the same way that pictures do. Ekphrastic hope is achieved, Mitchell claims, when "the impossibility of ekphrasis is overcome...when we discover a 'sense' in which language can do what so many writers have wanted it to do: 'to make us see'." Ekphrastic

⁴⁹ Wagner 13.

fear, then, comes into play when “the difference between the verbal and visual mediation might collapse and the figurative, imaginary desire of ekphrasis might be realized literally and actually.”⁵⁰

Mitchell describes the deployment and experience of ekphrasis as an “interplay of these three ‘moments’ of ekphrastic fascination...” he asks:

What is it in ekphrasis that makes it an object of utopian speculation, anxious aversion, and studied indifference? The answer lies in the network of ideological associations embedded in the semiotic, sensory, and metaphysical oppositions that ekphrasis is supposed to overcome. The central goal of ekphrastic hope might be called “the overcoming of otherness.”⁵¹

It is precisely this idea of otherness as indirectly addressed by way of ekphrasis in Hartmann’s *Erec* that I wish to focus on. But while the bulk of Mitchell’s argument focuses on the *object* of the ekphrasis, the art or thing being described, I wish instead focus on the simultaneity of otherness and integration that the ekphrasis achieves by serving as a representation of Enite’s individuality. The horse’s separate and fantastical nature works in several ways in *Erec*. First off, the description acts as a metatextual experience of the feminine space that Enite achieves; the audience’s experience of the horse description approximates the experience of being inside a separate metaphorical space.

Second, the horse itself acts as a marker, a sign of the correspondence between Enite’s self-actualizing actions and the mention of horses in conjunction with such behavior throughout the text. Given the size, scale and beauty of the horse, however, a reader may take the ekphrasis as the text’s implicit approval of her mode of being. The horse is

⁵⁰ W.J. Thomas Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 152-154.

⁵¹ Mitchell 156.

presented by queens as a gift to a queen. It is a wonderful, magical object, and Hartmann's narrator takes pains to show it as such.

Thirdly, the horse and its ekphrastic moment perform an integrative function between Erec and Enite. Just as Enite's trafficking with horses in earlier parts of the text help to draw her, for better or for worse, closer to her husband, so too does the huge horse description bring the separate feminine space Enite achieves in Limors fully into the realm of the actual, cause-and-effect narrative world heretofore dominated by Erec's development.

And fourth, the actual horse coupled with its description serve to subvert the problem of otherness as it is commonly understood. By opening up a separate space within the text of Erec, the description shows an audience an other place, one to which Enite has earned the rights. The other space is her space, wholly different from the expectations of the court. But by having the object of the ekphrasis be Enite's familiar rather than Enite herself, Hartmann's text avoids the problem of "otherness." Otherness, commonly, negatively understood as an in group/out group phenomenon, takes on a different meaning in *Erec*.⁵² The horse's space is Enite's space, and though she holds command over it she does not live inside of it. She *is* not "othered" by the ekphrasis, rather through her negotiations between old spaces and into new space, she claims a new type of otherness (or difference) for herself. The self-assertiveness of this claim thus divests the idea of otherness of its pejorative connotations, at least in *Erec*. In Hartmann's romance, women are other creatures, separate and different from men, occupying separate rooms. They are not, however, lesser people than men, as is often assumed when a quality of otherness is discussed (particularly as regards gender).

⁵² The otherness in *Erec* may be better denoted as a phenomenon of "difference" or even "alternativeness." The use of the term "other" as a pejorative seems better suited to descriptions of acts such as Guinevere's adultery or Enite and Erec's *verlegen*.

Bumke writes that “Durch ihre Stimme gewinnt Enite ihre Identität.”⁵³ When viewed on a superficial level, *Erec* bears this idea out. After all, it is Enite’s voice that constantly gets her into trouble. Her use of her voice to warn Erec in the forest lays the groundwork for the couple’s negotiations regarding her *triuwe*, her disobedience and her overall place as a wife. In a certain way, Enite’s speech does help her carve out a specialized place. Had the confines of the role of queen (or courtly lady) remained utterly inflexible, she never would have spoken out to warn her husband, or she would have spoken out and subsequently been killed. Either way, the strict application of the courtly rules for women would have resulted in the death of at least one of the main characters in *Erec*. For many readers, Enite’s voice is not only the means but an end. Renegotiating the rules of wifeliness using her voice, Enite gains a voice.⁵⁴

The idea of a silent party gaining a voice is an integral part of W.J.T. Mitchell’s discussion of ekphrasis. In the essay, “Ekphrasis as Other,” from his 1994 work *Picture Theory*, he writes that the narrowest definition of ekphrasis is “giving voice to a mute art object” implying that the arts muteness comes from its inability to speak on the terms proscribed by the “original” medium.⁵⁵ A painting within a poem, then, is silent; it cannot speak poetically. More correctly, it cannot speak until it becomes the object of ekphrastic activity. Within the technical boundaries of the art of poetry, then, a painting assumes a foreign character; it is an “other,” an outside element. Mitchell writes:

The ‘otherness’ of a visual representation from the standpoint of textuality may be anything...in which the ‘self’ is understood to be an active, speaking,

⁵³ Bumke 119.

⁵⁴ For deeper investigations into the power of speech and sight as they concern Erec and Enite’s relationship, see Wandhoff’s “Gefährliche Blicke und rettende Stimmen.”

⁵⁵ Mitchell 155.

seeing subject, while the 'other' is projected as a passive, seen, and (usually) silent object...this kind of wisdom is transferable from children to women to colonized subjects to works of art...Racial otherness...is open to precisely this sort of visual/verbal coding. The assumption is that 'blackness' is a transparently readable sign of identity...Whiteness, by contrast, is invisible, unmarked...[and] equated with a normative subjectivity and humanity from which 'race' is a visible deviation."⁵⁶

When extended, this concept of otherness may apply to any set of standards against which all are measured. Any thing, appearance or behavior which does not spring directly from that standard is viewed as foreign or "other." Put simply, a painting is an imperfect poem.

The medieval court, having been created by men as a matrix into which all people must fit regardless of gender, by default places women into inorganic situations. In the same way that the standards of painting cannot be applied to poetry, the standards of a male-created court cannot be said to offer Enite a choice in the same way that a less structured or co-constructed society would be able to. Her initial silence and her inner barometer regarding the uses of her voice have until now been analyzed only in terms of the rules of the male-dominated court. Scholars such as Bumke and Sterling-Hillenbrand analyze Enite's unconventionality exclusively in terms of the courtly standards in place during Hartmann's life, and therefore gauge Enite's humanity on a scale that only measures the degree of perfection to which she understands her role as courtly woman and potential queen.

Seen in this light, the initial strides Enite makes when crying out for Erec's safety are unsatisfactory, for she forges this initial "identity" only through a choice between two behaviors permitted her by the confines of the court: she is making a choice between or among male-generated options, much in the same way that Ginover's commands are not really commands at all, but rather reaffirmations of already fixed male standards. But it is Enite's negotiation within her own mind and her own conscience that is most important at the

⁵⁶ Mitchell 157.

time of Enite's disobedience, not her speech act. It is her arrival at a decision in line with the dictates of her own conscience that results in a mental space that lies outside of any prior expectations or paradigms

Mitchell's comparison of textualities and populations does square with a surface comparison between the characters of Erec and Enite. If one views Erec's behavior as representative of the court and the standards against which Enite's behavior is judged, then Enite indeed is a silent partner, an imperfectly formed other, her actions always measured along the scale of the court.

Mitchell goes on in his article to address the issue that lies at the heart of the self/other dichotomy: difference. He writes:

Our confusion with ekphrasis stems, then, from a confusion between differences of medium and differences in meaning...in ekphrasis, the "message" or (more precisely) the object of reference is a visual representation.; and therefore, (we suppose) the medium of language must approximate this condition. We think...that the visual arts are inherently spatial, static, corporeal and shapely...We suppose...that arguments, addresses, ideas, and narratives are in some sense proper to verbal communication...But neither of these "gifts" is really the exclusive property of their donors: paintings can tell stories...words can describe or embody static, spatial states of affairs, and achieve all of the effects of ekphrasis without any deformation of their natural vocation (whatever that may be).⁵⁷

Mitchell goes on to assert that in terms of semantics, there is "no essential difference" between texts and images, citing the existence of pictographic writing systems as evidence of the image's power to narrate. He believes that the difference between texts and images is only a matter of institutional traditions and available materials. "The mystery is why we have this urge to treat the medium as if it were the message, why we make the obvious,

⁵⁷ Mitchell 159-160.

practical differences...into metaphysical oppositions...which then have to be overcome with utopian fantasies like ekphrasis.”⁵⁸

The gendered world portrayed in *Erec* both acknowledges and departs from the problem of sexism inherent in Mitchell’s acute analysis of self and other. I believe that *Erec* does point to a fundamental difference between men and women, and fundamental differences between the dominions and spaces that each gender occupies. At court, Enite and Ginover are shown in a separate room, one belonging only to women. Men have no business in Ginover’s dressing room, not because they are lesser in some way or poorer tailors than Ginover, but only because they have their own space: the great hall at Karidigan where the round table sits. The women of Erec control and rule their own spaces, just as the men control the space of the larger court.⁵⁹

In this way, Hartmann’s adaptation of Chretien’s romance draws upon a different model of Arthurian rulership, one that is dually-gendered and based upon the binary regal strength of Arthur and his sister, Famurgan. Though Arthur is of course a patriarchal figure and dominant in the ordered world of the mundane, Famurgan presides over a wholly different dominion, an otherworldly one in which she commands the animal and the spirit kingdoms and possesses knowledge of healing and medicine. In this binary model each ruler, each gender is separate; there is no competition between the two for control over the same areas of life; thus, the question of equality is irrelevant. Whether rulership over the worlds of men is somehow “equal” to rulership over the world of the spirits is a fatuous one:

⁵⁸ Mitchell 161.

⁵⁹ The larger court is the default setting or paradigm, particularly when viewed in a larger context of medieval literature. But in *Erec*, though the default paradigm, traditional mode of storytelling and central character still have the most number of lines or the greatest amount of time on stage, as it were, I nonetheless maintain that Hartmann’s text points to a model of equality, though one achieved through a negotiation of distinctiveness.

they are different dominions. Hartmann's text supports this idea of the co-presence of female and male sovereignty and by extension, a fundamental difference between the worlds (either material or psychological) of men and women.

But Enite develops even further than may be expected by such textual allowances, already par for the course at the beginning of Hartmann's tale. For not only does she move within the types of spaces common to womankind allowable within the courtly matrix (eg. Ginover's dressing room), she carves out a psychological space as an individual. While this is not explicitly disallowed of women in the world of *Erec*, such a pioneering step would be so unconventional as to be inconceivable. Enite's first moves toward the realization of individuality are made when she negotiates her course of action and cries out to Erec to warn him of the approaching band of robbers. However, she soon steps, however willingly, back into a lady's traditional role: addressing Erec as *ir* and evoking ideas of courtly behavior such as *triuwe* that will indicate to her husband her desire to conform to his expectations and to the expectations of society.

Her true actualization comes when she finds herself alone in the sinister forest of Limors. It is her nimble movement around and ultimate perversion of the options presented her that allows for the creation of her own identity as an unabashed occupant of a new space. It is after this self-imposed queering, this speech "from the heart," as McConeghy puts it, that Enite is addressed for the first time as Queen. Gentry believes that in order for Enite to become worthy of her title, she "must come to specific insights....Enite is educated to evidence the necessary virtues of loyalty and steadfastness."⁶⁰ This an oversimplification, I believe; I contend that what happens in Limors is rather Enite's achievement of subjectivity. By refusing to adhere entirely to the norms of either obedience or mourning, she attains a

⁶⁰ Gentry 101.

tenuous space that places her wholly within the tradition of the Arthurian women of independent spirit between whom and Enite Hartmann's text establishes a direct link.⁶¹

⁶¹ This is not to imply that Ginover is not an Arthurian woman, but rather that she is a different type of woman than, for example, Famurgan, with whom Enite is much more closely aligned, as I will show.

Chapter IV--Culmination

In the Forest

Enite's "solitary" trip through Limors comes at a point in the romance at which the development and understanding of Enite's individuality reaches its height, in that it provides her with a final test of both *triuwe* and selfhood. Following a battle to free a knight from the clutches of a giant and return the knight to his lover, Erec faints from fatigue and lies on the ground as though dead. Enite at once begins to lament what she presumes to be his death.

Hartmann's narrator tells us:

dar nâch sluoc si sich zen brusten
und kustę in aber unde schrê
ir ander wort was 'wê ouwê.'
daz hâr si vastę ûz brach,
an ir lîbe si sich rach
nâch wîplîchem site,
wan hie rehent si sich mite. [5757-63]

Then she struck herself on the breast and kissed him again and cried our. Every second word was "Woe, alas!" She fiercely tore at her hair, taking out her sorrow on her own body as is a woman's custom—for this is the way they avenge themselves.

The narrator's choice of detail when describing the first phase of Enite's lament is standard: tearing the hair, beating the breast—the behaviors in which she engages are typical of mourning women everywhere from medieval literature to the Bible. He does not even bother to record what she actually says to any meaningful degree of specificity ("ir ander wort was "wê ouwê"—"every second word was "Woe, alas!"), a gloss-over that suggests that Enite's

lament at this point is typical of a woman of her station. Her behavior and speech are within the confines of the role of a courtly lady.⁶²

But soon Enite steps outside of this role, as has become her habit. She begins to rail at God himself, asking how he could kill such a fine and gracious knight, and reminds him of the holy idea that husbands and wives should remain together eternally. Thoroughly frustrated and wild with grief, Enite calls to the animals of the forest to come and devour her:

wâ nû hungerigiu tier,
beide wolf unde ber,
lewę iuwer einz kom her
und ezze uns beide [5833-36]

Where are you now, hungry beasts, wolf and bear and lion, let but one of you come this way and devour us both...

This summons of the animals recalls the capabilities of another Arthurian woman mentioned in *Erec*: Famurgan, sister to King Arthur and ancestress to a line of Arthurian women who fully inhabit their separateness.

Hartmann's audience is introduced to Famurgan earlier in the romance. She is described in connection with a magic poultice that Ginover applies to Erec's wounds after his battle with the dishonest count who tried to woo Enite away from Erec. As Ginover applies the medicine to Erec's injuries, Hartmann's narrator tells us that the poultice was left behind by Famurgan when she died.

waz starker listę an ir verdarp
unde vremder sinne!
si was ein gotinne...
si kundę et zoubers die kraft." [5159-61; 5189]

⁶² For a thorough discussion of the lament in courtly literature see Urban Küster's "Klagefiguren: Vom höfischen Umgang mit der Trauer." *An den Grenzen höfischer Kultur: Anfechtungen der Lebensordnung in der deutschen Erzähldichtung des hohen Mittelalters*. München: Wilhelm fink Verlag, 1991.

What powerful arts and strange knowledge died with her! She was a goddess... She had magical powers.

The narrator goes on to relate in an awed tone, the legend of Famurgan's powers: she was a goddess; she trafficked with demons; she could shape-shift and transform others into animals.

sie lebete vaste wider gote,
wan ez wartē ir gebote
daz gevügel zuo dem wilde
an walde und an gevilde,
und daz mich daz meiste
dunket, die übelen geiste,
die dâ tiuvel sint genant
die wâren alle under ir hant. [5190-97]

She lived in virtual opposition to God, for fowl and game in forest and field obeyed her command, and most impressive of all—the evil spirits, called demons, were all in her power.

The narrator's tone as he discusses Famurgan's capabilities is not only non-condemnatory, it is very nearly reverent. This rather positive tone may seem peculiar if viewed only in light of the strict religious dicta of the time, namely the omnipresence of the Catholic Church and the undesirability of any conjuring practices that might run counter to the church's teachings (trafficking with devils, for example). But the narrator's indifference to Famurgan's so-called heresy is not unusual, given the status of the ever-changing Arthurian legends. At the time of Hartmann's translation of Chretien, Famurgan (Morgan le Fay) was still a positive figure in the legend of Arthur.⁶³ Her only mention in written texts before *Erec* is as the queen of a band of nine fairies who live on the island of Avalon, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's vulgate cycle and in *Vita Merlini*.⁶⁴ Morgan is merely a fairy queen in these, the only

⁶³ Mike Dixon-Kennedy, *Arthurian Myth and Legend: An A-Z of People and Places* (London: Blandford, 1995) 213-214.

⁶⁴ Chretien also makes brief mention of her as Arthur's sister.

references to her before the time of *Erec*; her character in the stories circulating around 1180 bore little resemblance to the traitorous witch found in Malory's and other authors' interpretations of the legends.

It is therefore not surprising, that Hartmann's narrator would speak of her and her powers with such generosity and frankness. But more important than what is, to a modern reader, a conspicuous lack of calumny regarding Famurgan, is the separateness of the dominion in which she moves as it is described in *Erec*. To be sure, Hartmann's Famurgan moves easily through the world of the supernatural. The domain over which she presides is connected to the structured propriety of the Arthurian court only so far as to lend it legitimacy in the "other" world. For the most part, the fairy and animal realm, the world of the spirit, is wholly separate from the courtly world as structured by men; moreover, it is presided over by a woman.

I believe that the narrator's frankness in the description of Famurgan's capabilities is not only a reflection of the contemporary view of the woman herself (expressed in a lack of any judgment, either good or bad), but more an unblinking acknowledgment of the existence and legitimacy of the realm inside of which she works and conjures, and over which she presides. This other place, though it contains spirits that are termed devils, does exist, as surely as the regular world of the court.⁶⁵ Near the end of his digression the narrator tells the audience plainly:

von diu  nw re er niht w ser man
swer im wolde dar an
nehmen gr z laster,
ob ouch si ein phlaster
v r in gepr even kunde. [5232-36]

⁶⁵ The use of the passive voice to describe these *geiste* works here to suggest a common nomenclature, which may in turn be understood in light of the narrator's praise as a common misperception of the nature of such spirits.

Hence anyone who would be greatly offended if she could concoct a plaster for him, would not be a sensible man.

His admonition suggests to the reader that there are indeed those (men) who would scoff at the idea of a magical poultice, and by extension, the existence of special powers as possessed by this woman. The narrator all but gives his endorsement of the viability and rightness of Famurgan's powers.

Famurgan's magical legacy belongs to the past, but *Erec* makes deliberate moves to assert the legacy's vitality through the demonstration of a clear lineage from Famurgan to the other royal women in the story. The poultice is the physical manifestation of this lineage, passed down from Famurgan to Ginover and to King Guvreiz' sisters, Genteflur and Filledamur. The power to heal belongs exclusively to women in this story, only one more fact of the world of Erec that suggests a fundamental, positive separateness of the dominions of men and of women. Enite, too, will share in this inheritance, but not until after her final test.

Overheard, Undermined

Enite's suicidally-driven cry to the carnivorous beasts around her recalls Famurgan's command over the animal world. Unfortunately, the animals in Limors do not do Enite's bidding, do not come to eat her, and leave her standing there in the dark. She turns her verbal rage upon Death himself, and soon resolves to take her own life. But just as she is preparing to stab herself, Count Oringles, ruler of the area, hears her cries, rides up to her and asks her what the matter is. Enite tells him that she has lost both husband and lover in Erec. After she gives Oringles an account of Erec's supposed demise, the Count rides over to his companions

and confers with them about a possible union between him and Enite. Though he is assessing Enite's fitness as the potential queen of his county, he evaluates her as he might a piece of property or a potential acquisition: "si ist mir genuoc wol geborn," he says. [6202] ("She is high-born enough for me.") While this sort of scrutiny may not have been entirely unusual in the courtly world outside of *Erec*, comparisons between Oringles' treatment of Enite and the treatment of women up to this point in Hartmann's text reveal Oringles' attitude as condescending.

Once he has his companions' approval to go ahead with the union, he approaches Enite again and begins his unctuous appeal:

ich muoz iu des von schulden jehen
daz ir wîplîchen tuot
und dunket mich von herzen guot
daz ir klaget iuwer man,
wan dâ schînet iuwer triuwe an.
doch habet irs nû genuoc getân,
was ez enmac iuch vervân.
... dar an gedenket, schœnez wîp.
und möhtet ir im daz leben
mit weinene wider geben,
sô hulfen wir iu alle klagen
und iuwer swære gelîche tragen:
des enmac doch leider niht geschehen. [6223-29; 6235-40]

I must admit with some justification that you are acting in a woman's way, and it seems to me heartily praiseworthy that you lament for your husband, for it clearly shows your loyalty. But you have done enough of it now, for it cannot do you any good... Think on this, lovely woman. And if you could give him back his life with weeping, then we would all help you lament and share your burden among us equally. But alas, this cannot be.

Within this short speech, Oringles attempts to serve two contradictory aims at the same time; the simultaneity of his praise of Enite's loyalty to her husband and his minimization of the effectiveness of her lament is a perfect example of the type of paradox inherent in courtly culture against which Hartmann's text seems to strive.

On the one hand, Oringles professes respect for Enite by telling her that it does his heart good to see such wifely loyalty. But his praise only carries weight within the parameters of a traditional woman's role at court. He is not praising Enite's loyalty to Erec, but rather praising the propriety she is showing as a wife, any wife, toward her husband and lord. Oringles' use of standard term *triuwe* to describe what Enite is feeling and expressing recalls the earlier use of the term by Enite herself: following her disobedience and the breaking of her silence, she frames her very individualized actions inside a generalized term so that they may be more comprehensible to Erec, who cannot know and does not understand the intricacies of the inner debate through which Enite has put herself before speaking out. In Limors, as in the earlier scene, the term *triuwe* is trotted out as a sign, a marker for a certain type of behavioral category into which any expression of loyalty must either fall in or outside of. But Oringles' praise of Enite and use of the word *triuwe* shows none of the sort of subtextual cleverness that Enite's use of it demonstrated after her disobedience. Instead the mention of both the word and the concept work only to demonstrate the narrowness of his perspective: Oringles' worldview is confined to static courtly paradigms. Even his tone when he tells Enite, "wan dâ schînet iuwer triuwe an" ("it clearly shows your loyalty"), seems a perverse echo of Erec's earlier assumption that he knows a courtly woman's role better than Enite does. It would have been impossible that as a proper lady, Enite would not have known that a wholehearted lament was a good expression of her *triuwe*. Oringles' assumption is much like that of Erec's earlier one, but again without the complexity of both character and spousal relationship that may have underlay Erec's presumption.

Oringles' then goes on to tell Enite that while her role as a lamenting woman is most seemly, it does no one any good. When he reminds her of the obvious fact that lamenting

cannot raise the dead, he reminds her that one of the few modes of court-approved expression or action belonging exclusively to women, is charming but useless. And herein lies the larger paradox which Oringles' actions illustrate: a woman's role at court is pleasing and must be fulfilled, but only as it has been laid out for her within the larger structure created by men. Much like the women's dress and decorum at court, the lament is an aspect of courtly womanhood that, when fulfilled to its utmost provides little more than the finishing touches on a picture of the world as fashioned by men. Oringles praises Enite for being good within her assigned role, but then follows up his praise with a reminder that her role means nothing outside of itself.

After he has relegated Enite to her "proper" place, Oringles asks her to marry him, telling her that a marriage with him will not only make her queen over all of his land, but would be far preferable to her experiences so far as the wife of one who rides about aimlessly on *aventiure*. Once again this offer acts as Oringles' salesmanship of static courtly womanhood. Enite has had a dynamic and perplexing time of things as Erec's wife; the trials she has faced, as I have shown in earlier parts of this work, have provided her with opportunities for personal growth and development as both wife and woman. Oringles' misguided assumptions about her experiences up to this point again show the one-dimensionality of his worldview: he believes that queenship as he offers it is and must necessarily be in all cases preferable to being someone's companion on *aventiure*.

Enite's Balancing Act

Following the proposal, Enite pauses, for the moment speechless. And then, “si sprach sô si daz herze twanc.” [6286] (“[She spoke] when her heart compelled her”) She tells him that she cannot marry him, unless such a thing takes place fully against her will (“ez geschæhe sunder mînen danc” [6297]; “...it [would] come about against my will”) The importance of this moment cannot be overemphasized. Enite first acts consciously out of step with the demands of society’s representative through *outward* action by speaking frankly and directly to him about her own *danc*. This direct refusal shows a definite progression from earlier parts of the text when Enite’s actions as an individual conscience arose mainly out of choices she was forced to make. In the case of her earlier deviance, her disobedience was not disobedience, but rather a matter of choosing between differing degrees of serving Erec in her prescribed role as his wife: she opted to serve him by saving his life rather than serve him by obeying his order of silence. But her disregard for count Oringles’ wishes is of a different kind, for not only does she believe she is entirely alone, she is at this time aware of herself as an individual being, and makes this self-knowledge known through an open reference to her *danc*. She is disobeying the Count’s wishes because she *feels triuwe* toward her dead husband; it is an actual desire to be loyal that motivates her, not a wish to manifest behavior in the manner of courtly duty, as Oringles seems to believe must be the primary motivating factor for all women.

It is not surprising that directly after Enite’s refusal Oringles turns to his companions and begins speaking of women in general:

diu wîp suln reden alsô.
dâ von man irz wîzen ensol:
si bekêret sich wol
von ir unmuote. [6303-06]

Women will talk like that. Hence one should not criticize them for it. She will surely change her mind.

Once again, this scene perversely recalls the type of gender generalizations that Erec makes after Enite's disobedience. But while Erec seems in the earlier scene merely to be wrapped up in his developing worldview, Oringles' views appear to be fixed; the audience meets him as a fully formed character. Furthermore, there is nothing in this scene to suggest that Oringles bears any sort of feeling toward Enite that resembles the genuine affection that Erec has for her, and that might mitigate the unpleasantness of his generalizations. Though Arthur's evil opposite, Oringles is a flat character in the same way that the benevolent king is. He simply disregards Enite's rather bold self-expression and confidently tells his cronies, "She'll change her mind; just wait."

But Enite does not change her mind, though she does allow Oringles' men to lead her husband's unconscious body onto a wagon and follow the lot of them to court. Hartmann's narrator tells us that Oringles wished to marry Enite at once:

...er sô lange stunde
erbeiten niene kunde
unz ir man würde begraben,
si  nw rde der naht erhaben
ze vrouwen s nem lande.
swiez doch d hte schande
alle s ne dienstman...
...s  gr z ist der minne maht:
er wolde et briuten der naht. [6326-32; 6340-41]

...he could not wait long enough for her husband to be buried, but she must be made mistress of his land that very night. Although all his vassals deemed it a disgrace...Such is love's power. He wanted to consummate the marriage that night.

It is at this point that the text at last offers clear judgment of Oringles' actions: though all his vassals found it disgraceful to marry a mourning woman before her husband's body was even

buried, he wanted to do it anyway. The omniscient point of view allows the audience to see a larger courtly opinion at work, and for the first time allow that the actions of a lord over one court may not be in line with the generally beneficent image of courtly life in general.

Though this is the first divergence between a larger set of courtly ideals and the tyranny of one man over his court, his space, it is an important distinction, one that will play the crucial role in Enite's development in the scenes to come.

The narrator's unfavorable judgment is also apparent in the sarcastic aside, "...sô grôz ist der minne maht" ("Such is Love's power"). Hartmann's narrator draws attention to the contradiction between one courtly standard and another. Though all of Oringles' vassals thought it grossly inappropriate for him to attempt a marriage with a woman in mourning, he goes ahead with the preparations anyway. This might seem to be the height of uncourtliness were it not for the omnipotence of *minne*, having its way with the conscience of one man. The power of love might be a convincing excuse for such behavior, but the text has already shown Oringles to be thoughtless and self-serving. The narrator's aside here is extremely sarcastic, and only serves to show the text's opinion concerning what sort of man Oringles really is.

A wedding feast is prepared. Enite remains with Erec's body, ignoring a series of summons to come and dine. After a series of servants have been unable to fetch her to the table, Oringles himself at last goes to her, entering a separate chamber in which Enite is alone with Erec's "corpse," mourning him. This private chamber may be viewed as a private space on the order of Erec and Enite's bedchamber as depicted earlier in the text. In this chamber, Enite tells Oringles that for her to feast now would be tantamount to her forgetting her dead husband, a disrespect of utterly unwomanly proportions ("daz wære ein unwîplich maz")

[6386]) (“..it would be an unwomanly repast.”) Once again the audience becomes aware of Enite’s loyalty to the dignity of her sex, as well as to her husband and lord.

Oringles launches into an exhaustive, wheedling speech in which he attempts to prove to Enite that her lot as queen of Limors would definitely be better than her lot as Erec’s widow. He again expresses indirectly a disbelief in individuality, both by minimizing Enite’s feelings (“iuwer schade ̅nist niht s̅ gr̅z”—“Your loss is not so great.”) and by speaking of himself as readily interchangeable with Erec (“ich bin vil wol s̅n ̅bergen̅z/ oder doch wol als vr̅m als er”—“I am surely superior to him, or at least just as good as he.”). [6402; 6403-04] Enite’s responses to him are flat but consistent. When she does have a chance to reply she merely repeats what she has said before, namely that their marriage must not, cannot take place and that she remains loyal to Erec. The steady quality of Enite’s responses lends credence to the idea that Hartmann’s text does not attempt to portray her as a defiant, paradigm-smashing female, but simply a woman with a belief in her own conscience.

Oringles expresses his confusion at her refusal, saying, “ich engesach nie wunder s̅ gr̅z/ daz ir niht enkunnet gedagen...” [6457-58] (“I never saw such strange behavior, that you cannot keep silent...”). Though Oringles is referring here to her lament, the reader cannot help drawing the connection between his words here and the power of Enite’s speech in previous sections of the romance. Slowly and steadily, he lays out the “facts” of the situation, telling her that she will be rich, honored, queen over a large county—she will have everything, he says, whereas before this night she had nothing. The ironic subtext here is unmistakable. Up to this point the audience has watched Enite’s growth through a series of occupations of as both literal and figurative spaces. She has gone from a somewhat passive occupant of a court-approved feminine area (Ginover’s dressing room) to an occupant of a

private space as she evaluates her role in a situation (her bedchamber with Erec) to an inhabitant of her own conscience as she wrestles for a solution to a seemingly impossible situation (in the forest with the bandits) to an inwardly-directed actor in a courtly situation in which her actions carry meaning not only within her role inside the court, but to the very workings of the court itself. Enite's refusal to come and dine with Oringles is nothing short of open defiance of courtly custom (especially considering that the request being made of her is that she partake in a ritualized courtly event like eating at a banquet). For the first time, her speech and actions carry actual potential consequences for the structure of the court itself, that is to say, the male-constructed world inside of which feminine spaces, however separate, have needed up to this point to be housed.

In the either/or paradigm against which Hartmann's text seems to be working, such an act of insubordination would place Enite quite simply, out: out of a courtly woman's role, out of court itself, out of society. And in this myopic model, *out* is no place at all. For in the world of the Arthurian romance, the court is the world and a person outside of what *is*, is lost. Up to this point Enite's unconventional occupations have found a home within the court because of the fact that they have been accommodated within the smaller courtly model of marriage as made pliable by her unconventionality and Erec's relative good humor. Her acts of secrecy and disobedience in both the bedchamber and in the forest are followed by acts of shapeshifting whereby she snaps back, for whatever reason, into her "acceptable" role as obedient wife: in the bedchamber she gladly shares the rumors with Erec; in the forest she becomes complaisant and apologetic, mitigating her act of individuality with a reminder of her *triuwe* (a word she wields like a signpost to gain access back into the good graces of her husband and by extension, the courtly world).

But now Enite is all alone. She has no husband to forgive her transgressions; there is no flexible model of marriage by which her actions may be absorbed. Her rejection of Oringles the individual is an act that in Erec's absence may carry repercussions for the very workings of the court over which the count presides.⁶⁶ As stated above, in a narrowly-defined courtly worldview such an action would place Enite out of the space of the court; no place for such action has previously been defined for her, and therefore there is no space such an action would allow her to enter.

But Hartmann's text does not support such a cramped viewpoint, and cleverly allows Enite to defy the court on one level while remaining within it, indeed embodying the feminine component of its perfection, on a grander scale. Though Enite refuses Count Oringles as the localized representative of the courtly paradigm, she remains steadfast in her loyalty to a higher courtly law, that of her *triuwe*, genuinely, deeply felt, toward Erec.

While it may be argued that courtly principles are courtly principles, all possessed of the same degree of merit, in this case Enite's *triuwe* toward Erec trumps her obedience to the lord of her immediate surroundings. The narrator's sarcastic commentary on the urgency of *minne* acts as an initial signal to alert the audience to the approaching distinction between the mindless obedience of the small-scale haste of Count Oringles and the grander, timeless sort of loyalty Enite demonstrates toward Erec, a man she loves not only out of a sense of wifely duty, but because of the convictions of her own heart.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ This in contrast to an inner act, such as the debate Enite undergoes with her own conscience, in the forest. There she asks first, "what will become of me?" Her inner strife takes place in private and ultimately does not reverberate very far outside of the bounds of her marriage to and obedience of Erec.

⁶⁷ The difference between true and false *minne* is a difficult one to generalize, though in this context the distinction makes sense: the urgency of Oringles so-called *minne* may be held up for mockery here due to the uncourtly disrespect that the fulfillment of such *minne* would demonstrate toward Enite's role as mourning widow. In this scene the courtly propriety of her lament reveals her *minne* with/toward Erec as true, that of

Oringles has by this point dragged Enite to the table and demands that she eat with him. Again she refuses, prompting him to strike her until she bleeds. He calls her names and insults her in front of the entire court. This is the turning point for Enite's identity. The narrator tells us:

sô dûhtez si alle gelîche,
arme unde rîche
ein michel ungevuoge.
ouch wizzenz im genuoge
under sîniu ougen:
die andern redentz tougen,
ez wære tœrlîch getân. [6526-32]

Both in private and aloud they all thought, poor and rich alike, this was a great scandal. Several of them, in fact, reproached him to his face; the others said to themselves it was a stupid act...

The disapproval of the Count's company indicates beyond question that his actions, in addition to being cruel, are uncourtly. It is at this point that court itself, the very fabric of society in the Arthurian romance, disapproves of this sort of autocratic behavior. Oringles defends his actions, saying:

...swaz ich mînem wîbe tuo.
dâ bestât doch niemen zuo
ze redenę übel noch guot
swaz ein man sînem wîbe tuot. [6542-45]⁶⁸

...it is unheard of for you to reproach me for what I do to my wife. It is not for anyone to speak ill or well, whatever a man does to his wife.

And though technically speaking, it is Oringles' prerogative to treat those below him in the courtly hierarchy as he sees fit, the omniscient narrator shows his bias once again by telling the audience of the larger disapproval of those surrounding the scene. The faceless guests,

Oringles to be false. For more information on potential distinctions between true and false minne, see Joachim Bumke's *Courtly Culture*, chapter 5.

⁶⁸ Again Oringles reverts to generalizations of the sexes, suggesting that in any and all cases, regardless of the particulars thereof, the courtly hierarchy should remain untouched and uninterpreted.

treated here as a collective, act as agents of the larger ideals of courtly society by standing in opposition to Oringles' whims. Perversely, it is their speaking out "beide stille und überlût," ("both in private and out loud") against their lord that corrupts the stability of Oringles' court, not Enite's disobedience of his orders. The text shows Enite as an unwavering devotee to all that is good about the spirit of courtly society. It is Oringles' ungentlemanly reaction to her that causes instability. In a sense, then, Oringles' step outside of the bounds of honorable behavior places him outside the benevolent, more universal ideals of courtly culture as embodied by the justice and grace of Arthur and Ginover's reign. Oringles' crazed adherence to his own local set of standards is *Erec's* illustration of the hierarchical nature of the court carried to its most distasteful extreme.

And where is Enite? Her refusal of Oringles' demands carries the approval of the larger idea of court, though she has provided the catalyst for the disruption of the smaller, singular court in which she stands. On the one hand she defies her way right out of the courtly matrix, and on the other hand she stands squarely within her (courtly) role as a mourning woman. Her *triuwe*-cum-disobedience in this scene indicates that she is still a model of courtly womanhood not only in spite of but because of her transgression in this scene. Her inhabitation of both extremes at the same time recalls the nowhere gender of Silence, the impossibility of whose gender stability placed her always and ultimately in a third space.⁶⁹ Here Enite is simultaneously acting in open defiance the demands of the male-based court *and* acting completely in accordance with the courtly ideals of *triuwe*. I maintain, therefore, that her careful balance between obedience and defiance, between here and there, allows her to inhabit a third space, a new place that belongs to the sort of woman

⁶⁹ Not only was Silence allowed to inhabit a third space, she was rewarded with one, becoming queen of a faraway land at the end of the tale.

of whom Hartmann's text appears to approve. At no time during the whole romance is Enite disparaged or criticized; she is continually referred to as beautiful, perfect, honorable. With the balancing act that she performs at Oringles' court—maintaining devotion to the larger courtly ideal while defying the megalomania embodied by the ruler of an individual court—she creates, at last, a unique space, an individualized and outwardly expressed metaphorical whose realization culminates in the disruption of the courtly matrix. It is this disruption, I believe, coupled with the queer nature of Enite's dominion in this scene that shows the text's support of a type of equality. Women in *Erec* have as much right to affect the structure of the court as men do.⁷⁰

The Fabulous Horse

Enite maintains her position, precarious as it is, for another paragraph as Oringles hits her again and again. Though she rejoices at her tolerance of his beating (she believes that mortal injury will bring her to death and therefore to a reunion with Erec), she does cry out: "wê, mir vil armen wîbe!/ wære mîn geselle bî lîbe, diz bliuwen wære vil unvertragen." [6584-86] ("Woe for me, poor woman! If my companion were alive, these blows would certainly not be tolerated!") At the sound of this cry Erec awakes from unconsciousness and runs to the dining hall, where he slays first Oringles and then two of his companions. It is noteworthy that Enite has been talking during this entire scene, but it is only after sufficient maintenance

⁷⁰ Again, this is not meant to suggest that there is much need for people living within the Arthurian ideal to fundamentally change their surroundings. The Arthurian court is held up in *Erec* as a benevolent and stabilizing force, not an oppressive system in need of eradication. I believe Hartmann's text attempts to show what happens when courtly ideals (such as that of the silent and obedient lady) are upheld to an extreme degree. *Erec* seems to support a state of balance between the genders, as evidenced by the degree of absurdity inherent in Mabonagrín's absolute acquiescence to his lady.

of her unique position between obedience and originality that she is rewarded by Erec's awakening and subsequent rescue.

Having killed the lord of the castle and two of Oringles' friends, Erec finds himself unwelcome in Limors. He and Enite flee into the forest but cannot find their horses. They pause to kiss and to pledge their devotion to each other, while in the meantime a page escapes and runs to tell King Guvreiz, nearby, of the pandemonium at Limors. Guvreiz goes to fetch Erec and Enite from the forest. Having recognized Enite by her voice, he offers the couple hospitality at his castle at Penefric. The narrator describes Guvreiz' hospitality at length, and tells the audience of the graciousness with which Erec is received. He says:

sîner vrûmekeit ze lône
sô wart er dâ vil schône
gewirdet und gehalten:
vil schône wart gewalten
sîn und der kûnegîn. [7202-06]

In recognition of his [Erec's] prowess he was lodged and kept there in fine style. He and the queen were splendidly attended.

Though Erec and Enite have yet to be officially crowned, she is referred to here as queen.

There is no mention of Erec as king, though it is he who is being received so well at Penefric for his bravery. The narrator's choice here to refer to Enite as *kûnegin* is a clear indication that the true challenge to her right to royalty has already been met and surmounted. She has earned the courtly title of queen; in a metatextual alignment with the manner in which the text shows her earning her rights to it, the title is not used for the first time in a speech by a character at court, but rather by Hartmann's narrator, who has himself created, as Enite has, a courtly world of his own, with specialized allegiances and degrees of adherence to the (formerly) all-purpose courtly model.

Once the couple is received at Penefric, Erec's injuries are attended to. Guvreiz' sisters, Genteflur and Filledamur, heal his wounds with Famurgan's poultice, which has been sent over by Ginover as a gift. At the time of Hartmann's writing, the domain of medicine and healing still belonged largely to women; it would not have been unusual or noteworthy that Erec was being attended to by women. Further, there is no particular reason for the narrator to mention the poultice, other than to reintroduce the legacy of Famurgan, Arthurian woman, occupant and ruler over another plane or dominion, paragon of female otherness, into the story of Erec and Enite. The poultice's transfer from Famurgan to Ginover to Genteflur and Filledamur establishes a tradition of separateness, directly linked from the goddess to Ginover, to the queens at Penefric.

Erec and Enite remain at Penefric for two weeks. When it is time for them to depart, they are ready, but for a horse for Enite. The narrator employs a noticeable tonal shift as he cries out, "ouwê vrouwen Êniten! waz sol doch si nû rîten, diu schœne guote wol geborn?" [7264-66] ("Alas, Lady Enite! What is she to ride then, this good and beautiful, well-born lady?") He tells the audience that he is about to describe a horse, the most amazing horse that anyone has ever seen (a superlative which recalls descriptions of Enite's beauty from earlier in the tale). The narrator's cry and his announcement of his intention act as a buffer of sorts, a stylistic boundary or gate between the narrative world that the reader has experienced up to this point and the world which is about to overtake both the text and the reader's imagination. The narrator's changed tone, his use of apostrophe and his short summary of the events in Limors are all maneuvers of craftsmanship that help the story transition to another mode of telling—another room.

Acting as textual gatekeepers are Filledamur and Genteflur. Their mention at the very beginning of the ekphrasis places them at a transition point, as though they hold the keys that open the “other” space of the ekphrasis:

diz gâben ir die vrouwen
des küneges swester zwô
unde wâren des vil vrô
daz siz geruochte von in nemen
ouch mohte sis vil wol gezemen. [7281-85]

This was given to her by the ladies, the King’s two sisters, and they were very pleased that she agreed to accept it from them. And it was thoroughly appropriate to her.

The narrator tells us that the women were happy that Enite chose to accept the horse as a gift; their joy, however, represents a deeper satisfaction, that concerning Enite’s acceptance of the queenly status that she has at last earned through her trials in Limors. Enite’s acceptance of the sisters’ gift is the last thing the audience experiences in the “normal” world of men and the court, before the mysterious world of the feminine is opened and explored.

The horse description in *Erec* is over 800 lines long and incredibly complex. The narrator moves from a physical description of the body of the animal to the colors of its hair (white, black and green) to the horse’s perfection of movement as experienced by its riders. He discusses the history of the horse and how Guvreiz’ sisters came to possess it. He goes into exhaustive detail about the saddle blanket it wears, divided into four areas to represent the four elements of the world, each of which contains intricate embroidered designs of all the animals living within the element. He goes on to tell of the craftsmanship involved in making the saddle, even engaging the audience/reader directly as he asks them to guess about the materials from which it is made.

The horse ekphrasis is complicated and fascinating enough to merit study on its own. Scholars such as Haiko Wandhoff have posited a number of theories about the ekphrasis, among which is the idea that the description of the horse and the horse's history and saddle blanket are tantamount to the creation of a microcosm, and that the larger world of the text is reflected in the description of the horse, but on a smaller scale: the world reflected in a drop of water, as it were.⁷¹

Most important for the purposes of this work is the consideration of the horse ekphrasis simply as another textual room. The forward moving story of Erec and Enite in which *aventure* begets action begets abduction begets rescue is interrupted for 800 or so lines while Hartmann's narrator opens up a separate world inside of which exists lengthy and vivid description (itself one of the many possible definitions of ekphrasis), backstory, metatextual dialogue between narrator and fictional audience member. The ekphrasis is as textured and multilayered as anything and as all things that have come before it in the narrative; the sophistication of its deployment is beyond question, as evinced by the fact that scholars today are still trying to make sense of its many components, its reflection of the larger world of the romance, its overall meaning. Still, the ekphrasis' function is in one sense purely decorative; its presence in the romance does next to nothing to advance the story. Indeed, the same horse, though described as extremely handsome and pleasing, is afforded only 37 lines in Chretien's original. That the extreme disparity in the size and depth of the horse's description does nothing one way or the other to affect what happens next to Erec and Enite (saddling up to meet up with Mabonagrin at Brandigan) lends weight to the argument for the horse as a purely aesthetic and ultimately frivolous diversion. But is it extraneous?

⁷¹ For an extended discussion of the horse ekphrasis in *Erec*, see Wandhoff's *Ekphrasis: Kunstbeschreibungen und virtuelle Räume in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, ch. 3.

It is the crux of my argument that the ekphrasis containing the horse is the culmination of feminine space in *Erec*. Enite, having surmounted a foe at Limors through the assertion of her own, individually-negotiated psychological space, has earned her royal status. It is my argument that the horse description is the ultimate feminine space, as rare and beautiful as the horse within it, and fit for a woman as beautiful and as proper (according to the unique set of standards that *Erec* has allowed) as Enite has proven herself to be. The gifting of the horse is tantamount to a coronation, one enacted by women with the power of separate authority as handed down from a goddess (Famurgan).

Not only is Enite given a mantle in the form of a horse by women within the text, her character is given this honor by the text itself.⁷² Just as the title of queen was first given to her by Hartmann's narrator, so too is the actual, real-life manifestation of her intratextually confirmed royalty brought into being by the narrator/ storyteller.⁷³ The question of the extraneousness of the ekphrasis has meaning only when viewed from within the text. From without, from an audience's point of view, the ekphrasis is the high point of the tale. Whether it is the climax of the story itself is debatable, for as just stated, it has little impact on the events of the story. What matters here is that the ekphrasis of the horse is the climax of the experience of *Erec*.

It is my further contention that what matters about the ekphrasis is not the horse inside the description but Enite's ownership of it. The action of the majority of *Erec* belongs

⁷² I believe that the idea of the horse as a metaphorical royal garment is strengthened by an examination of the incident, told in scene in Chretien's text and in summary in Hartmann's, before Erec and Enite's first return to Karidigan. Enite's cousin offers her a new dress to wear when meeting the queen, but Erec disallows it, having her accept a horse as a gift instead. That this exchange is related very differently in the German text suggests that Hartmann at least gave the crafting of the scene some thought. Hartmann's narrator gives a tiny description of the horse's perfection, then cuts himself off before he goes too far, on the grounds that to describe a horse in excessive detail would be a waste of time.

⁷³ By "brought into being" I mean literally, brought into being among living men (and women, possibly): live audiences and the occasional reader.

to one textual realm and the material of the huge horse description to another. Enite owns the horse, it having been given to her by Guvreiz' sisters. Therefore, the separate textual realm of the ekphrasis is Enite's realm/ space/ dominion. This argument is strengthened when one considers that Enite's worthiness of such a gift came about as a result of a trial during which she successfully negotiated her own psychological space.

The horse ekphrasis itself is a textual other, a distinct element embedded within what has been up to this point, a homogenously crafted text with outside (feminine) spaces such as Ginover's dressing room of use only tangentially. Little would be lost if the audience did not go inside Ginover's dressing room and see the women at work. Similarly the horse space is "extra" when considered in terms of the series of cause and effect at work in the plot of *Erec*. However, in light of Enite's trials, the idea of the "other" space is no longer the damning compartmentalization that it may be in Mitchell's analysis. Mitchell's discussion, as I have stated, involves the idea of the other as the item or object being described, and he bemoans the idea of ekphrasis as a bridge between that other and the self. He believes that there should be no distance to be overcome between media, objects or populations in the manner of the gap between the space occupied by knights and kings at Karidigan and that occupied by ladies and queens, or similarly, the space occupied by outlaws and all things uncourtly.

But because it is the horse ekphrasis itself that is the other in *Erec* and not Enite, the problems of political correctness normally inherent in a distinction of otherness are lost. In this case, the other is only an occupied space, not a population or a person. Were Enite the object of the ekphrasis and the narrator had rhapsodized for 800-plus lines about her beauty, then the textual movement would have been one of condescending proportions, for it would have implied that Enite needs an ekphrasis as a mediator, a spokesperson; someone else to

give her a voice. But as the text shows, Enite is quite capable of finding her own voice, both literally and metaphorically. It is crucial that Enite herself is entirely absent from the lengthy description: the thing brought to life through the ekphrastic opening is the horse, though I do not believe that the horse itself has any particular “need” to be heard or to be infused with vitality in the way that a nonspeaking subject in Mitchell’s world might. The horse instead acts as a dummy, standing in Enite’s place at center of the ekphrasis and on the receiving end of mediation.

More literally, the horse ekphrasis is a culmination of Enite’s connection to horses which has been present in *Erec* from the start. The audience’s first impression of Enite is as an accidental groom. Before she leaves her hometown to go meet Arthur and Ginover she is given a horse to ride instead of a dress to wear. The role of groom is hers again after her disobedient warning to Erec. At last she is afforded a connection to a horse commensurate with the effort she exerts to forge her own identity.

There are physical correspondences between Enite and the horse as well, including the superlative nature of their bodily perfection and the colors white, black and green, which recall Enite’s torn dress and white skin that so captivated Erec at the beginning of the romance. But correspondences are only connections, and in the case of this ekphrasis they act first and foremost to show Enite’s ownership of the horse and of the “other” world it occupies. The horse is hers to ride, to steer as she will; the space in which it sits is hers to rule.

Joie de la curt

Eventually the horse description is finished. Mention of Genteflur and Filledamur closes the space once more, and Erec and Enite are off again, this time with Guvreiz to investigate Brandigan where many knights have lost their lives in tournament. When the three arrive at the castle and are received by the host, they are soon led into a hall where eighty widows are housed, all dressed alike in mourning garb. They are the widows of the eighty knights who have been slain by Mabonagrín, a knight who is sequestered with his lady inside the castle garden, allowing no one who challenges him in tournament to live. Out in the garden are the heads of the eighty knights, lined up on pikes. As Erec enters the garden area he spies Mabonagrín's lady; Hartmann's narrator comments on the woman's beauty. In a moment Mabonagrín himself (who is at this point still known only as the Red Knight) rides up and asks Erec how he dare ride so close to his lady-friend.

After tolerating a series of insults Erec fights the Red Knight and defeats him, though he spares his life at the last moment. Once the two have pulled off their armor, Mabonagrín tells Erec his name. Erec asks him how he came to be in such a strange situation, all alone:

wie ir mohtet belîben
ein alsô wætlîcher man,
wie mich des verwundern enkan!
wan bî den liuten ist sô guot. [9435-38]

I cannot help but wonder how you were able to stay here, fine as you are. For it is so good to be in company with others.

Mabonagrín explains that he has been kept here because of a promise to his lady, who long ago requested that he remain inside the garden with her until he is defeated in combat.

Gentry writes that, “informing this episode is not moral outrage or desire for revenge, but rather the sorrow of the court of Mabonagrín's uncle at the useless life—from its

perspective—that Mabonagrín has been leading.”⁷⁴ Erec’s assertion that “bî den liuten ist sô guot,” seems peculiar in light of the fact that there are indeed all sorts of people around Mabonagrín: eighty widows, his uncle, his beloved lady. But the state of “bî den liuten” to which Erec refers is the larger, more dynamic company of others: that of a healthy court.

Mabonagrín’s endless fulfillment of his promise is only for its own sake; “he has not contributed to the ‘joy of the court’,” that is, the activity and exercise of the type of give and take that *Erec* seems to promote.⁷⁵ Previous episodes, exhaustively detailed in this work, have pointed to the uselessness of a static role for women. Enite’s development throughout the romance has been a journey away from the ideals of the silent, obedient courtly lady; as a result of the creation and expression of her own psychological space Enite is rewarded with a royal title and a crown (of sorts).

The episode at Brandigan serves to show the flip side of this argument: that men’s absolute and unthinking devotion to ladies does equally little to contribute to what Hartmann’s text promotes as a healthy society, one in which men and women are at least regarded with equanimity, though they rule over different dominions, different spaces. Mabonagrín’s relentless service of his lady wreaks nothing but sorrow. First and foremost, it causes him personal distress. He tells Erec: “ich enhân mir ditze leben/ von deheinem vrîen muotē erkorn,” (“I did not adopt this way of life from any freedom of choice...”) a testament which recalls Enite’s distaste at the possibility of marriage to Oringles, which would, she tells him, happen “sunder mînen danc” [9445-46; 6297] (against her will). Mabonagrín’s obedience has made him into as much of a dummy as any silent, deferential courtly woman.

⁷⁴ Gentry 99.

⁷⁵ *ibid*

Further, Mabonagrín's romantic enslavement creates misery for those around him. Not only has he killed the husbands of eighty women and made them miserable through the loss of their lovers, but his actions have also caused the women to be placed inside a courtly feminine space in which all are alike: dressed identically, acting in concord with one another, indistinguishable.⁷⁶ The homogeneity of these women combined with their miserable segregation suggests that actions such as Mabonagrín's compartmentalize women as much as they do men. The role reversal inherent in the entire episode at Brandigan allows for analysis of this particular aspect, as well: if Mabonagrín's seemingly chivalrous actions actually restrict women, then it stands to reason that the inflexible courtly standards which Enite's progression resists subjugate the men who enact them as well as they confine the spirits of women.⁷⁷

The sort of gendered grouping afoot at Brandigan is the worst sort of essentializing, the sort which Mitchell's analysis of ekphrasis regrets. There is a synapse between the wishes of Mabonagrín on the one hand and those of his lady friend on the other, though by all objective accounts the population gap is perfectly bridged by the tireless fulfillment of the chivalric obligation. Mabonagrín and his lady stand at an unbridgeable distance, for their wishes, their selves are borne of a court that is not dynamic in the way that *Erec* upholds as healthy. In such a model as that at Brandigan, lovers remain separate populations, each one othering the other, never satisfied by connective efforts, never unified.

⁷⁶ Though Hartmann's narrator describes the beauty of each as surpassing that of the one previous, I argue that such beauty is not a true distinguishing feature of any *particular* lady; if each lady is more beautiful than the last, then this surpassing quality is also homogenized (in all except her who was unfortunate enough to be seen first!).

⁷⁷ This sort of subjugation is, of course, of a different type than that which befalls women, a distinction which bolsters an argument toward a positive vision of gendered essentialism in *Erec*.

Not so Erec and Enite. Enite, as we have seen, has earned her place as sometime sculptress of the marital (and in her role as queen and noble, courtly) model which she inhabits much of the time. Erec's progression, presumably, has been every bit as rewarding, for he speaks to Mabonagrín of the joy of the court as self-evident. And in the midst of such joy, men and women fill their roles without strain. After Erec commends Mabonagrín to God, Hartmann's narrator shows Enite taking Mabonagrín's lady aside ("nâch wîplîchem site" [9711]) to console her after her lover's defeat. In *Erec*, McConeghy writes, women are

“...free from...restrictions within their own circles, where they offer one another kind words of support and counsel. Two examples can be found in *Erec*: Enite's comforting of Mabonagrín's friend and Guinevere's earlier comforting of Enite. Both episodes pointedly take place in private, away from the men.”⁷⁸

Here we see the creation of a feminine space as a coda to the earlier spaces created by Enite's struggles in her bedchamber, during *aventiure*, and in Limors. Having reached its culmination with the horse ekphrasis, the feminine spaces in *Erec* find their last (and relatively benign, considering the acceptability of such a maneuver within the parameters of a “traditional” court) expression here, as Enite comes full circle and, just as Ginover did when leading Enite into her dressing chamber, takes a woman of lesser knowledge and/or experience into a feminine space within the court, and comforts her.

And just as Ginover leads Enite out of the dressing room once Enite is ready to be received in proper style, so too does Enite lead Mabonagrín's lady back toward the others after she has learned of her family ties to Enite and is thereby “dressed” in the proper sort of joy that would allow her to be received in an appropriate manner. The difference here is that the lady's reception will occur this time inside a transcendently healthy and joyous court, the description and depiction of which is much of the work of *Erec*. McConeghy agrees: “In

⁷⁸ McConeghy 774.

consoling Mabonagrín's friend, Enite is following the example of Guinevere at the intermediate interlude at court."⁷⁹ By showing Enite offering a gesture of such similarity to the one that was offered her at the beginning of the story by the most impeccable of queens, Arthur's wife, *Erec* reaffirms Enite's queenly status and brings her development to a satisfying close.

⁷⁹ McConeghy 774.

Conclusion

The development of Enite as an individual has dramatic ramifications, though some that do not support, at least in spirit, the conclusions that I have drawn here. For starters, there is the question of the occasion for Enite's self-identification. Her moral dilemmas all occur when she is in a personal psychological space; her ultimate triumph comes at Count Oringles' court when she thinks that Erec is dead. Though there would of course have been no occasion for such a triumph were she not left "alone" with her tormentor, it is worth asking whether she would have been able to self-actualize to the degree that she did had she been in the first instances, debating with someone else, and in the second instance, in Erec's company. Does *Erec* allow for the idea of a wholly realized feminine subject only in a wholly private space?

Moreover, though Enite wins her self in the violent exchange with Oringles, I have argued that it is the larger disapproval of Oringles' behavior by the implicit and benevolent courtly ideal that finally allows for her freedom. The approval of the courtly ideal grants Enite permission to exist outside of the court's jurisdiction. The question is hereby complicated: is a self-actualized woman only self-actualized when she is absolutely on her own? Or does the court's (dis)approval of her exchange with Oringles indicate that ultimately a woman needs in all cases, permission from society to do as she pleases?

I believe that in the world of Hartmann's romance, a woman like Enite would in spite of everything still have needed to remain in the good graces of the court in which she lived—to uphold the universal, benign idea of courtliness, she must find a way to demonstrate

localized courtliness on a daily basis. This evaluation must not be construed as condemnatory, however, for the very marrow of Hartmann's viewpoint points to a symbiotic relationship between the sexes. In this case, then, it is right that Enite or any woman following her lead should wish to keep the court's approval. One wonders, though, in spite of the gender-reversal portrayed at Brandigan if the same idea as regards men would bear itself out.

But the largest and most important issues raised by my analysis, I believe, concern the existence of a modern subject in the middle ages. While the question of subjectivity cannot ever really be resolved, neither as it concerns our age or the middle ages, it is interesting to consider the question of subjectivity in terms of fixed loci at which a subject rests, either briefly, in the postmodern view, or permanently, in the modern view. If it can be easily agreed upon that courtly behavior is more or less a fixed (though oft-parodied) set of constructed behaviors and ideals, it stands to reason that a subject's existence may just as easily be constructed, having occupied no particular, previously delineated, model. In *Limors*, Enite's choice *not* to choose a path of conformity is a postmodern action, though born from a locus of self. It is my contention that Enite is a modern subject acting in a postmodern fashion, and that the flexibility of gender relations that Hartmann's model of marriage and by extension, courtliness, proposes, presages the sort of trouble to which Butler pointed in the late 1990s.

Suzanne Fleischman's 1990 article about the "troubled" nature of the medieval text points as well to this sort of postmodern imbalance. She quotes Cerquiglini: "Medieval writing does not produce variants, it is variance...Variance is its foremost characteristic:

fluidity of discourse...”⁸⁰ Fleischmann’s suggestion that the variance in medieval “telling” allows for an utter absence of truth through texts, is a thoroughly postmodern one. It is interesting to consider the metatextual implications of Fleischmann’s analysis, for if the texts themselves may operate with such variance, it stands to reason that at least those who told and listened to them possessed similar capabilities. Like the function of Enite’s horse as an actual experience for a medieval audience of the new feminine room the character creates, the idea of unlimited variance in medieval narration is one that breaks through the divide between the real and imagined world: texts reflecting their real-life creators, in turn reflecting the texts they read and compose back at an audience, whose experience of the text then becomes reality, and so on. If one allows such thinking to creep into an analysis of a medieval text, *any* medieval text, then every aspect of character (both fictional and real) as regards medieval literature can stand a second look. If the framework of medieval literature may shed light on the medieval mind’s view of itself, then our small body of evidence regarding courtly life may substantially increase.

⁸⁰ Suzanne Fleischmann, “Philology, Linguistics, and the Discourse of the Medieval Text,” *Speculum* 65:1 (1990): 27.

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