HONEYCUTT, Benjamin Lawrence, 1938-
THE ROLE OF THE KNIGHT IN THE OLD FRENCH
FABLIAUX. [ Portions of Text in Middle and
Modern French].

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1969
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
THE ROLE OF THE KNIGHT
IN THE OLD FRENCH FABLIAUX

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Benjamin Lawrence Honeycutt, B.A., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University
1969

Approved by

[Signature]

Adviser
Department of Romance Languages
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my adviser, Professor Eleanor W. Bulatkin, who encouraged me to undertake this project and whose counsel and direction have been invaluable on numerous occasions.

A special word of thanks is due the Computer Center of the Ohio State University and Mr. James Wagoner in particular for their technical assistance in producing the concordance of the fabliaux which proved so helpful in the writing of this dissertation.
VITA

August 30, 1938 .......... Born, Cliffside, North Carolina

1960 .................. B.A., Wake Forest College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

1962 .................. M.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1963-1964 ............ Teaching Assistant, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1964-1969 ............. Instructor in Romance Languages, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Medieval French Language and Literature. Professors Alexander Schutz and Eleanor W. Bulatkin

Romance Linguistics. Professor David Griffin
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. The Fabliaux

That literary genre now popularly designated as the fabliaux comprises a group of verse tales written in France from the late twelfth to the early fourteenth century. In contrast to the animal fables, the fabliaux depict human characters drawn from all levels of society who become involved in a plethora of comic situations. The stories enjoyed great popularity in their own period and their themes and motifs influenced the two master storytellers of the Middle Ages, Chaucer and Boccaccio. Although the popularity of the fabliaux as a separate and distinct genre in France had diminished by the second half of the fourteenth century, later works such as the Quinze joies de mariage and the Cent nouvelles nouvelles incorporate and adapt subject matter taken directly from these tales. The sixteenth century Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre and the Contes et nouvelles of La Fontaine, both manifesting the influence of Boccaccio's Decameron, are likewise in many instances reworkings of themes familiar to readers of the fabliaux.
The fabliaux vary greatly in length, the shortest, Du prestre et du mouton, consisting of only eighteen lines while the unusually length narrative, Du prestre et du chevalier requires 1,364 lines. All of the 152 titles included in the definitive edition of the fabliaux, compiled by Anatole de Montaiglon and Gaston Raynaud¹ are written in octosyllabic couplets.

We can perhaps gain a greater comprehension of the nature of the fabliaux through a brief examination of four basic problems ordinarily treated by scholars studying the genre. These include (1) the term used to designate the genre, (2) the question of an appropriate definition, (3) the origins of the themes and motifs employed, and (4) the audience for whom the stories were written.

Through an evaluation of linguistic data and geographical references, it has been determined that the fabliaux were especially popular in the Norman and Picard regions of Northeastern France, thus we are not surprised to find that the most common designation of the genre in the stories themselves is a dialect form characteristic of

¹Anatole de Montaiglon and Gaston Raynaud, eds. Recueil général et complet des Fabliaux des XIIIe et XIVe siècles..., 6 vols., (Paris, 1872-1890). The work has been reprinted in the Burt Franklin Research and Source Works Series No. 47 (New York, 1960). The Montaiglon-Raynaud edition will hereafter be referred to as MR.
that region: *fable*—*fabliaus*. The existence of dual forms is of course a manifestation of the two-case system preserved in France well into the fourteenth century. With the aid of a computer concordance prepared by this author as a research tool for a projected series of studies on the fabliaux, of which this is the first, we are able to determine the specific number of occurrences of the forms mentioned above and also frequencies of any of the variants.

The results may be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fabel</td>
<td>fabliaus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fabulet</td>
<td>fabliaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fable</td>
<td>flabeau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fableau</td>
<td>flabeaus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fableaus</td>
<td>flabeaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fablel</td>
<td>flabel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fables</td>
<td>fabliaus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fablet</td>
<td>flabel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fabliau</td>
<td>flabeaux</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The form of highest frequency, *fabel*, is typical of both the dialects of the Norman-Picard area and that of the area around Paris when employed as either subject case plural or object case singular, while the *fabliaus* of the Northeastern dialects contrasts with the *fableaus* of the


\[^3\] The procedures involved in the preparation of the concordance and a brief description of the concordance itself is provided in Appendix A.
region surrounding Paris. The resulting paradigmatic distribution is thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fabliaus, fableus</td>
<td>fables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Object case  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>fablel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fabliaus, fableaus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The singular form fabliau which occurs only twice is of course a back-formation based on the form in s. There are only two occurrences each of fableau and fableaus while flabeau, flabeaus, and flabeax each appear once, a fact that would seem to deny Per Nykrog's assertion that "la forme régulière de la région parisienne est souvent attestée." Variants such as flabeau and flabel are the result of metathesis while flablel and flabliaus represent a merger of the original and the metathesized form. Fabelet seems to be a diminutive form and is used in the same story with fabliaus and fable.

Nykrog points out the differences in the significance of the word fable in the medieval language on the one hand and in modern French on the other. The meaning of the word was apparently much less restricted in Old French, designating first of all the animal fable (fable ésoipique), while also serving as a synonym for matière and conte and as an antonym of vérité: mensonge, fiction.5

4Per Nykrog, Les fabliaux (Copenhagen, 1957), p.3.
5Ibid., p.5.
Upon studying the occurrences of each of the forms, it becomes obvious that certain writers called their stories \textit{fable} or \textit{fabliaus} while others employed the term \textit{fable}. In the latter case, the word \textit{fable} does not however suggest any association with the animal fable type which appears in the \textit{Roman de Renard}. Variations in terminology are particularly evident in the many formulaic introductions and conclusions to the tales, such as:

- \textit{Une fable vœu commencer} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR II, 193.1}
- \textit{Que vous feroie longue fable} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR III, 85.117}
- \textit{En ioeste fable novele} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR V, 24.1}
- \textit{Qui cest fable fist a Provins} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR V, 64.380}
- \textit{Une fable par deliter} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR V, 157.2}
- \textit{Ce est la fin de oeste fable} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR VI, 33.269}
- \textit{Par ceste fable mountrer voilg} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR VI, 151.109}
- \textit{D'un fablel que vous conterai} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 70.2}
- \textit{Cortebarbe a cest fablel fet} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 70.10}
- \textit{Cest fablel par reson prova} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 97.2}
- \textit{Oiez signor, un bon fablel} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 168.1}
- \textit{Cest fablel fist Hues Piaucele} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 219.630}
- \textit{Par cest fablel prover vous vœuil} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 254.283}
- \textit{Commencier vous vœuil un fablel} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR III, 46.2}
- \textit{D'un chevalier cis fabliaus define} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 112.1}
- \textit{Par example dist cis fabliaus} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 134.64}
- \textit{Cis fabliaus moustre par example} \hspace{1cm} \textit{MR I, 244.184}
The above examples represent only a selection from the multiple occurrences of such introductory and concluding formulae in the fabliaux.

The discrepancies in the authors' designations of their own stories have only complicated the problem of establishing a firm definition for the genre. The most popular and the most widely accepted definition is Bédier's statement that "les fabliaux sont des contes à rire en
vers". With certain minor additions Nykrog accepts this basic definition:

La définition employée ici sera la même, ou presque, que celle de Bédier. Sa formule est qu'un fabliau est un "Conte à rire en vers" (p. 30). On pourrait y ajouter qu'il doit appartenir à la littérature française médiévale et qu'il doit être relativement court, tout au moins qu'il doit en principe se borner à raconter un seul incident et ses conséquences immédiates.

There is however considerable variation in the list of fabliaux established by Bédier and that of Nykrog. Bédier includes 147 texts while Nykrog mentions 160 tales. The difference is even greater than it would first appear, however, for Nykrog eliminates eight of the tales included

---

by Bédier so that we are speaking of a total difference of twenty-one texts. It is my opinion that Nykrog rather arbitrarily removes stories such as *La houye partie* and *Le vair palefroi*, tales which manifest a certain subtle humor quite capable of producing laughter.

Included among the fabliaux are tales containing morals, either real or contrived, stories based on word plays and misunderstandings, and accounts of the machinations of lovers bent on fulfilling their desires at the expense of the unwary husband. Certain tales must most definitely be classified as obscene while others are quite free from any ribaldry. However varied, the desire to provoke laughter is the basic purpose of the author in each of the tales.9

As with any medieval literary genre, the question of origins arises sooner or later. Prior to the work of Bédier, the oriental theory was most widely accepted and

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8Ibid., p. 15.

9In the most recent discussion of a proper definition for the fabliaux, Omer Jodogne, in his article "Considerations sur le fabliau," compares the fabliau and the lai, suggests a classification of the tales based on *Paroles* and *Actes*, and finally formulates his own definition or description of the genre: "un conte en vers où, sur un ton trivial, sont narées une ou plusieurs anecdotes plaisantes ou exemplaires, l'un et l'autre ou l'un ou l'autre." V. Mélanges René Crozet, Vol. II (Poitiers, 1966) pp. 1043-1055.
may be summarized in the words of Gaston Paris:

"D'ou venaient ces contes?... La plupart avaient une origine orientale. C'est dans l'Inde, en remontant le courant qui nous les amène, que nous en trouvons la source la plus reculée (bien que plusieurs d'entre eux, adoptés par la littérature indienne et transmis par elle, ne lui appartiennent pas originairement et aient été empruntés à des littératures plus anciennes). Le bouddhisme, ami des exemples et des paraboles, contribua à faire recueillir ces contes de toutes parts et en fit aussi inventer d'excellents. Ces contes ont pénétré en Europe par deux intermédiaires principaux: par Byzance, qui les tenait de la Syrie ou de la Perse, laquelle les importait directement de l'Inde, et par les Arabes. L'importation arabe se fit elle-même en deux endroits très différents: en Espagne, notamment par l'intermédiaire des Juifs, et en Syrie, au temps des Croisades. En Espagne, la transmission fut surtout littéraire...; en Orient, au contraire, les croisés, qui vécurent avec la population musulmane dans un contact fort intime, recueillirent oralement beaucoup de récits. Plusieurs de ces récits, d'origine bouddhique, avaient un caractère moral et même ascétique: ils ont été facilement christianisés; d'autres, sous prétexte de moralité finale racontaient des aventures assez scabreuses; on garda l'aventure en laissant là, d'ordinaire, la moralité; d'autres enfin furent retenus et traduits comme simplement plaisants."

Bédier attempts to discredit this theory, at least in its suggestion that India was the principal source for the themes and motifs of the fabliaux. He does not deny that a written and oral literature from this area may have contributed to the wealth of material in the fabliaux, but he prefers to view this type of literature as typical of diverse civilisations, originating in the customs and traditions of numerous countries with basic themes being

adapted to the milieu in which the stories were being written.

Il faut donc conclure à la polygénésie des contes. Il faut renoncer à ces stériles comparaisons de versions, qui prétendent découvrir des lois de propagation, à jamais indécouvrables: car elles n'existent pas. Il faut abandonner ces vains classements qui se fondent sur la similitude en des pays divers de certains traits forcément insignifiants (par le fait même qu'ils réapparaissent en des pays divers)--et qui négligent les éléments locaux, différentiels, non voyageurs, de ces récits, --les seuls intéressants.

Ces mêmes contes non ethniques, indifférents si on les considère en leurs données organiques, patrimoine banal de tous les peuples, revêtent dans chaque civilisation, presque dans chaque village, une forme diverse. Sous ce costume local, ils sont les citoyens de tel ou tel pays: ils deviennent, à leur tour, des contes ethniques. ...

Pareillement, les mêmes contes à rire indifférents sous leur forme organique, immuable, commune à Rutebeuf, aux Mille et une Nuits, à Chaucer, à Boccace, deviennent des témoins précieux, chez Rutebeuf, des mœurs du XIIIe siècle français; dans les Mille et une Nuits, de l'imagination arabe; chez Chaucer, du XIVe siècle anglais; chez Boccace, de la première renaissance italienne.11

Bédier's thorough refutation of the orientalist theory revealed its feeble structure and his statements on the question of origins are still respected and accepted today.

Per Nykrog voices little opposition to the first portion of Bédier's monumental work, but he openly challenges Bédier's assertion in the second section that the fabliaux constitute basically a bourgeois genre, the increasing popularity of the genre closely paralleling the rising

11Bédier, pp. 15-16.
influence of the bourgeois in society:

Comment le genre littéraire que nous étudions est-il né?--On peut dire que l'esprit des fabliaux a préséxisté aux fabliaux. Le jour où, dans la commune forte, riche et paisible, naquit la classe bourgeoise, germa aussi le goût de l'observation réaliste et railleuse, et l'esprit de dérision pénétra aussitôt la seule forme poétique alors développée; des intermèdes comiques se glissèrent dans les héroïques épopées. On conçoit aisément qu'ils s'en soient vite détachés: lorsque les jongleurs disaient quelque chanson de geste dans les communes, ils devaient choisir ces épisodes burlesques, et souvent la courte séance de récitation s'achevait sans qu'ils eussent trouvé le temps de revenir à leurs nobles héros. Leur public de vilains riches s'accoutume à les entendre isolément, à en rire, demande même de véritables parodies de chansons de geste. Bientôt on sent que ces intermèdes plaisants n'ont jamais été que des intrus dans les poèmes féodaux; l'esprit bourgeois réclame ses droits propres...

The concept of the fabliaux as a bourgeois genre manifests itself in the definitions and classifications of the genre in a multitude of literary histories and manuals. The authoritative medieval bibliography of Robert Bossuat lists the fabliaux under the heading of bourgeois literature. Nykrog's principal thesis, however, projects the opinion that the fabliaux actually form a part of the body of aristocratic literature, that the ideas and situations depicted are more representative of the aristocratic viewpoint than that of the bourgeois:

Une des premières conclusions que nous avons pu faire est qu'il est impossible de séparer le fabliau des milieux courtois. Notre genre a trouvé son public principal dans ces cercles, il reflète les idées littéraires et sociales qui leur sont propres, et enfin sa force comique présume très

12 Ibid., p. 427.
souvent chez les auditeurs une assez bonne connaissance de la littérature spécifiquement courtoise.13

A third point of view and the one which seems most probable to me envisions the fabliaux as a genre seeking its audience on various social levels. Such stories can be appreciated by aristocrat, bourgeois, and peasant alike. They contain a type of humor capable of striking a responsive chord with an audience whether the recitation takes place in the manor of a noble, in a village inn, or at a public fair. The dual versions of several tales (Béranger au lomme cul, Des tresoes, et cetera) also suggest certain modifications might have been made in emphasis or even milieu in order to accommodate the audience for which the story was being read or recited. The research of Jean Rychner on the variant versions of many fabliaux tends to substantiate this claim.14

In summary, it would seem appropriate to describe the fabliaux as a type of literature capable of adapting itself to diverse civilizations and cultures. The tales are apparently designed principally to provoke laughter and the appreciation of their humor need not be restricted to any one social milieu.

13Nykrog, p. 227.

B. The Knight in the Fabliaux

The term knight or chevalier normally triggers a very particular mental reaction. Visions of epic battle scenes to the accompaniment of the clash of armor alternate with a more courtly picture of the noble warrior pledging his undying devotion to his lady and submitting himself totally to the will of his beloved. This response of course represents the stereotype, the pre-established image of the knight resulting from the popularity of the chanson de geste and the roman courtois. The knight, however, also plays a prominent role in another type of literature quite far removed in tone from the heroic grandeur of the epic or the courtliness of medieval romance. I am referring of course to the fabliaux, a group of tales designed to provoke laughter by presenting characters from all levels of society in comic situations. In examining the role of the knight in the fabliaux, it is the aim of this study to present the knight in a new perspective, to characterize the more earthy counterpart of the stereotype described above and to consider the processes through which the hero of epic and romance becomes an instrument of humor in these consistently amusing and occasionally ribald tales.

In Chapters II and III we shall seek to establish the basic types of knight which are portrayed in the intrigues of the fabliaux and then consider these types in their rela-
tionships with other characters. The existence of consistent or patterned treatments of such encounters will then be determined. Chapter IV will present a more general picture of the life of the knight as depicted in the fabliaux, while in Chapter V, we shall examine the manner in which the words, actions, and descriptions of the knight are adapted to the humorous or comic intent of the genre.

With the aid of the computerized concordance mentioned above and more fully described in Appendix A, we were able to locate all occurrences of the word chevalier and its variant forms, revealing a corpus of texts comprising forty-nine fabliaux. The concordance also provided us with a poem and line-number reference in each case. Included below is a list of all distinct forms with a frequency indication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chevaler</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chevalers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chevalier</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chevaliers</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chivaler</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chivalers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those forms familiar to the modern language, chevalier and chevaliers obviously represent the prevalent orthographical rendering of the term in the thirteenth century, appearing in forty-four of the forty-nine tales. As a result of the maintenance of a two-case declension system, the form in -s may of course be either subject case singular or object case plural:

---

15 That portion of the concordance containing the term chevalier and its variant forms is reproduced in Appendix B.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chevalier</td>
<td>chevaliers</td>
<td>chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object: chevalier</td>
<td>chevalier</td>
<td>chevaliers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Li chevaliers ot molt grant honte (MR I, 35.342)
Li chevalier furent prodome; (MR I, 299.158)
Quant le tour au chevalier vint, (MR III, 249.67)

--- Dame, j'ai trove chevaliers
   Plus de .vii., corageus et fiers, (MR IV, 59.69-70)

Des estats du siécle and De la dame qui se venja du chevalier represent exceptions to this declension pattern. Here the disintegration of the two case system is already evident as, for example:

Quar chevaliers (subject plural) ont les honneurs (MR II, 265.49)
Li chevalier (subject singular) l'a acolée (MR VI, 26.71)
Quant li chevalier (subject singular) l'a veue (MR VI, 26.64)

These two tales do not appear to be in the Anglo-Norman dialect wherein there was an earlier disintegration of the declension system than in Old French. It is possible of course that their date of composition is later than that of the other fabliaux and that they are thus representative of the fourteenth century reduction of the case system in France.

The forms chevaler and chivaler are Anglo-Norman and the one-case system is evident in those fabliaux employing them (Le chevaler à la corbeille, Le dit de la gageure, and
The original Anglo-Norman orthography is chevaler, while chivaler probably indicates the influence of northern French regions such as Ponthieu and Flanders on insular speech and spelling.16

The form chevallier appears only once and might possibly be the result of scribal error considering the existence of the much more common chevalier in all other occurrences in the same story. It might also be explained as a dialect form, particularly since it appears as part of a passage of dialogue in which a woman is addressing a knight:

Et li dist: "Chevalliers fallis,
Jâ de moi n'arez vo delis,
Tant com vivre la vostre amie."17

The knight may be considered a principal character in thirty-one of the forty-nine fabliaux in which he appears or is referred to. In other cases he may only be included in some sort of group or merely as an object of passing reference. We have provided in Appendix C a list of the


forty-nine fabliaux in which the knight appears along with a brief synopsis of the plots of those tales in which his role is particularly significant.

As is the case with the fabliaux in general, we know very little about the authors of the fabliaux in which the knight appears. Many were apparently professional jongleurs while others were amateurs who on occasion wrote fabliaux and at other times recited tales authored by someone else. The professionals entertained at local fairs, at the village inn, or at the manors of wealthy lords who wished to provide their guests a happy and hilarious amusement. In considering the total corpus of the fabliaux, a tremendous number have been lost and the twenty-five or thirty names known to us represent only a small number of the actual authors of such tales.18

The known authors of fabliaux in which the knight plays a significant role are:

- Milon d'Amiens (Du prestre et du chevalier)
- Guerin (Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler, De Berangier au long cul)
- Huon le Roy (Du vair palefroi)
- Jacques de Baisieux (Des III. chevaliers et del chainse)
- Jean de Condé (Le sentier batu)
- Rutebeuf (De Frère Denise)

18The actual number is unknown due to uncertainty as to whether certain names represent one author or more than one.

19Bedier, p. 38.
Bernier (La houce partie)
Hugues de Cambrai (La male Honte I)
Guillaumme (La male Honte II)
Haisel (Du prestre et du mouton)

These names are often revealed in signatures to the tales:

Ainsi ot Oil la male Honte
Ce dit Guillaumes en son conte
Que li vilains en a partée
La male Honte en sa contrée. 20

Hues de Cambrai conte et dist,
Qui de ceste oevre rime fist,
Qu'en l'eveschié de Cantorbile
Ot .i. Engles a une vile...21

Traiies en cha, s'ouës .i. conte
Si com Milles d'Amiens le conte
D'un chevalier et d'un provoire...22

Bédier has summarized in the Appendix of his work all available information and speculation concerning these authors. Is the Guillaume le Normand who wrote Du prêtre et d'Alison the same Guillaume referred to in one of the versions of La male Honte? Are the names Guerin and Garin the same and do they represent one writer? Are Huon le Roy (Le vair palefroi) and Hugues de Cambrai (La male Honte) the same person? These are a few of the problems mentioned by Bédier and for the most part, he offers no definite conclusions, which serves to emphasize the scarcity of infor-

20 MR IV, 46.149-152.
21 MR V, 95.1-4.
22 MR II, 46.1-3.
mation concerning any of these authors. Both Bédier and Nykrog believe that the name Pierre d'Anfoi (Du chevalier qui recouvr'l'amor de sa dame) refers to Pierre Alphone (Petrus Alphonsi), author of the *Disciplina Clericallis*, a Spanish Jew who probably never even thought of writing a fabliau, but whose name was borrowed by the jongleur because he was a man of some reputation.

Let us turn now to an analysis of the role of the knight in the fabliaux. In the ensuing chapters, we shall, as mentioned above, describe his essential traits, treat his relationships with other characters, view certain aspects of his daily life, and study his function as an instrument of humor.

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23 Bédier, pp. 477-486.
24 Bédier, p. 478; Nykrog, p. 35.
CHAPTER II

The Type of Knight Treated in the Fabliaux

Our study of the forty-nine fabliaux in which the knight appears or is referred to reveals the presence of two principal types: on the one hand, the monetarily poor, unlanded chevalier errant and on the other, the wealthy and titled lord. Those of the former category are, in a majority of cases, knights whose livelihood depends on their success on the "tournament trail", their goal being the winning of the prizes offered by the sponsors of the contests, while the latter are most frequently lords with substantial holdings who have little interest in tournament competition.

In two stories the cowardly or false knight is depicted and one fabliau recounts an episode involving the legendary knights of King Arthur's court. In other instances, the knight plays no significant role in the story and there is insufficient material to permit any classification.

It shall be our purpose then in this chapter to examine the descriptive material available and to consider
the roles of each type of knight in the stories themselves in an effort to determine the possible existence of any consistent attitude toward or treatment of each given type. Since the chevalier errant or tournament knight appears much more frequently than his wealthy counterpart, let us first examine his role. In doing so, we shall necessarily also reach certain conclusions with regard to the usual results of confrontations between the two types, for both appear in several of the stories.

A. The Tournament Knight

The tournament played an important role in the life of the thirteenth century knight, especially among those who were not landed lords and whose incomes were limited. For them, tournament competition was not only a means of proving their prouesse, but more practically, the prizes awarded were often a primary source of income. Considering the nature of the fabliaux, it is certainly not surprising to find this type of knight playing a prominent role. He is not the defender of the faith and fatherland of epic literature; he is not the gallant lover and gay adventurer of the roman courtois; his courage and abilities in combat may be exceptional, to be sure, but he is basically a man taking advantage of one of the few practical and available means of making a living. As we shall see later, a curtailing of
tournament competition or a defeat may put him in a very bad position and even force him to pawn his armament and armor to obtain funds. This would undoubtedly be an extreme case, but then the fabliaux properly concern themselves with extremes and the ridiculous.

Now let us consider the tournament knight himself. How is he treated in the fabliaux? Is he hero or villain, distinguished or disreputable, the deceiver or the deceived? In order to answer these questions we must consider all descriptions of this type of knight, the adjectives employed and the characteristics attributed to him, and then we must further examine his role in the stories and his relationships with other characters.

With regard to specific descriptions of the tournament knight in the text, we are providing below a list of all such passages and shall then proceed to draw our conclusions.

1) **Le prestre et le chevalier**  
   *MR II, 46.5-20; 49.83-85, 94-96; 50.132-133*

2) **Du chevalier qui fait les cons parler**  
   *MR VI, 69-70.24-32, 38-46; 88-89.613-615*

3) **Le vair palefroi**  
   *MR I, 25.35-48; 26.55-76; 29.152; 37.383-385; 68.1323-1327*

4) **Guillaume au faucon**  
   *MR II, 96.120-130*
5) *La houe partie*
   MR I, 85-86.104-115

6) *Le chevalier à la robe vermeille*
   MR III, 35.4-7, 14-16; 35-36.18-23

7) *Des III Chevalier et del chainse*
   MR III, 124.24-30, 36-45

8) *Le sentier batu*
   MR III, 248.33-34

In *Le prestre et le chevalier* we have the only example of a knight who has suffered a defeat in tournament competition. He has lost all of his equipment and only his squire is left to him as he bitterly returns to his own country:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{C'uns Chevaliers molt povrement} \\
\text{Repairoit du tournoiement;} \\
\text{Si avoit tout perdu le sien,} \\
\text{Et si avoit estë si bien} \\
\text{Batus que, s'il donnast .c. saus,} \\
\text{Ne trouvast-il qui tant de cols} \\
\text{Li donast pour .c. sols contës.} \\
\text{Laidement fu desbaretës;} \\
\text{Si ot toute sa compaignie} \\
\text{Perdue et toute sa mainsie,} \\
\text{Et son harnas et son onroi.} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{Ensi s'en vint molt povrement} \\
\text{Et .i. Escuiers seulement.} \\
\text{S'esmurent une matinëe} \\
\text{Pour revenir en lor contrëe.} \text{1}
\end{align*}\]

Desirous of healing his wounded pride, he hopes to be able to use his ability to deceive and lie to his advantage.

\[\text{1MR II, 46.5-20.}\]
Upon entering a certain village, he demands of a passing peasant:

...Enseigne-moi le plus riche homme
De ceste vile, c'est la somme.

He is told that the priest is the wealthiest man in the town and the knight immediately proposes to make him his victim. Finding the knight to be both weak in combat and deceitful in nature, we might expect the tables to be turned and the knight himself to fall victim to the priest. However, this is not the case. Even the most unworthy of knights is unlikely to be deceived by a priest. The priest is the eternal victim in the fabliaux and is consistently depicted in an unfavorable light. Thus even a knight with such negative qualities is allowed to have everything turn out to his own advantage in such a confrontation.

The author of this fabliau skillfully uses descriptive passages to emphasize the contrast that exists in the poverty of the knight and the tremendous wealth of the priest.

...Perdue et toute sa mainsie,
Et son harnas et son conroi.

...De la mesaise qu'il souffroit,
Et sachiss bien que il estoit
.Xiiii. tans de sa poverte
Que de son cors ne de sa perte. 3

On the other hand, the first descriptions of the priest dwell on the subject of his wealth:

2MR II, 49.99-100.
3MR II, 46.14-16; 47.33-36.
...Vinrent une ville campiestre,
Ou il avoit moustier et prestre,
Riche, manant, et asasé:
I. grant tressor ot amassé

...et esra tant que en la fin
Qu'il entre en une voïste
Qui le mena a le vilête...

Dist li vilains: "C'est notre Prestres.
Ch'est li plus riche qui puist øtre
Chi environ dis liües loing,..."4

The priest, taken in by the knight's boast that he too is an extremely wealthy man, hopes to profit from his lodging of the knight. He is destined, however, to become the victim of a ruse that will deprive him not only of any compensation for his ill-motivated hospitality, but which will force him to allow his own mistress to grant her favors to the knight.

At the same time, the author uses adjectives to describe the knight which appear rather strange, considering his aforementioned negative qualities.

...A l'entrée .i. homme encontra
Qui li dist: "Sire, bien yeigniés,
Comme preus et bien afaitiés."...5

...Li chevaliers, simples et doux,
Qui le cors ot plaisant et gent...5

These passages can only be interpreted as an intentional attempt to inject a humorous note by assigning to the knight qualities which he obviously does not possess.

4MR II, 47.45-48; 48-49.78-82, 101-103.
5MR II, 49.94-96; 50.132-133.
These descriptions are then designed to evoke a chuckle in their obvious contrast to the actual deportment of the knight. The author's intention becomes even more obvious when we recognize their similarity to the traditional formulaic descriptions of knights in the romances. In this story then, a knight who is himself depicted quite negatively nevertheless triumphs over the greedy and lecherous priest.

_Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler_ again depicts the knight involved as one who is poor and who is forced to spend his time travelling about participating in tournaments in an effort to establish a reputation and win prizes:

Li chevaliers povre devint
Ainz que il fust de grant sage;
Por quant sel tenoit on à saige:
Mais n'avoit ne vigne ne terre.
En tornoiement et en guerre
Estoit tristote s'attendance, ...

In contrast to the knight of _Le chevalier et le prestre_, his abilities with the lance were exceptional:

Quar bien savoit ferir de lance;
Hardiz estoit et combatanz,
Et au besoig bien secouranz. ...

There are few adjectives used in any direct description of the knight, but rather his actions serve to characterize

---

6 The Arthurian romances, for example, use extensively terms such as _cortois, preus, dous, noble_ whenever a favored knight is introduced into the story.

7 _MR_ VI, 69.24-29.

8 _MR_ VI, 69.30-32.
him. He is an idealist, a sort of Don Quijote who refuses to commit any act unbecoming a knight and which might damage his reputation. His language would seem to indicate a person of the highest moral character and complete devotion to knightly ideals. However, after being rewarded with the ridiculously obscene power to "faire les cons parler", his own moral fiber appears to have been affected, for he rationalizes away his expropriation of the horse and money of a priest who is frightened out of his wits at the sound of a voice distinctly emanating from the posterior regions of his donkey. The priest, however, is described as "avers et chiches" and considering that the priest is usually ridiculed and deceived by other characters in the fabliaux, we might hesitate to negate the high caliber of our knight's character for this reason alone. But he must be rebuked later for obviously enjoying the discomfort of a poor peasant girl when he exercises his magic power over her and even more so for his determination to make an extremely obscene display of his powers at the expense of the wife of the gracious lord who has granted him lodging. Although she provokes the incident, the knight seems to relish the opportunity to prove her wrong.

Thus while expressing more noble ideals than his

9MR VI, 77.256.
counterpart in *Le prestre et le chevalier*, we find the actions of *Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler* in the latter part of the story *unknightly* to say the least. And while both triumph over their victims, while both are deceivers rather than the deceived, neither maintains those lofty ideals or that completely proper course of action expected of the knight.

The story *Le var palefroi* contains none of the obscenity or lechery associated with *Le prestre et le chevalier* and *Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler*. Bédier has suggested that this piece might more appropriately be termed a short verse romance rather than a fabliau. We shall examine later those aspects of the story which allow us to classify it with the latter group (See p.153 ). The knight Guillaume, the story's principal character, is introduced early in the story:

...Or redit d'uns chevaliers preus,  
Cortois et bien chevalereus,  
Riches de cuer, povres d'avoir,  
Issi com vous porrez savoir,  
Mest en la terre de Champaigne;  
Droiz est que sa bonté empaingne  
Et la valeur dont fu espris;  
En tant mains leus fu de grant pris,  
Quar sens et honor et hautece  
Avoit, et cuer de grant proece;  
S'autretant fust d'avoir seupris  
Comme il estoit de bien espris,  
Por qu'il n'empurast por l'avoir.  
L'en ne peust son per savoir,...

---

Guillaume obviously has all of the qualities necessary for greatness, but like his fellow knights in Le chevalier et le prestre and Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler, his financial status is deplorable. While we have reason to question the prouesse and cortoisie of those of the previously discussed stories, Guillaume's actions are beyond reproach. The above passage depicts the ideal knight, one endowed with all desirable qualities. His one problem is of course his lack of a substantial income "riches de cuer, povres d'avoir". Guillaume's qualities, so well delineated in the passage above, are further emphasized in the following sections:

...Tout là où il estoit venue
Si estoit son priz connue,
Que cil qui ne le connoissoient,
Por les biens qui de lui nessoient
En amoient la renomee.
Quant il avoit la teste armee,
Quant il ert au tornoiement
N'avoit soing de dosnoiement,
Ne de jouer a la forclose;
La ou la presse ert plus enclose
Se feroit tout de plain eslaie.
Il n'estoit mie aus armes lais,
Quant sor son cheval ert couuers;
Ne fust ja si pleniers yvers
Que il n'eust robe envoisie,
Sen estoit auques achoisie
L'envoiseure de son cuer;
Mes terre avoit a petit fuer,
Et moit estoit biaus ses confors.
Plus et .CC. livres de fors
Ne valoit pas par an sa terre;
Par tout aloit por son pris querre. ...

...Li chevaliers preus et senes... 11

11MR I, 26.55-76; 29.152.
His marriage to his beloved has been forbidden by her father who harshly refuses to even consider granting the hand of his daughter to a knight whose income consists largely of prizes won in tournament competitions:

...ne suis pas si yvres
Que je ma fille donner doie
A chevalier qui vit de proie; 12

Upon hearing the results of Guillaume's plea for her hand his sweetheart pays tribute to his nobility and moral qualities and wishes that her father might see and understand this:

...Sire, s'a la vostre bonté
Vousist mon père prendre garde,...

...S'il contrepesast vo richece
Encontre vostre grant procece
Bien deust graer le marchiè. 13

Guillaume is of course with the aid of his palefroi destined to triumph over those who seek to prevent his marriage. The vows are finally spoken and the final lines of the story emphasize the triumph of the noble hero, for Guillaume is destined to become an even greater knight:

...Mesire Guillaume fu preus,
Cortois et molt chevalereus;
Ainz sa proesce ne lessa,
Mès plus et plus e'en efforça;
Bien fu de princes et de contes. 14

12 *MR I, 34-35.318-320.*


14 *MR I, 68.1323-1327.*
In comparing this passage with that in lines 35-48 (See p. 27), we note that Guillaume has completely justified the earlier description. He has proved that courage and nobility of spirit are the true marks of human value and that money is not everything.

Guillaume is truly the hero of Le vair palefroi, while his counterparts in Le chevalier et le prestre and Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler exhibit negative qualities which preclude such a designation for them. Let us review briefly the complimentary vocabulary used in reference to Guillaume:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjectives and Adjectival Phrases</th>
<th>Nouns and Noun Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>præus</td>
<td>præsce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cortois</td>
<td>bonte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chevalereus</td>
<td>honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sages</td>
<td>hautece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riches de cuer</td>
<td>cuer de grant proceel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de grant pris</td>
<td>son pris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bien espris</td>
<td>l'envoûseur de son cuer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We find this sort of vocabulary time and time again in literary descriptions of the knight in both the epic and the romance, but there are few such examples in the fabliaux.

In the first lines of the Chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame, the author announces his intention to immediately begin his story "sans plus longuement deslaier". Thus we have no description of the knight and his qualities.

15MR VI, 138.1.
We do learn something about him as the story progresses. This is the first story in which the poverty of the knight has not been emphasized. This knight is obsessed with a certain married lady and his love is expressed in the most courtly terms. The tournament is introduced into the story not as a means of financial reward, but as a way in which the lover can prove himself worthy of his beloved in combat. He wishes to challenge her husband. This type of adulterous liaison is of course a prominent feature of much of the literature of the courtly tradition as well as of the fabliaux. The knight is specifically involved in an illegitimate relationship in nine of the fabliaux included in our study.

The knight is successful in the tournament and is granted an audience with his beloved. We now discover that he is not the perfect courtly lover at all, for he falls asleep while waiting for the lady's arrival and the rewarding of his prouesse.\(^16\) This is the first example of the lowering of the plane on which the poem is written. We now recall that we are reading a fabliau rather than a courtly romance. The stratagem devised by the knight to regain the love of his lady (for she abhors his conduct and has rejected him) further propels us into the world of the fabliaux. Wit and audacity are exercised by the knight.

\(^{16}\) The lover's rejection by his lady as a result of this demonstration of something less than complete devotion recalls Lancelot's rejection by Guinevere as punishment for his hesitancy in jumping on the cart (Chrétien de Troyes: *Le Chevalier de la Charette*).
and he ultimately succeeds in regaining her favor through a ruse in which we find the husband becoming a party to his own cuckolding. Again there is a direct contrast in the knight's early behavior and his subsequent actions. Such contrasts which seem such an integral part of the fabliaux are discussed further in Chapter V.

Although we were able to obtain information with regard to tournament preparations and procedure from the story of *Le chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame*, the designation of the hero as a tournament knight does not seem quite justified. While it is true that he actively participates in a tournament, the purpose of his participation is to prove his complete love for a lady whose favors he is seeking. There is no mention of his poverty or of his frequent appearances at tournament competition as a means of supplementing his income. The tournament is merely his way of proving his courage to a lady who has questioned it.

The principal knight involved in the obscene little tale *D'une seule fame qui a son con servoit*. C. chevaliers is described as having been wounded in a tournament.

...Yssu sont fors a ost bennie
Toute la noble compeingnie
Mais que ,II. Chevalier, qui jurent
Au lit por ce que bleciè furent.
Li uns avoit le col plaisiiè,
Et li autres le bras brièsiè,
Estë avoient au tournoi
0ù pris aboient ce bonoi.17

17 Mr I, 296.51-58.
Of the frequency or purpose of his participation, we are told nothing. However we soon discover that he is interested in taking advantage of the absence of the other knights for immoral purposes. There are only two women in the castle and each had been satisfying the sexual appetites of fifty of the one hundred knights involved in the defense of the castle. Both women now make advances toward this single knight and the more desirable of the two (not his usual companion, by the way) succeeds in seductively persuading him to kill her rival. The returning knights are quite willing to overlook this radical breach of "knightly conduct" when the remaining woman offers to serve the entire one hundred to their complete satisfaction. Thus this knight turned murderer is allowed to escape punishment, a rather grotesque development considering the emphasis on a strict knightly code of conduct in other types of literature of the period.

In Guillaume au faucon we have an example of the extremely wealthy lord who undertakes a trip to a tournament in a distant country as a means of improving his own reputation and worth. Such an established knight would apparently assemble an impressive array of other knights in his service for the trip to the tournament, hoping that his retinue would be the most striking of all.
This lord is not the principal character of Guillaume au faucon, but is rather the husband of the lady loved by Guillaume, a young knight-in-training in his service. Guillaume's unflinching demonstration of his love for the lady results in her eventual reciprocation at the expense of her husband who has returned from the tournament. Thus the tournament knight becomes the deceived in this story, although we must consider that his wealth and his purpose in tourneying set him apart from the type of the poor knight seeking an income discussed previously.

Du chevalier à la corbeille provides us with a second instance of the wealthy husband participating in a distant tournament thus leaving the home front undefended and vulnerable. His purpose in tourneying is as noted above quite different from that of his less wealthy counterpart. For him it is a question of maintaining appearances, of doing what was expected, while the poorer knight depended on the tournament as a source of income:

Le chevalier mout bien souvent
Soleyt aler à tournoyement, 
Si com riche baroun deit fere.19

18 MR II, 96.126-130.
19 MR II, 184.43-45.
The above description of the husband as "riche baroun" effectively contrasts him with the suitor who is referred to as "chevaler de grant valour" and "chevalier de basse affere"20 and sets the stage for the ensuing events. The lover is of course destined to have his day with the wife of the "riche baroun", a further indication that tournament participation alone does not automatically make one the victor rather than the victim in the fabliaux. The question of wealth and the motivation for tourneying are then of even greater importance, for here and in Guillaume au faucon, the rich knight who tourneys merely as a matter of form is victimized by his financially inferior adversary.

The three knights described in La houce partie are brothers who had no inheritance and who have made their livings following the tournaments. The expression "suirre les tornoiemenz"21 suggests that many knights moved from tournament to tournament just as rodeo performers or gold professionals do today. They had not experienced great financial success and were in debt. The eldest now seeks to conclude an advantageous marriage for his daughter. The persistent quizzing of the prospective husband is designed

20MR II, 183.5; 184.46.
21MR I, 86.112.
to assure themselves that the daughter will become the sole heiress to the fortune of the prospective groom. They are depicted as extremely materialistic but shrewd. The father suggests the possibility that the knight might decide to enter an order of the church and give all of his money away:

...Biais sire, font li chevalier;
Se vous deveniez templier,
Ou moine blanc, ou moine noir,
Tost lesseries vostre avoir
Ou à temple ou à abée;
Nous ne nous i accordons mie; 22

When the agreement is finally made, the father can scarcely contain himself:

...Et, quant la parole fu dite,
Li chevaliers tout main à main
Saisi sa fille par la main;
Si l'a au bacheler donsée,
Et li valles l'a espousée. 23

Thus even though the knight succeeds in making a good deal for himself, he is hardly the embodiment of knightly perfection that is Guillaume in Le vair palefroi. We gain the impression that the brothers have become extremely greedy, cynical, and materialistic as a result of their careers as tournament knights.

Le chevalier à la robe vermeille is important as an example of a confrontation between the tournament and non-tournament knight. The husband of the lady involved in

22MR I, 87.145-150.
23MR I, 88.188-192.
this story was apparently a chevalier es lettres, a knight who served as a judge in the courts of his sovereign. He enjoyed a good reputation in the region:

...Uns chevalier qui sans reproche
Vesqui ou pais son age,
Molt le tenoient cil a sage 24
 Qui de lui estoient accinte.

The lady's lover, on the other hand, was a tournament knight who was similarly respected by everyone who knew him:

...Li amis à la dame ert teus
Qu'il erroit par toute la terre,
Por honor et por pris conquerre,
Tant que tuit le tindrent a preu. 25

The husband felt it was unnecessary to prove his prowess in combat, for he considered his abilities as a judge sufficient proof of his worth:

...Et li vavassors por son preu
Entendoit a autre maniere,
Qu'il avoit la langue maniere
A bien parler et sagement,
Et bien savoit i. jugement 26
Recorder, c'estoit ses delis.

We detect a note of sarcasm here and as the story unfolds we find the husband deceived and cuckolded by his wife while the tournament knight enjoys her favors.

The story Des III chevaliers et del chainse presents another example of the non-tournament knight as victim of

24 MR III, 35.4-7.
26 MR III, 35-36.18-23.
his tourneying counterpart. Again the fact of the husband's failure to participate in tournaments is emphasized:

Prise l'avoyt par mariage
Uns bachelers de bone afaire.
Laiens avoiet mut grant repaire
De chevaliers, car riches eie,
Cortois et larges despendere;
Ilh n'estoit mie tornoyeres,
Mais ilh estoit bons hebegieres;27

Three tournament knights who seek lodging at the castle of the knight described above fall immediately in love with the wife of the lord. One of them proves himself worthy of her love by participating in a tournament without armor, clad only in the "chainse" she has sent him. The husband soon understands what has transpired, but the great valor of the young knight in proving himself seems to override any marital obligations and the husband is forced to accept the situation in silence.

...Mut en fu a son seigneur ente,
Mais ilh ne fist semblant ne chiere;
On ne l'en vit muer maniere,
Ne mains parler ne mains taisir.28

Now let us summarize our findings as to the attributes of those tournament knights just discussed. We shall refer again to the particular degree of knightly perfection attained by each and attempt to determine if there is a plausible correspondence of his perfection to his treatment in

27 Mr III, 124.24-30.
28 Mr III, 135.370-373.
The knight Guillaume in *Le vair palefroi* is certainly the most perfect of the knights described and he is rewarded accordingly. He obtains the hand of his beloved not through a ruse of his own invention, but through what may be properly described as an act of fate. Guillaume is the typical poor unlanded knight, but his virtue is rewarded with an abundance of wealth and property before the story is ended. The victimized party (if there is one) is the girl's father, an extremely wealthy and powerful lord who looks down upon this "chevalier errant". Thus as far as the aristocratic hierarchy is concerned, this involves a victory of the inferior over his superior, a triumph for the less privileged, the less fortunate knight over his wealthy and prestigious opposition.

Let us now examine the following two questions in our consideration of the other tournament knights discussed in the first part of this chapter.

(1) Does the perfection of each knight, his success in maintaining a strict code of conduct correspond to his failure or success in his ventures?

(2) Does the knight of a lower social status, possessing less wealth and prestige, triumph consistently over his wealthy and frequently titled adversary?
The answer to the first question is very definitely no. The knights studied are successful in their enterprises with little consideration of their greater or lesser degree of virtue. The vulgar exploitation of his "gift" besmirches the character of the Chevalier qui fist les cons parler as does his willingness to use the young servant girl. The knight of Le chevalier et le prestre is apparently rather inept in combat, a terrific liar, and quite a lecher. Yet both of these "knights" emerge victorious over their respective victims. The brother knights of La houe partie are greedy and materialistic, but they obtain their goal in effecting an advantageous marriage for the daughter of the eldest. Le chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame, in falling asleep while waiting for his beloved, falls far short of the conduct expected of the courtly lover, but his wit and trickery enable him to regain the love of his lady. Two of the knights in Des III chevaliers et del chainse lack the absolute courage required of the knight in pursuit of the favors of his beloved, for they refuse to accept her challenge to fight without armor (just common sense perhaps). The most courageous of the three, the one who ultimately wins the favor of the lady has his misgivings and moments of hesitation but manages to overcome them.

Thus the knight's standard of conduct would seem to have little to do with his success or failure in his ad-
ventures or in the various deceits he attempts to practice. The virtues in the fabliaux are little concerned with the typical knightly virtues. Shrewdness and the ability to contrive clever deceits are admired and the sin of getting caught in bed with one's mistress attracts greater condemnation than the adultery itself.

The knight whose rank or position places him on a lower rung of the ladder of the aristocratic hierarchy does indeed consistently triumph over his wealthier and more distinguished rivals as does Guillaume in Le vair palefroi. Guillaume's request for the hand of his sweetheart is vehemently refused as her father reveals the little esteem in which he holds the tournament knight. The conclusion of the story however, finds Guillaume not only succeeding in the quest of his beloved, but also placed in the position of falling heir to all of his father-in-law's wealth.

Le chevalier qui fist les cons parier succeeds in his wager with the wife of a very noble and wealthy knight, subjecting her, in fact, to a very humiliating experience. In like manner, Le chevalier à la robe vermeille cuckolds the wealthier and more revered husband of his mistress. The noble husband in Des III chevaliers et del chainse is forced to remain silent in the face of certain evidence that his young wife has accepted a young tournament knight as lover while Le chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame makes his
superior a party to his own cuckoldling.

Guillaume au faucon and Le chevalier à la corbeille present unusual cases in that the wealthy and powerful husband is the one who leaves for tournament competition in order to improve his reputation. As noted above, however, the sin of wealth is not adequately compensated for in the fabliaux merely by tournament participation. The motivation to tourney is of primary importance. Thus is these two stories we have the only examples of tournament knights failing to triumph over their rivals.

In summary then, the tournament knight is consistently victorious in his dealings with other characters except in those rare cases in which he himself has great wealth. Numerous examples of his triumphs over nobles in a more elevated position are recounted. While these knights may possess great virtue as did Guillaume in Le vair palefroi, they are by no means always depicted in this manner (La houye partie, Le chevalier et le prestre, et cetera). The emphasis would appear then to be on the victory of the underdog, the triumph of the poor knight over his wealthy and respected counterpart, an indication that the viewpoint of these particular fabliaux is most probably not a reflection of the attitudes of the titled aristocracy.
B. The Wealthy and Titled Knight

Having demonstrated the consistent victories of tournament knights over their non-tourneying fellows, we must now turn to an examination of those stories in which the two do not meet, those fabliaux in which the wealthy and landed lord is the sole representative of the order of knights.

There are five fabliaux in which such a knight figures as a major character. In *Du chevalier qui fist sa femme confesse*, *Des tresses*, and *Romanz de un chivaler et de sa dame*, the knight is being cuckolded and is the victim of a ruse perpetrated by his wife while *Le sot chevalier* is exactly that, a fool who is ridiculed for his lack of knowledge, especially in sexual matters. The knight in *De la dame escollie* fares somewhat better in that he is eventually able to turn the tables on a domineering and demanding wife who has kept him "under her thumb" for many years. The gullible husband of *Des tresses* is convinced by his wife that the apparent proofs of her infidelity existed only in a dream:

Le chevaliers chose ne dist,
Se la dame le contredist,
Qu'il ne nuisdat ce fust mencaigne
Ou qu'il l'eüst trové en songe.29

The significance of the extremely lengthy description of the knight-victim's admirable qualities (lines 1-4) is dis-

29MR IV, 81.423-426.
cussed in chapter V (See p. 163). In Du chevalier qui fist sa femme confesse the knight seems at first to be deceiving his wife by borrowing the habit of a monk in order to hear her confession and thus confirm his suspicions of infidelity. The tables are turned however when his wife, confronted by her husband, claims to have recognized him all along and to have invented her list of indiscretions in order to teach him a lesson. Again the gullible husband accepts her story, but people throughout the area who knew the truth of the matter laughed behind his back:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tant li a dit, et tant conts,} \\
\text{Que li est a tout son espoir,} \\
\text{Et bienuida que dist voir.} \\
\text{Granz risés et granz gabeis} \\
\text{En féirent en Bescinois.}\end{align*}
\]

The Sot chevalier is described thusly:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{En la forest ancianor} \\
\text{Avoit manant .I. vavassor} \\
\text{Qui moult estoit bien herbregiéz;}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mès tant estoit sos par nature,} \\
\text{Qu'il n'oict dire créature} \\
\text{Que il ne dist maintenat} \\
\text{Plus de cent foiz en .I. tenant,} \\
\text{Quar setie l'ot deçeu.}\end{align*}
\]

The story revolves around his complete ignorance of sexual matters, an attempt by his mother-in-law to instruct him, and his foolish repetition aloud of the very graphic lesson he has learned.

\[30\text{MR I, 187.282-286.}\]

\[31\text{MR I, 221.11-13; 27-31.}\]
In all five instances, the knight involved is deceived and ridiculed and in three cases he is the victim of an adulterous wife. Thus the wealthy nontourneying knight not only suffers in direct conflict with the tournament knight, but he is played the fool in these five additional tales in which he appears as a major character.

We have yet to find an instance of this type of knight being well treated in the fabliaux. We must admit, however, that such references are not totally absent. There are several stories in which the established knight plays a minor role and in these tales he is not maligned.

The story of the Provost a l'aumuche deals with the treachery of a servant of the knight involved rather than presenting any significant depiction of the knight himself. In Frere Dénisé, a kindly knight aids a young girl in escaping the clutches of a monk who had through deceit and trickery made her his mistress. In De la vieille qui oint le palme au chevalier, the lord of the region reacts kindly to the simplicity of the old peasant woman who has taken quite literally the advice to "graisser la palme au chevalier", but he had been characterized earlier in the tale as greedy and subject to bribery. Thus the non-tourneying lord does appear in a favorable light in these few stories but he is definitely not the major character in any of them. When he is assigned a major role in a story, he is treated in a quite different manner.
C. The Cowardly Knight

Fabliaux eighty-six and ninety-three in the Montaiglon-Raynaud edition comprise quite similar versions of the story of Berangier au long cul. The former is by Guerin while the latter is anonymous. Except for certain shifts in emphasis the facts of the two versions are the same. The quotations employed in this section are for the most part taken from number eighty-six, the version by Guerin. In reading the stories, it soon is obvious that we are dealing with a quite wealthy and established knight. Why then is he not included in the previous section? There are two principal reasons for placing him in a separate category. He is, first of all, a coward, the only example of the cowardly knight in the fabliaux, and secondly, he has achieved his position and wealth through his marriage, being a commoner (vilain) by birth.

D'un chevalier qui ot pris fame,  
Ce m'est vis, une gentil dame,  
Fille d'un riche chastelain,  
Et cil estoit filz d'un vilein,

Et vanterres apres mengier;  
Mout se fesoit bon chevalier  
Par parole; en .III. ou en quatre.  

We are reminded of the unfortunate results in Le vilain mire when the daughter of a knight is married off to a commoner who was her father's creditor.

32MR III, 252.13-16; MR IV, 57.9-11.
Thus, in so far as the viewpoint of the fabliaux is concerned, Berangier has the misfortune of being wealthy and titled at the same time a faker, no real knight at all. As a result he is accorded the most vicious and revolting treatment of any knight in the fabliaux.

This marriage of the vilain to a young lady of the nobility had been arranged by her father who had allowed himself to get in a financial situation that demanded the bartering of his daughter. Soon after the marriage vows are spoken, this medieval "bourgeois gentilhomme" begins to exhibit a nature and form of conduct quite in contrast to that expected of a knight. Eating and sleeping appear to be his favorite pastimes and feats of arms hold no allure for him:

Li chevaliers amoit repos;
Il ne prisoit ne pris ne los,
Ne chevalerie .II. auz;
Tartes amoit et flaons chaus,
Et mout despisoit gent menue.

Ains pire de li ne fu mai
Por armes prenre ne baillier,
Mielz amast estrain enpailler
Que manoier ascu ne lance.33

Considering his lowly birth, however, what more could one expect?

Li chevalier mauvais et vill
Et coart lissent de tel gent.34

---

His undesirable qualities are emphasized as his wife takes him to task for his laziness and paints a glowing picture of those bold knights who are a glorious part of her family tradition.

Qu'il n'estoit mie chevaliers
Atrais ne de gentil lignaige;
Donc li ramentoit son paraige
Où tant a vaillanz chevaliers;
As armes sont hardiz et figrs,
A sejornen n'amoient rien.35

Stung by the scornful words of his wife, he determines to devise some deceit that will make her change her opinion. A deceit is the only answer, for any real change in the "knight" himself is by his very nature impossible.

Si se porpense qu'il fera,
Comment sa feme engignera
Qu'el le tiegne à bon chevalier.36

He arises the following morning, arms himself and declares that he is ready to do battle. The author humorously points out the unblemished condition of his armor:

Si fist ses armes aporter
Et son cors richement armor,
Quar armes avoit il mout beles
Trestotes fresches et noveles.37

He enters a nearby wood, dismounts and proceeds to strike his armor with his own sword in an effort to make it appear that he had taken part in a fearful combat. As he returns

36 MR III, 255.87-89.
37 MR III, 255.81-84.
in the evening, his wife comes out, as was the custom, to hold the stirrup while he dismounts:

Et sa femme contre lui vint;
Au descendre li tint l'estrier. 38

Her husband responds with a vicious kick, announcing that she is not worthy to touch such a great knight. He then launches into a monologue of self-praise wherein the reader or auditor can substitute the negative counterpart for each praiseworthy attribute he so graciously bestows on himself:

Or ce sachiez, n'est mie droiz
Qu'a si bon chevalier touchoiz
Con ge sui, ne si alose
Il n'a si preuz ne si ose
En tot vostre lignaige au meins;
Ne sui mie matez ne veins,
Ainz ai los de chevalerie. 39

As one can see, he also takes advantage of the opportunity to vilify his wife's family in the process of praising himself:

Que vos diroie? Ainsi servi
Le chevalier de ceste guille
Et tenoit la dame pour ville, 40
Et despisoit tot son lignaige.

Having practiced so successful a deceit, the knight tries the same ruse on other occasions until his wife became suspicious and determines to follow him. One morning her husband arises and announces "qu'il ira tuer. III.

38MR III, 256.116-117.
39MR III, 256.121-127.
40MR III, 256-257.138-141.
chevaliers qui le menacent...". His wife also dons knightly armament and sets out after him. Following him into the wood, she observes his abuse of his sword and armament and rides up to challenge him for striking the sword against the trees of her wood. Unable to recognize his wife in her armor, the coward is of course filled with fear at the prospect of combat and is delighted when the strange knight offers him another means of payment for his deeds. Suddenly we are aware again that this is a fabliau, for she states that he must either joust or kiss her rump; he may choose as he pleases. The decision is no difficult one:

Et cil qui doute mout forment
Et qui plains est de coardie
Dit que il ne jostera mie.42

As he places the kiss on the "uncovered rump of this fearsome knight, he notices the strange formation of this anatomical feature whereupon his wife announces that she is known far and wide as "Berangier au lonc cul".

Leaving her husband to thank God that his life has been spared, she returns to the castle and immediately invites one of her favorite knights into her bedroom. The husband returns and finding them in fond embrace threatens to denounce her before everyone. Her reply is a threat to call

41MR III, 257.164-165.
to her aid a certain brave knight called "Berangier au lonc cul". Her husband, realising that she in some way knows of the episode in the wood, is forced to remain silent and we can suppose that she will threaten him with "Berangier" to the end of his days.

Nowhere in the fabliaux is a knight dealt with in a more vicious or vulgar manner. He is reviled and despised because he is a villain who has suddenly been raised unjustly to the rank of wealthy and titled lord. The treatment accorded the knight in this story is completely compatible with attitudes revealed in the tales previously discussed. The knight of a lower station, the tournament knight, is the type consistently the victor in the intrigues of the fabliaux while those of higher station and counterfeit nobles such as the husband in Berangier au lonc cul are just as consistently victimized.

D. The Arthurian Knight

The Arthurian knight appears infrequently in the fabliaux, there being only one story set at the court of the good king Arthur, the tale of the Le mantel mauteilis in the MR edition. However, in the very first fabliau of this collection, two "jongleurs" are boasting about their individual repertoire of stories and one makes the following claim:
It is interesting to note that the epithets are reversed here. Quex (Ké, Kay), the sharp-tongued boastful knight of the romances, is here called "le bon chevalier" while Gauvain, normally depicted as a gallant and courteous knight, is referred to as one of whom the jongleur could speak evil. This reversal forms an important part of the pattern in this particular fabliau, for the boasts of the raconteurs are made to appear ridiculous as it becomes evident that they know absolutely nothing but are merely name-dropping. In their enumeration of Chansons de geste they consistently confuse the titles (Ogier de Montaubant, Renaut le Danois, et cetera). In considering our one Arthurian fabliau, Le mantel mautaillé, we are tempted to see something prophetic in this reference to Quex and Gauvain, for none of the Arthurian heroes emerge unscathed at the end of the story. It is in fact pointed out in rather dramatic fashion that each of them has been deceived by his wife or sweetheart and even the degree of infidelity is evident. Just as the normal attributes of Gauvain and Quex are reversed in the boasts of the jongleur, the victim-
izing of the Arthurian knights in *Le mantel mautaillié* represents a reversal of their roles as gallant heroes and lovers in the "romans courtois". Those knights who have vanquished innumerable foes in battle and who have proved themselves consistently worthy of the love of their ladies are here depicted as cuckolded and betrayed husbands and lovers. It is indeed unfortunate that no further examples of Arthurian fabliaux are extant.

A further examination of this tale reveals the ultimate triumph of an unknown knight over his more illustrious counterparts in that his sweetheart is proved the only faithful one in the assembly. The ladies involved in the fidelity test are requested to try on an extraordinarily beautiful mantel in order to determine whom it fits most properly, that person being destined to receive the garment as a gift. This magic mantel however has unusual properties. It will only hang properly on one whose faithfulness to her knight is without taint. In succession the ladies are brought forward, the wife of Quex, the sweethearts of Gauvain, Yvain, Ydier, et cetera, on and on until all the ladies have been found wanting to some degree in virtue. It is finally discovered that the "amie" of a certain Karados Brisebras has

\[44\] There is a striking similarity here to the Lai du Cor wherein the mantel is replaced by a drinking horn which spills its contents over the shoulders of any deceived lover or husband who attempts to drink from it. We are also reminded of the search for the maiden whose foot will fit the glass slipper of Cinderella.
not been tested being absent due to illness. She is brought in, the mantel is placed on her shoulders and it is a perfect fit. One can imagine the consternation among those knights whose ladies had not fared so well. The triumph of this impertinent upstart makes each of them feel even more ridiculous.

Thus here again we have the less renowned knight gaining the upper hand, the same sort of situation we have found to be typical of the fabliaux. Indeed this irreverence with which the heros of Arthurian lore are treated is quite characteristic of the spirit of the fabliaux, wherein prouesse and cortoisie are subordinated to trickery and deceit.
CHAPTER XIII

The Knight's Relationship With Other Characters in the Fabliaux

Attitudes toward the knight in the fabliaux are of course reflected in their relationships with other characters. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine these relationships in an effort to determine if there is any patterned treatment of the knight as he is brought in contact with diverse types of people, male and female, priest, peasant, and fellow knight. In treating the knight's relationships with female characters for example, we naturally find two basic types of associations. The knight is either husband or lover of the lady involved. Our objective then is to determine whether there is a consistent treatment of the knight who assumes either of these two roles.

We shall begin with a discussion of those stories in which the love triangle plays a prominent role. This category may then be sub-divided in order to separate those stories in which both husband and lover are knights from others wherein one of the parties involved is either a member of the clergy or a villain. We shall then move on to a consideration of those stories in which husband and wife or lover and sweetheart alone are involved. After our study
of these two most important relationships, we will turn to a brief survey of all other situations in which the knight is associated with any other character.

Before beginning our study, it seems advisable to present an outline listing the various types of relationships in the order in which they will be discussed.

I. The Love Triangle

A. Both husband and lover are knights
   1. Chevalier à la robe vermeille
   2. Des III chevaliers et del chainse
   3. Berangier au lonic cul
   4. Des tresces
   5. De l'espervier
   6. Du chevalier qui recovra l'amor
   7. Le chevalier à la corbeille
   8. De la dame qui se venga

B. Husband is not a knight
   1. no examples

C. Lover is not a knight
   1. Guillaume au faucon
   2. Romans de un chevalier et de sa dame et de un clerk
   3. Du prestre et du mouton

D. Lady is unmarried
   1. Du prestre et du chevalier
II. Two-character confrontations: The knight and female personages.

A. Wife and husband (knight)
1. Du chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse
2. Du sot chevalier
3. Le mantel mautaillié

B. Lady and sweetheart (knight)
1. Le vair palefroi
2. Le mantel mautaillié
3. Le sentier batu

C. The knight and his daughter
1. La houce partie
2. Vilain mire
3. Berangier au long cul
4. Le vair palefroi
5. De plaine bourse de sens

D. The knight and his mother-in-law
1. Le sot chevalier

E. The knight and a prostitute
1. D'une seule fame...

F. The knight and a casual acquaintance
1. Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler
2. Du prestre et du chevalier

G. The knight as benefactor to women
1. De la vielle qui cint le paume au chevalier
2. Frère Denise
III. Two-character confrontations: The knight and other male personages.

A. The knight and the priest
   1. Du prestre et du chevalier
   2. Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler
   3. Frère Denise
   4. Du prestre et du mouton
   5. Du pescheor de Pont seur saine
   6. Des estats du siécle
   7. Des putains et des lecheors
   8. Du chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse

B. The knight and the "vilain"
   1. Le vilain mire
   2. La houoe partie
   3. Berangier au lono cul
   4. Du pescheor de Pont seur Saine
   5. Des estats du siécle

C. The knight and his squire
   1. Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler
   2. Du prestre et du chevalier
   3. Le chevalier à la corbeille
   4. De celle qui se fist foutre sur la fosse de son mari

D. The knight and the king
   1. Le mantel mautaillid
   2. La male Honte
I. The Love Triangle
A. Both husband and lover are knights

The story of the *Chevalier à la robe vermeille* deals with a ruse in which the wife convinces her husband that he is sick or has been dreaming in order to conceal from him a visit by her lover. A similar deceit is practiced in *Des tresoes*. In the former, the *robe vermeille* is left behind by the lover who is forced to flee upon the unexpected return of the husband. The garment is explained away as a gift from the wife's brother who had just left. The explanation is accepted by the husband who retires for the night. The following morning, desiring to wear his new *robe*, he requests that his servant bring it to him. The servant has no idea which garment his lord means and the whereabouts of the *robe* is demanded of the wife. She pretends to know nothing about the matter and even expresses horror that her lord would even consider lowering himself to the point of accepting a gift of clothing from another. She assures him that he has either been dreaming or is perhaps feverish and delirious. Her ruse is successful and the author of the story passes on this advice to his audience:

*Cis fabliaux aus maris promet
Que de folie s'entremet
Qui croit ce que de ses iex voie;
Mès cil qui vait la droite voie,*
Doit bien croire sans contredit
Tout ce que sa fame li dit.\textsuperscript{1}

It is certainly significant to point out that the deceived husband is a knight of the non-tourneying type while the lover is one who has participated in many tournaments in order to demonstrate his love for his mistress.

The same distinction between the husband and lover exists in Des III chevaliers et del chaine. The young knight who ultimately wins the favor of the lady is a poor but worthy warrior who had arrived in the area to participate in a tournament while the husband is a wealthy and titled lord. In this case however, no ruse is necessary for the husband seems to accept his cuckolding in a rather matter-of-fact manner. Any great protest on his part would apparently have been met with disapproval by the other knights and ladies since their sympathies were obviously with the young gallant who had proved himself so worthy of his lady's favors by doing battle without any armor.

\textsuperscript{1}MR III, 45.307-312.

\textsuperscript{2}MR III, 135.370-373.

The husband is again deceived by his wife in Berangier au long cul and after administering a most absurd form of punishment to him, she even flaunts her lover in his face.
We must remember, however, that in this instance we are dealing with no true knight, but with an "artificial" knight, whose cowardice is his most prominent characteristic. Still he conforms to the pattern of the deceived husband present in the Le chevalier à la robe vermeille and Des III chevaliers et del chainse.

An elaborate ruse is designed in order to deceive the cuckolded husband in Des tresces. His wife's lover, a young knight from the neighboring countryside, has the audacity to enter the couple's bedroom in an effort to awaken his sweetheart. He mistakenly arouses the husband who pushes him into a tub standing nearby and shouts to his wife for a lantern. The wife, now aware of the identity
of the intruder, pretends a fear of the darkened kitchen and promises to hold on to the culprit until her husband returns with the light. While he is away a calf from the stable is substituted for the lover, but the husband refuses to believe what he sees and orders his wife out. She joins her lover at a relative’s home and they devise a plan for restoring her to her husband's good graces. A servant girl is sent to the knight's home with instructions to enter the bedroom and begin weeping. When she follows their orders, she is struck by the husband who in the dark believes her to be his faithless wife. He then snips off some of her hair so that she will be publicly disgraced. Having heard the results of the encounter, the wife returns home, cuts off a portion of the calf's tail and substitutes it for the locks of the servant girl. She then resumes her place beside her husband. When he awakens in a rage the following morning, she insists that he has been dreaming or that he is mad. Seeing the hair from the calf and finding no sign of a blow or missing hair on his wife, the poor soul is forced to accept her story and beg her forgiveness for his lack of faith. Emphasizing the possibility of some illness affecting his vision, she suggests that he undertake a pilgrimage in an effort to effect a cure. He agrees and the deceitful wife is overjoyed at the prospect of several visits by her lover.
Thus the husband again suffers indignities at the hands of his treacherous wife and her lover.

The various versions and the sources of De l'espervier are discussed by Bedier (Les Fabliaux, pp. 228-36) and by Gaston Paris in Romania (VII, 1). The account of the tale in the MR edition involves two knights who are extremely close friends, practically inseparable. One finally marries an extremely beautiful lady but soon suspects that his friend loves his wife also. He confronts the two with his suspicions and bitterly denounces his former friend. Although there had been nothing between the two up to that point, the husband's angry harangue achieves the opposite of the desired effect and soon his wife and his friend realize that they are actually in love. When the husband absents himself on a hunt the lover sends his squire to announce his own imminent arrival. The squire is attracted by the lovely lady's charms and attempts to obtain her favors, but he is forced to hide when his lord arrives. The husband then returns unexpectedly and the lady must be able

\[\text{MR IV, 81.427-434.}\]
to explain the presence of the two men. She urges her lover to make loud menacing threats so that her husband might hear. He complies with her instructions and then departs. The lady is confronted by her husband who believes the threats were meant for him. His wife in turn produces the squire and explains that while hunting he had lost his master's hawk and was being chased by the knight whose threats of death had been directed at him. She had of course hidden the squire in order to protect him. Once again the lady has devised a shrewd and cunning scheme in order to protect her lover and reaffirm her husband's faith in her.

The lover knight of *Le chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame* is intent on winning the favors of a beautiful but married lady. He seeks the right to meet her husband in tournament competition in order to prove himself worthy of her. Like the often capricious and demanding ladies of the courtly tradition, she has chided her suitor for his failure to perform any noble deeds in her behalf:

\[\text{Gil chevaliers tant la requist} \\
\text{Que la dame à raison lo mist} \\
\text{Un jor, et li demande et quiert} \\
\text{De quel aconte il la requiert} \\
\text{D'amor, quant il jor de sa vie} \\
\text{Ne fist por li chevalerie} \\
\text{Ne proece qui li plaust} \\
\text{Par quoi s'amor avoir deust.} \\
\text{Si li dist, en riant, sanz ire} \\
\text{Que de s'amor n'iert il ja sire} \\
\text{De si que sache san dotance} \\
\text{Commant il porte escu ne lancq,} \\
\text{Et s'il en set venir à chief.}^{5}\]

---

Successful in his battle with the husband, the knight is granted an audience with his lady for that same evening. While waiting for her arrival, he is overcome with combat fatigue and falls asleep. Upon observing him in this somnolent state, the lady angrily returns to her room, refusing to abide such a sign of imperfection in her intended suitor.

When a servant awakens the knight and reveals what has transpired, he realizes he must devise a scheme for regaining the favor and admiration of his lady. He boldly enters the bedroom of the sleeping couple and stands before them, sword in hand. The husband is awakened by the reflection of the gleaming sword and demands that the intruder identify himself. Claiming to be the spirit of a knight who had been killed that day in the jousts, he states that he has come to demand the pardon of this lady toward whom he had acted badly. The disturbed husband urges his wife to forgive this wretched knight whose soul is apparently in a state of great agitation. Admiring the boldness and shrewdness of the knight, she readily agrees and thus the husband becomes a party to his own cuckolding.

Or s'an vait il sans arrestée;  
Bien a sa besoigne atornée.  
Mais, s'il n'aust ensin ovré,  
Il n'aust jamais recovrè  
L'amor qu'il ot tot de novel.

This is of course the first tale in the category under

_____  
6MR VI, 146.243-247.
discussion in which the ruse has been conceived and perpetrated by the lover knight. In all previous cases (Le chevalier à la robe vermeille, Berangier au lonc cul, Des tresces, De l'esnervier), the wife assumes the role of the crafty and cunning deceiver.

A lover concocts a scheme to meet his sweetheart during her husband's absence in Le chevalier à la corbeille. His easy access to his beloved being hindered by a high wall, he devises a plan through which he is raised to the top of the wall in a basket attached to ropes manipulated by his squire:

Et um ly fet test aporter
Une corbeille bien tornée,
De cordes bien avyronée,
Ou la aye cely desus.
Le chevaler, qu remist jus,
S'est denz la corbaille coochée,
E cil l'ount sus le mur sakee
E molt test le ount mis a vale
De le mur desqe en la sale;

The husband in this instance is of course a "victim in absentia" but his role as guardian of his wife's virtue is assumed by his mother who as a result suffers those indignities normally reserved for the husband.

Now we turn to a story that alters the pattern previously established, that of the consistently deceived and cuckolded husband. De la dame qui se venga du chevalier, as the title suggests, depicts a situation in which the

7MR II, 188.160-168.
lover is the object of a carefully conceived ruse devised by his sweetheart. He had made certain inappropriate remarks to her and she is determined to repay his lack of courtesy. We should hasten to add that although the husband is not himself the victim of the lady, he too is tricked and deceived in the accomplishment of her plan.

The lady has devised a plan which is designed in the course of its implementation to place her lover in a terrifying predicament. Having sent her husband away on a hunt, she invites her lover to be with her. She arranges circumstances so that her husband returns while they are in bed together. The wife speaks to her husband in the darkened bedroom while her lover quivers under the covers. Imagine his fright when he suddenly hears the lady ask her husband what course of action he would take should a lover be in bed with her. The husband shouts that he would kill him and his wife suggests that he go for his sword for there is one present who has been next to her more often than he. The young lover is now properly terrified and only at this moment does the lady relent and admit to her husband that she has been teasing him, that she was only referring to her gown. Thus in this clever manner the affronted mistress effectively punishes her lover while using her husband as the unsuspecting instrument of the deceit.

Ceste aventure retenez
Et plus souvent la recordez:
The husband then is treated in no better manner here than in the other stories of this group, the major difference resting in the deceit of the lover as well.

In summary, the eight fabliaux depicting a love triangle in which both the lover and husband are knights reveal a consistent pattern in the treatment of these two roles. In all of the stories the husband is being or has been cuckolded by his wife and her lover. In each case the husband is depicted as weak and ineffective and in four of the tales (Le chevalier à la robe vermeille, Berangier au lonc cul, Des tresces, De l'espervier), he is victimized by his wife who skillfully perpetrates a deceit designed to prevent his learning of or interfering with her affair. Thus the married knight is constantly demeaned in the fabliaux. It is also important to note that the husband in most cases corresponds to the wealthy and titled lord discussed in chapter I while the lover is a tournament knight or at least a knight of lower station. The respective treatments accorded the husbands and lovers in these stories of the ménage à trois then obviously correspond to the depiction of these two types of knights in the fabliaux as a

8MR VI, 33.265-270.
whole. Only in  _De la dame qui se venga du chevalier_ does the lover fall victim to his mistress and even here the husband is treated in no better fashion.

We should note the strong role assigned the woman in these intrigues. In all of the stories discussed above except two ( _Le chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame_ and _Le chevalier à la corbeille_), she dominates the knight whether he be husband or lover. She cleverly devises the plots and schemes which are essential to her continuing affair with her lover and the retention of her husband's esteem.

B. Husband is not a knight

(No examples)

C. The lover is not a knight

Having found no occurrences of love triangles in which the lover is a knight and the husband is not, we shall move on to a consideration of those cases in which the lover is not a knight. In _Guillaume au faucon_, he is, however, on the threshold of knighthood and has only remained in this position for fear of being separated from the wife of his lord, a lady whose charms have completely won his heart.

_Li vallez ot à non Guillaume,
Cerchier pëust-on .xx. realmes
Ainz o'on pëust trover si gent,
Et s'estoit molt de haute gent._
Finally while the husband is away participating in a
tournament, Guillaume musters the courage to speak to the
lady of his love. She firmly resists his advances and
threatens to report the matter to her husband. Guillaume
falls ill, obsessed with his love. He refuses to eat and
steadily grows weaker until he lies at the point of death.
When the husband returns, his wife threatens to tell all if
Guillaume is obstinate enough to continue his foolish fast.
Preferring death to a life of misery without his love, he
refuses. Seeing how much she is loved, the lady’s heart
softens and she concocts a tale to explain Guillaume’s ill-
ness. She tells her husband that Guillaume had asked for
the lord’s falcon and that she had refused him. Her hus-
band accepts the story and the lady’s act in Guillaume’s
behalf is an indication to this suffering soul that he may
finally expect his beloved to grant him her favors. The

9MR II, 92-93.7-24.
lord sends for his falcon and gives it to Guillaume. The lady's reaction fills Guillaume with great joy for her words clearly show that she is also to be his:

Dist la Dame: "Or avez faucon; .ii. besanz valent .i. mangon."
Ce fu bien dit, .ii. moz à un,
Que il en auroit .ii. por un,
Et cil si ot ainz l'endemain
Le faucon dont il ot tel faim,
Et de la dame son deduit
Qu'il ama mielz que autre fruit.  

We have become accustomed to the idea that the knight of higher position repeatedly suffers indignities at the hands of knights of lower status, but in Guillaume au faucon we would appear to have our first example of a lover who is not even a knight triumphing over the titled husband. As we mentioned above, however, there do appear to be extenuating circumstances. Guillaume was apparently perfectly capable of having already attained the rank of knight, but his fear of separation from his beloved had prompted him by his own choice to retain his position as "vallez". This fact is important if we are to admit a certain sense of propriety in the fabliaux, for although it may be perfectly proper for one knight to triumph over another, it is quite another thing to permit a noble to be demeaned by one who is markedly lower on the social scale, as for example, a merchant or peasant. Guillaume's self-imposed refusal of knighthood thus permits us to assume in him those qualities

\[10\text{MR II, 112.607-614.}\]
necessary to the knight and his ultimate victory over the husband then becomes less offensive.

A similar situation exists in the Romanz de un chivaler et de sa dame et de un clerk in that a cleric gains the upper hand in a love triangle involving the wife of a knight. But here again there seems to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to make this development plausible as he offers a bit of biographical information on the "clerk":

\[\text{Si estoit li clerk gentil,}\]
\[\text{Ne fut paisant ne nès vil,}\]
\[\text{Car fix de chivaler estoit.}\]
\[\text{Piere e miere perdu avoit;}\]
\[\text{A la clergie se vout tenir;}\]
\[\text{De ceo se quidout mieuz guarir.}\]

The noble parentage of the clerk thus must have been a satisfactory explanation of his triumph over the knight in this story. If this sense of propriety and class distinction had not been important to the authors of the fabliaux, we could certainly expect to find the wealthy and titled lord not only the victim of the "chevalier errant" but also of the clerk and the vilain. That is obviously not the case since the only two stories involving the conflict of the husband-knight with lovers who are not knights have built-in explanations which make their triumphs understandable, explanations which practically have

\[^{11\text{MR II, 217.67-72.}}\]
the effect of conferring knighthood on them.

There are two other brief references to love affairs of this type. In Du pescheor de Pont sur Saine a priest is drowned by a knight who discovered his interest in his wife:

Lors a veu venir flotant,
_I. provoire qui ert nois,
Si vous dirai par quel pechié;
Uns chevaliers le mescreoit
Qui por sa fame le haoit;12

The eighteen lines of Du prestre et du mouton relate the story of a priest who is having an affair with the wife of a knight. One day while the two were together the priest suffered great indignity from the head of a ram who took pleasure in butting. The attack occurred of course at a most inappropriate moment and as the author wittily observes:

Par ce nos veut Haiseaus moutrer.
Qu'il se fet bon de tot garder.13

In these two cases the priests who have dared to love the wives of knights suffer greatly for their indiscretion and lack of propriety.

D. The Lady is unmarried

The tale of Du prestre et du chevalier offers the sole example of a triangle involving a knight and an unmarried

12MR III, 71.84-88.
13MR VI, 50.17-18.
woman, another indication of the predominantly adulterous nature of this type of relationship in the fabliaux. In the course of the story, a travelling knight extracts a promise to provide him anything he desires from a wealthy priest who has reluctantly given him lodging. The knight among other things demands the favors of both the niece and the mistress of the worldly priest. The knight's pursuit of sensual pleasures from women quite definitely beneath his station would certainly seem to violate that sense of propriety discussed above, but here again there is a plausible explanation. The knight involved is the type of impoverished tournament participant who normally emerges triumphant in the intrigues of the fabliaux and even here there is no exception to that characteristic feature of the genre, for the knight does have his way. However, there is one major difference in the author's depiction of this knight. He is described as cowardly and somewhat inept in combat and his bold lies to the priest with regard to his financial condition reveal him to be something of a scoundrel. His stated purpose after all is to "take the priest" for all he can.

C'uns Chevaliers molt povrement
Repairoit du tournoiement;
Si avoit tout perdu le sien,
Et si avoit esté si bien
Batus que, s'il donnast .c. saus,
Ne trouvast-il qui tant de cols
Li donast pour .c. sols contes.
Laidement fu debarêtés;
Si ot toute sa compaignie
Perdue et toute sa mainsnie,
Et son harnas et son conroi.

Ensi s'en vint molt povrement
Et .i. Ecuiers seulement.
S'esmurent une matinée
Pour revenir en lor contrée.14

De la messaise qu'il souffroit,
Et sachiés bien qu'il estoit
.XIII. sans de sa poverté
Que de son cors ne de sa perte.15

Qui molt eert avenans et bele
.X. sans que dire ne poroir
De Monpellier dessi à Roie.16

Enseigne moi le plus riche homme
De ceste ville, c'est la somme."
Dist li vilains: "C'est notre Prestres.
Ch'est li plus riche qui puisst estre
Chi environ dis liues loing.17

Just as the clerk in Romanz de un chevalier et de sa dame
et de un clerk is presented as being of noble parentage
and endowed with knightly qualities in an effort to make
his liaison with the wife of a knight more acceptable, so
here the knight is most probably described as cowardly and
unscrupulous in order to explain his readiness to have a
physical relationship with women beneath his station.

14MR II, 46.5-20.
15MR II, 47.33-36.
16MR II, 48.58-60.
17MR II, 49.99-103.
II. Two-character Confrontations:

The knight and female personages

Having completed our survey of the knight's participation in several types of love triangles, we now turn to a consideration of relationships of a non-triangular variety, that is to say, those tales in which the knight is involved primarily with one other character. We shall first examine all of his encounters with female characters and then direct our attention to situations affording us examples of confrontations with other male characters—other knights, priests, peasants, et cetera.

A. Wife and Husband (Knight)

There are three fabliaux which treat the husband-wife relationship, omitting of course the previously discussed love triangle. In all three cases, Du chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse, Du sot chevalier, and Du mantel mautailié, the husband is dealt with in a manner quite unbecoming a man of his position.

The title Du chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse is somewhat misleading in that it suggests the dominance of the husband. A closer examination of the situation depicted reveals that any such inference based on the title is false. It is true that the husband appears to have the upper hand for most of the story, but ultimately the tables are turned.
In Beesin there lived a knight who loved and trusted his wife so implicitly that he gave no thought to any possible indiscretion on her part:

En Beesin, moult pres de Vire,
Une merveille j'oi dire
D'un Chevalier et de sa fame. 18

Et li sires tant se sioit
En sa moillier, et tant l'amoit,
Que de rien cure ne premoit,
Tout li ert bon quanques fesoit,
Qu'à nule riens ne féist
Se il séust qu'il ne vousist. 19

As was mentioned earlier, he determines to assure himself once and for all that his wife is true to him by disguising himself as a monk and thus hearing her shocking confession:

En leu de moine e li vendrai,
Et sa confession orrai.

Through the skillful manipulations of the accused wife, the situation is soon reversed and the befuddled husband is led to believe that it is he who has committed a grave sin in ever doubting her virtue.

Le sot chevalier is without question one of the most obscene fabliaux. The knight involved is extremely wealthy and as a result has arranged an excellent marriage, but his ignorance with regard to sexual matters is appalling. At the end of a year the marriage is still unconsummated:

18 **MR** I, 178.1-3.

19 **MR** I, 178.7-12.

20 **MR** I, 179.47-48.
The poor chap’s mother-in-law decides to provide him with a certain enlightenment and takes him into her room for instruction. In his determined effort to remember the rather specific lesson he has been taught, the demented knight repeats it aloud at regular intervals, the final result placing him in an extremely ridiculous situation. Thus this poor fellow’s attempts to consummate his marriage result in his becoming an object of scorn and contempt, hardly a fitting position for a wealthy vavassor.

In *Le mantel mautaillié*, each knight (Ke, Yvain, Perceval, Ydier, et cetera) praises his lady’s virtue as she comes forward to don the mantel and each in turn is forced to eat his words, so to speak, as the garment is first ridiculously high in back or dragging the floor in front as each successive lady tries it on. To make matters worse, the greater infidelity of the lady, the worse the fit of the mantel.

The queen herself covets the magnificent cape and without knowing the significance of her act, she places it on her shoulders. The fit is far from perfect:

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La Roine premier le prent;
Maintenant à son col le pent
Que moult amast que il siens fust.
Mès, se la verité sëust
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21 *MR* I, 221.38-41.
Comment li mantiaus fu toissuz,
Ja à son col ne fust penduz.
A paine au soller li ataint;
Toz li vis li palist et taint
Por la honte que ele en ot.22

In the Montaiglon-Raynaud edition the ladies involved with Key, Yvain, Gavain, et cetera, are referred to as their "amies", suggesting that they are unmarried, but the Legrand d'Aussy edition of 1829 specifically refers to the wife of Sir Kay and Gauvain. The Montaiglon-Raynaud text also points out that both wives and sweethearts were proved unfaithful in the course of the fittings:

A la cort n'ot nul chevalier
Qui drue i eust ne moillier
Qui molt n'eust le cuer dolent,
Qui veist lor contenement
Com li uns l'autre regardeit;
Mes auques les reconfortoit
Ce que li uns ne pooit nue
Dire de l'autre vilonie
Que il meismes n'i partist.23

Thus, le chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse, le sot chevalier, and le mantel mautallié all depict situations in which husband-knights are ridiculed or deceived. This treatment of the husband corresponds to his perpetual cuckolding in the love triangles previously discussed and is perfectly understandable when one considers the somewhat stereotyped role he plays in the fabliaux.

22MR III, 10-11.281-289.
If one only considers the relationship between the noble Guillaume and his lady in *Le vair palefroi*, Bédier's previously referred-to description of the story as a courtly tale seems justified, for Guillaume is indeed a perfect example of the young knight hopelessly in love but apparently doomed to see his beloved given in marriage to his own uncle, an old but extremely wealthy rascal. Unable to visit with his love because of her father's disapproval, Guillaume daily follows a secret path leading from his rather modest dwelling to that of his sweetheart. Taking his place on the outside of the wall surrounding her house, he was able to converse with her but unable to see her:

Et, quant li chevalier venir
Voloit à celle qu'il amoit,
Por ce que on l'en renomoit,
Avoit en la forest parfonde,
Qui grans estoit à la roonde,
Un sentier fet, qui n'estoit mie
Hantez d'ome qui fust en vie
Se de lui non tant seulement.
Par là aloit celsemement.
Entre lui et son palefroi,
Sanz demener noise n'effroi,
A la pucele maintes foiz.
Mès molt estoit grans li defois,
Quar n'i pooit parler de près;
Si en estoit forment engrès,
Que la cort estoit molt fort close.
La pucele n'ert pas si ose
Qu'ële de la porte assist fors;
Mès de tant ert bons ses confors
Qu'à lui parloit par mainte foiz
Par une planche d'un defois.24

Guillaume finally approaches the father and eloquently requests the hand of his daughter:

--Sire, dist-il, je vous dirai
Quel don je vous demanderai.
Vous savez auques de mon estré;
Bien connüstes mon anestre
Et mon recet et ma meson,
Et bien savez en quel seson
Et en quel point je me déduis;
En guerredon, sire, vous ruis
Vostre fille, se il vous plést.
Diez doinst que pensser ne vous lest
Destorber le vostre corage
Que vous cest don, par mon outrage
Que j'ai requis, ne me faciez;
Et si vueil bien que vous sachiez
C'onques ne fui jor ses acointes;
Quar molt en fusse baus et cointes
Se je a li parlé susse,
Et les granz biens aparçusse
De qui ele a grant renommée.
Molt est en cest pais amée
Por les granz biens qui en li sont;
Il n'a son pareil en cest mont.
Ce me content tuit si acointe,
Mès à petit de genz s'acointe,
Por ce qu'ele est cëns enclose.
La penssee ai eu trop ose
Quant demander la vous osai,
Et, se je de vous le los ai
Que m'en daingnies fare le don
En service et en guerredon;
Baus et joianz forment en iër.
Or vous ai dite ma proïre,
Respondez m'en vostre plesir.**25

His plea is of course denied, for the father is seeking a marriage based on financial gain. The maiden now suggests that Guillaume attempt to secure the aid of his uncle who "n'est pas mains riches de mon père" (MR I, 37.407) and who could provide his nephew with a dowry sufficient to per-

suade the girl's father. The uncle is consulted, pretends to agree, then instead asks for the daughter's hand himself. He is accepted as a suitable husband and thus two forces of richesse et pouvoir are united against Guillaume.

Preparations for the wedding are made and the man in charge of arrangements asks Guillaume to loan them his palefroi, reputed to be the most magnificent animal in the area, to be used as the bride's mount in the wedding procession. Herein lies the solution to Guillaume's problem, for the palefroi will leave the wedding party and stray along the secret but often traveled path to the home of his master, bringing the bride-to-be with him.

The two are overjoyed at this quirk of fate and throw themselves into each other's arms. When the father and uncle arrive, the two lovers have already been married and there is nothing they can do. The author suggests that Guillaume and his bride are destined to enjoy a happy and prosperous life:

Mesire Guillaume fu preus,
Cortois et molt chevalereus;
Ainz sa proesse ne lessa,
Mès plus et plus s'en efforcoa;
Bien fu de princes et de contes.
Ainz le tiers an, ce dist li contes,
Morut li anciens, sans faille;
Tout son avoir li rent et baille;
Toute sa terre ot en baille,
Qui molt est riche et bien garnie.
. M. livrées tint bien de terre.
Après ala la mort requerre
Son oncle, qui molt estoit riches,
Et ois, qui n'estoit mie nices,
Ne de ouer povres ne frarins,
Ne blastengiers de ses voisins; 26
Ains tint la terre toute cuite.

The feeling that the pure sort of relationship described in *Le vair palefroi* is quite unusual in the fabliaux is heightened upon consideration of the two other stories involving knights and their sweethearts. We have discussed *Le mantel mautailliè* in the preceding section, for several of the knights involved were married to those ladies suddenly exposed as unfaithful by the ill-fitting mantel. In other cases however, they are their sweethearts:

Cele damoisele de là
Qui dolez vous à destre esta,
Ele l'afublera avant;
Quar ele est bien de vostre grant.
Amie est Tors le filz Arès;

Ne ja ne l'en portast en vie.
Kex en a apelé s'amie;
"Damoisels, venez avant;
Oiant ces chevaliers, me vant
Que vous estes leaus par tout,
Que je sai bien sans nul redout

L'amie mon seignor Gavain,
Venelaus la preus, la cortoise,

    Li Rois prist par la destre main
L'amie mon seignor Yvain

    Li Rois apela demanois
L'amie au damoisel galois,
Qui Percheval ert apelez: 27

Le sentier batu is a story of bitter recriminations


over a love affair that has been broken off. A game played during tournament festivities provides the setting for the story. The rules of this particular game, which was called Le roy qui ne ment, required all knights to answer truthfully questions posed by a lady who had been selected queen. The lady selected played the game quite cleverly and asked witty and amusing questions of the knights assembled. Finally she came to a knight who had been in love with her and who would willingly have married her if she had only agreed:

Tant que vint à .i. chevalier,
Assez vourtois et biau parler,
Qui l'ot amêse, et qui l'eüst
Pris à fame, s'il li pleüst;28

The lady however decided that his particular knight, who was even incapable of growing a thick and handsome beard, would be an inadequate lover and she impishly takes advantage of this opportunity to make a rather obscene joke at his expense:

"Sire," ce li dist la royne,
"Dites moi tant de vo couvines,
S'onques ëstes nul enfant.
--Dame," dist il, "point ne m'en vant,
Car onques n'en oi nul, ge croy.
--Sire, point ne vous en mescroy
Et si croy que ne sui pas seule,
Car il përt assez à l'esteule
Que bons n'est mie li espis."29

The knight was tremendously embarrassed and could say

29 MR III, 248-249.43-51.
nothing in response to her audacity:

Le chevalier qui ce oy
De ces mos point ne s'esjoy,
Esbahis fu, et ne dit mot;30

Having asked questions of all of the knights, the "queen" in turn was to be questioned by the gentlemen as was the custom of the game. She acquitted herself quite well in this endeavor until it was the turn of the knight so grievously ridiculed earlier in the game. His thought was now of revenge:

Quant le tour au chevalier vint,
De la ramprosne li souvint:
Volente ot de revengier,31

He too asks an extremely pointed question about the lady's anatomy and takes advantage of her response to draw an amusing conclusion about her availability to members of the opposite sex:

"Dame, respondez moi sans guile;
A point de poil à vo poinille?
--Par foi," ce dist la damoisiele,
"Vez ci une demande bele
Et qui est bien assise a point!
Sachiez qu'il n'en y a point."
Gîl li dist de vouloir entier:
"Bien vous en croy, qu'ar en sentier
Qui est batus ne croist point d'erbe."32

The lady is completely taken aback by this sudden turn of events and her enjoyment of the game is quickly dispelled:

30MR III, 249.57-59.
31MR III, 249.67-69.
32MR III, 249.71-79.
Que cele en fu forment honteuse,
Qui devant estoit convoiteuse
De chose demander et dire
De quoi les autres feist rire.
Or fu son cuer si esperdus
Que tout son deduit fu perdus,
Et li fu sa joie faillie,
Car devant estoit baudet lig,
Et mout plaine d'envoisement.33

In both Le mantel mauteillié and Le sentier batu the story revolves around a conflict between the knight and his sweetheart (past or present). In comparison with these two stories and considering the situations depicted in a majority of the fabliaux, we must conclude that the relationship of Guillaume and his sweetheart in Le vair palefroi is not at all typical of the genre.

C. The Knight and His Daughter

There are four fabliaux which depict relationships between knights and their daughters and in every case the father's concern is the same—the necessity of arranging an advantageous marriage for his daughter. In three of these tales (La houce partie, Le vilain mire, and Berangier au long cul) the father is an impoverished knight who eventually lowers himself to marrying his daughter off to a rich bourgeois, while the father in Le vair palefroi is an extremely wealthy lord who refuses to permit his daughter's marriage to a knight of meager means, seeking for her in-

33MR III, 250.112-120.
stead a man whose wealth equals his own. Again, as in the
relationship between Guillaume and his sweetheart, *Le vair
calfore* presents a situation atypical of the fabliaux in
general.

The greedy father of *La houce partie* is perfectly
willing to affect a marriage agreement with a rich bourgeois
who is seeking a wife of some stature for his son.

Li ainsnes avoit une fille
De sa fame, qui morte estoit,
Dont la damoisele tenoit
Dedenz Paris bone meson
Devant l'ostel & cel preudon.
La meson n'estoit pas au père
Qar li ami de par sa mère.
Ne li lessierent engagier.

Biaus fils, tu as bon reconfort,
Et si deviens biaus bacheler;
Tu es en point de marier,
Et je sui mes de grant aage.
Si je trovoie .I. mariage
De gent qui fussent de pooir,
Gî metroie de mon avoir;

S'or trovoie fame bien née
Qui fust d'amis emparentée,
Qui éust oncles et antains,
Et frères et cousins germains,
De bone gent et de bon leu,
La ou je verroie ton preu,
Je t'i metroie volentiers,
Ja nel leroie por deniers."34

The father and his brothers question the bourgeois closely
with regard to his holdings and finally obtain from him a
promise to give all that he has to the son.

34 MR I, 86.116-123; 85.84-90; 85.95-102.
Li chevalier li ont enquis
De son mueble, de son avoir,
Combien il en pocioit avoir,

"Seignor, de quanques vous querez
Acomplirai voz volentez,
Mès ce sera par .I. couvent:
Se mes fills vostre fille prent
Je li donrai quanqu'ai vaillant,
Et si vous di tout en oiant
Ne vueil que me demeure rien,
Mès praingne tout et tout soit sien,
Que je l'en saisi et revest,"
Ainsi le preudon se dèvest.35

Having driven a good bargain, the girl is abruptly handed over to the young man.

The father-knight in Du vilain mire is an old man whose lack of property discourages anyone from requesting the hand of his quite beautiful daughter:

El pais ot .i. chevalier,
Viez hom estoit et sans moillier,
S'avoit une fille mout bele
Et mout corteise damoisele,
Mes por ce qu'avoirs li failloit,
Li chevaliers pas ne trovoit
Qui sa fille li demandast.36

He too is receptive to the proposal of a rich "vilain" who seeks a wife of noble birth:

Li ami au vilain alerent
Au chevalier, et demanderent
Sa fille por le paisant
Qui tant avoit or et argent
Plenté forment et planté dras.
Il leur dona ismel le paç
El otroia cest mariag.37

35MR I, 86.132-134; 88.169-178.
The daughter is reluctantly forced to accept the decision of her father:

La pucelle qui mout fu sage,
N'osa contredire son pere,
Quar orfeline estoit de mere,
Si otroia ce qui li plot,
Et li vilains plus tost qu'il pot
Fist ses noces et espousa
Celi cui forment en pesa,
S'ele autre chose en osast fere. 38

Guerin describes in *Berangier au lonc cul* the unhappy union of the daughter of a knight and the son of a rich vilain.

Oiez que Guerins velt retraire
Que il avint en Lombardie,
Ou la gent n'est gaires hardie,
D'un chevalier qui ot pris fame,
Ce m'est vis, une gentil dame,
Fille d'un riche chastelain,
Et cil estoit fils d'un vilein
D'un usurier riche et conblé. 39

In this instance the knight even goes so far as to automatically confer knighthood on his new son-in-law, thus creating one of the sorriest specimens ever to call himself a knight.

Mais, à ce que ge ai appris,
De chief en chief con l'ai conquis,
Li chevaliers sans demorer
Fist sa fille bien atonner;
Si la maria à vilain;
Sil fist chevalier de sa mein. 40

39 MR III, 252.10-17.
40 MR III, 253.35-40.
Although quite rich himself, the girl's father owed money to the vilain and saw the marriage as an easy means of paying off the debt:

Et li chastelains li devoit
Tant que paier ne le pooit,
Ainz dona à son filz sa fille.  

Guerin takes advantage of the situation in order to moralize on the question of a marriage of unequals and the disastrous results of such unions:

Ainsi bons lignaiges aville,
Et li chasselain et li conte
Declinent tuit et vont à honte;
Se marient bas por avoir,
Si en doivent grant honte avoir,
Et grant domaige si ont il;
Li chevalier mauvais et vill
Et coart issent de tel gent,
Qui covoitent or et argent
Plus qu'il ne font chevalerie;
Ainsi est noblece perie.

Incompatibility is indeed the most characteristic feature of the marriages described in each of the three aforementioned fabliaux. Each wife suffers deprivations and indignities as a result of her being practically bartered away by her father.

Le vair palefroi presents quite another case. The father is determined to prevent his daughter from marrying even a knight of lower station and seeks instead a man

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41MR III, 253.21-23.

42MR III, 253.24-34.
whose wealth is comparable to or superior to his own. He pointedly compares Guillaume with the ideal husband he seeks for his daughter:

Chascon anç, ne sui pas si yvres  
Que je ma fille doner doie  
A chevalier qui vit de proie;  
Quar je n'ai plus d'enfans qui li;  
Si n'a pas à m'amor failli,  
Et après moi sera tout sien;  
Je la voudrai marier bien;  
Ne sai prince dedenz cest raine,  
Ne de ci jusqu'en Loheraine,  
Qui tant soit preudom et senez  
Ne fust en li bien assenez.  
Tels le me requist avant ier,  
N'a pas encore .I. mois entier,  
Qui de terre a .Vc. livrées,  
Qui or me fussent delivrées  
Se je à ce vousisse entendre;  
Mès ma fille peut bien atendre,  
Que je sui tant d'avoir seurpris,  
Qu'elle ne peut perdre son pris  
Ne le fuer de son mariage.  
Le plus haut home de lingnage  
Qui en trestout ces pais maingne,  
Ne de ci jusqu'en Alemaingne,  
Puet bien avoir, fors roi ou conte. 43

Before moving on to our next category, we must mention the story De pleine bourse de sens. Although the father is not mentioned as the matchmaker in this particular case, we do find a bourgeois married to a lady of nobility. In response to a question as to his marital status, the bourgeois replies:

--011, fille de chevalier,  
La plus belle qui soit en terre. 44

43MR I, 34-35.318-341.
44MR III, 93.164-165.
The strangeness of this type of marriage is suggested in the emphasis placed on her station in the above quotation and in an earlier description of the wife:

Et avoit fame de haut pris,
La plus bele que l'en seüst
Ou pais, ne que l'en psüst
Trover, tant seüst l'en cerchier. 45

We can only speculate here that this marriage too may quite possibly have been arranged in a manner similar to those described above.

The characteristic feature of the relationship of the knight and his daughter is then the father's determination to arrange a marriage for his daughter. In three of the cases, he is himself the most prominent beneficiary of the union, having affected the agreements in an effort to ease his own financial burdens. In Le vair palefroi we see a father actually concerned with his daughter's financial well-being but completely irresponsive to her feelings and desires in the matter.

D. The Knight and his Mother-in-law

The single occurrence of a knight and mother-in-law confrontation appears in one of the most obscene of the fabliaux, Le sot chevalier. The knight is extremely wealthy and owns a great deal of property, but, as previously stated, 45

45MR III, 88.8-11.
he is unbelievably ignorant and foolish. In lines 62-80 his mother-in-law provides him with a most vivid lesson in sexual procedure and then urges him to put what he has learned into practice with his wife that very night, for the poor girl had remained a virgin since their marriage. The knight's tendency to constantly repeat his lesson aloud in order not to forget it leads to a rather hilarious situation involving several visiting knights who misunderstand his intentions.

E. The Knight and the Prostitute

As we have seen above (See p. 33 ), the prostitute in D'une seule fame qui a son con servoit c. chevaliers succeeds in making a murderer of one knight and causes it to appear that the others are not nearly so concerned with the murder itself as with the possible loss of female companionship. They readily accept her proposition to make herself available to all and the murderer goes unpunished.

F. The Knight and the Casual Acquaintance

The term "sweetheart" or "lover" does not properly apply to the casual female acquaintance of the knight, but there are two stories in which the relationships involved must be described in exactly this manner. In both cases the knight plays the role of deceiver or trickster. He
takes advantage of both a servant girl and the wife of a wealthy count in *Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler* and indulges himself sexually with both the niece and mistress of a priest in *Du prestre et du chevalier*.

The servant girl in *Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler* is sent to the bedroom of the visiting knight as a sort of substitute for the lady of the castle who would willingly have gone herself if her husband were away. The knight fondles and caresses the frightened girl and then exercises his miraculous ability to "faire les cons et les culs parler" in order to learn the true reason for the maiden's presence. Upon hearing this particular portion of her anatomy speaking, the frightened lass completely loses control and flees the room:

Quant cele ou son con paller,  
Estrangement fu esperdue;  
Du lit sailli trastete nue,  
Arriérs s'est & la voie mise,  
El n'en porta que sa chemise.\(^{46}\)

Learning of this amazing feat, her mistress decides to determine publicly the truth of her story and the next evening at dinner she defies him to demonstrate his powers before her husband and the assembled knights and even offers herself as a victim. She too is then subjected to a most public humiliation made even more obscene through her own

\(^{46}\text{MR VI, 82.426-430.}\)
effort to turn the tables on the knight.

The rather disreputable knight of *Du prestre et du chevalier* intends to inflict a most grievous suffering on the greedy priest. His plans include the seduction of both his niece and his mistress:

> Après ices mos se porpense
> De grant barat et de grant guille
> Dont dist qu'il vora bien que Gille
> Viengne en nuit couchier en son lit,
> Faire son boin et son delit
> Et en après dame Avinse, 47
> Li praus, il bele, li sense;

His goals are realized at the expense of the two women involved for they do not yield willingly to his advances.

The explanation for the crude and vulgar conduct of the knight in these two stories undoubtedly lies in the status conflict between the male characters involved. The count and husband in *Le chevalier qui fist sa dame confesse* is a wealthy and titled lord whose counterparts are consistently ill-treated by tournament knights in the fabliaux (See Chapter I). What could be more devastatingly effective than the public humiliation of his wife? The priest too is a perennial victim and there are no instances of a priest's victory over the knight. A more detailed discussion of relationships between male characters will be offered later in this chapter.

47MR II, 60.420-426.
G. The Knight as Benefactor to Women

In a treatment of courtly romance, we would expect a lengthy chapter relating the brave exploits of the hero-knight in the service of his lady. Such is not the case in the fabliaux. As we have already seen, particularly in our study of the love triangle, the knight is much more likely to achieve his goal of sexual satisfaction by means of trickery and deceit rather than through any sort of lady-service.

There are two exceptions that should be mentioned in which the knight proves himself both understanding and charitable. In both instances the knights involved are men of quite high station, a type normally treated quite shabbily in the fabliaux.

De la vieille qui oint la palme au chevalier is a delightful little story deriving its humor from a play on words. As we have seen above, an old peasant lady is told that she can expect no consideration from the lord of the area who has taken her two cows for taxes unless she "greases his palm". Taking the advice quite literally she applies grease freely to the hand of the astounded knight. Upon hearing the old woman's explanation, he laughs heartily and promises not only to return the cows but to provide them with food and pasture.
"Bone fame, que fais tu ci?
--Sire, por amor, Deu merci,
Si me fu dit c'â vos venisse
Et que la paume vos oisississe,
Et se je ce faire poole,
Mes vaches tout quites ravroie.
--Cele co t'anseigna à faire
Entandi tot à autre afaire,
Mais ja por ce riens n'i perdras:
Tes vaches quites raveras.
Si t'abandon lo pré et l'erbe."48

The knight in *De Frère Denise* is a minor character but he is instrumental in freeing a young girl from the clutches of a lecherous monk who had abducted her:

Et li chevaliers s'umelie,
Qui de franchise ot le cuer tendre,
Quant celui vit en croiz estendre;
Sur l'en leva par la main destre;
"Frere" dit il, "velez vos estre
De cest afaire toz delivres?
Porchâmis. tost .IIIIC. livres
A marier la damoisele."
Quant li Freres oit la novelle,
Onques n'ot tel joie en sa vie;
Lors a sa fiance plevie
Au chevalier des denurs rendre,
Bien les rendra cens gage vendre,
Augues seet ou il seront pris.49
Atant s'enpart, congié a pris.

In summary, we should note then that the knight for the most part fares quite badly in the depiction of his associations with female characters in the fabliaux (ex­cluding of course his previously discussed role in the love

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48MR V, 158.37-47.
49MR III, 272.272-286.
triangle). The husband is deceived by his wife (Chevalier qui fist sa femme confesse), portrayed as an idiot (Le sot chevalier) and embarrassed by his wife's infidelity (Le mantel mautallig). In each of these tales we should point out that the knights are wealthy or famous and they are married. Thus their treatment here corresponds to both the normal attitude toward the rich and titled knight in the fabliaux and the consistent cuckolding of the husband in the stories involving the love triangle.

The knight receives only slightly better treatment from his sweetheart. Their ladies are proved unfaithful (Le mantel mautaillig), and his ability as a lover is publicly questioned (Le sentier batu).

The author of Le vair palefroi does permit the complete triumph of the young Guillaume, but Guillaume is the perfect example of the poor tournament follower who is normally accorded preferred treatment in the fabliaux. His victory is also at the expense of his wealthy uncle, and the manner in which this relative is deceived offers the expected contrast to Guillaume's success.

The daughters are repeatedly the pawns in their father's match-making efforts (Le vair palefroi, La houce partie, Le vilain mire, and Berangier au long cul) a situation which only serves to depict these knights as callous and greedy. The marriages they arrange are forever the torment of their daughters.
The mother-in-law's effectiveness as a sex educator only emphasizes the knight's ignorance in *Le sot chevalier*, a knight is corrupted by a prostitute in *D'une seule fame qui a son con servoit*. He proves himself something of a lecher in *Du prêtre et du chevalier* and he uses his magic power to take advantage of a servant girl and her mistress in *Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler*.

In contrast to this negative treatment of the knight in his associations with women, he is pictured as charitable and a benefactor to women in one extremely short fabliau of fifty-four lines (*De la vieille qui oint la palme au chevalier*) and in a fifty line portion of *Frère Denise*.

III. The Knight Involved with One Other Party (Male Characters)

A. The Knight and the Priest

Although the wealthy and titled lord is a much maligned character in the fabliaux, his treatment might not even be considered severe in comparison with that accorded the priest, who suffers indignities at the hands of knight, peasant, bourgeois, and even fellow ecclesiastics of inferior rank. An audience being entertained by the telling of a fabliau involving a priest could be certain that the priest was destined to become the exploited victim or the object of sharp ridicule in the course of the story. We shall limit ourselves here to an examination of those.
tales in which both the knight and the priest appear. They are eight in number:

1. Du prestre et du chevalier
2. Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler
3. Frère Dénise
4. Du prestre et du mouton
5. Du pescheor de Pont seur Saine
6. Des estats du siecle
7. Des putains et des lecheors
8. Du chevalier qui fist sa fame confess

The first two stories listed above present the knight and priest in their most direct and revealing confrontation. As we noted earlier (See p. 22), the knight in Du prestre et du chevalier is anything but a perfect specimen. He lies, cheats, and proves himself quite a lecher, but even this state of immorality does not prevent him from emerging the victor in his dealings with the avaricious priest. We discover early in the story that the priest is extremely wealthy and that he has a mistress, a not uncommon situation for priests in the fabliaux, who are usually depicted as robbing the poor in order to live in luxury themselves:

Vinrent une ville campiestre,  
Où il avoit moustier et prestre,  
Riche, mainant et asasé;  
I. grant tressor ot amassé.  
Riens nule celi ne faloit,  
Ne d'omme nul ne li chaloit
Notice how his wealth is emphasized causing us to immediately think of the poverty of the knight. The rich man, be he knight or priest, is treated mercilessly throughout the fabliaux. The author continues to underline the financial status of the priest as his narrative continues:

Et esra tant que en la fin
Qu'il entra en une voïstè
Qui le mena à le viléstè
Où li Prestres riches manoit,
Qui l'amie et la nieche avoit,

Enseigne moi le plus riche homme
De ceste vile, c'est la somme.”
Dist li vilains: “C'est notre Prestres.
Ch'est li plus riche qui puist estre
Chi environ dis liues loing,51

The ecclesiastic is quite inhospitable and refuses to feed and lodge the knight until he has agreed to pay an exorbitant price for this service. In exchange the priest promises on his honor as a man of God to provide the knight anything he requests. This pact is of course his undoing and before the tale is done, the knight has bedded both the mistress and the virgin niece of the priest and has the poor soul fearing that even his own body might be momentarily

50MR II, 47-48.45-55.
51MR II, 48-49.78-82; 49.99-103.
violated by the demanding knight who ultimately emerges with a sum of money and great sexual satisfaction from his evening's work. Thus even the basest knight enjoys the spoils when his opponent is a wealthy priest.

The knightly hero of Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler meets a priest on the road shortly after being endowed with his miraculous power. Anxious to test his abilities, he views the priest's arrival as most opportune. The cleric is again described as wealthy, powerful, and greedy:

Li prestres fu poissanz et riches,
Mais il estoit avers et chiches.\(^5\)

This sort of characterization makes it only just that he should be deprived of his money belt and the knight proceeds forthwith to exercise his newly acquired powers.

The "talking" horse not only reveals that his master is travelling toward a rendezvous with his mistress, but that he is carrying a goodly sum of money secreted on his person. Needless to say, man and money and even man and horse are soon parted:

"Sire cons, ou va vostre sire?
Dites le moi, n'en mentez mie,
--Par foi, il vait veoir sa mie,"
Fait li cons, "sire chevaliers;
Si li porte de bons deniers,
Dis livres de bone moncie,
Qu'il a ceinz en une corroie
Por achater robe mardi."

\(^5\) MR VI, 77.255-256.
Et quant le prestres entendi
Le con qui parole si bien,
Esbahiz fu sor tore rien;
Enchantez cuide estre et trais;
De la poor s'en est foliz,
Et por corre deliverment,
Deffible sa chape erramment,
Et les deniers et la corroie
Gita trestot en mi la voie,
Sa jument l'ot, si tore en fuie.
Voit le Huet, forment le huie;
Et li prestres, sans mot soner,
Gaigne le gieu par aler,
Qui s'enfuit par une charriere;
Por cent mars ne tornast arriere.
Li chevaliers les deniers prent,
Et Huet saisi la jument
Qui mout estoit bien affeute;
Puis troue la chape forree,
Mout rient de cele aventure;
Atant s'en vont grant aleure. 53

The lecherous Franciscan monk in Rutebeuf's Frère

Denise tricks a beautiful young maiden into entering his monastic order. His purpose is 'of course to make her his mistress:

Mout par est contrare sa powce
Au bon pensei où cele poence;
Mout est lor pençoé contraire,
Car cele pençe à li retraire,
Et oteir de l'orgueil dou monde;
Et cil qui en pechié soronde,
Qui toz art dou feu de luxure,
A mis sa pençoé et sa cure
En la pucelle acompaignant
Au baig où il ce vuet baignier,
Où il s'ardra, ce Dieux n'en pence,
Que ja ne li fera deffence,
Ne ne li saura contredire
Choze que il li vueille dire.

53 MR VI, 77-78.282-310.
The cleric's debauchery is finally revealed during a visit to the home of a noble and honorable knight. Frère Denise is recognized as a woman and the wicked monk is exposed. The generous knight allows the villain to go free if he will provide a suitable dowry for Denise and never approach her again. The monk readily agrees and the maiden is saved. The knight then serves here as the instrument by which the lustful mendicant is exposed and punished.

The next two fabliaux to be considered, Du prestre et du mouton and Du pescheor de Pont seur Saine provide only brief references to priestly misconduct. In the former a priest who is secretly visiting the wife of a knight is attacked by a ram and thus painfully prevented from enjoying himself with his mistress. This is one of the shorter fabliaux, comprising only eighteen lines:

Un prestres amoit une dame,
Qui d'un chevalier estoit fame.
En l'ostel .i. mouton avoit,
Qui par usage gens hurtoit.
.I. jor estoient asemblé,
Et li mouton a esgardé
Le prestre qui hooheit la teste.
Maintenant s'apensa la beste,
Qu'il le semonnoit de hurter;
De loinz s'esquieut à esconsser,
Le prestre hurte en la coronne,
Si tres douleros cop li done,
Contre li estona la teste.

\[5^\text{th} \text{MR} \text{ III, 266.95-108; 265.76-77.}\]
The body of a drowned priest is discovered in *Du pescheor de Pont saur Saine* and the author explains that he was killed by a knight who discovered him in an embarrassing situation with his wife:

> Lors a vetl venir flotent,  
> "I. provoire qui ert nois,  
> Si vous dirai par quel pechis;  
> Uns chevaliers le mescroit  
> Qui por sa fame le haoit;  
> S'en fu espris de jalousie,  
> Tant le gusta et tant l'espie  
> Que il trova la char jumele,  
> Le masle desur la femail  
> Trova ensemble nu a nu,  
> Cil saut en piez, le vit tendu,  
> En l'eve sailli qui ert grant,  
> Noier le covint maintenant,  
> Mës onques nul lieu n'aresta  
> Et li peschiers le trova."  

These two tales treat priests who seduce the wives of knights and then face injury and even death.

*Des estates du siecle* depicts the dilemma of a young man attempting to choose a vocation. He is of course seeking the most comfortable situation and it is significant that his first choice is the clergy. He later abandons his ecclesiastical studies upon deciding that the life

55*MR* VI, 50.1-18.

56*MR* III, 71.84-98.
of a priest is no bad of roses. It would first appear that the priest is at last receiving a word of kindness in the fabliaux; however, an examination of the terminology employed reveals that the ecclesiastic is consistently referred to as clerc. The clerc and the prestre represent two separate levels in the clerical hierarchy, the former normally quite well-treated in the fabliaux. The prestre, on the other hand is, as we have already indicated, maligned at every opportunity. Thus he cannot be considered the recipient of even this brief word of sympathetic understanding:

Nous lisons une istoire, ou fable,
D'un qu'avoit .i. fil non estable,
Qu'au comencement de sa vie
Regarda l'estat de Clergie,
Et vit qu'il est trop precieux,
Très aisés, très delici eux.
Les Cleres ont les prelations,
Les rantes, les possessions,
Les grans palaffrois, les chevaux,
Les vins vieux et les vins nouveaux,
Devant tous autres la parole.
Si se prist aler à l'escole,
Et cuyda bon Clerc devenir
Et cel grant estat maintenir.
Quant vint après .iii. ans ou quatre,
Il regarda les enfans batre,
Et la poine qu'il convient traire,
Quant uns hors se veut por Clerc faire,
Matin lever et tart cuchier,
De jour panser, de nuyt songier,
Et les autres affliccions
Qui sont nès às prelations,
L'estat de Clergie despri se,
Et dist que mieux vaut Marchandise.57

After rejecting in turn the vocations of merchant and farmer, the dissatisfied lad sees himself a wealthy and honored knight:

Et jura par sa main senestre
Que Chevalier lui convient estre,
Quar Chevaliers ont les honneurs
Et les estas de grans seigneurs.
Sans main mettre, l'en leur aporte
Tout ce qui leur faut à leur porte.
L'en les sert à grant diligence,
A honneur et à reverence;
Chacun doubtte les Chevaliers,
Quant eulx moyent leurs escuiers,
Leurs hommes avoec leur pennalye;
N'est rien ou monde qui leur fallye.58

He soon realizes the responsibilities and risks involved in this choice:

Qu'À Chevalier fait vilenie,
Il n'est pas seür de sa vie.
Tantoust Chevalier se fist faire,
Mais après luy vint .i. contraire,
Que luy convient aler en guerre
Por son paix et por sa terre,
Et sarma, selon la coustume,
Des armes qui ne sont pas plume,
Et il mist l'eaume en sa teste;
Ne le tient pas n'à jeu n'à feste.
Après, quant vist la chivauchie
Des enemis qu'ont aprouchie,
Et qui se moustroint en appart,
Lors voulsist bien estre autre part
Et pensa, s'il n'estoit delivres,
Qui luy dondroit .x."". Livres,
Quar tel estat plus ne tiendragit
Pour le peril qu'il y veoit.58

The humor in this tale of course centers around the lazy lad's quest for the "easy life" and the descriptions

58MR II, 265-266. 47-58.
59MR II, 266. 59-76.
of the various estate are not intended to be derogatory or laudatory. Totally unable to find the type of position he is seeking, the young man turns to astronomy and the author slyly observes:

Et proposa toute sa vie
Estudier Astronomie,
Et savoir du ciel la nature;
Quar de la terre n'a plus cure.

Des putains et des lecheors is a "tongue-in-cheek" attack on the immorality of the clergy. According to the author, God, in the process of creating the world, established three principal ordres of people:

Quant Dieus ot estoré lo monde
Si con il est à la reonde,
Et quanque il convit dedanz,
Trois ordres establi de genz,
Et fist el sãecle demoranz,
Chevaliers, clerz et laboranz.
Les chevaliers toz asena
As terres, et as clerz dona
Les aumosnes et les dimages;
Puis asena les laborages
As laboranz, por laborer.
Quant ce ot fet, sans demoper
D'iluec parti et s'en ala. 61

Having completed his work, God is about to depart the earth when he sees and hears a group of putains et lecheors plaintively beseeching him to grant them a place in this world:

60 MR II, 268.111-114.

The "lecheor" in this tale is a type of wandering minstrel or jongleur.
Quant li s'en partoit, veu a
Une torbe de tricheors,
Si con putains et lecheors;
Poi ot alié, quant l'aprochierent,
A crier entr'aus commencierent;
"Estez, sire parlez à nos,
Ne nos lessiez, o âlez vos?
De rien ne somes asené,
Si avez as autres doné."63

As a result the chevaliers are made responsible for
the welfare of the lecheors and the clergy responsible for
the putains. Naturally the members of the clergy prove
themselves much more willing to carry out God's commands
in this respect since the putains are better equipped for
providing a service in return:

Mès putains sovent robes muent,
Avec les clerçs cochent et lievent
Et sor lor depanses enbrievent.64

The knights, on the other hand, treat the lecheors
quite badly. They see no reason to spend their money and
waste their time when the lecheors are quite unable to pro­
vide them with the relationship afforded the clergy by the
putains.

Petit truevent de tiels escos
Li lecheor as chevaliers;
Et si sont il mout bons parliers,
Ne lor donent fors viez drapiaus;
Et petit de lor bons morsiaus,
En gitant, con as chiens, lor ruent. 65

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63MR III, 175.14-22.
64MR III, 177.64-66.
65MR III, 177.58-63.
Since the clercs have obeyed God and the knights have not, the author speculates that the former are thus "saved" and the latter damned:

A cest conte font li clerc bien
Desor toz les autres que font.
Si mes fabliaus dit voir, donc sont
Par cest comment li clerc sauysé
Et li chevalier sont damnsé. 66

There is no real significance to the encounter be-
between knight and priest in Du chevalier qui fist sa famw
confesse, for the knight's sole purpose is to obtain one
of the priest's habits as part of a plot to hear the con-
fession of his own wife and thus expose any infidelity on
her part. There is no characterization of the priest and
he is neither deceived nor ridiculed in the story. The
device of assuming priestly garb in order to hear the con-
fession of one's own wife appears in the Cent nouvelles
nouvelles de la cour de Bourgogne, a tale imitated by La
Fontaine and also Boccacio.

B. The Knight and the Vilain

Encounters between the knight and vilain are infrequent
in the fabliaux. Three of the stories in which they do
appear together involve a marriage negotiation between a
wealthy vilain and a knight in financial distress who is

66 MR III, 177.78-82.
willing to compromise his daughter's future for his own gain. These tales have been discussed above and need not be dealt with in detail here.

In Du pescheur de Pont seur Saine, the supposed attack on a vilain by a group of knights is completely imaginary, concocted by the vilain as part of a plan to deceive his wife. Thus this fabricated encounter has little significance for our study.

The advantages and disadvantages of the life of the knight as they are depicted in Des estats du siecle have been described above (See p. 107). The young man's indecisiveness in choosing a vocation leads him to consider the situations of the merchant and the farmer, both of whom were considered vilains. As a merchant, however, he is soon disenchanted by the necessity for making perilous sea voyages in order to obtain goods:

Et dist que mieux vaut Merchandise.  
Marchans gagnyent ardiement,  
Marchans vivent aisement,  
Marchans puent prouffit aquerre  
Et en la mer et en la terre.  
Lors fist ses nefz appareillier,  
Outre mer s'en vait por gagnier,  
Mais, quant fust en la mer profonde,  
Regardâ le peril de l'onde,  
Et se santist le cuer amer  
Par l'esmeuvement de la mer.  
Tantoust arriere s'en retourne;

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67 MR II, 265.24-35.
Deciding then to obtain his livelihood from the soil, he turns to farming but finds himself at the mercy of the elements and his crops ruined:

A cultiver terre s'atourne,
Cilz, qui avoit le cuer volage,
Commencza louuer cultivage,
Quar l'en puet gagnier en cultil
Sans grant travail et sans peril,
Sans aler loing de sa maison.
Mais aprês vint une saison,
Quant il cuida grant gaing aquerre,
Sa semenoe pourrist en terre
Et ne gita herbe ne grain.
Si se sentist por fol vilain,

Whether *vilain* or *chevalier*, the young man finds no easy road to follow. Neither merchant nor farmer nor knight is glorified at the expense of the other.

The most significant aspect of the knight-vilain relationship in the fabliaux is the infrequency of contacts between the two stations. For the most part, those knights who do become involved with *vilains* are those in financial distress who have sunk to a point where they might even bargain away their souls. Considering the great number of contacts within the knightly fraternity described in the fabliaux and the relatively limited contact between the knight and *vilain* we must conclude that there is a definite social awareness manifesting itself in the genre.

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*MR II, 265.36-46.*
The squire is both attendant and traveling companion to the knight. He is himself a knight-in-training, a young noble whose father is perhaps a much more powerful lord than the knight whom the lad serves. This does not prevent the squire's complete devotion to his knight, however, for only in serving him well can he hope to merit knighthood himself.

The most lengthy description of this relationship occurs in *Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler*. The knight in question had been forced to pawn his equipment since tournaments had been banned for a time and thus he had been deprived of his source of income. Even in such a wretched state he has a loyal squire at his service, Hugh by name. The squire in this case is somewhat more practical and materialistic than his idealistic master. Excitedly telling Hugh news of a great tournament that has just been announced, the knight is reminded that he has pawned everything and is completely lacking in the equipment necessary for participation in such a contest. Hugh is then encouraged by his master to devise a means of securing the release of his arms and clothing, a problem he solves by selling the knight's *palefroi*, the horse which the knight customarily led on his right and on which his possessions were packed.
The next episode puts the knight’s idealistic concept of proper conduct at odds with the materialistic and opportunistic viewpoint of his squire. Hugh, having ridden ahead of his lord, spies three maidens bathing in a pool in the midst of a meadow. Their gold-trimmed and embroidered clothes lying nearby, Hugh sees this as an opportunity to further provision themselves for their journey to the tournament. Having stolen the clothes, he is forced by the knight to return them, for this theft is certainly not in keeping with his code of conduct and will contribute nothing to his prestige, despite Hugh’s insistence that the dresses are worth a great amount of money, more than he could make in fifteen years of tournament participation:

Li chevaliers en ot pesance;
Des puoseles ot grant pitie,
Lors a le cheval tant coite
Que Huet ataint, si li dist:
"Baille qa tost, se Dieu t’aist,
Cez robes, nes enportes mie;
Ce seroit trop grant vilenie
De faire à ciez puoseles honte.
—Or tenez d’autre chose conte,"
Fait Huez, "et ne soiez yvres;
Les robes valent bien cent livres;
Quar onques plus riches ne vi.
Devant quatorse anz et demi
Ne gaigneroiz vos autant,
Tant sachoiz aler ternoiant.

69 MR VI, 71.90-92.
As the story progresses, however, the knight himself acts in a manner more and more in contrast to his lofty ideals and his squire becomes his accomplice in the exploitation of a priest and the humiliation of the wife of a wealthy nobleman.

The squire in *Du prestre et du chevalier* not only attends to his lord's equipment and clothing, but he serves as a sort of messenger boy between the knight and the priest as the former is executing his plan to seduce both the mistress and the niece of the cleric:

Son Esquier pront par le cuissei; Vers li le sache et si le boute; "Os tu? Diva", fait-il, "escoute." Tant le deboute, et sache, et tire, Que chiez sot que c'estoit ses sire. Li Chevaliers li priet a dire: "Lieve tost sus, et si va dire Au Prestre felon et vilain, Qu'il m'envoist sa nieche Gillain; 71

The lad, in this case, attempts to dissuade his lord, but without success:

Dont dist li Esquiers et proie A son seignor qu'il laist ester; "Vous n'i poriés riens conquerer, Car qui trop prent et trop acroit Ains qu'il ne veut caitis se voit." 72

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70 *MR* VI, 73-74, 148-166.
71 *MR* II, 61, 444-452.
72 *MR* II, 61, 464-468.
The squire becomes an integral part of the humor of the story as he scurries back and forth conveying messages between knight and priest.

The inventive knight of Le chevalier à la corbeille likewise makes use of his squire in his plan to reach the bed chamber of his lady. It is the squire who is assigned the task of raising the basket containing the knight to the top of the wall. He is not very happy with this assignment but fears the anger of his lord if he does not do his bidding:

Un soun esquier apela,
Priveement le councila
Q'il s'en isse, e s'en aut muscer
Zoste la sale en un ligner
Qi estoit apuez al mur,
E soit là dès q'il soit obscur
E que la gent se soit cochée;
Puis mounte le mur à celee,
Si le atende à un kernel.
Cely, qe ne fust gueres bel
De remeyndre en si grande doute,
Greunta sa volenté toute;
Qar ne le osa fere autrement. 73

The squire in all three of these tales objects to the course of action taken by the knight he serves and there is even some effort to win his lord over to his point of view. He may be treated somewhat roughly by his lord (See lines 444-445 above) and his opinions may be overruled, but there persists a sense of camaraderie between the two. In all three cases the squire actually

73MR II, 187-188.137-149.
becomes the knight's accomplice and a party to his debauchery.

One of the more obscene fabliaux, *De celle qui se fait foutre sur la fosse de son mari*, involves a bet between a knight and his squire. While passing by a cemetery, they observe a lady prostrate in grief on the grave of her recently deceased husband. The knight, noting her condition, expresses his pity for her to his squire, who in turn startles his lord by insisting that it is false display of emotion and that he would even be able to seduce her immediately without any difficulty.

---

Pitié au deable vos tient,
Quant il li de pitié vos vient;
Je gagerai, se vos volez,
Par si que de ci vos tornez,
Que ja à mout petit de plet,
Si dolente comme el se fait,
La fouterai, mès que vos traiez,
En tel lieu que ne vos voiez. 74

The bet is made and the squire cleverly makes good his promise while the hidden knight observes the entire scene. 75

---

74 [MR III, 120.57-64.]

75 A more detailed analysis of the reactions of a widow deprived of male companionship is provided in Gautier le Leu's *La veuve* ([MR II, 197]). The fourteenth "Joy" in the *Quinze Joyes de mariage* and La Fontaine in his tale *La Jeune veuve* treat similar situations.

76 [MR III, 121.106-107.]
The roles are reversed here in that the squire is the principal character and the knight only an observer.

Thus it is not the role of the knight as teacher and shining example for the squire which is stressed in the fabliaux. It is rather their companionship, their willingness to share with each other even their most intimate experiences. The squire most probably was responsible for providing his lord with suitable female companions and concerned in turn with demonstrating his own prowess as a lover to his mentor.

D. The Knight and His King

Appearances of kings are rare in the fabliaux. We might infer then that the type of humor and satire typical of the genre results in a milieu not entirely appropriate to the royal presence. If there is indeed, as we suggested earlier, a hesitancy in involving knights with peasant or bourgeois characters, this evaluation may be quite correct. There are two tales in which the king is involved, Le mantel mantaillié and La male Honte. In the former, as we have seen above, King Arthur’s own Gueniviere is the first to place the magic cloak upon her shoulders, being completely unaware of its powers. Thus is she humiliated along with the king himself when the mantel fails to fit. It is significant to note that the king’s humiliation even preceded
that of his knights. The anonymous author of this fabliau certainly seems to have been somewhat daring and audacious in his treatment of the heroes of the roman courtois.

La male Honte is one of several fabliaux involving a play on words. A certain knight named Honte has died and left the contents of his trunk (male) to the king. A fellow knight seeks to present "la male Honte" to the king but is consistently reprimanded and threatened for daring to rebuke the king. Nykrog suggests that the involvement of a king in such a trivial episode may be explained away by the fact that he was an English king, an enemy of France:77

Seignor, oez et entendez
.I. flabel qu'est faiz et rimés,
D'un roi qui Engleterre tint.78

However, the demeaning role assigned Arthur in Le mantel mautaillie and the general tendency toward parody of courtly literature in the fabliaux suggest that the emphasis in La male Honte should be placed on the humor of the involved word play rather than on any attempt to explain how a king came to be a party to a situation of this type. While it is true that kings appear infrequently in the fabliaux, this fact does not necessitate a search for some complicated explanation for such appearances.

77Nykrog, p. 121.
78MR IV, 41.1-3.
CHAPTER IV

The Daily Life of the Knight in the Fabliaux

In view of the important role of the tournament knight in the fabliaux, we should not be surprised that our stories provide frequent enlightenment on the subject of tournament competitions and the publicity and festivities accompanying them. The preparations of the knights, their weapons and armor, and even the jousts themselves are described. Information on the life of the knight is not however limited to customs associated with the tournament. One is able to obtain data treating a variety of subjects directly affecting the knight: essential aspects of daily life such as food, clothing, and recreation, the arranged marriage and customs associated with the wedding ceremony, activities associated with the celebration of the holiday of Pentecost in King Arthur's court, and so forth. It is our purpose to provide in this chapter a complete account of all such references.

Little information is given in the fabliaux regarding the process of becoming a knight, but one does find characters aspiring to the coveted title of chevalier. The squire or écuyer is a sort of apprentice to an established
knight and may serve in various capacities:

Les liez firent li escuier;
Si couucha chascuns son seignor.
Son escuier li apareille 1
Une robe vert qu'il avoit,

A wealthy lord who has several squires may assign specific duties to each while the sole squire of a poorer knight is required to be stable-boy, valet, and armor-bearer.

The term bachelor has sometimes been considered a designation for the squire or the young knight in training, as, for example, in the Old French dictionaires of Godefroy and Grandsaignes d'Hauterive. A study of the use of bachelor in the fabliaux leads to a quite different conclusion. The word appears thirty-seven times in twenty-two different fabliaux and those instances in which the exact status of the bachelor can be determined may be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>knight</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Exact status undetermined, but apparently not a knight or knight in training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peasant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bourgeois</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the young knights in *Des III. chevaliers et del chainse* is referred to as both chevalier and bachelor:

Li bachelors fu près saineis
Des plaies k' al toornoi a prises. 2

while the fisherman of *Du pecher de Pont seur Saine* is likewise designated a bachelor:

---

Au bachelor tendi le vit\textsuperscript{3}

The obvious conclusion then is that the application of the term \textit{bachelor} has no social limitations but that it is a rather general designation corresponding roughly to \textit{jeune homme}. An examination of the term \textit{vallès} leads to exactly the same conclusion.

\textbf{A. The Tournament}

Ten of the thirty-seven stories in which the knight appears describe some aspect of the tournament practice or procedure. In four of these stories the principal character actually participates in a tournament, while all ten contain characters who apparently respond rather frequently to the call to joust.

As a means of publicizing proposed tournament competitions, messengers were dispatched throughout the land urging all brave knights to hasten to the site of the contest. This practice is mentioned several times in the fabliaux:

\begin{verbatim}
Tant que il avint à un jour
C'on cria un tournoiement
Par le pais communalment,
Que tuit i fussent sans essoine,
Tot droit a la Haie en Toraine;\textsuperscript{4}
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{3}MR III, 69.24.
\textsuperscript{4}MR VI, 70.52-56.
En icele marche avait pris
Et criet un tornoiement

Ez vos que li tornoi est pris,
Puis ont as chevaliers de pris
Mandé et proisé qu'il i soient.
Ensi par lo pais envoient,
Ne jusc'au terme ne finerent
Car mout entalanté en erent;
Et manderent lo jor et l'ore
As chevaliers, tot sanz demore,
Et vindrent granz tropiaus ensanble.

The exact locations of the tournaments are not always indicated, but we are able to determine the following:

1) **Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler**: The tournament was to be held at **la Haie en Touraine**.
   
   Tot droit a la Haie en Touraine?

2) **Le sentier batu**: The specific location is given:
   
   Il devoit .I. tornoi avoir
   Droit entre Perronne et Aties,

3) **Du chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame**: The tournament took place in Normandy.

It was apparently not uncommon for the knight to travel great distances and remain away for long periods while enjoying such competitions.

Un jor estoit alez li sire
Li chastelains por tornier,
Son pris et son los essaucier;

---

5MR III, 124.34-35.
6MR VI, 139-140.41-49.
7MR VI, 70.56
8The modern villages of Perronne and Athies are located in the Picard area approximately 150 kilometers northeast of Paris.
These tournaments were for the most part friendly competitions in which the knights contested vigorously for the prizes to be awarded. Their weapons were blunted and numerous protective measures were taken to prevent injury to the combattants. In *Le chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame*, a knight is accidentally killed and the competitions are canceled as a result. The gloom cast over the assembled knights and their ladies is evident here:

Mout avoient bien commancié
A tournoir tuit, qant pechier,
Lor corut sor et enconbrier,
Que mort i ot un chevalier.
Je ne sai pas dire raison
Commant fu morz ne l'achoison,
Mais tuit en furent mat et morne.
Lors l'anfouirent soz un orme.
Après por ce qu'il estoit tart,
Li tornoiemans se depart,
Puis va chascuns son ostel prandre.  

Such fatal accidents coupled with deaths resulting from an excess of zeal or loss of emotional control during combat resulted in tournaments being forbidden on numerous occasions by both church and state from the twelfth to the fourteenth century.  

9†MR II, 96.120-124.
10†MR VI, 141.85-95.
11Tournaments were forbidden by papal decree in 1130, 1148, 1179, 1201, 1228, 1245, 1279, 1311, et cetera, and by decree of the king in 1261, 1312, 1361, 1405. See La Grande Encyclopédie. (Paris, 1900), Vol. 31, p. 244.
obstacle to the crusades since they assuaged the combattive spirit of the knight. The church even went so far as to forbid them on penalty of excommunication. One such period when tournaments were forbidden is mentioned in the fabliaux:

Adonc avint en cel tempoire,
Si com lisant truis en l'estoire,
Que les guerres partot failloient;
Nule gent ne s'entr' assaillgient,
Et li tornoi sont deffendu.12

There is one report that sixty knights and squires perished in a tournament held at Nuits in 124013, killed either by the blows they received in combat, by being crushed and trampled by the horses, or by suffocation from the dust. However, the passion for the tournament was so intense that decrees forbidding them were temporary and this form of competition was popular well into the sixteenth century. The death of Henri II in a tournament in 1599 finally led to an increasing lack of enthusiasm for these contests.

Prizes were for the most part sums of money, but there were tournaments in which the victor was awarded the horses and arms of his victim:

Si ot toute sa compagnie
Perdue et toute sa mainsie,

12MR VI, 69.33-37.

In Guillaume au faucon, we even find a knight returning from the tournament with prisoners who having been defeated were now in his service.

Et son harnas et son conroi.14

His return is celebrated with a great banquet, probably a custom with those knights as well financially as this one.

Various ceremonies, customs, and games were associated with these gala affairs, for the participants were often accompanied by their wives and sweethearts. On one such occasion a queen was chosen from among the ladies in attendance and a game was then begun called Le jeu du Roi qui ne ment ("The king who did not lie").16 This game is the entire basis for the story of Le sentier batu.

Et chevaliers en ces parties
Sejournolent pour le tournoi.
Une fois ierent en dosnoi
Entre dames et damoiseles;
The queen was allowed to ask any question of the knights present and they in turn had to give the best possible answer. Later the situation was reversed as the knights questioned the Queen. The object was to pose the most interesting and intriguing question of all. In this fabliau the game is soon reduced to a rather obscene exchange between the queen and a knight who is one of her former suitors.

According to the author of Guillaume au faucon, the ladies in service at a lord's castle often spent their time sewing the insignias of their knight-lovers on silken cloth while the knights themselves were away at a tournament.

Les puceles totes ensanble
Erent alées, ce me sanble,
En une chanbre d'autre part.
Ne sai lioncel ou liépart
Cousoient en un drap de soie;
Enter'elles menoient grant joie;
Ce ert l'ensaigne au chevalier.

The knights were often granted a favor of some sort by their ladies, frequently a personal possession, a scarf, et cetera. In the story of Des III chevaliers et del chains,

17MR III, 247-248.18-25.
18MR II, 98.173-179.
the lady whose love and companionship is being sought sends her chainse or chemise and offers to receive favorably the suitor who will be willing to substitute this apparel for his armor in the impending jousts. Thus a cherished custom associated with the tournament becomes a basis for humor in this fabliau.

As the jousts began, it was customary for the ladies present to take their places in assigned areas near the gates from which their husbands or lovers would ride forth to practice their art. In Le chevalier qui recouvrira l’amour de sa dame, the knight who is attempting to win the love of a certain beautiful but married lady realizes that she must seat herself near her husband’s gate, but he nevertheless encourages her to at least take a position allowing her observation of his own heroic acts in her behalf.

Me donez de prandre un tomoi
Contre vostre seignor, et soit
Devant sa porte en tel endroit
Que vos veoiz apertement
Par tréstot lo tonoiemant;
Lors si verroiz, se il vos siet,
Conme lance et escuz me siet."19

Each knight was normally accompanied by at least one squire and the size of his entourage was often an indication of his wealth, a sort of status symbol.

19MR VI, 139.28-34.
Ensi s'en vint malt povrement
Et i. Esuiers seulement. 20

The obvious poverty of this knight may be compared with
the tournament company of the wealthy knight in Guillaume
au faucon:

Chevaliers mena et serjans
A grant foison ensemb e o lui. 21

The squire was a sort of general valet for the knight. He
took care of the horses, maintained the knight's clothing
and armor, and aided him in all preparations for combat,
serving as a sort of second during the jousts themselves.
The typical entourage of a knight of the poorer type in-
cludes the squire leading the palefroi or parade horse on
which his lord's possessions are packed with the knight
himself mounted on his battle horse (destrier). The pale-
froi is sold by the squire in Du chevalier qui fist les
cons parler in an effort to earn money for an expedition
to an announced tournament:

Ge vendi vostre palefroi,
Quar autrement ne pooit estre;
N'en merrois or cheval en destre, 22

The amorous knight of Le chevalier à la robe vermeille
mounts his palefroi in order to pay a visit to his sweet-
heart:

20 MR II, 46.17-18.
21 MR II, 96.126-127.
22 MR VI, 71.90-92.
Montez est sor son palefroi,
Ses esperons dorez chauciez,\textsuperscript{23}

The arms, armor, and equipment of the tournament knight are our proper concern in this chapter and several passages reveal the preparations of the combattants for participation in the jousts.

Demain veste cest chanse riche
Al tornoi, sans autre armeure
Fors son hiaume et chacheure
De fer, et espée, et escut.

Ce li samble; les chauces lace,
L'espée chaint, l'escut enbrache,
Monte à cheval, son elme a prise;
Por pou ke ses estriers ne brise,
Si s'afiche sus à l'esmuevre;\textsuperscript{24}

Car qui veist ces chevaliers,
Qant ore fu de tomoier,
Haubers vestir, hiaumes lacer,
Tost fu ohasouns prest ondroit sol.
Li dui qui pristrent lo tornoi,
En la place furent premiers
Armé sor les coranz destriers,
Tuit prest de lances depecier,
Lors s'ailont sus sans delaier,
Les escus joinz, les lances baissent,
Lachent les regnes, si s'eslaissent;\textsuperscript{25}

Le haubere vest, l'espée a gaine,
De tost armer ne s'est pas fainte,
Et sus son chief l'iaume laga,
El destrier monte, si s'en va,\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{MR} III, 36.34-35.
\textsuperscript{24}\textit{MR} III, 126.90-93; 130.219-223.
\textsuperscript{25}\textit{MR} VI, 140.52-62.
\textsuperscript{26}\textit{MR} IV, 62.143-146.
Qu'il cuidoit bien tout maintenant
Laissier son escou et sa targe,

The haubere (hauber) was a coat of mail consisting of a series of round interlocking metal links which broke the force of a blow by its resilience. A lining made of animal hair was often sewn into the haubere and an auguston or gambois of quilted cotton was normally worn under it. The chausses or chacheure which served as protection for the legs was often also made of mail (chacheure de fer). There was an extension of the haubere called the coiffe which covered the head and was worn under the helmet (hiaume, hiame, elme, iaume). For defensive purposes the knight carried a shield (escut, escus), a somewhat smaller version being referred to as a targe. The lance and the espée were the most popular weapons, especially in the joust. A variety of throwing weapons (dard, javelot) were frequently used in time of war.

As the hour designated for the beginning of the tournament approached, heralds passed by calling on the participants to arm themselves:

27 MR II, 55-56.290-291

28 We find the popular expression roler le haubere (battre, to beat) twice in the fabliaux:

N'sust miex son haubere roulé. (MR I, 123.193.)
Bien li ont son haubere roulé. (MR IV, 140.203.)
La nuit s'en va li jors esclare; 29
Hiraut orient: "Lachies, lachies!"

The command *lachies* is apparently an abbreviation of the phrase *lacez les heaumes* for the helmets were laced to the haubert to assure their remaining firmly on the heads of the knights.

As for the joust itself, there were two different types of contests. The most common situation involved pitting individual knights against each other and declaring the one with the most victories the winner. Such an individual combat is depicted in *Du chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame*:

*Tuit prest de lances dépecier.  
Lors saillent sus sans délaiер,  
Les escus joiz, les lances baissent,  
Lachent les regnes, si s'eslaissent;  
Noblement es estriers s'afichent,  
Les lances brisent et esclcent,  
Onques de rien ne s'espartgerent;  
Des espées lo chapele ferent  
Chascuns au mialz que il savoit.  
Li chevaliers qui pris avoit  
Lo tornoi, et juré par s'ame  
Envers lo seignor à la dame  
Que il voldra à lui joster  
Par tans, cui qu'i doie coeter  
Lors laisse celle, et si se part  
Plus tost que foille qui depart,  
D'arc, qant ele est bien entesée.  
Jus l'anporte lance levée,  
Nel pot tenir poitraus ne cengle,  
Tut chaî en un mont ensamble.*

---

30:MR VI, 140.59-78.
In *Des III chevaliers et del chainse* a quite different form of combat is involved. All of the participants are on the field at the same time, each knight in effect opposing all of the others. The contestant judged to have acquitted himself in the most skillful fashion throughout the mêlée was declared the winner:

Vers son content tot l'ambleure
S'en va, en l'escut enbuisés.
Ses contraires a si buisiés
Al branc d'achier et tant malhiés
Ke lor escus a detalhiés,
Lors habiers ros, et enbareis
Lor hiames: ja ert debarreis
Ses chanses et mut depechiés
Et s'ert ses cors forment blechiés,
Mais li cuers noient ne s'esmaie;

Toute jor maintient l'eskermie
Tant ke li tornois fu espars.
On li done, de totes pars,
Le pris do tornoi, et en voie
Chascuns à l'hosté le convoie. 31

B. Food

The fabliaux, being a genre devoted primarily to the narration of a particular incident, contain few examples of detailed descriptions of food and clothing. Such descriptions are for the most part incidental to the plot and thus infrequent. On two occasions banquets prepared to welcome home the lord of a castle are described. The first such account comes from the story *Du provost à*

l'aumuche and the occasion is the lord's return from a pilgrimage. A squire was normally sent ahead to announce the lord's impending return so that proper preparations could be made:

Le matinet, ainz la vesprée,
A .I. sien escuier tramis
A sa fame et à ses amis,
Qu'il venissent encontre lui,
Quar haitiez est et sans anui,
Et si fëist appareillier
A l'ostel assez à mengier,
De char, de poisson sans devin,
Qu'à plentë aient trestout.

Au premier mès ont pois et lart,32

The story itself however deals with the attempt of the provost to steal a large piece of pork (lart) and there is no further indication of other specific courses to be served.

In Guillaume au faucon a banquet is prepared for a lord who has been away participating in a tournament:

En la sale en est retornée,
Qui fu richement atornée,
Et les tables basses assises,
Et les blanches napes sus mises,
Et anpréš les mès aportez,
Pain et vin, et hastes tornez,
Lors sont venu li chevalier,
Et sont tuit assis au mengier,
Et plus très bien furent servi
C'on ne porroit raconter ci.33

Again the description is rather limited. The tables are

32 MR I, 113.36-45; 114.64.
elaborately decorated and covered with white cloths and meat roasted on a spit (hastes tornez) is served. As for the rest, the author satisfies himself with the comment that he could not even begin to describe the magnificence of the feast.

The most detailed description of an elegant meal is found in Le prestre et le chevalier and here it is the priest who has prepared the meal for a knight who is his guest. In all probability this is exactly the type of banquet referred to in the above examples. First of all, the preparations for the meal are described and then the serving of the courses themselves:

Li keus faisoit peler les aus,
Commin broier et poivre ensanle,
Et já cuiscient, ce me sanle,
.Iiii. capons Æt .ii. gelines.
Molt Êrent beles les cuisines,
Car li connin et li oison
Êrent já cuit et li poisson.
Gille, au cors avenant et biel,
Fist .ii. pastés et un gastel;
Dame Avinë eeslut le fruit,
C'on dut mengier par grant deduit,
Et en apres autres viandes.
Li Prestres poile les amandes;
Caus bat les aus, l'autre le poivre,
Et si ont fait un moult boin soivre;
Li tierch levent les escuielles,
Li quart met les bans et les seles
Et les tables pour assêoir. . .

En .ii. bâchins clers et luissians
Porta on l'iaue pour laver;
Gille, la plaisant demisele,
L'a aporëes maintenant.
Le Prestre fist laver devant
Le Chevalier à grant honnor;
De son otel le fist seignour.
Après lava li Capelains
Ses iex et sa bouche et ses mains;
Puis s'alerent seoir après.
.II. candelabres de chîpres
Aportent doi vallet avant;
En cascun ot .i. chierge grant
Que mieux veissent au mengier. . .

Et, devant tous les autres mâs,
Fu premiers li pains et li vins.
Li chars de porc et li connins
Aporta on, pour .ii. mâs faire;
Celle viande doit bien plaire.
Après orent cisiaux nouviaux;
Puis fu aportés li gastiaux,
Et li capon furent au soivre,
Et li poisson à le fort poivre,
Et les pastes à derains
Fait aporter li Capelains,
Por ce qu'il ôrent biel et chier.
Por mieux seoir le Chevalier,
Et à toute l'autre maisme
Dame Avinée, qui fu lie,
Aporta nois et autre fruit,
Et kanièle, si com je cuit,
Et gynbembras et ricolisse;
Mainte boïne herbe et mainte espise
Lors aporta dame Avinée.
Ains que la table fust ostée,
S'en mengèrent, toutes et tuit,
Tout par loissir et par deduit,
Et burent vin, vermeil et blanc,
Cler comme larme, et pur, et franc,
Assés et as grans alesées.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Et ont les tables, quant lius fu.
Et puis font attisier le feu
Que froidure ne les sousprengne.34

The cook peels the eggs, mixes the seasonings (cumin and pepper) and then prepares to cook four capons and two hens. The fish and goose are already cooked, bringing a splendid aroma to the kitchen. The young niece of the

34 MR II, 55.268-285; 56.296-309; 56-57.312-341.
priest prepares two pastries and a cake while the cleric's mistress selects the fruit. The prêst himself shells the almonds. The eggs and pepper are used in the preparation of a spiced sauce (soivre). Finally, the glasses (escuielles) are filled and the table and chairs are arranged. Water is brought in two basins by the beautiful niece and the priest urges the knight to wash first, thus indicating that he is to consider himself lord of the household. Candles are brought forward by two servants and the meal itself begins.

The first course consists of bread and wine followed by a second course of pork and rabbit (conning). Afterwards, game bird and cakes, capons in a spicy sauce, fish in pepper sauce, and pastries are served. Dame Avinée then brings in nuts and fruit, cinnamon (kaniele), ginger preserves (gyngembras), and licorice (ricolisse) along with a variety of other herbs and spices. When the table is finally cleared, everyone sits around drinking both white and red wine.

In Des trois aveugles de Compiengne, three beggars who claim to have a considerable sum of money are served a lavish meal in a local tavern. The author Cortebarbe specifically compares the meal to one which might be served a knight.
Et li avugle du solier
Furent servi com chevalier; 35

The meal itself consisted of five courses and included bread, meat, pâté, capons, and wine:

De .V. mès pleniers lor atorne
Pain, et char, pastèz et chapons,
Et vins, mès que ce fu des bons; 36

Finally, in De la dame escollée, the host enumerates those items which he refuses to share with the visiting count, knowing full well that his wife will then command that the entire list be included on the menu:

Dit li sires: "Quir par mon grâ
Ne mengeront de mes poissons,
Ne de mes bones venoisons,
De mes viez vins, de mes ferrez,
Ne mes oiseaux, ne mes pastez."

La dame haste le mengier;
Mout en a fait apareillier
De venoison, de voleille.

Mout par fu riche la quâsine,
Mout ont beûs vins et morez,
Et mout fu li quens honorez.
Après mengier si sont deduit
De paroles, puis si ont fruit,
Et après le mangier laverent:
Escuier de l'ève donerent,
Puis burent du vin qui fu bons. 37

The meal itself then included fish, venison, poultry, pâté, the best wine of the host stored in kegs in the

35MR I, 74.113-114.
36MR I, 73.100-102.
37MR VI, 100.1380142; 100.153-155; 101.180-187.
cellar (*ferrez*), a special blackberry wine (*morez*) and finally fruit. A squire then brought in water so that they might wash their hands. Later in the story we again find the group drinking *morez* and *clarez fins* (*MR VI, 110. 446*). *Clarez* is a kind of spiced wine.

C. Costume

As we have seen above, descriptions of the knight's armor and weaponry occur quite frequently in the fabliaux. Little is revealed, however, about his daily costume or those garments worn on special occasions. We know that the dress of men and women was practically identical except that the lady never wore *braies*, a type of linen underdrawers. Otherwise, both sexes wore a *chainse*, a shirt with long tight sleeves. Over the *chainse* went the *cote* or *bliaut*, also frequently referred to as a *sorcoat*. This garment was often elaborately decorated and the short, full-cut sleeves allowed the tight sleeves of the *chainse* to be visible. During the thirteenth century, the sleeves of the *bliaut* or *sorcoat* tended to become longer and tighter. The *sorcoat* was cut low enough so that the often handsomely embroidered neck of the *chainse* might show. In winter, a fur-lined *pellice* was often worn over the *sorcoat* and when the weather warranted it a *mantel* could be worn over both *sorcoat* and *pellice*. A basic difference in the dress of men
and women was of course the cut of the clothes and length of the woman's chainse and bliaut which frequently reached the ground. 38

Each of the terms mentioned above occur in the fabliaux and our concordance reveals the following frequencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cote</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bliaut</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sorcoat</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surcoat</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pelice</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chainse</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemise</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mantel</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a majority of cases, however, these articles of clothing are mentioned in relation to characters other than knights.

The impoverished knight of Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler was in such a wretched state that even his good clothes had been pawned:

Ne li remest mantel d'ermine
Ne surcot, ne chape forrée 39

The dress of the young lover of Du chevalier à la robe vermeille is described as he prepares himself for a rendezvous with his sweetheart:

Robe d'escarlate novele
A vestu, forrée d'ermine. 40

Later, as he is about to enter her bed, he disrobes:


39 MR VI, 69.40-41.

Sus une huche aus piez du lit
A oit toute sa robe mise;
Ses braies ote et sa chemise,
Et ses esperons a otez.

The custom of sleeping in the nude is suggested in
*Le vair palefroi* when Guillaume jumps from his bed upon
learning of the unexpected arrival of his beloved:

Il sailli sus, plus n'i atent;
Un sorcot en son dos sans plus
Droit à la porte en est venus.

The most elaborate description of costume appears in
*Guillaume au faucon* and here it is the wife of the wealthy
knight whose dress is so extensively described. Considering
the similarity in the dress of men and women however, we
are able in this description of feminine attire to obtain
some idea of just what an elaborate male costume might be
like:

Si vos dirai ci la devise
De sa beauté par soutill guise;
Que la dame estoit plus très cointe,
Plus très acesmée et plus jointe,
Quant el est parece et vestue,
Que n’est faucons qui ist de mue,
Ne espervier, ne papegaut.
D’une porpre estoit son bliaut,
Et ses menteaus d’or estelée,
Et si n’estoit mie pelée
La penne qui d’ermine fu;
D’un sebelin noir et chenu
Fu li menteaux au col coulez,
Qui n’estoit trop granz ne trop lez.

\[41\text{MR III, 37.66-69.}\]
\[42\text{MR I, 63-64,1188-1190.}\]
\[43\text{MR II, 94.65-78.}\]
D. Recreation

We have discussed above the type of game which might be enjoyed during tournament festivities (Le roy qui ne ment pas) and no other games as such are mentioned in those fabliaux which concern us. The subject of the hunt as a form of recreation and the use of the falcon as a method of hunting is however brought up on several occasions. The falcon figures prominently in Guillaume au faucon when Guillaume's illness, actually brought about by his lady's rejection of his love, is explained away as having resulted from his ardent desire to possess his master's prize falcon. The readiness with which the lord of the castle accepts this excuse as plausible indicates the high esteem in which these birds were held. In L'Espervier, a search for a lost falcon is given as the excuse for the presence of a knight and his squire in the bedroom of a married lady. A hunt is arranged in La dame qui se venja du chevalier in order to get the husband out of the house and provide the lady an opportunity to welcome her lover. The young knight preparing to journey to the home of his mistress in Le chevalier A la robe vermeille decides to take his falcon along on the chance that they might encounter some game along the way:

Et prist son esprevier muè,
Que il meismes ot muè,
Et maine .ii. chienès petit.
E. Miscellaneous Customs

A careful study of the fabliaux brings to light numerous pieces of miscellaneous information regarding medieval customs. The knight returning from a journey for example was normally greeted in the courtyard by his wife whose duty it was to hold the stirrup as her lord dismounted:

Et sa feme contre lui vint,
Au descendre li tint l'estrier. 45

Frequent visitors were not unexpected at the castles of wealthy knights and lords since the number of inns was insufficient for the lodging of all travelers:

La dame et le seignor salue,
Puis a sa resson desponge:
"L'ostel vous requier et demande
Avoec oels qui sont en la lande."
Li chevaliers a respondu
Tantost come il l'a entendu:
"Ja mes ostels n'ert escondis,
Bien soiez-vous venu tozdis,
Vous avant et li autre aprês;
Sont vo compagnon auques pr3s?
Alez les esraument haster." 46

45 MR III, 256.116-117. This custom was apparently extended in that any visitor of high rank could expect to be greeted and assisted in like manner by the lady of the castle. In the Yvain of Chrétien de Troyes, Laudine comes forward to hold the stirrup as King Arthur dismounts.
46 MR I, 224.119-129.
The marriage procession of the daughter of an extremely wealthy lord is described briefly in *Le vair palefroi*. The best horses in the country were chosen as mounts for the lady and her entourage comprised a number of highly regarded knights. It was their duty to see the bride safely to the church. The manner in which marriages were arranged by the parents is of course quite evident in a number of fabliaux (*La houce partie, Le vilain mire, Le vair palefroi*, et cetera).

A tradition associated with the celebration of Pente-coste in King Arthur’s court is mentioned in *Le mantel mautaillié*. The king and queen provide their many guests, both male and female, with elaborate gifts at the beginning of the festivities:

> **A la Roïne pas n'en poise**
> De se qu'elles sont assamlées;
> En sa chambre les a menées,
> Et, por elles plus esjoir,
> Lor fist maintenant departir
> Robes de diverses manières;
> Molt furent vaillans les moins chieres
> De molt bone soie et de riche,
> Mès qui vous voudroit la devise
> Et l'œuvre des dras aconter,
> Trop i convendroit demorer
> Qui bien en voudroit reso rendre;
> Mès aillors me coivent entendre.
> Molt fet la Roïne à loer;

47 MR III, 124.35-37.
Après lor a fat aporter
Fermaus, gaintures et aniaus;
Onques tel planté de joiaus
Nul hom, mien escient, ne vit
Comme la Roine lor fist
A ses puceseles aporter;
S'em fist à chascune doner
Tant comme onques en voudrent prendre.
Or me covient aillors entendre
Et du bon Roi Artu parler,
Qui fist aus chevalier doner
Robes molt riches et molt beles,
Et grant planté d'armes noveles,
Et molt riches chevaus d'Espaingne,
De Lombardie et d'Allemagne.
N'i ot si povre chevalier
Qui n'eüst armes et destrier
Et robe, se prendre les volt;
Onques si grant plentiful n'en ot
A une feste plus doné.48

Finally, in the two versions of La male Honte there is a reference to a custom practiced in the English kingdom whereby a portion of a man's estate was to be turned over to the king at his death. The two explanations of the custom differ slightly. The first version (MR IV, 41.) by Guillaume le Normand states that if one dies without leaving an heir, all of his property is turned over to the king:

En icel tens ert us et droiz
Que, quant i. hom moroit sans cir,
Li rois avoit tot son avoir.49

In the second version (MR V, 95.) it is noted that one-half of the estate was to be assigned to the king:

Riches hon estoit à grant force.
La mort qui toute rien efforce

49MR IV, 41.6-8.
The humor in the story is based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of the phrase *male Honte*. The knight who wanted to present the *male Honte* to the king was repeatedly sent away by his aides who did not understand that it was a question of a trunk which had belonged to a man named Honte. They interpreted the messenger's remarks as an expression of his desire to put the king "to great shame". A number of fabliaux are based on similar word-plays (*Estula*, *Le sentier batu*, et cetera).
CHAPTER V

The Knight and his World as Instruments of Humor in the Fabliaux

Joseph Bédier described the fabliaux as "contes à rire en vers." While there has been some tendency to dispute this designation as being oversimplified and unindicative of the wide variety of subjects and attitudes treated in the genre, it seems to me that in this case Bédier has appreciated that element common to all writers of fabliaux, the desire and intention to provoke laughter. It is quite true that certain fabliaux reveal a much more moral tone than do others, that a few are extremely obscene while most leave absolutely no room for criticism in that respect, and that many deal principally with the vilain or priest while others adopt as a social milieu the world of the nobility, but it is equally true that all are endowed in varying degrees with comedy and humor. This is the unifying factor, the element that enables us to designate, for example, both the highly moralizing La houe partie and the courtly tale of Le vair palefroi as fabliaux.

The knight is not normally treated as a source of humor in literature. His courage and his loyalty to God
and king are emphasized in the *chansons de geste*, while in the *romans courtois* he is judged by his adherence to a rigid chivalrous code of conduct stressing valor and perfection in the service of his lady. In the fabliaux the knight becomes subject to that type of comic treatment accorded members of every level of society. He becomes indeed an instrument of humor and it is his function in that particular role that we propose to examine in this chapter. We shall describe the methods or techniques employed in the process of reducing the knight of the *chanson de geste* and *roman courtois* to his more earthy and perhaps more human counterpart in the fabliaux.

Ironic contrast and opposition are basic features of the humor centered around the knight. We shall consider the extent to which the conduct of the knight in the fabliaux is at variance with his role in both epic and romance, but we shall also be concerned with a more internal type of contrast. The conduct or treatment of a knight, for example, may conflict dramatically with his character as it is depicted in descriptive passages; there may also be a notable contrast in his actions at different points in the narrative. It is my opinion that these drastic changes and contrasts which may sometimes result in the sudden metamorphosis of a quite courtly tale into a rather ribald fabliau form the nucleus of the humor in these stories.
These contrasts are most dramatically evident in the obscene little tale *Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler*. The squire Hugh attempts to steal the expensive clothes of three maidens who are bathing in a pool as part of his plan to obtain the money necessary for his lord's participation in a tournament. He is, however, severely reprimanded by the knight who insists that such a crime was not at all in keeping with his code of conduct and will contribute nothing to his worth as a knight.

Li chevaliers en ot pesance;  
Des puceles et grant pitié.  
Lors a le cheval tant coitie  
Que Huet ataint, si li dist:  
"Baille ça tost, se Dieu t'aisist,  
Cez robes, nes enportes mie,  
Ce seroit trop grant vilenie  
De faire à cez puceles honte."

Par foi," ce dit li chevaliers,  
"Ge lor reporterai arriers  
Les robes, comment qu'il en praigne;  
Ge n'ai cure de tel gaaigne;  
Ge n'en venroie ja en gris."

How typical of the spirit of the fabliaux that this knight who has acted in such a worthy manner should be rewarded with so crude but useful a gift, the ability to "faire les cons parler".

As stated earlier, his idealistic protestations to his squire are soon completely obliterated by his callous and vulgar exploitations of a priest, a servant girl, and the

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\(^1\) *MR* VI, 73.148-155; 73-74,163-167.
mistress of a château where he has been hospitably received. The humor in this antithesis of statement and conduct is compounded when the story ends with the news that this knight will be forever honored by all those who knew him:

_Quo tos li mondes l'ameroit,_
_Et fist puis tant con il vesqui._

Do his later actions verify the glowing description of his character referred to in Chapter I? Definitely not! He does battle with the priest, the servant girl, and the lady of the manor, but his weapon is no sword, but rather the crude magical power bestowed on him by the maidens of the lake. We are certainly not suggesting that the contrastive humor described above is employed only in reference to the knight, but it is particularly appropriate when a lady or gentleman of relatively high station is involved.

_Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler_ provides us with yet another example of this type of humor in the character of the mistress of the castle. She is introduced into the story in a most complimentary fashion:

_En cel chastel avoit un conte_
_Et la contesse avuec, sa feme,_
_Qui mout ert bele et vaillant dame._

The lady is attracted immediately to the handsome knight and having learned of his strange power from a servant girl

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2_MR VI, 88-89.614-615._
3_MR VI, 79.338-340._
sent to console him as a sort of substitute for herself, she challenges him before the assembled court to demonstrate this extraordinary gift:

La contesse parla en haut:
"Seignors," fait el, "se Dieus me salt,
J'ai oi paller chevaliers,
Serganz, borgois et escuiers,
Et aventures acanter,
Mais nous ne se porroit vanter
D'une aventure qu'oi hier,
Qu'il a saiz n un chevalier
Qui tot le mont a sormonté,
Quar il a si grant poësté
Qu'il fait & lui le con paller. 4

Again what a strange mixture of the noble and the base that this "bele et vaillant dame" now stands before the court and her husband, using such language and daring to make such a challenge. Her husband and his knights are not at all disturbed by this boldness on the part of their lady and she is even encouraged to continue:

Et la contesse reparole,
Qui n'estoit vileine ne folé:
"Dant chevaliers, comment qu'il aille,
G'en veuil à vos faire fermaille:
Si i metrai soissante livres,
Jamés cons n'ert si fous ne yvres,
Qui por nos parolt un seul mot." 5

What a humorous paradox for the author to insist in line 498 above that the lady is not at all crude or base (vileine) and then in the next lines have her openly involve herself personally in her wager that the knight will be unable to

4 MR VI, 84.477-487.
5 MR VI, 85.497-503.
demonstrate any such power. Even though she delays temporarily the victory of the knight by a deceit best left unmentioned, he eventually elicits a reply from that normally mute part of the countess and she is forced to pay the amount of the wager.

Thus a knight who is described in glowing terms and who speaks idealistically of knightly honor and merit in the first part of the story does not hesitate to take full advantage of the basest of powers in the second section. A countess who the author insists is noble and elegant acts and talks like the coarsest of women. These contrasts provide the most pointed humor in the story. The early descriptive passages may be passed off by some as mere formulaic introductions to characters of specific types, but it is my contention that they are a conscious and integral part of the humor in the story.

The author of Du chevalier qui recouvré l'amor de sa dame dispenses with introductory descriptive comment and launches into a tale which we might first mistake for a lai or short courtly tale. The knight stricken by Cupid's arrows will do anything to please his lady:

Oil chevalier voloit s'amie  
Faire d'une dame, et grant poine  
Sofroit por lui qu'el fust certaine  
Que il l'amoit, car il faisoit  
Totes les choses qu'i savoit  
Q'à la dame deussient plaire.

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6MR VI, 138.6-11.
He proves himself worthy of his beloved by defeating her husband in tournament competition and is granted an interview with her for that very evening. As previously noted, the knight, weary from the long hours of combat, falls asleep while waiting for his lady and it is this obvious and amusing contrast between his actions at this moment and his earlier promises of a complete love and devoted service to his lady that removes us from the material proper to the courtly tale and shifts us to the level of the fabliau. From the very moment of this conflict between word and deed, the knight proceeds to regain his lady's favor by employing the sort of ruse that is completely in the tradition of the fabliaux. Contrasts between action, word, and description may then mark a turning point in certain fabliaux, the moment at which the level or tone of the story is dramatically shifted. Therein lies this blending of diverse elements which is a significant feature of the genre.

*Le vair palefroi* exhibits all of the characteristics of the short verse romance until a similar contrastive sequence is related. Elaborate preparations have been made for the wedding of Guillaume's beloved to his own treacherous uncle. The finest horses in the land have been chosen for the wedding procession and Guillaume's *palefroi*, reputed to be the most magnificent animal in the country, has been chosen as a mount for the bride. Herein lies the solu-
tion to the problem of the unhappy lovers, for the palefroi will leave the wedding procession and stray along the secret but often travelled path formerly used by Guillaume on his visits to his beloved. Other preparations are necessary, however, in order to make the bride's disappearance plausible and it is in the description of these circumstances that the level or tone of the story is altered. A huge party is held on the eve of the wedding and everyone drinks his fill. Later, the watchman, his mind and vision befogged with drink, mistakes a bright moon for the coming of dawn and awakens everyone.

Après la miennuit leva
La lune, qui bien esclaira
Tout environ l'air et les ciex;
Et quant la guete vit aus iex,
Qui embéus avoit esté,
Environ lui la grant clarté,
Cuida que l'aube fust crevéée:
"Estre déust, fet-il, levée
Pieqa la grant chevalerie."
Il tret le jors et huche et crie;
"Levez, Seignor, li jor apert,"
Fet cil, qui toz estordis erès;
Du vin qu'il ot le soir bëu.

The party of knights sent to escort the lady to the church have likewise been drinking and in their drowsiness do not notice the absence of the girl for quite some time, thus permitting the palefroi to arrive home bringing the lady into the arms of her true sweetheart. Thus the spectacle

7MR I, 55.933-945.
of the drunken knights and the laughable improbability of a watchman mistaking moonlight for the break of day form an effective contrast to the general tone of the story up to that moment. It is precisely this humorous sequence that permits the dénouement to take place and at the same time allows us to include *Le vair palefroi* among the fabliaux.

A bizarre intermingling of epic-like passages with a description of the very real problem of the limited female companionship available to the soldier-knights involved is a source of parody and humor in *D'une seule fame qui a son con servait, c. chevaliers de tous points*. In the rather lengthy extract which follows, the first ten lines might certainly be the beginning of a *chanson de geste*, but this section is immediately followed by the introduction of the rather comical social problem referred to above:

```plaintext
En ung chastel ser mer estoient
Cent chevalier, qui lâ manoienc,
Pour aus et le pais desfendre,
Par que nus ne les pouist prendre.
Chascun for assaut lor livroient
Sarrazin, qui Deu ne crôeient.
Par acort furent treves mises
Entre les parties et prises,
Tant que chascun à l onc sejour
Retorna et fist son labour.
Li chastiax estoit biaz et gans,
Mais assis estoit loing de gens;
Deux fames entr'ax touz avoient,
Qui por aus buer les servoient;
Assez estoient de bel atour.
Qui plus plus, qui miex, à son tour,
D'eles faisient lor volenté
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Chascuns, et à cele plentë,
Et sâ et là, ce est la somme,
Com fame puët miex servir home.
Ainsis furent par moulî long tems,
Tant qu'entre aus orent .I. contens
Por les famez, ce m'ët avis;
Car chascuns d'aus à son devis
Les vouloit avoir à son tour,
Sans faire as autres nul retour.
Quant les famez sorent la noise,
N'y a cele ne s'en envoise,
Car chascune en cuide bien faire
Son preu par li, et touz atraire;
Chascune en ot au cuer grant joie,
D'ame furent com rat en moie.
Li plus sages se porpencerent,
Et ainsis le contens osterent,
Que chascune d'eles par rente
Serviroit Chevaliers cinquente,
Ne nus ne porroit par justice
Faire a l'autre préjudice;
Ainsi cil et celez ansemble
S'acordërënt, si com moi samble.8

No sooner has the problem of a division of the services of
the two available women been solved than the knights are
called once more to battle.

Ainsi furent bien longuement,
Tant qu'il avint, ne sai coment,
Que les treves furent rompues,
Et les guerres sont revenues,
Et li assaus est revenus
Des Sarrazins et fort tenus,
Et li Chevalier dou chaste;
S'adoubèrent et bien et bel,
Qui grant talent avient d'abatre
Les mescrêans par bien combatre.
Yssu sont fors à ost bennie
Toute la noble compeingnie,
Mais que .I. Chevalier, qui jurent
Au lit por ce que blecië furent.9

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9 MR I, 295-296.41-54.
The description of these knights who have just been bickering over the question of the ladies' services as "toute la noble compeingnie" definitely seems tongue-in-cheek.

The writer also leads us to believe that a knight turned murderer will be appropriately punished for his crime when his companions return, but, as seen above, we find that they are primarily concerned with the loss of their concubine and the probability of an obviously undesirable abstention on their part. There is no concern over the murderer's betrayal of any chivalrous code of conduct and he is even freed completely when the surviving woman assures the company that she is capable of serving them all:

Einsis fust par ceste aventure  
Délivrée de mort obscure;  
Des Chevaliers fu si privée  
Que ses services lor agrée;  
Onc ne recrut de lor amor,  
Ne tost, ne tart, ne nuit ne jor,  
Ains lor livroit assez estor,  
Car chacuns l'avoit à son tor.10

The blending of courtly tale and fabliau found in Du chevalier qui recovra l'amor de sa dame and Le vair palefroi is thus paralleled in this irreverent mixture of epic tone and earthy humor.

The religious pilgrimage even finds its way into the fabliau Le provost a l'aumuche, a tale which begins with a

10 MR I, 300.185-192.
dignified description of a knight beloved and respected in his country who wishes to make the journey as an expression of his devotion to God:

D' un chevalier cis fabiaus conte
Qui par samblant valoit un conte.
Riches hom estoit et manans;
Fame ot, dont il avoit enfans
Si come il est coustume et us.
XX. ans cil chevaliers et plus
Vesqui sanz guerre et sans meslée.
Moult fu amez en sa contrée
De ses homes et d'autre gent,
Tant que I. jor li prist talent
Du baron saint Jaque requerre. 

Confiding the care of his estate to his provost, he departs for Saint Jaque.12 His mission accomplished, he returns home to the joy of relatives and friends and a banquet is prepared in his honor. Up to this point in the tale, there has been nothing in action or tone to indicate or even suggest that we are dealing with a fabliau. The banquet scene, however, presents a very definite contrast to the first part of the story, for here there is a rapid reduction of tone resulting in an almost farcical conclusion to the story. The knight ceases to be the focal point of the story and our attention is shifted to the provost who soon proves himself to be a most greedy and scheming character. He conceals a huge piece of meat (li Iars) under his aumuche or furred


12Saint Jacques de Campostello in Spain was a popular shrine in the Middle Ages and the destination of many pilgrims.
cape, but drops it into the lap of a knight sitting near him when he is bumped by one of the serving boys. Attempting to flee the room, he is tripped by a squire who had seen everything and is soon beaten and thrown outside into a ditch.

This slapstick routine is in complete contrast to the loftier tone established at the beginning of the story and again I believe the drastic shift that occurs is a principal feature of the humor in the tale.

One would naturally believe illustrious knights such as Ywain, Keux, Ydier, and Gauvain to be blessed with loving and faithful wives and sweethearts. The contrast of this expectation with the reality of the mass unfaithfulness revealed in *Le mantel mautaillié* provides the basic humor in that tale. Each knight believes that the mantel will fit his beloved perfectly and each in turn is embarrassed as he is proved wrong. The protestations of each knight only serve to underline or dramatize his lady's misconduct and thereby increase the comic effect achieved.

Keux is the most boastful and self-assured of all:

Keux en a apelé s'amie:
"Damoisele, venez avant;
Qiánt ces chevaliers, me vant
Que vous estes leaus par tout,
Que je sai bien sanz nul redoût
Vous le poez bien afubler;
N'i aurez compaingne ne per
De leauté ne de valor.
Vous en porterez kui l'onor
De ceenz sanz nul contredit." 14

How comic his boasts appear when the lady tries on the garment:

Et la demoisele le prent;
Voiant les barons, l'afubla
Et li mantiaus plus acorça
Aus jarès et noiant avant,
Et li dui acor de devant
Ne porent les genouz passer.15

In the case of Ywain, the author slyly describes his best qualities and refers to his noble parentage, all in

preparation for his humiliation:

Li Rois prist par la destre main
L'amie mon seignor Yvain
Qui au roi Urien fu fil,
Le preu chevalier, le gentil, 16
Qui tant ama chiens et oisius.

Similar adjectives are employed in the introduction of the
amie of Gauvain:

L'amie mon seignor Gavain,
Venelaus la preus, la cortoise,17

In both cases the comic effect is achieved with the humiliation which accompanies the obvious ill fit of the mantel on each of the ladies.

Ydier then eloquently insists that his lady be granted the opportunity to try the garment, but his lofty speech results in his great discomfort when his lady's lack of loyalty is obvious:

Ydiers en apela par ire
S'amie, qui lez luy seoit;
Quar au matin de voir cuidoit
Que nule ne fust plua loiaus;
"Damoisele, li seneschaus
Me dist or que trop me hastoie;
Je dis que riens ne me doutoie;
Mës je me fiai en vous tant
Que je parlaï seuremant;
Mës molt le fetes lentement,
Or sachiez que je m'en repent
Por ce que je vous voi douter
Alez le mantel affubler;
Quar je ne vueil plus delaier.
Por quoi en fetes vous dangier,
Quant n'en poez par el passer?"

16MR III, 17.485-489.
Li Rois li fist tost aporter
Le mantal, et ele le prent, 
Maintenant à son col le pent
Que n'i osa essoine querre;
Li acor cheirent à terre
Si que plain pis li trainèrent.
Li plus des chevaliers cuidierent
Que en li n'eüst se bien non;
Puis regarderent le crepon
Qui tréstoz descouvers estoit.
Girflet, qui permerains le voit,
Li escrie de maintenant:
"Li acor en sont trop pendant;
Ne fus pas à vostre oes tailliez;
Jamès derrier n'ert si moilliez
Qu'il puisse rooms devenir."
Et Kex, qui ne se pot tenir
De ce qu'Ydier l'ot ramposné,
L'en rendi tantost la bonté:
"Ydier, que vous en est avis?
Vostre amie n'a rien mespris;18

The supreme irony comes at the end of the story when a faithful amie is finally found. In his choice of the weirdly named unknown knight Karados Brisebras as possessor of the most virtuous lady, the author achieves the final comic contrast in the story, for in so doing the champion knights with their faithless mistresses receive their final and most disturbing humiliation.

The knight is of course an excellent object for this type of contrastive humor, for he can be humorously brought down from greater heights than the bourgeois, priest, or peasant. When the knights involved are those fabled heros of courtly romance, the effect is that much more striking.

18 MR III, 21-22.606-642.
The most obvious contrast of descriptive material and the knight's treatment in a story is found in Des tresces. The first fourteen lines of this fabliau provide a detailed enumeration of the virtues of the knight in question:

Jadis avint c'uns chevaliers,
Preuz et cortois et beaus parliers,
Ert saiges et bien entêchiez;
S'ert si en préesce affichiez
C'onques de riens ne se volt faindre
En place où il poost ataindre;
Et par tot si bien le faisait;
Et à toz sis erreis plaisoit,
Tant qu'il fu de si grant renom,
Qu'en ne parloit se de lui non.
Et s'en li ot sen ot préesce;
Il ert de si haute largece,
Quant il avoit le heaume osté, 19
Preuz ert au champ et à l'osté. 19

In the very next lines, however, we learn that his wife is unfaithful, preferring a knight from the neighboring countryside to this paragon of virtue as described above.

Il ot feme de grant paraige,
Qui avoit mis tot son coraige
A .i. chevalier du pais; 20

Is the author soliciting sympathy for the husband in his extremely complimentary description? I think not. This is just one more example of that very obvious shift in tone that we have shown to be typical of stories in which the knight appears. If the author had intended to make the husband the hero as his description might indicate, we


20 MR IV, 67.15-17.
should then expect his eventual triumph over wife and lover. This is of course not the case, for the lady's elaborate ruse succeeds in so confusing the poor man that he is deceived into believing that he has dreamed everything and that his wife's misconduct is only imaginary:

--Dist il: "Dame, vos dites voir; Ge vorrai le matin movoir, Quur du vecir au grant envie." Et au matin pas ne s'oublie; Le chevaliers chose ne dist, Se la dame le contredist, Qu'il ne cuisdat ce fust mengoinge Ou qu'il l'eust trouve en songe.²¹

How laughable the first fourteen lines become then in the light of the subsequent treatment of the knight in the story.

The adjectives used in reference to the knight in *Le prestre et le chevalier* are also most inappropriate when we consider his attitudes and actions in the tale:

A l'entrée, i. homme encontra Qui li dist: "Sire, bien viengniés, Comme preus et bien afaitiés."

Li chevaliers, simples et doux, Qui le cors ot plaisant et gent²²

Actually these complimentary qualities assigned the knight serve a dual purpose in this particular story. They form a contrast with the knight's own actions as stated above, but at the same time, they also set into motion the opposition or conflict between knight and priest which com-

²¹ *MR IV*, 81.419-426.
²² *MR II*, 49.94-96; 50.132-133.
prises the central theme of the story. Adjectives describing the wealth of the priest are designed to achieve just this opposition:

Vinrent une ville campiestre,
Où il avoit moustier et prestre,
Riche, manant et assasé;
I. grant tresor ot amassé.

Et esra tant que en la fin
Qu'il entra en une voïte
Qui le mena à le vilâte
Où li Prestres riches manoit,
Qui l'amie et la nieche avoit,
Dont oistes ore nagaires.
Mais grans anuis et grans contraires
Avint au noble Chevalier,

Enseigne moi le plus riche homme
De ceste vile, c'est la somme,"
Dist li vilains: "C'est nostre Prestres.
Ch'est li plus riche qui puist estre
Chi environ dis liues loing.23

The weary knight requests the hospitality of the wealthy priest, intending to take him for everything he can. The priest at first refuses but relents when he believes the penniless knight to be worth a great deal of money, some of which he would like to transfer to his pockets. A covenant or ggreement is reached whereby the knight will be charged what appears to be a reasonable sum for each item he uses and in return he may request anything he desires. A great fuss is made over the sacredness of the covenant, but a further ironic contrast is attained in the opposition

23MR II, 47.45-48; 48-49.78-85; 49.99-103.
of the question of honor involved in upholding the pact to
the manner in which the agreement is exploited by the knight. We find that in exercising his right to request anything he
desires, he demands the companionship of both the mistress
and the virgin niece of the priest and manages to extort a
goodly sum of money as compensation for not violating the
priest himself.

There are several fabliaux in which the humor is based
on a character's manifestation of moral qualities totally
incongruous with knightly ideals such as courtoisie and
prouesse and with the role of the knight in other literary
genres. The comic effect in these tales in more external
than in those fabliaux previously treated in that we are
not specifically involved with contrasts and oppositions
within the text itself, but with a comparison of internal
action or description with an external ideal—a sort of
pre-established knightly code of conduct.

The gulf between this ideal and the reality of the
tale itself is widest in the two versions of Berangier au
longe cul, for the knight dealt with here is actually a
vilain who has been dubbed only in order to make feasible
his marriage to the daughter of a knight. He is com-
pletely lacking in those noble qualities expected of the
chevalier; thus his violations of the ideal are all the
more blatantly comic. Faced with a lengthy enumeration of
the high qualities of the noble ancestors of his wife, he boasts that he is a knight without equal:

Ge sui chevalier sans perece,
Le meillor trestot par ma mein;
Dame, vos le verroiz demain.
Se mes ennemis puis trouver,
Demain me vorrai esprouver; 24

This is by no means the sole example of his boastfulness in Guerin's version of the tale, but it is the anonymous second treatment of the theme which particularly stresses this aspect of his character.

Et si ert pereceus et vains
Et vaunterres après mengier;
Mout se fesoit bon chevalier
Par parole; en .iii. ou en quatre

Can s'il èüst prêce fete
S'en reventoit mout fierement
Et disoit à toute la gent
Qu'il avoit .ii. chevaliers mors;

---Dame, j'ai trovè chevaliers
Plus de .vii., corageus et fiers,
Qui me vindrent ferir et batre;
Mès j'en ai si bleciè les quatre,
Por mon escu qua perciè orent,
Que puis relever ne se porent,
Et li autre troi s'en fuirent
De la paor quant il ce virent;
Onques ne m'oserent atendre."

Et dist: "Dame, par saint Omer,
Vous me devez mout bien amer
Et honorer et tenir chier,
Que il n'a si bon chevalier
De moi de si en Normendie.

Et plus ai force et hardement
Que je ne di mon esclent."

"Dame," dist il, "je m'en revois
Querre aventures en cest bois;
Sachiez, se je puis encontre
Homme qui ost à moi jouster,
Ja eschaper ne me porra;
Je le prendrai, ou il morra.  

The author himself apparently considered the sin of boasting
his primary target in the tale:

Por ce deffent à toute gent,
Qui se vantent de maint afere
Dont il ne sevent à chief trere,
Qu'il lessent ester lor vantance:
Et je vous di bien sans faillance,
Quant il s'en vantent, c'est folie.
Ici est ma reson fenie.  

This weakness only serves to comically underline the knight's
complete failure and inadequacy in fulfilling the duties
and obligations of his position. His armor, sardonically
described by the author as "beles, fresches, et noveles" shows no sign of having been previously employed in knight-
ly combat and his comic and humiliating reaction when faced
with the possibility of such a conflict labels him as a
coward, the most shameful of all conditions for the knight.

There are five additional fabliaux in which laughter
is provoked as a result of the knight's flagrant violations
of his own pre-established proper image: De la dame qui se

25 MR IV, 57.10-13; 58.32-35; 59.69-77; 60.101-105; 60.111-112; 61.127-132.

26 MR IV, 66.274-280.

27 MR III, 255.83-84.
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venja du chevalier, De la dame escollie, La houee partie, De celle qui se fist foutre, and Le got chevalier. In each of the fabliaux listed above, a knight is endowed with exactly the opposite of the usual knightly virtues—fear, a weak will, avarice, vulgarity, and stupidity. It would not even be necessary for an audience to be well versed in epic and romance in order to appreciate the comedy in such oppositions, for the ridiculing of those in high positions is a common device of humorous literature. Endowing the knight with such negative qualities and subjecting him to humiliating experiences would indeed provide a rich source of humor for the bourgeois or even the peasant, but it seems less probable that the aristocracy would have found great humor in such tales merely because they treat knights who are in some way imperfect and thus deserving of humiliation, a theory offered by Per Nykrog in maintaining that the fabliau is basically an aristocratic genre.28

One much prefers to laugh at a caricature of a person socially or intellectually above him rather than at a similar treatment of his peer. I do not mean to imply that aristocratic audiences must be excluded when considering the fabliaux, but rather that this particular type of story in which the knight is the object of the humor would probably have more appeal at a bourgeois or even a peasant

28Nykrog, p. 229.
gathering. There is no reason to rule out the possibility that various types of fabliaux were chosen for different audiences. A jongleur may well have chosen the most appropriate stories from his repertoire, depending on whether he was entertaining a wealthy lord or at a local fair or village inn.

Now let us examine more closely each of the five fabliaux in question. A knight has spoken in a crude and vulgar manner to his sweetheart in *De la dame qui se venja du chevalier*, an act in itself quite in contrast to the courtliness and eloquence demanded of the proper knight. As we have seen, the lady is of course insulted and determines to avenge herself on the unsuspecting knight by arranging for her husband to return at the very moment when they are sharing a bed together. The knight's mounting fear as the probability of discovery increases is described in passage after passage:

\[
\text{Einz ne fina, si vint tot droit}
\]
\[
\text{Au lit oû sa moillier gesoit}
\]
\[
\text{Lès son ami le chevalier,}
\]
\[
\text{Qui vosist estre à Montperlier.}
\]

There is no suggestion here of the courageous knight who might have revealed himself and challenged the husband;

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29 As mentioned above, this is the position taken by Rychener.

30 *Vi* VI, 27.99-102. The victim in the fabliau frequently expresses his desire to be somewhere rather than in his present dilemma, and in most instances he employs the name of a particular place in his wish ("qui vosist estre à Montperlier").
instead, the stricken knight is practically reduced to a quivering mass of jelly:

Et la dame remest jesant  
Delës le chevalier ellit  
Qui petit prise son delit,

Quant ce li chevalier entent,  
Sachies, mal li vient à talent.

Quant oil l'entent, de poor tremble  
Que les denz li hurtent ensemble:  
Entre la coute et la cortine  
Au plus tost qu'il puet se sovinet

Quant li chevalier l'aperchoit,  
De poor est mout en malese,  
Et ja soit ce que il se tese,  
Tel paour a qu'a mout grant peime  
Puet il mès reprendre s'aleine;

The wealthy knight of *De la dame escolliée* has placed himself in a humiliating position by handing over all authority to his wife, by becoming the "hen-pecked" husband. The wife in turn has taken full advantage of the situation and allows her husband no voice in decisions to be made:

Uns riches hom jadis estoit,  
A qui grant richece apendoiti;  
Chevaliers ert, tint grant hennor,  
Mais tant avoit amé s'ossor,  
Que desor lui l'avoit levée,  
Et seignorie abandonée  
De sa terre, de sa maison,  
Et de tot otroïs le don;  
Dont la dame le tint si vill  
Et tant si bas, que quanque cil  
Dicoit, et ele desdisoit,  
Et deffaisoit quanqu'il faisoit.

---


32 *MR VI, 96.25-36.*
The degree to which the knight is subject to his wife’s authority becomes obvious in an episode involving a potential husband for the daughter of the couple. A certain count has sought refuge during a storm, but hospitality is granted him only when the knight refused it, the wife being inclined to reverse her husband’s decisions in all matters:

Li quens son ostel li rouva:
"Sire," ce dit li chevaliers,
"Herbergasse vos volentiers,
Que mestier avez de repos;
Mais herbegier pas ne vos os.
--N'osez? pou quoi? --Por ma mollier,
Qu'a nul fuer ne veilt otroier
Chose que face ne que die.
De sor moi a la seignorie,
De ma maison a la justise,
De trestot a la comandise,
Si ne li chalt s'en ai enuie;
Ge ne li sui fors chape à pluie.
A son bon fait, moi ent au mien;
De mon command ne feroit rien."

The count laughingly contrasts the husband’s conduct to the proper mastery of the male in such situations, accusing him of a lack of pride:

Li quens s'en rist, et si li disti.
"Se fussiez preuz, pas nel feist." 33

The husband is of course able to obtain his own way by consistently making decisions in opposition to the results he really wants to obtain. His wife then obliges him by reversing the decision and thus obtaining the desired objec-

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33 MR VI, 98.88-102.
34 MR VI, 98.103-104.
Dit li sires: "Que par mon gré
Ne mengeront de mes poissons,
Ne de mes bones venoisons,
De me vies vins, de mes ferrez,
Ne mes oiseaux, ne mes pastes."
Dit la dame: "Or vos esmaiez;
De ses diz ne vos esmaiez,
Que por ses diz ne plus ne mains,
Par semblant est li sires grains."
Mout beau li est de cel servise;
Mout s'en est la dame entremise.
De servir les forment se paine,
Li cheval ont assez aveine
A plenté, ont assez aveine
L'avoyt osé nes contradire.
La dame haste le mengier;
Mout en a fait appareillier
De venoison, de voleille.
En la chanbre cela sa fille,
Ne volt que li quens la veist,
Mais li sires bien le vosist:
"Dame," dit il, "laissez laiens
Mangier ma fille avues vos gens
En la chambre, non ça defors.
Tant a beauté, tant a gent cors;
Li quens est joenes; s'il la voit,
Tel flor mout test la covoistroit."
Ce dit la dame: "Or i venra
Mengier o nos, si la verra."

In much the same manner, the husband obtains the consent of his wife to their daughter's marriage to the count. While it is true that the knight does indeed know how to make the most of the situation, the very fact that he must plan every step in order to avoid the wrath of his domineering wife places him in a humiliating and comic situation. What a contrast to the concept of the lord's mastery of his family and his attendants!

35MR VI, 100-101.138-166.
The brother knights in *La houce partie* demand a careful accounting of the assets of the bourgeois whose son is a prospective bride-groom for the daughter of the eldest:

*Li chevalier li ont enquis*
*De son mueble, de son avoir,*
*Combien il en peut avoir.*

The picture of a knight greedily evaluating the property of a bourgeois in the hope of benefitting from the latter's accumulation of wealth again forms a quite comic contrast to the concept of the knight as typically generous and charitable.

The hero of the epic and romance rarely becomes involved in a rude or vulgar situation, but the knight in the fabliau *De celle qui se fist foutre sur la fosse de son mari* goes so far as to make a wager with his squire that he (the squire) cannot seduce the grieving widow observed prostrate on her husband's grave. He accompanies the wager with protestations against the squire's willingness to undertake the seduction:

*Je croi que pas creistsiens n'ies.*

Earlier he had expressed his pity for the poor woman:

*Certes mout en ai grant pitié.*

---

36 MR I, 86.132-134.
37 MR III, 120.66
38 MR III, 120.56
Such statements only strengthen the humor apparent then in his eventual willingness to make the wager and in his careful observation of all that transpires from the shelter of a nearby tree:

\[\text{Si li embat el con le vit,} \\
\text{Si que ses sires bien le vit} \\
\text{Qui se pasmoit de gieus en aise.}\]

The early indications of a sympathetic and courtly attitude on the part of the knight are then erased by his subsequent actions.

\textit{Le sot chevalier} is the very antithesis of appropriate knightly sagacity and good sense for he is both ignorant and stupid:

\[\text{Se il fust sages et senez,} \\
\text{A grant avoir fust assenez;} \\
\text{Mès tant estoit sos par nature,} \\
\text{Qu'il n'ooit dire créature} \\
\text{Que il ne disist maintenant} \\
\text{Plus de cent fois en tenant,} \\
\text{Quar sotie l'ot deçu.}\]

His actions become all the more ridiculous when we learn of his total ignorance in sexual matters:

\[\text{Quant il l'ot espousée et prise,} \\
\text{Si le tint plus d'un an pucele.} \\
\text{Moult en pesa la damoisele,} \\
\text{Qui vausist sos deduis avoir;} \\
\text{Mès cil n'avoir tant de savoir} \\
\text{Qu'il seust au con adrecier,} \\
\text{Ne le pucelage percier;} \\
\text{Ne porquant l'avoir-il tenue} \\
\text{Par maintes foiz tréstoute nue;}\]

\(^{39}\text{MR III,121.105-107.}\)

\(^{40}\text{MR I, 221.25-31.}\)

\(^{41}\text{MR I, 221.38-46.}\)
The story of a demented knight who does not even know how to make love must have provoked gales of laughter from an audience, especially if that audience were bourgeois. An aristocratic audience would no doubt have preferred a situation in which the ridiculed character was either a bourgeois or a priest.

These five stories then present the knight as one possessing character traits most definitely in conflict with the image of the knight cultivated in the chanson de geste and the roman courtois. This very pointed contrast is thus without question the basis of the humor in these fabliaux.
CONCLUSION

In the course of the study undertaken herein, we have shown that the knight is indeed a character of considerable importance in the fabliaux and that his frequent appearances definitely merit our examination of his role in the genre. We have also been able to determine certain patterns and consistencies in his treatment.

Two basic types of knights appear in the world of the fabliaux, the poorer tournament knight and his wealthier landed counterpart. The former is very definitely favored by the authors of the tales and he consistently emerges triumphant in adventures undertaken or deceits conceived and perpetrated. We do not mean to suggest, however, that this type of knight is necessarily the "hero" of those stories in which he appears. On the contrary, he is sometimes rude and inclined to various forms of dissipation, attaining true knightly perfection only in the character of Guillaume in Le vair palefroi. Thus we conclude that the favored treatment of the poorer knight is not related to any consistently high standard of conduct on his part.

The wealthier knight does not fare nearly as well. He suffers indignities in encounters with the poorer chevalier...
errant and he is frequently assigned the role of cuckolded husband in the conte triangle with the tournament knight in the favored role of the lover. In those limited cases in which the knight is both rich and a tournament participant, he is also victimized, a fact which suggests that the relative wealth or poverty of a knight is more important in determining his treatment than his participation or non-participation in tournament competitions. The rich are consistently victimized in the fabliaux, be they landed knight or avaricious priest.

The female protagonist is particularly dominant in the love triangles and she exerts her power over both husband and lover although to the definite advantage of the latter. This feature corresponds of course to the active role assigned women in the fabliaux in general. Whether peasant woman, bourgeoise, or mistress of a manor, they are all equally capable of duping their weak and ineffectual husbands and manipulating the actions of their potential lovers.

The fact that knights are rarely opposed in their courtships by rival suitors from obviously lower social levels (non-knights) indicates a certain sense of propriety in the fabliaux. We have pointed out that the two cases in which such a situation occurs are explained by the revelation of a clerk's noble parentage in one instance (Romans
de un chivaler et de sa dame et de un clerk) and the fact that a squire has chosen to remain in that position for reasons of love in the second (Guillaume au faucon).

In studying non-triangular relationships of knights with characters, both male and female, sufficient evidence has been presented as to warrant the following conclusions:

(1) As in the contes à triangle, husbands are constantly deceived by their wives.

(2) Landed knights often barter away their daughters (often to a bourgeois) for financial gain.

(3) Priests are without exception the victims of the knight regardless of the degree of morality evident in the knight himself.

(4) The squire often serves his knight as counselor and comrade in amorous adventures.

Although there is in general a scarcity of descriptive detail in the fabliaux, we have discovered numerous references to various aspects of the life of a knight in the thirteenth century, particularly in the area of tournament customs and procedures. These references have been categorized and discussed in Chapter IV.

Since the fabliaux are basically contes à rire, the knight depicted in the genre must in some way be an instrument of the characteristic humor of the tales. We have
shown that contrast and opposition are techniques employed by the writers of fabliaux in order to achieve that end. A laudatory description of a knight may be in ironic contrast to his later behavior, high principled conduct in one instance may be humorously opposed by contemptible deportment on another occasion, abrupt shifts in tone quickly remove us from the atmosphere of the epic or courtly romance to the world of the fabliaux, and finally, the knight frequently violates that high standard of conduct cultivated in epic and romance and thus expected of one in his position. These are all features of the rather subtle irony that must be considered an essential ingredient of the humor of the fabliaux.
APPENDIX A

The Preparation of a Computer Concordance of the Old French Fabliaux

In the past ten years the computer has become a resourceful tool in humanistic research. There are many scholars who still do not or prefer not to see the potential in this combination of man and machine. But the evidence is irrefutable. Projects that would normally require years or even a lifetime to complete may now be accomplished in a matter of minutes. Once a text has been prepared for processing by the computer, programs may be originated and applied to the corpus in order to obtain as many diverse types of significant data as possible. In the years ahead we shall all hear much about concordance generating programs, automatic scanners to enable the immediate transfer of the printed word to a form acceptable to the computer, and new research in fields such as computational stylistics. The potential is there; we must take advantage of it.

My own interest in this area resulted from the encouragement of my advisor, Professor Eleanor W. Bulatkin and the experience of one of her former students, Professor Joseph Duggan, presently of the University of California.
at Berkeley. Professor Duggan's doctoral dissertation involved a study of two Old French chansons de geste in an effort to evaluate formulaic expressions therein in terms of their relevance to the question of an oral tradition for the genre. His enthusiasm and his success aroused my interest in such studies, an area then quite unknown to me.

Having determined in consultation with my advisor to direct my attention to the fabliaux, it was decided that a concordance would be a most basic tool in any study of the genre. It could make available information related to many types of studies: stylistic, morphological, lexical, dialectical, et cetera. Thus began the process which ultimately resulted in the production of just such a concordance.

The Computer Center of The Ohio State University offered every assistance in the formulation and realization of the project. Mr. James Wagoner was especially helpful in the preparation of necessary programs and was always a most willing advisor on technical aspects of the project.

Problems arose from the beginning, for we were dealing with an extremely large corpus--forty thousand lines, to be exact. The source employed was the 1872 Montaiglon-Raynaud edition of the fabliaux, reprinted in 1960 as a project of the Burt Franklin Research and Source Works Series (#47). The first step involved the key-punching of the text, a task which proved very time consuming and which had to be accom-
plished with workers who were totally ignorant of Old French. We were told that our output would of necessity be completely in the upper case and that diacritics could not be indicated without development of some tagging procedure. We decided to proceed, accepting these disadvantages as an evil necessary for accomplishment of our major goal. Many problems of this nature have happily been solved in the past two or three years. The volumes of the Cornell Concordance Series under the editorship of Professor Stephen Parrish are evidence of the steady progress that has been made in this area. Their most recent publication, a concordance of Racine, presents the text in upper and lower case with diacritics.

The next steps involved the implementation of a program designed to transfer the text from punched cards to magnetic tape and the development of a sorting program which would direct the machine to search the tape and organize alphabetically every occurrence of each distinct form in the entire corpus. This information was stored on tape along with the lines of text in which each form occurred accompanied by a reference to poem number and line number in the Montaiglon-Raynaud edition. The sorting process required fifty-two minutes of computer time.

Output format was our next concern. Given several choices, we finally opted a form which included alphabetization of the key word in a column to the left of the page.
followed by the line in which that word occurred. Finally, in a column to the right, poem and line references were cited. A word occurring ten times in the text would then appear that number of times reading down the left-hand margin followed in each case by the appropriate line and numerical reference, as for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fabler</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabler</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fables</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fables</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fables</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabliau</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabliau</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabliaus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabliaus</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabliaus</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabliaus</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the concordance proper, we were able to obtain two types of frequency lists. One is an alphabetized list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nez</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichole</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niece</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nieces</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niecete</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nieche</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second is organized in order of frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>et</td>
<td>8142</td>
<td>que</td>
<td>4366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>6427</td>
<td>il</td>
<td>4364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en</td>
<td>5364</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>3725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li</td>
<td>5070</td>
<td>si</td>
<td>3268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de</td>
<td>4678</td>
<td>l'</td>
<td>3127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne</td>
<td>4524</td>
<td>qui</td>
<td>2936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la</td>
<td>4482</td>
<td>se</td>
<td>2315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The machine also relayed the information that it had worked with 19,688 distinct forms in the corpus and a grand total of 246,597 occurrences.

In preparing our final output program, it was deemed advisable to limit in some way the appearance in the concordance of words of exceptionally high frequency. To include all 8142 occurrences of *et* certainly seemed inadvisable, but complete omissions of such forms was not a happy alternative. The solution agreed upon permitted the concording of every tenth occurrence of the sixty-seven words appearing more than five hundred times. Thus eight hundred fourteen examples of *et* appear in the final format. An asterisk is used to designate each high-frequency form in the concordance proper. The decision to include these forms was based largely on the feeling that complete omission would be a distinct disservice to those who might be interested in the concordance as a tool for the study of syntax. It should be stressed that a more random sampling of high frequency forms was obtained through the program's capacity for requiring
every tenth occurrence of a form rather than our being forced to accept the first ten per cent of appearances. This would naturally have resulted in all forms coming from the first stories scanned with no examples from the later material.

Those high frequency forms treated in the manner described above are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>et</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8142</td>
<td>au</td>
<td>1025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6427</td>
<td>grant</td>
<td>1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5364</td>
<td>fu</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5060</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4678</td>
<td>tant</td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4524</td>
<td>or</td>
<td>959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4482</td>
<td>mes</td>
<td>948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4366</td>
<td>ele</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4364</td>
<td>plus</td>
<td>926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3725</td>
<td>et</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3268</td>
<td>fait</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3127</td>
<td>mout</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2936</td>
<td>sire</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2315</td>
<td>fet</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2314</td>
<td>une</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2257</td>
<td>ou</td>
<td>733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2191</td>
<td>cil</td>
<td>708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>mais</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>pas</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>un</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1738</td>
<td>puis</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1734</td>
<td>ai</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1575</td>
<td>estoit</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1358</td>
<td>avoit</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1334</td>
<td>tout</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1297</td>
<td>dit</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1286</td>
<td>ja</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1262</td>
<td>ses</td>
<td>587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1219</td>
<td>quar</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1147</td>
<td>mon</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1048</td>
<td>cele</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1047</td>
<td>el</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Present plans involve possible publication of the concordance as a research tool or perhaps even more likely, the compiling of a dictionary of Old French from the vocabulary of the fabliaux thus concorded.
## APPENDIX B

### Occurrences of the Term Chevalier and its Variants in the Fabliaux

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Del chevaler a la corbayle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Un chevaler de grant valour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler mout bien souvient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler de basse affere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler ce fust la fyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler s ert atornee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>E le chevaler ad fet taunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler qe remist jus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler fist son mester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler mien esssient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevaler ala e vynt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Un chevaler jadis estoit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li chevaler ad grant delit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalers</td>
<td>Les chevalers qe leyns furent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalers</td>
<td>Ja estes vus ly chevalers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Et de quex le bon chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>L autre chevalier dont je di</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Qui fille au chevalier estoit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>A chevalier qui vit de proie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li oncles au buen chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le gentil chevalier et preu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>N avoit chevalier en tox sens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au bon chevalier alose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li dui chevalier ancien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au chevalier qui l adestroit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Il ni a chevalier qui sente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Ne voit chevalier ne baron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Ou li chevalier son ale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Furent servi com chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li chevalier li ont enquis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Biaus sire font li chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Dun chevalier cis fabliaus conte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Encontre le chevalier vont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Avec i riche chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Par derriere le chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au chevalier qui les lui sist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>D un chevalier et de sa fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Quant ceenz viennent chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevalier prent par la main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Vers la meson au chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>La ot i chevalier moult grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>La ot i chevalier de tongres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Cent chevalier qui la manoient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Et li chevalier dou chastel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Mais que li chevalier qui jurent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Dou chevalier blecie dirai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Ainsis au chevalier argue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li chevalier furent prodome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li chevalier l ont respitie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Dun chevalier et d un provoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au chevalier repairier voeil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Avint au noble chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>A chevalier chevalerie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevalier cuide dechoivre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le Palefroi au chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevalier et sa maisnie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevalier a grant honnor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Por mieus seoir le chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Du chevalier qui mal me maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Faire les boins au chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au chevalier la droite voie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevalier et ses talens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Aler au chevalier sans faille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au chevalier la droite voie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au chevalier courtois et sage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Quant o le chevalier mengastes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Avec le chevalier gentil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>C au chevalier donra x livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Tant k il viennent au chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Ge ert l ensainge au chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Lors sont venu li chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Lors ont monte li chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Qui cheval et chevalier rue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>S abat cheval et chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Que chevalier lui convient estre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Qu a chevalier fait vilenie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Tantoust chevalier se fist faire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>De chevalier faissa l estat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>N i ot si povre chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li chevalier sont tret arriere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Por qui cil chevalier se painent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le preu chevalier le gentil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Molt l esgardent li chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Li chevalier sont tuit penssis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>A la cort n ot nul chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Bien sachiez que maint chevalier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
N i a chevalier ne baron
Trois chevalier m ont assailli
Où fille de chevalier
Es vos I chevalier estraine
Trois chevalier qui i aloient
A cel chevalier le me livre
Al secunt chevalier tendi
Al tierc chevalier est venus
K ele pense do chevalier
La dame al chevalier plaieet
Al chevalier ki plus li grieve
A aucun chevalier vesti
Le pais ot i chevalier
Au chevalier et demanderent
D avoir fille de chevalier
Sont tuit li chevalier perdu
Mes li chevalier sont aver
Et li chevalier sont dampe
Escuier chevalier et dames
Tant que vint a i chevalier
Le chevalier qui ce oy
Quant le tour au chevalier vint
Le chevalier de li vengier
Le chevalier qui bien savoit
D un chevalier qui ot pris fame
Li chevalier mauvais et vill
Sil fist chevalier de sa mein
Li chevalier entend bien
Ge sui chevalier sans perce
Qu el le tiegne a bon chevalier
Le chevalier a esperon
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poème</th>
<th>Ligne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Qu a si bon chevalier touchoiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Le chevalier de ceste guille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Con un chevalier s est armee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Puis a mande i chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Qu il vindrent chiez i chevalier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Au chevalier des deniers rendre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>A un chevalier fu donee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier</td>
<td>Mais cil chevalier et cil conte</td>
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Chevaliers

Atant li chevaliers i vint
Qu il est mout beaus li chevaliers
Et quant li chevaliers la sent
Fait li chevaliers qui l embrace
Et enpres li chevaliers dist
Aue li chevaliers se leva
J ai oi pallier chevaliers
G est li chevaliers qui vint hier
Dant chevaliers comment qu il aille
Tantost con li chevaliers l ot
Li chevaliers le con apele
Et quant li chevaliers ce ot
Li chevaliers n ot soig de rire
Dist li chevaliers en riant
Quant li chevaliers ot cest conte
Li chevaliers au con parole
Chevaliers ert tint grant hennor
Sire ce dit li chevaliers
Sis chevaliers apareilla
Cil chevaliers tant la requist
Fait li chevaliers mais otroi
As chevaliers tet sans demore
Car qui veist ces chevaliers
Li chevaliers qui pris avoit
Li chevaliers sa voie aquialt
Li chevaliers ne se movoit
Li chevaliers tantost parla
J ai fait li chevaliers creance
Dan chevaliers fait ce li sire
Fait li chevaliers nel dirioie

Chevallet

I vint a tot son chevallet
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APPENDIX C

The Fabliaux in which the Knight Appears

Listed below are the forty-nine fabliaux in which the knight appears or is at least referred to along with a brief comment on his role in each tale. The order in which the stories appear below is based on the frequency of occurrence of the term chevalier, represented by the figure in parentheses immediately following the title. The second figure indicates the location of the story in the Montaiglon-Raynaud edition.

1. Du preatre et du chevalier (67) (MR II, 46.) by Milon d'Amiens

A knight returning in defeat from a tournament seeks food and lodging from a wealthy priest. The greedy cleric's demands for payment are so outrageous that the clever knight devises a successful plan whereby the priest is tricked, humiliated, and made to pay dearly for his service.

2. Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler (57) (MR VI, 68.) by Guerin

An impoverished but idealistic knight is urged by his squire to sell the jewel-laden clothing of three maidens found bathing in a pool in order to finance a trip to a
distant tournament. The knight refuses citing the code of knightly conduct and admonishing his squire. The grateful maidens in return for his noble act endow him with a crude but most startling power—the ability to "faire les cons parler". Delighted in the exercise of his new power, the knight soon forgets his lofty ideals.

3. *Du vair palefroi* (34)(MR I, 24.) by Huen le Rey

Guillaume, a noble but poor young knight is in love with the daughter of an extremely wealthy lord who refuses to even consider Guillaume as a possible son-in-law. The story describes the unexpected circumstances resulting finally in the marriage of the young lovers even in the face of parental determination to effect a union between the girl and Guillaume's wealthy uncle.


The son of a wealthy vilain marries the daughter of a knight and is then knighted himself. He soon proves himself the basest of cowards when challenged by his own wife disguised as a knight.


A knight enamored of a beautiful but married lady proves himself worthy of her in tournament competition. Granted a rendezvous, he falls asleep while waiting for her causing her to depart angrily without speaking to him. The
shrewd knight is able however to devise a plan whereby he restores himself in his lady's favor and thus recovers his temporarily lost love.

6. **Du mantel mautaillé** (16)(MR III, 1.)

The setting is the court of King Arthur where a messenger arrives bearing a most beautiful mantel. It is soon revealed that the garment will only fit properly a lady who is completely faithful to her husband or lover. The ladies of all the illustrious knights and the queen herself are revealed to be unfaithful in varying degrees while the sweetheart of an unknown knight is proved the most virtuous of all.

7. **D'une seule fame qui a son con servoit .C. chevaliers de tous poins** (14)(MR I, 294.)

A castle is being defended by one hundred knights who must share the favors of two women. When a wounded knight is persuaded by one of the women to kill the other, the survivor agrees to provide her services to all with a guarantee of complete satisfaction.

8. **Du chevalier à la corbeille** (13)(MR II, 183.)

A young knight achieves a meeting with his beloved in the absence of her husband who guards her zealously. He has himself raised in a basket to the top of the wall near his lady's bedroom. Complications result when the mother-in-law who has been left in charge of the wife accidentally
falls into the basket and is lowered by the knight’s unsuspecting friends.

9. De la dame qui se venja du chevalier (13)(MR VI, 24.)

A lady is insulted by a remark of the young knight who is seeking her favors. To obtain her vengeance, she invites him to her bed and pretends surprise upon hearing her husband return. Hiding the knight under the covers, she causes him to tremble with fear as she seems to be ready to reveal his presence at any moment. Her honor satisfied, she curtly dismisses the knight, vowing never to admit him again.

10. De Berengier au long cul (12)(MR IV, 57.)

This is a second version of the tale described above.


by Jacques de Baisieux

Three knights are seeking the favor of a married lady who challenges them to prove their devotion by going into combat wearing no armor but only her chalnse. Only one accepts the challenge and he emerges victorious.

12. Du provost à l’aumuche (9)(MR I, 112)

This tale treats an almost farcical situation wherein an employee of a knight is caught stealing a large piece of meat from the table.


A knight totally ignorant in sexual matters is given a lesson by his mother-in-law. Being something of a moron,
he creates a horrible situation as a result of his tendency to repeat aloud everything he has learned in an attempt to remember it.

14. De Guillaume au faucon (7)(MR II, 92.)

Obsessed with a love for his lord's wife, a young knight-in-training falls ill when she rejects his advances. Refusing to eat, he is on the point of death when the lady finally has a change of heart. The tale is something of a satire on the excesses to which love may lead one.

15. Des putains et des lecheors (7)(MR III, 195.)

God, after dividing man into three classes: knights, priests, and workers, is requested by the prostitutes and wandering minstrels (lecheors) to provide them a place in the order of things. He in turn entrusts the putains to the care of the clergy and the lecheors are to be cared for by the knights. The knights are then condemned for not providing as well for their charges as do the priests.


A young man seeking a vocation for himself tries among others the profession of knight. He is soon disenchanted as a result of the danger of such an existence and the manner in which he may be required to give up his own life in the service of another.

17. Le sentier batu (6)(MR III, 247.) by Jean de Condé

The former sweetheart of a certain knight makes fun of
his ability as a lover in the course of a game associated with the tournament festivities. He avenges himself for this public humiliation by reversing the situation in the second part of the game through a play on words designed to suggest that she is extremely promiscuous.

18. Des tresses (6)(MR IV, 67.)

A rather gullible husband is persuaded to accept his wife’s story that the insurmountable evidence of her adultery is something that he has only dreamed. A second version of this tale enacted in a different social milieu is found in De la dame qui fist entendant son mari qu’il songnait by Garin.

19. De la dame escollie (6)(MR VI, 95.)

The shrewish and domineering wife of a wealthy knight has taken over the management of his affairs to such a degree that he must demand the opposite of what he desires in order to have things his own way.

20. De frère Denise (5)(MR III, 263.) by Rutebeuf

A lecherous monk tricks a beautiful maiden into taking the vows of his order wherein she passes as a man. He then uses her to gratify his own sensuous desires until she is ultimately freed from this bondage through the intervention of a generous knight and his wife who have realized the truth of the situation.

21. De l’espervier (5)(MR V, 43.)

A young knight falls in love with the wife of his
closest friend and is discovered by the husband in the lady's bedroom. The wife concocts a fantastic story in a desperate but successful attempt to explain the situation.

22. *La houpe partie* (4)(MR I, 82.) by Bernier

The marriage of the son of a wealthy bourgeois to the daughter of a knight leads to a situation in which the wife eventually wishes to throw out her father-in-law, who had given up his entire wealth to his son in order to bring the marriage about.

23. *Du chevalier qui fait sa fame confesse* (4)(MR I, 178.)

The habit of a monk is worn by a knight in an effort to learn of possible indiscretions on the part of his wife by hearing her confession. To the consternation of the husband, she admits to many love affairs. On the following day, however, confronted with his accusations, she informs him that she had recognized him from the beginning and had fabricated the story of her illicit affairs as a punishment for his lack of faith in her.


Another marital union involving the daughter of a knight and a bourgeois results in an extremely unhappy marriage, a situation leading to the bitter wife's story to the king's messengers that her husband is actually a doctor who must be beaten before admitting it. This is the basic plot found later in Molière's *Le médecin malgré lui.*
25. **Du pescheor de Pont seur Saine** (3)(MR III, 68.)

In this tale we find a reference to a knight who had murdered a priest discovered in the arms of his wife.

26. **La male Honte** (3)(MR V, 95.) by Hugues de Cambrai

A misunderstanding is the basis for this tale in which a knight attempts to present the trunk (male) containing the possessions of a deceased knight named Honte to the king, in keeping with a custom of the country. Everyone believes that the visitor is criticizing the king by speaking of his male honte and he is consistently threatened and refused an audience.

27. **De la vielle qui oint la palme au chevalier** (3)(MR V, 157.)

The naiveté of an old lady results in her literally greasing the palm of a wealthy knight reputed to be cruel and greedy. He in turn is so amused by the situation that he grants her request to return her cow which had been confiscated.

28. **Du chevalier à la robe vermeille** (2)(MR III, 35.)

The wife of a wealthy lord summons her young lover to her chambers in the absence of her husband. The husband's early return forces the young knight to depart without his pants. The lady temporarily explains both pants and the horses in the courtyard as gifts from her brother who had just departed. She later convinces him that he had imagined it all in a sort of delirium.
29. *De celle qui se fist foutre sur la fosse de son mari*  
(1)(MR III, 118)

A wager is made between a knight and his squire as to the possible success of the squire in seducing a lady discovered prostrate in grief on the grave of her husband. The squire wins the bet as the hidden knight views the proceedings.

30. *De la male Honte* (1)(MR IV, 41.) by Guillaume le Normand

A second version of number twenty-six above.

31. *Du prestre et du mouton* (1)(MR VI, 50.) by Maisel

This tale is the shortest of the fabliaux (eighteen lines) and recounts the misfortune of a priest attacked by a goat while in the embrace of the wife of a certain knight.

There are only brief or passing references to knights in the remainder of the fabliaux in which they appear; thus they are simply listed below without comment.

32. *Des deux bordors ribauz* (2)(MR I, 1.)

33. *Une branche d'armes* (2)(MR II, 130.)

34. *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur* (2)(MR V, 65.)

35. *Le lai d'Aristote* (2)(MR V, 243.)

36. *Des trois avugles de Compiengne* (1)(MR I, 70.) by Cortebarbe

37. *De la dent* (1)(MR I, 147.) by Archevesque
38. **Du fétôor** (1)(MR I, 304.)
39. **Le meunier d'Arleux** (1)(MR II, 31.) by Enguerrant d'Oisy
40. **Le dit des C.** (1)(MR II, 137.) by Gautier le Loup
41. **Le dit de la gageure** (1)(MR II, 193.)
42. **Le roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely** (1)(MR II, 242.)
43. **De pleine bourse de sens** (1)(MR III, 88.) by Jean le Galois
44. **Du vilain au buffet** (1)(MR III, 199.)
45. **Du pré tondu** (1)(MR IV, 154.)
46. **De la pucelle qui voulait voler** (1)(MR IV, 208.)
47. **De la vieillette ou de la vieille truande** (1)(MR V, 171.)
48. **Du secrétain moine** (1)(MR V, 215.)
49. **Du prêtre et du mouton** (1)(MR VI, 50.) by Haisel
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