

"Father, I wish only to be near to my true liege."

"My son, you are welcome; and do I not recognize you as Sir Bedivere the Bold, brother to Sir Lucas the Butler?"

Thus the Archbishop and Sir Bedivere remained at the hermitage, wearing the habits of hermits and devoting themselves to the tomb with fasting and prayers of contrition.

Such was the death of King Arthur as written down by Sir Bedivere. By some it is told that there were three queens on the barge: Queen Morgan le Fay, the Queen of North Galys, and the Queen of the Waste Lands; and others include the name of Nyneve, the Lady of the Lake who had served

King Arthur well in the past, and had married the good knight Sir Pelleas.

In many parts of Britain it is believed that King Arthur did not die and that he will return to us and win fresh glory and the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesu Christ; but for myself I do not believe this, and would leave him buried peacefully in his tomb at Glastonbury, where the Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir Bedivere humbled themselves, and with prayers and fasting honored his memory. And inscribed on his tomb, men say, is this legend:

HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS. [Here lies Arthur, once and future King]

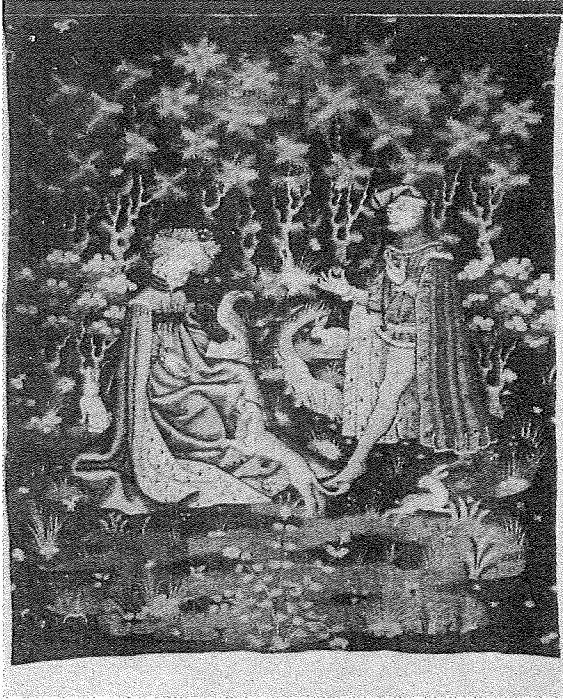


ANDREAS CAPELLANUS

COURTLY LOVE

By itself, the Arthurian cycle is just a popularized and sentimentalized heroic epic. The Arthurian stories were however rewritten, often to the point of great subtlety, with high symbolism and often nonchalantly eroding the simple narrative thrust of the original story, by writers of deep imagination and elaborate literary skill who infused the conventional stories with disquisitions on the meaning of human love (invariably heterosexual, the church by this time having come to condemn homoerotic love, although it was practiced in monasteries quite commonly). This eroticism—this focusing on the realities of human love—has come to be called *courtly love* because nearly all of the love poetry was written in aristocratic courts, usually under the patronage of a queen or duchess or countess, particularly in northern France, the Rhineland, or southern England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, spreading to northern Italy in the late thirteenth century. Historians give much credit for getting this intellectual and literary movement going to Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine and queen first of France and then of England. In turn, some scholars believe that eroticism came up from Moslem Spain into southwest France (Aquitaine) in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries and was then carried by Eleanor and her daughter, the Countess Marie de Champagne, to northern France and England. The writers, at least in Champagne, were "young men," ambitious university graduates and underemployed clerics working under the patronage of Countess Marie de Champagne and such like. One scholar examined all the legal and administrative records of the county of Champagne and found no evidence of anyone practicing courtly love there, which is like trying to find the weekend amours of Wall Street lawyers and bankers in the business records of their law firms and investment houses. The actual impact of courtly love on aristocratic behavior was likely important although inconsistent and intermittent. Courtly love literature itself is among the great imaginative constructions of the human mind, so

subtle and complex as often to be difficult to translate. A key work that shows the rise of eroticism and general interest in the subtleties of human love is a prose treatise in dialogue form on courtly love produced by Andreas Capellanus (Andrew the Chaplain) at the court of Champagne around 1175. It is partly tongue-in-cheek dialogue about how lovers should and do behave, whether there can be love within marriage or only in adulterous relationships, and so forth. But underneath there is a keen sense that aristocratic women were being pressured to make difficult choices. Andreas had certainly read *The Art of Love* by the Roman poet Ovid, who was very popular in the late twelfth century, but this is not a work of literary adaptation. It is a slick, original dramatization of some beautiful people's problems.



Man offering his heart to a Woman (courtly romance)

THE MAN SAYS: 'It would be quite pleasant for you to grant me this, unless perhaps you find your will opposed to mine. In short, it is your love which I seek as salve to my health, and which I am zealous to obtain by pursuing you.'

THE WOMAN SAYS: 'It seems to me that you are wandering from love's true path and sinning against the best convention of suitors in demand-

ing love with such haste. The wise and informed suitor, on addressing a lady previously unknown to him at their first meeting, should not demand the gifts of love in explicit terms. Rather by his energy he should make himself known to the loved one, and by all he says show himself amiable and complaisant. Next, he should ensure that his deeds can of full right speak well of him to his loved one, even when he is away. And then at the third stage he may approach her more boldly to ask for her love. You, however, have clearly erred, and turned this order upside down; and I imagine you have done this because you thought I was all too ready to grant your requests, or because you are a novice in the art of love. So your love deserves to be regarded with suspicion.'

THE MAN SAYS: 'If it is true that I have reversed the stages of courtship, I think your approval countenanced this. For though my intention might have been obvious to you from the careful and oblique language which I used, you pretended that you wholly failed to understand my request, and demanded that I speak in more explicit terms. It was not that I believed in your compliance, or was asking that you immediately confer your love when I agreed to explain my request; I wished to reveal my purpose in answer to your question.'

'Again, though the order you mention should be observed, it can be reversed if a proper reason obtrudes. If I am constrained by deep emotion, and wounded by an inner shaft of love, justified necessity defends me from this charge

of unworthiness. Insistent necessity cannot be confined by any rule of law. Then, too, if I am deficient in the labour love demands, I must inevitably request the love of one of great wisdom or resource, for thus my lack of experience can be remedied and I can learn thoroughly the lore of love. Obviously if a novice seeks the love of a novice, the love of such partners could not experience the appropriate growth, nor could an apposite relationship last any time. When a ship is exposed to the hazards of the sea and is at the mercy of stormy waters, the wind which gets up may be pleasant, but if the ship has no experienced helmsman or oarsman it is sunk and goes to the bottom, though the wind is favourable and its force slight. So both arguments advanced by you are disarmed by effective replies, and can in no way disqualify the proposal I have

made.
~~WOMAN SAYS:~~

Love, we live apart from each other, separated by a tract of country too extensive and hard to cross for occasion to devise a suitable time and place for affording each other the consolations of love. Lovers who are close at hand can reciprocally assuage the torments springing from love. They can aid each other in their sufferings, and nourish their love because of the fortunes and afflictions they share. But lovers living apart cannot recognise that their pains are mutual, so that each must nurse his own labours and heal his own pains. It therefore seems that we must not consummate our love, for Love's rule shows us that the daily sight of each other makes the love of lovers grow. So I conclude that the opposite is true, that love diminishes and fades through distance. Accordingly each individual should be sure to win a love close at hand.'

THE MAN SAYS: 'You strive to maintain a position contrary to all reason. It is clear to all mankind that to obtain what one desires without difficulty breeds a cheap relationship at the start, and converts into an object of contempt what the whole mind's emotion earlier desired. On the other hand we take up with greater eagerness and preserve with more watchful zeal the good which is deferred because of the difficulty of

bestowing it. So the lover's embrace which is infrequent and hard to achieve induces the lovers to be bound with a warmer bond of mutual love, and their minds to be tied with a readier and closer affection. Constancy is perfected in a sea of troubles, and perseverance is clearly recognised in adversity. Rest has a sweeter taste for the man exhausted by many toils than for him who loiters in continuous idleness. Fresh shade seems to offer more to the man troubled by heat than to him who lives in a climate constantly temperate. Accordingly the rule you cited, that when lovers rarely meet it diminishes the power of love, is not Love's rule, for it is seen to be false and deceitful. This is why you cannot rightly debar me from your love because of the long and extensive distance separating us; on the contrary, you ought to be more interested in me than in one who dwells near by, for love between people apart is more easily concealed than is that between lovers joined in regular association.'

THE WOMAN SAYS: 'So far as concealing one's love is concerned, I think there should never be discrimination between an absent lover and one present. If a lover is established as wise and resourceful, it does not matter whether he is far from or close to his loved one; he will control his actions and desire in such a way that no one will be able to plumb the secrets of his love. On the other side, a lover who is a fool will never be able to hide the secrets of his love, whether he is distant or on the spot. So your argument comes off worst for it most clearly clashes with reason.'

'There is an additional powerful reason forbidding me to pledge my love. I have a husband renowned for his universal nobility, civility and moral worth, and it would be wicked to pollute his bed or to be joined in any man's embraces. For I know that he loves me with all the heart's affection, and I am bound to him with all my heart's devotion. Since I am adorned with the reward of this great love, Love's laws command me to refrain from loving another.'

THE MAN SAYS: 'I admit the truth that your husband rejoices in a character universally worthy,

and is endowed with blessed joys more than all men alive, since he has deserved to savour in his embraces the joys of your exalted person. But I am mightily surprised that you consent to allow marital affection, which any couple is allowed to have after being joined in matrimony, to appropriate the name of love, for it is clearly known that love cannot claim a place between husband and wife. Although they may be united in great and boundless affection, their feelings cannot attain the status of love because they cannot be gathered under the heading of any true definition of love.

'Love is nothing other than an uncontrolled desire to obtain the sensual gratification of a stealthy and secret embrace. Now I ask you: what stealthy embrace could take place between a married couple, since they are acknowledged to possess each other, and can fulfil all the desires that they will from each other without fear of opposition? The most outstanding teaching of princes shows that no one can obtain the use of his own possessions by secret enjoyment of them.

'Do not think absurd my statement that the relationship of a married couple, though joined in universal feelings of affection, cannot obtain the title of love, for we see the same outcome in the matter of friendship. A father and son can have regard for each other in all matters, but true friendship does not exist between them; for as the teaching of Cicero attests, it is merely blood-descent which preserves the affectionate regard between them.

'So there is obviously as much difference between the all-embracing affection of a married couple and the obligation between lovers as there is between the mutual regard of father and son and the most constant friendship between two men. In the first case, love is not considered to exist, and likewise in the second there is said to be no friendship. You see clearly, therefore, that Love can in no sense play his role between married people, but has desired his privileges to be wholly withdrawn.

'Then there is a further argument opposing mutual love between husband and wife. Jealousy, which is of the nature of love itself and without

which true love cannot exist, is wholly rejected between husband and wife, and must be always expelled by them as a harmful bane. But lovers must embrace it always as the mother, so to say, and nurse of love.

'Hence it is clear to you that love can in no way flourish between your husband and yourself. So since it is appropriate for any honest woman to be a prudent lover, you can accept a suitor's prayers without harm to yourself and enrich with your love him that asks for it.'

THE WOMAN SAYS: 'You are striving to lend your support to what all men even from ancient times are agreed is generally reckoned blameworthy and condemned as loathsome. Who could with justice praise grudging jealousy, or defend it with his words? It is nothing other than a base and malevolent suspicion about a woman. So God forbid that any honest man should be possessed with jealousy for someone, for it is recognised to be every wise man's enemy and loathsome to all good men throughout the world.

'Then you seek to condemn love between married people under the cloak of a definition of love. You say that they cannot have secret embraces because they can satisfy their desires towards one another without fear of opposition. But if only you understand the definition correctly, love between married people cannot be hindered by it. For the expression "secret embrace" explains the preceding term in its metaphorical extension. The argument from impossibility does not appear to prevent married persons from offering secret embraces to each other, nor can the unlimited opportunity of consummating love without fear of opposition obstruct all love's working. In fact all should choose the love nurtured in continual embraces in the confidence that one can serve it; or more important, all should choose the love which can be practised daily without reproach. Such is the man whom I must choose to take joy in my embraces, who in my company can attain the role of both husband and lover; for whatever the definition of love lays down, love seems to be nothing other than an uncontrolled desire of physical affection

for someone, and there is no obstacle to a married couple experiencing this.'

THE MAN SAYS: 'If Love's teaching was more fully clear to you, and if Love's pursuing darts had ever pricked you, your opinion would in truth have maintained that true love cannot exist without jealousy. As I recounted more fully to you earlier, jealousy between lovers is praised by all with experience of love, and is censured throughout the world when it exists between husband and wife. The reason for this will become clear to you with the clarity of truth once you understand the definition of jealousy.

'Jealousy, then, is a genuine mental emotion which provokes sharp fear in us that the substance of our love is being diminished through a failure to serve the wishes of the loved one. There is anxiety that love is not evenly poised, and suspicion against a lover is aroused, but this is unaccompanied by base thoughts. So it is quite clear that jealousy has three aspects. The truly jealous man is perpetually afraid that his services cannot be adequate to preserve his love: he fears that his love is not reciprocated to the same degree: and he reflects on the harsh pains he would have to suffer if his partner took another lover, though he believes that this could not possibly happen.

'It is quite obvious and clear that this third contingency could not happen to married couples. A husband cannot suspect his wife without having unworthy thoughts about her. Jealousy in its pure form, if applied to a husband, is defiled through the defect in the substance in which it has its place, and ceases to be what it was. It is like water renowned for being perfectly clear, which on beginning to flow into a sandy channel is seen to take on the dark colour of the sand, and its natural limpidity leaves it. Or again, take almsgiving; though of its nature it deserves the rewards of eternal blessedness, if expended on the poor by a hypocrite or a glutton for vainglory it loses its natural function and causes the extinction of both virtue and reward.

'So it is quite obviously clearly established that jealousy cannot claim a natural role between hus-

band and wife, and consequently love must have no place there, for jealousy and love are constant companions. But jealousy is said to preserve love between lovers, for all three roles earlier allotted to jealousy are judged necessary to the lover, and so jealousy between lovers themselves is not condemned. However, many people are plainly deceived in this matter. They mistakenly maintain that base suspicions are jealousy, and accordingly a considerable number who know nothing of its source and description are very often misled and drawn into intractable error. Even between an unmarried couple this false jealousy can claim a place; and subsequently they are termed not lovers but male friend and lady friend.

'The contention in your reply that the love which can be practised without sin is certainly to be preferred, seemingly cannot stand. Whatever consolation is afforded each other by the married couple beyond affection for their offspring or discharge of obligations, cannot but involve sin. The punishment is all the keener if abuse disfigures the use of something sacred than if we follow an abuse which is customary. The sin is more serious in a wife than in another woman, for as we are taught by apostolic law a lover who shows eagerness towards his own wife is accounted an adulterer.

'Now your interpretation, which went beyond the definition of love, seems worthy of no man's praise, for it is certainly recorded by the witness of the ancients that explanatory glosses are not to be joined to actual definitions of things. So it is crystal clear to all that your interpretation is void of the truth of reason because it seems to have been introduced contrary to the intention of the definition.

'Moreover your definition, which you are seen to have applied to love, cannot rest on any rational basis. For according to it the blind and the mad are included, whereas the teaching of the lover Andreas, chaplain to the royal court, shows us beyond doubt that they are utterly debarred from the court of Love. Since then you cannot oppose my purpose with any rational reply, no man will consider it honourable on your part if

you make me languish for love of you and undergo such great tortures on your behalf.'

THE WOMAN SAYS: 'You have not, I think, shown any reason such as can invalidate my opinion, or compel me rightly to assent to your wish. However, since in places the laws you propound seem persuasive, and in order that you may be deprived of any chance of accusing me, I accept the arbitration of any lady or honourable man you wish on the subjects discussed by us—namely, whether love can claim a place in marriage, and whether envy between lovers can be justly praised. For the disagreement in the argument seems impossible for us to resolve or to be laid to rest by a right decision.'

THE MAN SAYS: 'I do not wish to seek anyone's arbitration in this dispute, as long as you are willing to subject your statements to just investigation.'

THE WOMAN SAYS: 'It is unheard of since the world began that anyone should preside as judge

over his own case, and so I refuse to intrude on this matter, which I leave to be entrusted to another.'

THE MAN SAYS: 'You may have the full right to name an arbiter for our disagreement. But I should like to abide by the judgment of a woman, not a man.'

THE WOMAN SAYS: 'If you are agreeable, I think the Countess of Champagne should be given the honour of deciding this problem and of lulling the dispute.'

THE MAN SAYS: 'I promise to maintain her judgment in its full import wholly and for ever, and to preserve it without spot or stain, for no man can ever rightly doubt her wisdom or balance of judgment. So a letter must be composed with the agreement and desire of both of us, expressing the main lines of the dispute and revealing the promise contained in it.'



CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE

Of the French romantic poets, by far the most original and subtle was Chrétien de Troyes, another member of Countess Marie de Champagne's productive entourage. What Chrétien is mainly interested in is not the heroics of Arthur and all that, but in the joys and pains of human relationships, how men and women feel about each other, how they talk to one another, how they join together or don't, how they imagine each other, how they react to these conjunctures. Here is an example from *Lancelot*, one of Chrétien's four lengthy romances that have survived. If we join with his audience in expecting to hear about Lancelot and Gueneviere again, we find that is only the vague casing for the work. Most of it doesn't deal with that at all. Nowadays a publisher would call this work "how men talk to women and vice versa." Here in this selection is a typical example: a potentially tempestuous physical relationship between a knight and young woman he meets that doesn't come off, with suggestions of why not and how they feel about it. Chrétien is the poet of difficult and failed relationships, and he has marvelous perceptions of the psychology of the sadomasochistic and power facets of heterosexual behavior. The splendid verse translation by William W. Kibler should be noted.
