

Adultery and Kingship in Marie de France's *Equitan***Sharon Kinoshita**

In medieval French literature, the conventional plot of courtly love focuses on the figure of the queen. As the highest ranking woman in the land, she is the natural feminine object of male heterosexual desire--a desire heightened by the social and symbolic distance that sets her apart as unapproachable and forbidding.² In stories of an adulterous queen, the king often cuts a poor figure. Cuckolded by a member of his household, he remains inexplicably passive (like Arthur) or resorts to behavior unbecoming to his station (like Marc, crouching in a tree to spy on Iseut's assignation with Tristan). Marie de France's *Equitan*, on the other hand, tells the story of an adulterous *king* enmeshed in an affair with his seneschal's wife. Though the lady initially resists the king's advances, she eventually gives in; the two then plot to dispose of her husband so they may marry. In a turnabout of fair play, the seneschal discovers their disloyalty, and they are scalded to death in the hot bath intended for him. Now historically, men's extramarital affairs were so routine that the very phrase "adulterous king" sounds nonsensical. Chroniclers show surprise not when a ruler took a mistress but rather when he did not.³ Why, then, does Marie de France imagine such a bad end for these particular lovers, when elsewhere in the *Lais* she shows sympathy for adulterous wives (as in *Yonec*) and for unmarried lovers (as in *Lanval* or *Milun*)? The simple answer is found in the moral Marie appends to the tale: "He who plans evil for another may have that evil rebound back on him" "Tels purcace le mal d'autrui / Dunt tuz li mals revert sur lui" (309-10).⁴ A more textured answer concerns the lai's representation of the complex interplay between courtly forms and the responsibilities of kingship. Redistributing the roles of husband, wife, and unmarried lover, *Equitan* interrogates the function of kingship, situating it at the nexus of lord-vassal relations

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and the feudal politics of lineage.

As a discourse, courtly love derived its power from its striking inversion of the gender hierarchies governing the high middle ages. In feudal society, noblewomen were pawns in the feudal politics of lineage, the dynastic capital whose circulation concretized the homosocial relations between fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. Despite the church's insistence that marriage required the consent of both partners, in marriage "the wife was subject to the power of her husband, woman's sovereign."⁵ The conventions of courtly love, on the other hand, purported to invert this gendered hierarchy of power, elevating woman from her subordinate role, making her into an object of service, adoration and desire.⁶ Quintessentially, the *domna* is a lady of high feudal rank; invested with a power that both mimics and redoubles that of the feudal lord, she exercises complete control over her lover. In Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, Lancelot willingly humiliates himself at the tournament of Nouaz because Guenevere has secretly instructed him to do his "worst." Valorizing a violent passion at odds with the aristocracy's carefully-crafted politics of marriage (in his *De arte honesti amandi*, Andreas Capellanus represents Marie, countess of Champagne, going so far as to declare the two incompatible), courtly love seems to gather a range of attitudes and practices subversive of feudal society.

But the young man's love service to his lady was also, as Georges Duby points out, a homosocial game that strongly reinforced the status quo: "in this military society, was courtly love not, in reality, love between men? ... in serving the prince's wife, it was the love of the prince which the young wished to gain, by applying themselves, by bending, by bowing down. At the same time as they served to prop up the morality of marriage, the rules of courtly love reinforced the rules of the ethics of vassalage."⁷ Far from subverting feudal society, the young knight's homage to his lady powerfully enacted and confirmed its hierarchical norms, training him in the feudal values of submission, fidelity, and self-forgetfulness.⁸ The lord who "allowed his wife to be placed at the centre of the competition, in an illusory, and ludic situation of primacy and power" understood that courtly ritual provided a means of managing the political as well

as erotic desires of his vassals. For the king in particular, ideologies of chivalry and courtly love helped mobilize male desire to political ends, which in the late twelfth century meant "the rebirth of the state."⁹

Courtly love serves this political function, however, only as long as the king remains on the sidelines of this dangerous game of discipline and desire. Even when the king is ineffectual (like Arthur), vaguely ridiculous (like Marc), or simply absent (like Henry II in the face of Bernart de Ventadour's lyric homage to Queen Eleanor¹⁰), the erotic tension surrounding the queen reproduces the centralizing attraction exerted by the monarchical state. When the lover is the king, on the other hand, the obsessional passion that defines the courtly lover turns destructive. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the*

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Kings of Britain, Uther Pendragon falls in love with the wife of his own vassal, Duke Gorlois of Cornwall. Disguising himself as the duke, he sneaks into Tintagel to make love to Ygerne; then, after Gorlois dies in battle, Uther marries her.¹¹ The plot of the king who covets his vassal's wife occurs in history as well, in a curious incident forming the centerpiece of *Le Chevalier, la femme et le pretre*, Georges Duby's study of marriage practices in twelfth-century France. In 1092, Philip I of France repudiated Bertha of Frisia in order to marry Bertrade de Montfort, the wife of his vassal, Count Fulk of Anjou. On the one hand, since early medieval kings regularly made and unmade marriage for political expediency, Philip's contemporaries were surprised but showed no sign of disapproval.¹² So when Pope Urban II, launching an early salvo in the papacy's campaign to regulate the lives of the feudal nobility, excommunicated the king, chroniclers gave confused or contradictory explanations.¹³ Sigebert of Gembloux implies his offense was bigamy: "while his wife was still alive [he took] as an additional wife [*superduserit*] the wife of another, he also being still living." Bernold of Saint-Blasien gives the incident a somewhat different spin: "Having dismissed his own wife, he united himself in marriage to the wife of his vassal." Yves of Chartres, one of the reformist church's leading ideologues, contributes a charge of incest: Fulk's envoys, he writes, accused the king "of having carried off the wife of the count of Anjou, she being his cousin, and having wrongfully kept her."¹⁴ In the course of the twelfth century, the confusion--these fluctuating charges of bigamy, abduction, or incest--surrounding the pope's condemnation of Philip's marriage to Bertrade de Montfort would crystallize into an ongoing conflict between the secular nobility, defending repudiation and remarriage as strategies central to its all-important feudal politics of lineage, and reformist clerics who more and more intransigently insisted on the indissolubility of marriage. For the moment, the irregularity of the king's conjugal relations had the effect of placing him out of bounds: excommunicated by Urban II, he saw the leadership of the First Crusade fall to his own brother Robert and to the northern counts soon to establish themselves as crusader kings of Jerusalem.

The strange case of Philip, Fulk and Bertrade, like the fictional example of Uther, Gorlois and Ygerne, turns on the king's deployment of power in his determined pursuit of political or sexual goals. *Equitan*, in contrast, narrates the raw assertion of royal power through the discourse of courtly love. At the outset, the two are distinct and mutually exclusive. When Equitan first falls in love with the lady, he acknowledges the fundamental contradiction between erotic passion and feudal responsibility: "If I love her, I'm doing wrong; she's the wife of my seneschal. I owe him the same faith and love that I want him to give me" "E si jo l'aim, jeo ferai mal: / Ceo est la femme al seneschal; / Garder li dei amur e fei / Si cum jeo voil k'il face a mei" (71-74).¹⁵ The relationship between the king and his seneschal is unequal but it is mutually binding; in order to command his vassal's allegiance, Equitan must conduct himself as a

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good feudal lord.

For a king, however, the danger inherent in an illicit affair is uncoupled from the threat of direct political reprisal. Where the amorous vassal playing the dangerous game of courting his overlord's wife must temper his ardor with circumspection and moderation, Equitan experiences no such constraints. From his vantage point atop the feudal pyramid, he yields to the seduction of courtly discourse, casting aside all feudal scruple: "What a waste of a beautiful

woman if she did not love and take a lover! What would happen to her *courtoisie* if she didn't love a sweetheart? There isn't a man in the world who wouldn't be much better for it" "Si bele dame tant mar fus, / S'ele n'amast e dru n'eüst! / Que devendreit sa curteisie, / S'ele n'amast de druërie? / Suz ciel n'ad humme, s'el l'amast, / Ki durement n'en amendast" (79-84). In the quick transition between his original compunction at the thought of pursuing his vassal's wife to this justificatory rhetoric of mutual self-improvement, Equitan has rationalized away all political responsibilities and concerns, plunging headlong into the alternate reality of courtesy and love.

The lady, on the other hand, inhabits a world devoid of such courtly banter. Like Laudine in Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier au Lion*, she is surprised by this discourse of love: "My lord," she says, "I must have some time to think; this is so new to me, I have no idea what to say" "Sire ... / De ceo m'estuet avoir respit; / A ceste premiere feiee / N'en sui jeo mie cunseillee" (117-20).¹⁶ For the wife of the king's seneschal, what Equitan proposes is no game: the discrepancy in their power and status is not a mere detail that can be pretended away: "You're a king of high nobility, and I'm not at all of such fortune that you should single me out to have a love affair with. If you get what you want from me, I have no doubt about it: you'll soon get tired of me, and I'll be far worse off than before" "Vus estes reis de grant noblesce; / Ne sui mie de teu richesce / Qu'a mei vus deiez arester / De druërie de n'amer. / S'aviëz fait vostre talent, / Jeo sai de veir, ne dut nient, / Tost m'avri%oz entrelaissiee, / J'en sereie mut empeiriee" (121-28).¹⁷ In fact, she has her own ideology of love, one based not on the submission of one partner to the other but on parity: "If I should love you and satisfy your desire, love wouldn't be equally shared between us. Because you're a powerful king and my husband is your vassal, I'm sure you believe your rank entitles you to my love. Love is unworthy if it is not equal" "Se issi fust que vus amasse / E vostre requeste otreiasse, / Ne sereit pas uël partie / Entre nus deus la druërie. / Pur ceo que estes reis puissaunz / E mis sire est de vus tenaunz, / Quideriez a mun espeir / Le dangier de l'amur avoir / Amur n'est pruz se n'est egals" (117-37). The conventional tropes of courtly love, she seems to understand, invert but preserve the inequalities that put her at the king's mercy. The love she proposes instead is more truly subversive, outside and unstructured by feudal hierarchies of power.

For the king, however, the appeal of courtly love is inseparable from the thrill of the submission demanded of the courtly lover. The lady's tiresome

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insistence on equality threatens to spoil the excitement of the game. By rejecting her reservations as "uncourtly" "mie fin curteis" (151) and accusing her of "bourgeois trading" "bargaine de burgeis" (152), he makes light of her distress at the discrepancy in their ranks by reminding her of the shared nobility that distinguishes them both from the non-noble *vilain*. Despite his name, what Equitan seeks is not an exchange between equals, but the delicious novelty of abasement. Cajoling the lady, he begs to be dominated: "Don't think of me as king but as your vassal and your lover . . . You be the lord and I'll be the servant--you be the proud one and I'll be the supplicant" "Ne me tenez mie pur rei, / Mes pur vostre humme e vostre ami . . . / Vus seiez dame e jeo servanz / Vus orguilluse e jeo preianz" (170-76). Titillated by the prospect of humiliation, Equitan takes courtly discourse's metaphorical inversions of hierarchical relations to literal extreme.

Finally, worn down by his insistence, seduced by the prospect of holding a king in thrall, or perhaps simply mindful of the consequences of saying no, the lady gives in and becomes Equitan's mistress. The language Marie uses to narrate their affair suggests a kind of secret marriage; it is also lexically marked by a vocabulary of reciprocal exchange, as if the lady's ideology of love had prevailed: "They took each other by exchanging rings and promised themselves to each other. They kept their promises and loved each other well" "Par lur anels s'entresaisirent, / Lur fiaunces s'entreplevirent, / Bien les tiendrent, mut s'entramerent" (181-83; emphasis added).¹⁸ Their trysts draw Equitan away from the public functions of kingship: "When they were to speak together the king informed his followers that he wanted to be bled privately. The doors of his chamber were closed, and no one was so daring, if the king didn't summon him, that he would ever enter there" "Quant ensemble durent parler, / Li reis feseit dire a sa gent / Que

seigneur iert priveement. / Li us des chambres furent close; / Ne troveissez humme si os, / Si li reis pur lui n'enveiaist, / Ja une feiz dedenz entrast" (188-94). If the affairs of the kingdom are tended to nonetheless, it is because another exchange has taken place as well; as Equitan takes his pleasure with the seneschal's wife, the seneschal takes the king's place at court, performing the public functions of kingship: "Meanwhile, the seneschal held court and heard pleas and complaints" "Li seneschals la curt teneit, / les plaiz e les clamurs oieit" (195-96). From the beginning of the lai, Equitan had shown himself willing to delegate affairs of state in order to devote himself to the hunt and other pastimes: the seneschal "took care of his land for him, governed and administered it" "Tute sa tere li gardout / E mainteneit e justisait" (23-24). Now, with the seneschal discharging the king's public functions and Equitan closeting himself with the seneschal's wife, the exchange seems complete.

There is one responsibility, however, that cannot be fulfilled by proxy: the begetting of an heir to continue the royal line. In the twelfth century, as hereditary succession emerged as a prime factor in political stability, dynastic

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politics assumed greater and greater importance. Rulers went to great lengths to engender sons to inherit their realms.¹⁹ In the case of Philip I, the nobles of his kingdom (with the probable exception of the count of Anjou) were undisturbed to see him take a *second* wife; what was intolerable, in the feudal politics of lineage, was for the king not to marry at all. To this aspect of kingship, Equitan remains oblivious: "The king loved [the seneschal's wife] for a long time, and had no desire for any other woman; he didn't want to marry and never allowed the subject to be raised. His people held this against him" "Li reis l'ama mult lungement / Que d'autre femme n'ot talent. / Il ne voleit nule espuser; / Ja n'en rovast oir parler. / La gent le tindrent mut a mal" (197-201).²⁰ The very loyalty that makes Equitan an exemplary lover renders him, in the eyes of his vassals, an irresponsible king. As the feudal politics of lineage intrudes on the king's courtly idyll, the barons' discontent reanimates the lady's fears: "you're going to take a wife, some king's daughter, and you will leave me" "Femme prendrez, fille a un rei, / E si vus partirez de mei" (215-16). He assures her he will do neither. And then, incredibly, Equitan adds: "Believe me, this is the truth: *If your husband were dead*, I'd make you my lady and my queen; no one could stop me" "Sachiez de veir e si creez, / Si vostre sire fust finez, / Reïne et dame vus fereie. / Ja pur nul humme nel lenneie" (225-28, emphasis added). Transported by his passion, Equitan makes the lady an extravagant proposition: to translate their courtly play into feudal reality. The price of this extraordinary transformation, however, is nothing less than the life of her husband, the seneschal.

When Philip I conceived his desire for Bertrade de Montfort, neither his marriage to Berthe of Frisia nor hers to Fulk of Anjou prevented him from marrying the countess and making her his queen. In *Equitan*, on the other hand, the king and his mistress resort to the horrible if logical expedient of plotting the seneschal's death, cooking up a plan to scald him in the bath.²¹ When the seneschal momentarily leaves the room, Equitan draws the lady into his bed so that when her unsuspecting husband returns, he finds the two locked in an embrace: "There he discovered the king and his own wife lying in each other's arms" "Le rei e sa femme ad trovez / U il gisent, entr'acolez" (291-92). Having caught his wife and her lover *in flagrante delicto*, the seneschal--according to medieval customary law--is entitled to slay them.²² But the seneschal is denied the satisfaction--or spared the trauma--of regicide. At the sight of his seneschal, Equitan jumps into the scalding bath; in leaping to his own death, the king both avenges his wronged vassal and extinguishes the lineage that his excessive devotion to love had already so jeopardized. At this, the seneschal pitches his wayward wife into the boiling vat as well. In an equitable turn of poetic justice, the lovers die in a strategy of their own devising, consumed by a heat commensurate with the passion that burned them.²³

The real lesson of *Equitan* is located less in the moral Marie so conspicuously appends to her tale ("Tels purcace le mal d'autrui / Dunt tuz li mals

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revert sur lui" [309-10]) than in the cautionary maxim cited in the poem's prologue: "Those who love without sense or *measure* place their lives in danger; such is the *measure* of love that no one involved with it can keep his head" "Cil

metent lur vie en nuncure / Ki d'amur n'unt sen ne *mesure*; / Tels est la *mesure* d'amer / Que nuls n'i deit reisun garder" (17-20, emphasis added). In its normative form, as Duby writes, the game of courtly love was "an education in moderation. Moderation was one of the key words in its specific vocabulary. As an invitation to repress impulses it was in itself a factor which contributed to calm and to appeasement."²⁴ For the vassal paying court to his overlord's wife, discipline and *mesure* were the natural reflex of his subservient position in the feudal hierarchy: *courtoisie* existed in anamorphic alternation with the real-world politics but was never allowed to displace them. When the lover was not a vassal but a king, *Equitan* seems to suggest, that constraint disappears. In Marie's formulation, the measure of love is that it brooks no measure. And, with no other force to restrain them, kings who love can hardly help falling into *démesure*, whether in the form of Philip I's refusal to give Bertrade up despite repeated excommunication, or in *Equitan*'s murderous plot against his faithful seneschal.²⁵

In Marie de France's *Fresne* and *Eliduc*, the scenario of one man caught between two women produces tales of serial polygamy, in which secular lords repudiate their first wives in order to take new, more desirable brides. Moreover, in direct contrast to the twelfth-century church's increasing insistence on the indissolubility of marriage, Marie conspicuously represents abbesses, archbishops, and arguably even God as complicit in the protagonists' audacious marital politics.²⁶ *Equitan*, on the other hand, takes place in a world in which repudiation and remarriage no longer seem viable options. In an astoundingly cynical turn, it is the king's implied respect for the principle of the indissolubility of marriage that leads him to plot the seneschal's murder. The difference has to do, at least in part, with the feudal politics of gender. *Eliduc* is allowed to trade up, exchanging Guildeluëc, a well-born wife of good family ("de haute gent, de grant parage" [10]), for Guilliadun, who is of royal birth ("fille ert a rei e a reine" [16]). Unlike Bertrade de Montfort, the lady in *Equitan* is allowed no such privilege: wives are exchangeable, but husbands are not. Her attempt to scale the feudal ladder brings both her and her royal lover to a bad end.

Literary representations of adulterous queens, Peggy McCracken has argued, form part of a medieval debate around the changing functions of queenship: the queen's influence in government, her biological role in dynastic succession, the importance of her chastity in the court's ritual and symbolic structures.²⁷ *Equitan*, I suggest, performs a similar function around the question of medieval kingship. The king errs not in seducing the seneschal's wife but in surrendering so completely to his courtly fantasy that he jeopardizes his succession and provokes the discontent of his barons. At first, *Equitan* seems to instantiate Erich Köhler's reading of chivalry as an ideological strategy meant

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to mystify the growing class differences within the feudal nobility in an idealized celebration of their common courtly culture.²⁸ In falling in love with the wife of his vassal, the king seems to display an egalitarian impulse that conjures away the discrepancies in power, resources, and interests separating the petty nobility from the great princes. As the tale progresses, however, the lai unveils the limits of this strategy of containment. Only in the world of make-believe can the king claim equality with, let alone subservience to, a seneschal's wife. The king who falls prey to courtly fantasy rather than mobilizing it to his own political advantage and the royal mistress foolish enough to believe she can become queen both pay with their lives: "Thus they both died, the king first and she with him" "Issi murerent ambedui, / Li reis avant e ele od lui" (305-06). Disregarding the rules of the game, *Equitan* dies for trying to move to center court a passion that should have remained out of bounds.

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Notes

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2. See Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, 1998).

3. Henry I is famous for his huge brood of illegitimate children, including Robert, Earl of Gloucester, one of the dedicatees of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. What was odd, in fact, was not taking a mistress. At the end of the twelfth century, Flemish chronicler Gislebert of Mons described Count Baldwin IX as uxorious for his singular devotion to his wife. "At Mons and Valenciennes," as Georges Duby puts it, "people laughed about this stripling who, by getting married, had joined the ranks of the *seniores* and who, right from the start, should have behaved like a senior; people laughed at him because he had

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respected his wife's wish to remain chaste, because he had not taken her by force; above all, people laughed at him because he did not transfer his desire elsewhere, because--the text which I am using stresses this--he was content with her alone.' In other words, he was an eccentric, a ridiculous man" ("What Do We Know About Love in Twelfth-Century France?" *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Dunnett [Chicago, 1994], p. 31). This is a nice bit of irony since his wife Marie was the daughter of Countess Marie de Champagne, at whose "command"

Chrétien de Troyes had composed the adulterous tale of Lancelot and Guenevere.

4. *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Jean Rychner, *Classiques français du moyen âge* 93 (Paris, 1983). English translation based on *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante (Durham, 1978). Subsequent references to these texts are given by line number in parentheses.

5. Pauline L'Hermite-Leclercq, "The Feudal Order," *Silences of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2 of *A History of Women*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, 1992), p. 226. Occasionally, when a man married a woman of higher rank, his dominance might be challenged: one thinks of William the Conqueror's daughter Adele of Blois, who shamed her husband Count Stephen into returning to the First Crusade after he had deserted the siege of Antioch, or Mathilda Empress, protesting the disparagement of her marriage to Count Geoffrey of Anjou.

6. The term "amour courtois," however, is a nineteenth-century invention, coined by Gaston Paris in two articles on Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*: "Etudes sur les romans de la table ronde," *Romania* 10 (1881), 465-96 and "Etudes sur les romans de la table ronde: *Lancelot du Lac*," *Romania* 12 (1883), 459-534. See also David Hult, "Gaston Paris and the Invention of Courtly Love," *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore, 1996), pp. 192-224, and R. Howard Bloch, "Mieux Vaut Tard que Jamais," *Representations* 36 (1991), 64-86.

7. Georges Duby, "Courtly Love" in *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, p. 63.

8. "Courtly love was a game, an educational game. It was the exact counterpart of the tournament. As at the tournament . . . the man of noble birth was risking his life and endangering his body . . . in the hope of improving himself, of enhancing his worth, his price, and also of taking, taking his pleasure, capturing his adversary after breaking down her defenses, unseating her, knocking her down and toppling her" (Duby, "Courtly Love," p. 57). On courtly love as a means of limiting women's power, see R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago, 1991).

9. Duby, "Courtly Love," pp. 61-2 and 63.

10. Charmingly fictionalized by Amy Kelly as Chap. 8, "The Countess and the Poet," in her *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (Cambridge, 1950).

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11. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1966), pp. 205-08.

12. Note, for example, a charter complacently dated "the year when Philip took to wife Bertrade, wife of Fouque, count of Anjou" (Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray [New York, 1983], p. 8). Louis Halphen calls Fulk "un homme sans prestige, dont la conduite privée fut un objet de scandale." His first wife, daughter of Lancelin de Beaugency, died; he then married and repudiated Ermengarde de Bourbon, Orengarde de Chatelaillon, and the daughter of Gautier I of Brienne. Bertrade, his fifth wife, ran away with Philip in 1092 (Halphen, *Le Comté d'Anjou au XIe siècle* [Paris, 1906], pp. 169-70).

13. Urban II excommunicated the king at the Council of Clermont (1095), confirming the excommunication pronounced the previous year by papal legate Hughes of Die, the Archbishop of Lyons. In a sense, Henry of Anjou's 1152 marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine without the permission of her ex-husband and their common overlord Louis VII symbolically redressed the slight that Louis's grandfather Philip had inflicted on Henry's great-grandfather, Fulk le Réchin.

14. Duby, *The Knight, the Lady*, pp. 5-6.

15. Henry II of England, the king sometimes identified as the "noble reis" to whom Marie dedicates her *Lais* (Prologue, l. 43), relied on seneschals to help him govern his far-flung empire. In Normandy, Poitou, and Brittany, the office survived Henry's decentralization of power to his sons, and it remained strong in his patrimony of Anjou. See John W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1986), p. 233.

16. Had she read her Andreas Capellanus, she could have borrowed from the script of the woman of simple nobility importuned by a man of higher nobility (Book I, Part IV, Dialogue 7) and protested that his extravagant praise of her detracted from the courtesy he ought to show other women "more worthy of the honor," making him seem less worthy; similarly, any special favor she might show him would be "to the disadvantage of others who have as much desire to serve [her] as [he has], or perhaps even more" (Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John Jay Parry [1941; rpt. New York, 1969], pp. 95-96).

17. Of all Marie's *Lais*, *Equitan* makes the heaviest use of direct discourse, particularly in the "four long tirades" (of which this is the second) spaced throughout the text (Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, "*Equitan* dans l'oeuvre de Marie de France," *Moyen Age* 69 [1963], 340).

18. The line which resolves the second couplet, however, falls with a thudding finality: "Then died of it in the end" "Puis en mururent e finirent" (184).

19. After his only legitimate son drowned in the White Ship disaster in 1120,

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Henry I of England, a widower, quickly took a young wife in a futile attempt to produce a new heir. Though he subsequently designated his daughter Mathilda as his successor, at his death in 1135 the throne was seized by his nephew, Mathilda's cousin, Stephen of Blois. Note too that Louis VII of France married three times before finally fathering a son; that son, Philip Augustus, also married three times and endured a twenty-year battle with the church in his pursuit of Capetian marital politics. On literary representations of genealogical reproduction as the central function of the feudal nobility, see Sharon Kinoshita, "Heldris de Cornuälle's *Roman de Silence* and the Feudal Politics of Lineage," *PMLA* 110 (1995), 406.

20. The motif of the lord who discomfits his vassals by refusing to take a wife recurs in Marie de France's *Fresne*. See also Jean Renart's early thirteenth-century *Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, in which the German emperor Conrad, seduced by fictional representations of the courtly ideal, selects as his queen the sister of his humbly-born vassal (*Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, ed. Félix Lecoy,

Classiques français du moyen age 91 [Paris, 1979]).

21. On literary representations of bathing, see Danielle Régner-Bohler, "Imagining the Self: Exploring Literature," *A History of Private Life II. Revelations of the Medieval World*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 363-66. On moralists' suspicion towards bathing, see Georges Duby, "The Emergence of the Individual. Solitude: Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries" in *A History of Private Life II*, p. 525. Compare Mélusine, Jean d'Arras's late fourteenth-century genealogical romance of the house of Lusignan, in which the bathhouse also plays a key role.

22. Even though killing someone in bed (that is, without proper warning) normally counted as murder. According to the late thirteenth-century jurist Philippe de Beaumanoir, the fact of being alone in a private place established criminal guilt. The husband needed only raise public cry in order that the deed be known. See R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 54-6.

23. In the Middle Ages, the punishment of being boiled alive (in water, oil, or pitch) was particularly associated with counterfeiters who, like illicit lovers (Jean-Louis Picherit notes) are guilty of adulteration. He cites this interesting parallel from Nicole Oresme's fourteenth-century treatise, *De moneta*: "So, just as the community cannot grant to the prince authority to misuse the wives of any of its citizens he will, it cannot give him such a privilege over the coinage as he can only misuse, by exacting a profit from changing it." See Jean-Louis Picherit, "Le Chatiment des amants dans le lai d'*Equitan* de Marie de France," *Le Moyen Age* 102:3-4 (1996), n. 20.

24. Duby, "Courtly Love," p. 61.

25. In 1105, Philip swore he would "never again have relations or converse"

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with Bertrade "except in the presence of trustworthy persons." The two, however, continued to live together and the following year were even accorded "a warm welcome" by Count Fulk himself (Duby, *The Knight, the Lady*, p. 13). Philip's tenaciousness in refusing to give Bertrade up is matched at the end of the twelfth century by his great-grandson Philip Augustus's twenty-year refusal to take back his second wife, Ingeborg of Denmark, once again despite papal excommunication.

26. See Sharon Kinoshita, "Two for the Price of One: Courtly Love and Serial Polygamy in the *Lais* of Marie de France," *Arthuriana* 8: 2 (1998), 33-55.

27. McCracken, *Romance of Adultery*, p. 15.

28. Erich Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque: idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois*, trans. Eliane Kaufholz (Paris, 1974).