NAME OF AUTHOR...Holly J. Drezael

TITLE OF THESIS...Discussions of Allegory:

...Two Cultural Phases

UNIVERSITY...Simon Fraser University

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED...Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED...1973

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DATED...August 20...1973
DISCUSSIONS OF ALLEGORY: TWO CULTURAL PHASES

by

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B.A., Indiana University, 1967

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
English

HOLLY JEWELL DRESSEL 1973

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

July 1973

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Discussions of Allegory: Two Cultural Modes

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Abstract

The thesis, entitled "Discussions of Allegory," is arranged in five chapters. The first deals with definitions, and attempts to ground itself in the history of Western ideas by situating the concept of allegory, or "other-speaking," within the entire range of its application, in philosophy, art, literature, and criticism, from the Greeks into its continuance in Neoplatonic or Realist theology. I discuss the Realist position, especially in terms of its major proponent, St. Augustine, as the system of symbolic organization that formed and expressed Christian culture from the fifth to the late fourteenth centuries, and remained a major if declining force well into the Renaissance. Such a discussion demands mention of the opposing philosophy and eventual supplanter, Nominalism, which is discussed simultaneously if peripherally. Given that modern criticism is based on empirical research, I discuss the implications of a Nominalist method of enquiry on the understanding of medieval cultural expression. I define allegory in medieval terms, insofar as I am dealing with medieval culture, while noting modern understanding and usage.

The second chapter situates the idea of allegory in terms of its early historical development in "primitive" Western culture, and its similarity to other symbolic, non-pragmatic thought processes in man, such as primitive magic, folk myth, religious vision, and so on. This chapter aims both to differentiate allegory from such concepts, and to illustrate allegory's
ultimate development from and use of them as a means for the meaningful control and interpretation of the universe. I refer specifically to the older stories of the Mabinogion, early Irish manuscript illumination, and examples of Romanesque art.

The third chapter follows the development of the religious art and literature of early Christian culture into its mature, secular phase. I discuss late twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth century medieval culture and examine some of its profane art and literature in terms of "other-speaking." I discuss the affinities between allegory and romance, the evolution of romance, and refer to the predominant theological movements of the time.

The fourth chapter discusses the fifteenth century as a period of medieval decadence, with a corresponding rise in empirical and material consciousness and aesthetics. I discuss the work of Jan Van Eyck in terms of Realism, Nominalism, and allegory, and compare his methods and values with the work of Thomas Malory. I discuss Malory in terms of fifteenth century art and culture, and in comparison with his sources. I see the fifteenth century in general, and Malory in particular, as a useful illustration of the interaction between the two cultural views of Realism and Nominalism, presented in their vivid and violent forms of decadence and primitivism.

The final chapter is intended to summarize, and to illustrate that while one of these cultural dualities may predominate, the other is never dead. I give a few examples to
illustrate, but essentially the last chapter is meant to emphasize the importance and universality of Realist consciousness and its expression in allegory in the West, and to help place it in the correct perspective, in order to increase its recognition and appreciation, and to encourage a more comprehensive and less egocentric view of the development of our culture.
"For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yer,
And out of olde bokes, in good seyth,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere."

Chaucer, The Parliament of Foules,
II.22-25.
Special thanks to Gary Toole, who did the photographs and kept fixing the typewriter.
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Chapter I

I have only one purpose in writing this paper, and that is to define and discuss a certain form of human consciousness that I consider important, both to myself and the culture in which I live. This type of consciousness I am terming "allegorical" or "Realist," for reasons given below. I believe that human beings are capable of being conscious of themselves and the world in several different ways, sometimes exclusively, and sometimes simultaneously; the predominant way in which a group of people of a certain place or time are conscious of themselves and their surroundings will be reflected in their culture, their art, literature, methods of education, social ideals, and so on. Moreover, if we see these latter things changing, in retrospect, of course, we may assume that the general consciousness of the given people or era is shifting from one form to another.

A good part of my adult life has been devoted to the study of what is called the European High Middle Ages, more especially the art and literature, both religious and profane, of what is now England, France, Italy and Belgium. What originally attracted me to this period, and what has continued to hold my interest, is a sense that the predominant form of consciousness of this period is very different from that of my own, and that this former understanding and use of human life, while no longer in ascendance, still exists and is
both available and useful to present culture.

Briefly, it seems that in the twentieth century Western world, empiricism, pragmatism, individual personality and individual goals, chronological time, and generally the reality of the external and material world as perceived by the five senses of our bodies dominate, often exclusively, the human consciousness. In other times and other places, particularly in the period to be discussed, the more or less opposing side of human consciousness was prevalent; religious faith, less concern with individual achievement and happiness, an attempt to transcend time, and inner, immaterial ideals, perceived by the mind rather than through the senses, prevailed in education and mass values, and were reflected in art and literature. These two actively opposed understandings and uses of human life have been discussed for centuries. Proclus, in his Commentary on the Timaeus, contrasts what he terms the "Pythagorean type," "sublime,...intellectual, defines all that is in terms of number, and...shows things symbolically and mystically," to a "Socratic type," who shows a "love of human things...the civilized...the ethical...the demonstrative, and...that which contemplates things through their images."\(^1\) For one, what can be thought of exists, including that which cannot be expressed in human language. For the other, only what can be perceived and named is granted a viable place in the life of man.
Jorge Luis Borges, in Other Inquisitions, says,

Coleridge observes that all men are born Aristotelian or Platonist. The latter know by intuition that ideas are realities; the former, that they are generalizations; for the latter, language is nothing but a system of arbitrary symbols; for the former, it is the map of the universe. The Platonist knows that the universe is somehow a cosmos, an order, which, for the Aristotelian, may be an error or a figment of our partial knowledge. Across the latitudes and the ages, the two immortal antagonists change their name and language: one is Parmenides, Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Francis Bradley; the other is Heraclitus, Aristotle, Locke, Hume, William James. In the arduous schools of the Middle Ages they all invoke Aristotle, the master of human reason, but the nominalists are Aristotelian, the realists, Plato...

As might be supposed, the passage of so many years multiplied the intermediate positions and the distinctions to the point of infinity. Nevertheless, for realism the universals (Plato would say the ideas, forms; we call them abstract concepts) were fundamental; and for nominalism, the individuals. The history of philosophy is not a vain museum of distractions and verbal games; the two theses probably correspond to two manners of intuitively perceiving reality. Maurice de Wulf writes: 'Ultrarealism gained the first adherents. The chronicler Heriman (eleventh century) speaks of those who teach dialectic in re as 'antiqui doctores'; Abelard calls dialectic an 'ancient doctrine,' and the name of 'moderni' is applied to its adversaries until the end of the twelfth century.' A thesis that is inconceivable now seems obvious in the ninth century, and it somehow endured until the fourteenth century. Nominalism, which was formerly the novelty of a few, encompasses everyone today; its victory is so vast and fundamental that its name is unnecessary. No one says that he is a nominalist, because nobody is anything else. But we must try to understand that for the people of the Middle Ages reality was not men but humanity, not the individuals but mankind, not the species but the genus. Not the genera but God. I believe that allegorical literature has developed from such concepts (of which the clearest manifestation is perhaps the quadruple system of Erigena). The allegory is a fable of abstractions, as the novel is a fable of individuals. The abstractions are personified; therefore, in every allegory there is something of the novel. The individuals proposed by novelists
aspire to be generic (Dupin is Reason, Don Segundo Sombra is the Gaucho;) an allegorical element inheres in novels... 

Despite its sweeping quality, this capsule-history of Western thought and its expression in literature is a helpful and even intuitive statement of what I want to discuss. In the fifth century after Christ, the theologian known as Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite mentions the two attitudes in similar terms:

...this must be borne in mind, that the tradition of those who give accounts of the divine is double, being on one hand ineffable and the subject of secret knowledge, on the other open and the subject of common knowledge, on one hand symbolic and the subject of initiation, and on the other philosophic and the subject of demonstration...one persuades and binds fast the truth of things said; the other fulfills and situates souls in God through a mystical guidance not (learned) by teaching.

Whitney J. Gates refers to a "Closed System," where "logic and reason are the only reality and the world of the senses the only basis for discussion," versus an "Open System," one which "comprehends within it all aspects of reality, which recognizes the principle that 'life runs beyond logic.'" For the first he mentions St. Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, and Epicurus; for the second, Plato and Augustine. There are really innumerable names for and discussions of two rival concepts that seem to have vied for place in Western thought since the Greeks. I say "seem," because I do not wish to reduce human consciousness to a duality. These two concepts do seem to seesaw; as one gathers force, the other grows weaker. But to classify all the thought of Western man into two is not within my scope, to say nothing of the thought of Eastern man.
I hope it will be understood that I wish to trace, in a necessarily delicate manner, the use and importance of what could be called medieval, Platonic, Pythagorean, "Open System," "Realist" or "allegorical" consciousness, and that this will involve its opposite, Aristotelian, modern, pragmatic, "Closed System," "Nominalist," "historical" consciousness; but all things extraneous or related I do not pretend to include.

* * *

Today we know the word "allegory" primarily in its use as a literary term; in dictionaries it is commonly defined as a "prolonged metaphor." As a literary mode of expression, "allegory" has been gravely out of fashion since about the eighteenth century. The two allegories most commonly known to modern students are two of the latest ones, The Faery Quene, and Pilgrim's Progress, both still actively studied, but neither ardently popular. The allegory par excellence of the Middle Ages, Prudentius' Psychomachia, I find extremely dull going. Even Borges, who reads anything and is more understanding of allegory than most, says, "For all of us, the allegory is an aesthetic error." Yet it was once extremely popular; this we know. In fact, from the fall of Rome until well into the eighteenth century, allegory was either a major or the major literary form written, read, and enjoyed by the European populace. There does still exist from this period some allegorical literature that even the most vituperative critic of the form (and there are many) cannot completely dismiss as worthless or even unbeautiful, for example Boethius'
Consolation of Philosophy, The Pearl, The Romance of the Rose; the Physiologus, in T. H. White's translation, is a popular paperback. Still, by and large, there are few modern critics who hold the literary mode "allegory" in high esteem. I could write a hundred pages on the modern controversies over the critical definition of the word, the different methods employed by different critics in detecting its actual presence. The predilection for classifying its more successful efforts under different headings, like "symbolism," and painstaking differentiations between it and modern critical terms like "myth," "symbol," "emblem," "metaphor," "vision," and so on. There are some few modern critics, however, who besides Prudentius, Boethius and Alan de Lille, read Dante, Andreas Capellanus, and even Chaucer, as allegory. This is where older and more modern definitions of this word begin to clash. The medieval definition of allegory is, "Allegoria est enim, sicut saepe jam dictum est, quand alius dicitur, et aliud significatur," or, as Isidore of Seville says more simply, "aliud videtur, aliud intelligitur." ("one thing is said in words, another understood.") This is presently considered "too broad;" most modern critics prefer to define the word very narrowly, only in terms of its literary function, and either in its role of "figura," where it either foretells or fulfills an event in history, (as Isaac's sacrifice is an allegory of God's sacrifice of His Son) or as personification metaphor (where Virtue, in her chariot of Good Works or Good Government or whatever, overcomes Vice personified by demons, and so on.) The cause for this shrinkage, from a
word dealing with all verbal and literary forms of expression, and unarticulated thought as well, to a tightly defined piece of jargon, is, I think, due to modern man's difficulty in accepting the concept that there is anything conceivable that cannot be expressed in words, in human language, as is implied in "that said in words...that understood." Again, it is Borges who has most succinctly discussed this difficulty. He quotes the aesthetician Benedetto Croce, who is typically modern in his rational disdain of allegory. He says, "If the symbol is conceived as inseparable from the artistic intuition, it is a synonym of the intuition itself, which always has an ideal character. If the symbol is conceived as separable, if the symbol can be expressed on the one hand and the thing expressed on the other, one falls back into the intellectualish error..." In other words, either an allegory is redundant, or it is impossible. There is no admitted difference between content and form, and allegory is seen only as an odd perversity that chooses obscure words instead of clear ones. Borges answers this attack with a quote from G. K. Chesterton, who came about by an altogether different route.

Man knows that there are in the soul tints more bewildering, more numberless, and more nameless than the colours of an autumn forest;...yet he seriously believes that these things can every one of them, in all their tones and semi-tones, in all their blends and unions, be accurately represented by an arbitrary system of grunts and squeals. He believes that an ordinary civilized stockbroker can really produce out of his own inside noises which denote all the mysteries of memory and all the agonies of desire.
This argument is, of course, very broad—either language works completely, or it does not; either you are in control of the phenomena of life, or you are not. Besides any blows to the human ego the latter view may involve, the Nominalist, even in Augustine's time, is always in a more solid position. Human beings, no matter how mystic or ascetic, cannot really deny the existence or worth of their own bodies. Among Christian philosophers, the Church Fathers, Augustine, Bede, Isidore of Seville, Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory and the rest, basically sought to achieve a balance and cooperation between the physical and the spiritual, not a denial of either. The physical was in their view subordinate to the spiritual, but never vilified. Hugh of St. Victor's twelfth century discussion of the physical and spiritual marriage is completely orthodox:

The music between the body and the soul is that natural friendship by which the soul is leagued to the body, not in physical bonds, but in certain sympathetic relationships for the purpose of imparting motion and sensation to the body. Because of this friendship, it is written, 'No man hates his own flesh.' This music consists in loving one's flesh, but one's spirit more; in cherishing one's body, but not in destroying one's virtue. II

If the late medieval church is popularly known for its denial and even condemnation of the flesh, it should be obvious that such extreme steps were taken not as consonant with Church dogma, but as a decadent popular attempt to control and subdue the rising Nominalist spirit.

Besides the real undeniability of the physical and the physically perceived, "Pythagorean" or "Platonic" Western man cannot prove what is by nature unproveable, unseen, unknown,
and ineffable, the concept of "proof" being empirical and Nominalist in the first place. Modern man says, basically, that what cannot be logically proved, or at least expressed in words, does not exist. Any concept outside of the verbally and empirically knowable, is, according to the precepts of modern philosophy and science, automatically denied. As moderns, our discussion of allegory and "Pythagorean" or "Open" systems would therefore end here, and will end, unless we investigate our attitudes.

If we wish to read the literature of the past only within the framework of our own training and preferences, it is obvious that what we will see will perhaps be valuable to us, but it will not reflect what was first intended. Our vision may in fact be twisted, and knowledge of the past, rather than serving to broaden and educate us, will only serve to narrow us and strengthen our particular ignorances. If we are fairly certain, and we are, that men in the medieval period were more concerned with the Divine, with universals, with symbolism, and with such concepts as "soul" and "redemption," than with artistic originality, imitation of reality, or empiricism, yet we judge their work by the latter criteria and not by the former, we are only playing some kind of superior-culture game. Yet criticism is a highly idealistic profession; few modern critics would disagree with Augustine's method of evaluating a text, quoted by Hugh of St. Victor four hundred years later:

When, therefore, we read the Divine Books... let us prefer above all what it seems certain
that the man we are reading thought. But if this is not evident, let us certainly prefer what the circumstances of the writing do not disallow and what is consonant with good faith. 12

The idea, in our terms, is to glean all we can from our admittedly patchy and biased knowledge of our own past, while avoiding any immoral temptations to propagate our own ideas. We know the medieval definition of the word "allegory;" we know the extreme popularity of what is even now considered its literary form; we are familiar, moreover, with "allegoresis," the extensive works of exegesis on the "deeper" meaning of Biblical texts written by the Church Fathers, Jerome, Augustine, Bede, Isidore of Seville, Pseudo-Dionysius, and so on. We know, at least to some extent, the influence of these works, by their constant reappearance and reworking in the religious literature of the entire Middle Ages, and by the general agreement among scholars that their influence was largely undisturbed into the thirteenth century, and according to some, far beyond. 13 Moreover, art historians have found many more examples of scriptural exegesis preserved in stone, glass, gold and vellum, than scholars can prove exist in literature, so that the delicate process of recognizing and establishing allegorical intent in literature is aided and clarified by the graphic arts. It is important that we understand that the medieval attitude did not distinguish between allegorical interpretation and allegorical creation in the manner that we do. It regarded interpretation and criticism as creative acts, even as it looked upon artistic originality with suspicion. Except in the case of the Bible, they did not consider symbolism as consciously placed by an
author, but preexisting in all things, as a tree represents life, or a lion Christ; the exegete's role was to discover and explain the symbolism, and like the authors, he was considered a crucible of God's word, and was not personally credited with any "creation," or any gift beyond perhaps that of Divine Grace. Thus "allegory" did not imply just the original creation, as the "Song of Songs," but the correct interpretation as well, as Augustine's explication of the Songs in terms of Christ and the Church. 14

This broad view of allegory originated, to a large extent, in the teachings of Augustine, whose overriding influence upon religious thought and education was not, as nearly all scholars agree, actively challenged until the thirteenth century writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. The controversy between St. Thomas and his followers, termed the Scholastics, and the fathers of the Church, represented by Augustine, Bede, Pseudo-Dionysius, and later Hugh of St. Victor, Bonaventure, and the other Neoplatonic philosophers, obviously could not have occurred if the Augustinian ideas had not retained their power into the thirteenth century. Indeed, there was always controversy over Aquinas' doctrine in his lifetime, and shortly after his death certain of his positions were condemned by the Bishop of Paris, and proscribed by the Franciscans. These condemnations were revoked at his canonization in 1323, but that does not mean, I think, that all resistance to them had necessarily disappeared. To put it very simply, Augustine and the other Neoplatonic theologians taught that knowledge of God, and hence the soul's
salvation, was to be gained at first through human reason, but then through faith and something called "illumination," that is, through the inexplicable and ineffable intervention of God's grace. St. Thomas and later writers aligning themselves with him taught a more Aristotelian Christianity, and in a diplomatic way ascribed greater powers to human reason and fewer to mystic and inexplicable revelations. Thomas' precepts contained, in fact, all the implications of Aristotelianism; in other words, in terms of the history of philosophy, he was one of the first Christian Nominalists to oppose the Christian Realists. Probably because of this, he is also the medieval philosopher most acceptable to the modern Church; "Thomism," as Hyman and Walsh say, "has the status of a kind of official doctrine in modern times."\textsuperscript{15} Despite this present favored position, however, and although Augustinianism began to wane at this time, it was still far from disintegrated until well into the eighteenth century, as works by Panofsky, Huizinga, Lovejoy, Tillyard, and Auerbach have amply illustrated.\textsuperscript{16} In this context, I do not find it any more helpful to ascribe overriding influence to the doctrines of St. Thomas than I do to ignore the shifting from Realism to Nominalism that his writings express. This, I think, is the proper context in which to judge Thomism; as a new form of consciousness rising in a culture that was characteristically slow to change.

St. Thomas was a kind of vanguard whose influence was to grow as Augustine's waned. Yet Augustine's positions would shape theology, art, and nobility's to the lowliest serf's comprehen-
sion of life for centuries before and after Thomas, even as
Thomas' influence continues to this day. Augustine taught, be-
sides the doctrine of faith and illumination, that the universe
had been created and schematized by God according to a system
of universal hierarchy; meditating on this order was as medita-
ting on the mind of God, and was a necessary step towards sal-
vation. Even St. Thomas did not deny cosmic hierarchy or the
fourfold interpretation of Sacred texts; he merely played down
the idea of analogy and limited allegoresis to stricter situa-
tions. As for the cosmic order itself, it is a concept that
should be familiar to any student of Western culture. Through
it, every "thing" in the created universe was given meaning by
means of a hierarchical relationship to God, the Ultimate Prin-
ciple, Creator and Embodiment of All. Its details were worked
out by Augustine and further elaborated in the medieval encycol-
pedias, or explained in sections, as in The Celestial Hierarchy
of Pseudo-Dionysius. According to this system, all "things" (per-
sons, animals, objects, concepts) were organized under God ac-
cording to the perfection of their relationship to Him, the
thrones, cherubim and seraphim being closest, down through inan-
imate creation and abstract concepts. The universe was seen as
an allegory of the completeness and order of the mind of God,
with man occupying the most important place in terms of his be-
ing the one link between the animals and the angels, the con-
scious and the unconscious, the material and the immaterial man-
ifestations of God, a bridge between the two worlds. Despite
his predilection for the carnal and the sensual, only man is also capable of grasping the idea of spirituality. First man's ability, and second his willingness to make use of his unique position were of extreme importance to Augustinian and to general medieval thought. For as the universe represented Divine order, so man's refusal to fulfill his particular function would totally disrupt the unity of the chain, and divorce it from the Perfection which it represented. Only man could bring about such disruption, as both angelic and animal creation were incapable of fulfilling any but their allotted function. Man's allotted function included the ability to choose or to refuse God; hence his need for instruction. We can see what implications the emphasis Thomas Aquinas and his followers placed on man's reason would have on this balance, as it would tip the delicate scales in favor of the "lower" nature of man's brain as opposed to the "higher" one of his soul. Thus, under the old system, the ability to understand written as well as created allegory represented the ability to choose spiritual as well as carnal meaning in life. All this is what Augustine is talking about when he seems to condemn so harshly an inability to detect symbolism in Sacred texts:

At the outset, you must be very careful lest you take figurative expressions literally. What the Apostle says pertains to this problem: 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.' That is, when that which is said figuratively is taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally. Nor can anything more appropriately be called the death of the soul than that condition
in which the thing which distinguishes us from beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in the pursuit of the letter. 17

Pseudo-Dionysius says that those who, "consider the phrases rather than the meaning,"

are under the dominion of senseless elements and lines, and of uncomprehended syllables and phrases which penetrate not into the perception of their souls, but make a dumb noise outside about their lips and hearing.. 18

These are the basic principles of medieval consciousness from the fifth at least into the thirteenth centuries, as they were understood by the populace in general, and by the teachers in particular. If we take the knowledge we are privileged, through modern scholarship, to have of the past, and apply it, if we read the Church Fathers not as quaint curiosities, but as intelligent and even brilliant men who mean what they say and who are expressing themselves correctly, then the meaning we get from their writings will change. Certainly few critics would publicly disagree with Hugh of St. Victor when he says,

...now the beginning of discipline is humility. Although the lessons of humility are many, the three which follow are of especial importance for the student: first, that he hold no knowledge and no writing in contempt; second, that he blush to learn from no man; and third, that when he has attained learning himself he not look down upon everyone else. 19

In De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei, Hugh of St. Victor speaks of the purpose of the world and the meaning of life:

He who believes that this was made for his sake will not look for the reason of it outside of himself. For it all was made in the image of the world within him; the earth which is below, is the sensual nature of man, and the heaven above is the purity of his intelligence quickening to immortal life. 20
These are not, as we usually deign to interpret them, the
words of benighted oddity of the Dark Ages, striving to ex-
plain through superstition all the things we now know or have
rejected through science; they are the words of a human being
with a brain every bit as advanced as our own who is approach-
ing the questions of life from a separate point of view. This
is a consciousness more concerned with the "why" of the exis-
tence than the "how;" and although we now know a great deal
about how creation works, we definitely have not the medieval
confidence of why. In one small paragraph Hugh takes in the
ideas of his age that I have spent pages trying to just sum-
marize: that the world is an allegory of God, that God and the
world are within and without man, that the purpose of the uni-
verse is to be comprehended by man, that man's purpose is to
comprehend it, that he stands midway between the animal and
spiritual forms of creation, that the choice is his. Hugh is
quite conscious of the fact that it is difficult for an intel-
ligent man to accept so simple an answer to his question. But
his explanation is based on his belief in faith, in accepting
things which are presently beyond our comprehension, and in
illumination, where in an inexplicable and dramatic way, all
the tenets of faith are made clear. How much of this, however,
could we understand without background, and especially, with-
out a desire to learn from an attitude towards life different
from our own?

It must be added that this system of hierarchy had impli-
cations that extended into the medieval world's conception
of time and space on a day-to-day as well as an abstract level.
The understanding of time in the Middle Ages is illustrated by
many scholars in terms of verticals and horizontals, and is a
logical consequence of giving a symbolic meaning to every as-
pect of creation. Instead of time appearing, as it does to
us, in an orderly, chronological straight line, with b follow-
ing a, every chronological event had been foretold in the past,
and was a figure of the future, all three concepts being simul-
taneous in the eyes of God, and running vertically in the Divine
hierarchy as well as horizontally in human time. In other
words, another dimension was added to our normal, one-plane,
horizontal comprehension. Hugh of St. Victor says,

"...those things which, from our point of view lie
in the future, have, from the standpoint of God's
eternity, already been done. For this reason, when
anything is announced as having yet to be done,
this is said from our point of view. But when things
in the future are spoken of as already done, these
must be taken from the standpoint of the eternity of
God, with whom all things belonging to the future
have already been accomplished."

Auerbach uses the example of a twelfth century passion play, the
"Mystère d'Adam," to illustrate this idea. The Adam figure
speaks of his salvation by "Jesus, son of Mary;" Auerbach says,

"One must...be very much on one's guard against
taking such violations of chronology, where the
future seems to reach back into the present, as
nothing more than evidence of a kind of medieval
naïveté...this simultaneous over-all view is...
the expression of a unique, exalted, and hidden
truth, the very truth of the figural structure
of universal history."

Of course, this was basically a theological position, but as it
was strenuously taught in the schools and held out to the pop-
ulace as an ideal, we can assume that after six or seven hundred
years of reiteration, it did have repercussions on secular
arts and day-to-day life. Passion plays were first presented
within the church, later on the church porch, and finally, by
the thirteenth or fourteenth century, in the town square.
They were intended for the popular instruction of the laity,
especially the unlettered, and it was in fact their popularity
and coarse, common appeal that accounts for their slow remov-
al from sacred ground. Augustine says that, "all things, to
God, are present simultaneously; time exists only for the Crea-
ted Universe, since the Creation."24 we may assume that even
for the popular audience of the "Mystere d'Adam," these prin-
ciples were sufficiently ingrained that the people understood,
in general, the significance of Adam's reference to Jesus.25
As for the concept of space, it was generally understood in the
same context. Hugh of St. Victor urges those seeking the philo-
sopher's life to constant travel, so they can see that all the
world is one under God.26 Neither time nor space were separa-
ted as they are today, with predictable implications in atti-
tudes towards the present concepts of nationalism and history.
As Auerbach puts it, the medieval system worked in time and
space like a

*great drama, which..in principle..contains
everything that occurs in world history. In it
all the heights and depths of human conduct and
all the heights and depths of stylistic expres-
sion find their morally or aesthetically estab-
lished right to exist; and hence there is no basia
for a separation of the sublime from the low and everyday, for they are indissolubly connected in Christ's very life and suffering. Nor is there any basis for concern with the unities of time, place and action, for there is but one place, the world; and but one action--man's fall and redemption. 27

We might say that transcending time and space was a partial goal of the Middle Ages; the impetus behind it, however, the goal of all life, was to know God. D. W. Robertson remarks that modern students no longer receive instruction in dialectic and rhetoric as did their medieval counterparts, (probably because dialectic, in the complex form known to the Middle Ages, is no longer used,) and hence may be expected to miss the import of techniques such as allegory, trope, irony, aenigma, antiphrasis, alieniloquium, asyemos, anagogy, and so on. 28 I have been quoting Hugh of St. Victor, who was a teacher at the twelfth century Abbey school of St. Victor. His Didascalicon is a medieval educational handbook intended for the use of his students, one of the better known works of a long line of didactic Christian literature outlining how and what to study. Hugh's work concerns itself primarily with the study of "philosophy" and the attainment of "wisdom," through proper instruction in the seven liberal arts. Philosophy for him is "coterminous with all knowledge whatever, including revealed or scriptural knowledge;" Wisdom is reunion with God. 29 Hugh explains the function of education so:

"...the mind, stupefied by bodily sensations and enticed out of itself by sensuous forms, has forgotten what it was, and, because it does not remember that it was anything different, believes that it is nothing except what is seen. But we are restored through instruction, so that we may recognize our nature and learn not to seek out-
side ourselves what we can find within. 'The highest curative in life,' therefore, is the pursuit of Wisdom: he who finds it is happy, and he who possesses it, blessed.

If we compare this aim of teaching with our own, from Hugh's point of view, we will see that our purposes end with the first sentence. We educate with "what is seen" for "what is seen;" we teach empirical, visible, and provable knowledge of the world in order, primarily, to increase individual material gain and in order to facilitate personal adjustment to society. The nurturing of internal virtue or spiritual aspiration is encouraged only insofar as it does not interfere with social goals. Perhaps such a comparison makes it more apparent how different social aims and attitudes can color and even obscure our understanding of the art and thought of previous times.

In effect, there have been dramatic reversals within the past ten years or so in the critical interpretations of authors like Ovid, Lucan, Andreas Capellanus, and so on; yet an established modern critic can still say, "the basic and important meaning of the Divine Comedy, except in the case of a few obvious symbols, is its literal meaning." There is a letter supposedly written by Dante concerning the Divine Comedy, but whose authenticity is in some doubt, which says,

"Be it known that the sense of this work is not simple, but on the contrary may be called polysemous, that is to say, of more senses than one; for it is one sense which we get through the letter, and another which we get through the thing the letter signifies; and the first is called literal, but the second allegorical or mystic." 33

Though Morton Bloomfield, in his article, "Symbolism in Medie-
val Literature," admits, partially because of the Can Grande letter, that Dante may possibly be read polysemously, he refers to the fourfold meaning of scripture expounded in Augustine and Bede as part of his objection. If four levels of meaning cannot be detected in any given text, and moreover if they are not sustained throughout, he says we may safely assume that no allegorical interpretation was intended. He remarks that Henry Totting of Cyta's fourteenth-century discussion of the question of multiple meanings is "surprisingly modern; he is well aware of the difficulties." He states also that,

if the purpose of scholarship is to determine the historical circumstances surrounding a work of art and the probable intention of the author in terms of his background and the evidence of the text itself, then the burden of proof lies with those who would claim a religious symbolic multi-leveled meaning for medieval literature. 34

In other words, he does not admit the existence of anything that cannot be empirically proven; he defines allegorical intent very strictly and in a fashion actually rejected by the medieval authors he is discussing; and he finds it surprising that a medieval writer can actually be aware of the empirical type of consciousness that he himself is at pains to prove is and always has been the viable form of human thought. I am not trying to pick on Mr. Bloomfield, but I find his general attitude very typical of modern scepticism towards the aims of medieval art and thought. 35 As for his discussion of the fourfold meaning of scripture, I can refer to both Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor. Although Augustine describes four levels on which to judge a Sacred text, he further explains that these meanings
may be taken "in bono" or "in malo," and that they are not always indicated:

Yet not all things which are described as having been done are to be thought of as signifying something; but for the sake of those things which do signify something, other things which do not have any signification are included. For the soil is cloven only by the plowshare, but in order that this may be done, the other parts of the plow are necessary also. 36

Hugh is yet clearer:

To be sure, all things in the divine utterance must not be wrenched to an interpretation such that each of them is held to contain history, allegory, and tropology all at once. Even if a triple (or quadruple) meaning can appropriately be assigned in many passages, nevertheless it is difficult or impossible to see it everywhere. 37

Moreover, any of the Church Fathers or later theologians can be "surprisingly modern" in their understanding of the dangers of the system they expound. Hugh begins the longest chapter of his Didascalicon, "Concerning Allegory," so:

After the reading of history, it remains for you to investigate the mysteries of allegories, in which I do not think there is any need of exhortation from me...Yet I wish you to know, good student, that this pursuit demands not slow and dull perceptions but matured mental abilities which, in the course of their searching, may so restrain their subtlety as not to lose good judgement in what they discern...You must...employ such restraint that, while you are subtle in your seeking, you may not be found rash in what you presume...

He ends the chapter by saying,

...it is certainly necessary that the student of Scripture adhere staunchly to the truth of spiritual meaning and that the high points of the literal meaning, which itself can sometimes be wrongly understood too, should not lead him away from the central concern in any way whatever....I do not say these things in order to offer anyone the
chance to interpret the Scriptures according to his own will, but in order to show the man who follows the letter alone that he cannot long continue without error. For this reason it is necessary both that we follow the letter in such a way as not to prefer our own sense to the divine author's, and that we do not follow it in such a way as to deny that the entire pronouncement of truth is rendered in it. Not the man devoted to the letter, 'but the spiritual man judgeth all things." 38

Medieval theology saw in the interpretation of written and created allegory not one but two dangers. They did warn against the greatest modern fear, that of overenthusiastic allegoresis, "for so we should be battling not for the thought of the Divine Scriptures but for our own thought, and this in such a way that we wished the thought of the Scriptures to be identical with our own..." 39 This is the fault that many critics find so readily in the work of D. W. Robertson; it is belittled as well in many minor ecclesiastical works of the Middle Ages, and sometimes in Augustine himself. How many moderns, however, ever worry about the second danger, the spiritual aridity, the "death of the soul" that Augustine and so many others fear even more; how many even care to understand the concept?

As everything leading to God was desirable, so allegory was the basis for medieval aesthetic delight. There was no separation between beauty and function; art, like any other earthly delight, was beautiful insofar as it reflected Divine Beauty, or explained, through analogy, the universal truths. The Greek term Kosmos, in Latin ornatus or decoratio, signi-
ified our present word "ornament." But since the idea of ornament or embellishment implied a part-whole relationship, it also signified the "whole" of which any decoration is a part, that is, a "microcosmos" and a "macrocosmos." Plutarch, in his Moralia, says, "Pythagoras was the first philosopher that gave the name Kosmos to the world, from the order and beauty of it; for so the world signifies."40 In the medieval Christian hierarchy, the Pythagorean concept of the world as an ornament of the universe naturally carries to the world as an ornament of the mind of God, as a form of order, purpose, and beautiful embellishment, inseparable from it. Angus Fletcher, in his confused but insightful book, Allegory, the Theory of a Symbolic Mode, says that the concept of decoration and embellishment is so central to the mode of allegory that the presence of convoluted, decorative imagery in a work of art or literature indicates the presence of allegory.41 This method is a little backward, but it contains an element of truth. If the mind of God cannot be directly expressed but only hinted at, indirect language in general—even if perhaps not expressly needed—becomes a spiritual and aesthetic joy. Augustine articulates this idea in the De Doctrina: "The more they seem obscure through their use of figurative expressions, the more they give pleasure when they have been made clear."42 A millennium later, Boccaccio, in his discussion of Dante, says, "It is obvious that anything that is gained with fatigue seems sweeter than what is acquired without effort."43 Hugh of St.
Victor says, "...whatever is sought with greater effort is found with greater desire." This is of course another universal critical concept, discussed by aestheticians of today in terms of "clarity" and "obscurity." One's predominance over another is, like Aristotelianism or Platonism, partly a case of the age, and of personal taste and training. Fletcher refers to adverse criticism of obscurity in modern poets like T. S. Eliot. Rosamund Tuve, in *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, quotes Yeats' poem, "Three Movements:"

"Shakespearian fish swam in the sea, far away from land; Romantic fish swam in nets, coming to the hand;
What are all those fish that lie gasping on the strand?"

Tuve remarks, "This tripartite image would have been called an enigma by the slower-minded, and allegoria by the quick. If anyone doubts that it 'beautifies the subject,' let him try to state Yeats' idea without it." Fletcher comments that one must always be willing to allow that,

visionary truth follows from one's own willingness to accept a given set of doctrines...Obscurity appears to be a price necessarily paid for the lack of a common doctrinal background. If readers do not share this background with the author, they may still be impressed by the ornaments of the vision...but these will not for such readers have the cosmic reference of true allegorical language.

Critics refusing to acknowledge any but the decorative, sensuous aspects of Spenser or Shelley or Chaucer, are trained to appreciate a different aesthetic; but they are ultimately making a decision to "avert serious thought about the problem of belief." As for what critics presently understand by "obscure," it was no more appreciated in Augustine's day than
now; complicated imagery still had to have a core. Bernard Huppé, in *Doctrine and Poetry*, remarks that Augustine himself attacked obscurity, "not meaningful obscurity, but meaningless rhetorical display. The rhetoric of the Second Sophistic dismayed him not because it taught obscurity, but because it treated obscurity as an end in itself."48

It is apparent that the meaningful obscurity of allegory is no longer considered beautiful; reading allegory into Dante, for example, does not detract from his other qualities, but greatly adds to their artistry and deepens their significance, especially on a personal level. Yet, many scholars avoid the allegorical classification as if it implies the destruction of Dante's art and the belittling of his genius, even though his historical position naturally suggests such a classification. The reasons for this are perhaps not so hard to surmise. If the allegorical form held such a strong position from late antiquity into the Renaissance, a period of over one thousand years, or even if it held sway just until St. Thomas, seven hundred years, it is hardly surprising that a change was due and that, as its power waned and was replaced, there would be a reaction against it and a repugnance for its aims and methods. Certainly it is true that in its extreme forms, wholistic philosophy not only ignores many of the humanitarian physical and social needs, it actively frustrates them. As men began to long to cure their diseases, stay warm at night, work for and govern themselves, and attain some control of their lives, the
religious forms of thought and their literary and artistic expressions became symbols of the old life of servitude, misery, disease, and ignorance. The mystical life still retains much of this connotation, and this explains in part our pity and contempt for countries like India, Mexico, Africa and so on, where it still conserves much of its influence. Our repugnance is understandable, but in the competent scholar, it is not excusable. Because we wish to recognize only the Nominalist point of view, because we reject Realism and mysticism and deem them marks of ignorance or savagery, and because we revere Dante and find him a genius, does not give us the right to declare retroactively that, despite his own efforts and the overwhelming temper of his times, he was not concerned with mystic thought. Religious ideas were basically accepted on the popular level, as are the scientific ideas of today; Einstein did not intend to destroy Hiroshima when he formulated his theory. If the holistic, Realist, allegorical, "Open System" approach to human life has terrible consequences for mankind in its extreme forms, so has the pragmatic, Nominalist, individualistic, "Closed System" approach. Besides, the inner destruction of spiritual aridity, the individual gropings with meaninglessness and despair, we find that the emphasis on individual success and gratification, the deemphasis on the welfare of the species and the future (if we are not universal, we need not be concerned with anything beyond our own lifespans,) has fostered the monumental greed and insensitivity that is wasting our resources and destroying the creatures and the future of our planet. If
we do not fit into our world in any particular way, then we feel no compunction about destroying it. Oddly enough, either extreme leads to man's physical existence being threatened by the forces of Nature. The idea is balance. Augustine and the earlier fathers of the Church were confronted by the duality of the barbaric unconsciousness, superstition and mystical excesses of the early Christians and the converted barbarians on the one hand, and the refined, sophisticated, but hollow intellectualism of Classical and decadent Greece and Rome on the other. They sought a synthesis leaning towards mysticism, which by the fifteenth century had become used up and abused, even as pragmatism and material progress had been abused by the Romans; so came another upheaval and synthesis, a rediscovery of human glory, which is in turn being abused now.

Allegory functioned, in the Realist cycle of Western civilization, rather as our mimetic modes of expression do now; that is, it reflected the concerns of society, pictured their ideals, aided their understanding of life, and especially gave comfort and aesthetic pleasure to the medieval readers. The aim of mimetic expression, however, the imitation of life, was neither sought nor over praised. Alan de Lille prefaces his twelfth-century allegory the Anticlaudianus with the promise that

'in this work, the sweetness of the literal meaning will tickle the puerile ear; moral teaching will imbue the more proficient understanding; and the finer subtlety of allegory will sharpen the finished intellect. 49

Almost four hundred years later, the popular English poet, Thomas Usk, complains in his Testament of Love that
"Many men ther ben that, with eres openly sprad, so muche swallowen the deliciousnesse of jestes and of ryme, by queynt knitting coloures, that of the goodnesse or of the badnesse of the sens-tence take they litel hede or els none. 50

This is reminiscent of Augustine's exhortation to allegorical understanding, and begins to illustrate the role such literature played in medieval society, subtly yet profoundly different from the role of literature in our own. Hugh of St. Victor says:

'The man who seeks knowledge of the virtues and a way of life from the Sacred Word ought to study especially those books which urge contempt for this world and inflame the mind with love for its creator; which teach the straight road of life and show how virtues may be acquired and vices turned aside... Do you desire to reach your goal? Then learn how a man reaches the goal you are after. 51

This is a kind of summary of the aims of medieval religious allegory, which functioned as an actual tool of salvation. In fact, really good medieval allegory, like Alan de Lille's De Planctu Naturae or Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, not only attempts to rise to universals, it recounts intensely subjective spiritual anguish in such a way that a suffering reader can identify with the steps towards salvation, and in this way, follow them.

Besides all its functions as a method of education, as a symbol of God, as a tool in art and in politics, that is, besides its expression of the macrocosm, of universal order and human salvation, allegory and its artistic and literary expression worked on the microcosmic level, as a personal, subjective, and interior form of guidance and healing. The impact of these
old books may well be lost to us because we no longer un-
derstand dialectic in re or the concepts of microcosm and
macrocasm, of Divine hierarchy, or even of sin and redemption,
upon whose comprehension and assimilation the steps towards
illumination are based. If we do not share the nearly univer-
sal medieval desire for unity with God, it is small wonder we
do not enjoy the principle method through which it worked and
expressed itself. If sin no longer exists as a reality for us,
it is small wonder its personification engenders no emotion.

I must here make clear, I think, that there are other lit-
erary modes of what may be called allegory or "other-speaking,"
which do not share in the characteristics I have been discuss-
ing, that is, which are not ultimately analogical or expressly
concerned with an ideal of universal hierarchy. They share vari-
ous goals that can be termed profane instead of sacred. Bas-
ically, they employ similar methods and a similar aesthetic to
medieval allegory, that is, decorative language, an elect read-
ership, personification, various forms of abstraction and so
on, but their ideal basis is mundane rather than holy, and their
order political rather than Divine. Examples are various works
by Swift, Defoe, Orwell, Buxley, or Golding. Obviously, "other-
speaking" is a valuable tool during periods of political re-
pression or for striking irony and contrast, and is closely
related to the analogical form; yet its ultimate basis is very
different, and it does not characterize a period in history or
a type of human thought, but is rather a literary method in the
strict sense. As such, it is peripheral to my discussion of
allegorical and mimetic attitudes; in fact, as a mode of expression it is nonexistent in the Middle Ages, and does not appear until man's values had again become terrestrial. Besides political, there is naive or unintentional allegory, where reading on another level is either unintentionally or crudely intended by the author, as for example in advertising, where a fast car is understood as a sex symbol.

The allegory I am discussing is not a literary method so much as the expression of the Realist or Neoplatonic culture of the Middle Ages, just as mimesis is the expression and major artistic form of the period following the Middle Ages. Schiller's definition of the sublime can apply to this concept; the sublime expresses ideas which "cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather, ... although no adequate representation of them is possible, may be excited and called into the mind by that very inadequacy which does not admit of sensuous presentation." I wish to illustrate how the two cultural concepts of mimesis and allegory differ from and meet each other, how they blend, twist, purify, and triumph over one another. Northrop Frye, in _Fearful Symmetry_, says that, "All literature, is from the point of view of commentary more or less allegorical, while no 'pure allegory' will ever be found. There is therefore no harm in drawing instances from border-line cases." It is in fact these "borderline cases" which illustrate most vividly the interplay between the two worldviews of Western culture. I will therefore look for Boethius and Hugh of St. Victor not in Prudentius and Alan de Lille, but in secular and vernacular litera-
ture, in the popular romance, in decorative as well as religious art. If the religious outlook on life was as pervasive as I believe, it should be mirrored on the lowest levels, and even if warped and adulterated, it should reflect concerns more spiritual than those reflected in the decorative and popular art of the period since the Renaissance.
Chapter II

The predisposition to see all history, action and objects as symbols of a higher reality is essential to human religious conception, and as such has been one of the distinguishing features of human intelligence since it has been capable of making observation and judgement. In prehistorical times, when man could think, but had not developed sophisticated methods of organizing and expressing his thoughts, his religious experiences, his every-day life, the legends he had been taught and the emotions he felt as an individual, the actual and mythical history of his tribe, the geography of his area, his mystic revelations, and his animal instincts, were undifferentiated, in the sense of not being named, organized, catalogued or judged (against, we may assume, an as yet foggy sense of ultimate perfection.) We know that one of the primary manifestations of an emerging human culture, beyond material achievements such as the discovery of tools or fire, is the discovery and use of language as a tool for symbolizing what had heretofore been inexpressible, and hence, by this means, to control what had heretofore been unknown and uncontrollable. As far as we know, the earliest manifestations of the capacity to understand and dominate nature through symbolism are found in primitive sympathetic, homeopathic, and word-magic. In the first, a desired action is dramatized symbolically in order to effect its actuality. What is not the "thing" symbolizes it on a smaller scale or a different level,
an idea still extant in the more sophisticated concept of microcosm and macrocosm. In homeopathic magic, a part of an object symbolizes the whole, an analogy which also continues in Christian theology. In word-magic, a "thing" is named, and its name grants power over it. This is the beginning of truly sophisticated methods of human control and comprehension of the universe. "In the Beginning there was the Word, and the Word was God." That is allegory. Once man was granted the Word he was granted God, he became aware of his own existence and of his differentiation from and power over whatever lacked the Word. By it he became aware of abstract concepts, of ideas as separate from objects, and of ideals of perfection against which to form judgements. These judgements helped him to name and classify his fears, and to gain enough power over the confusing phenomena of life to develop culture and identity; and while all these powers served to differentiate him from the world around him, they also, in different times and places, helped him to situate himself within the phenomena that he saw and felt.

In the oldest stories of the Welsh Mabinogion, we find the fragmentary remains of a very early form of literature that might help to illustrate what I mean by the undifferentiated and unorganized expression of primitive man. Some of these stories preserve primitive folk tales dating back to before the time of Christ.¹ In "Math the son of Mathonwy," the hero figure, Llew Llaw Gyffes, has been wounded by his wife's lover, and is being sought by his lifelong friend and mentor, Gwydion,
who has come to Bryn Kyvergyr on the river Anvall in his search. There he finds the home of a villain of "Arvon, in Maenawr Penardd;" this man owns a "great sow" who breaks free from her sty each morning and disappears, "so that none might follow her." For reasons not elucidated, Gwydion apparently feels that the sow has something to do with his lost friend, so he is by the sty in the morning, and with difficulty follows the sow up the river:

She went upstream and made for a valley which is now called Mantllew, and there she slowed and fed. And Gwydion came under the tree and looked to see what it was that the sow was feeding on, and he could see the sow feeding on rotten flesh and vermin. He then looked up into the top of the oak tree. And when he looked he could see an eagle in the treetop. And when the eagle shook himself the maggots and the putrid flesh fell from him, and the sow was eating them. And he thought that the eagle was Lleu, and sang an englyn.

We are here graphically presented with the confusion of an undifferentiated or "primitive" consciousness. Bryn Kyvergyr on the river Anvall and Arvon in Maenawr Penardd are actual places still identifiable by these names; we are not separated from the action by any mechanisms of fairyland. Lleu Llaw Gyffes is a faintly numinous folk hero of the warrior sort who here is transformed into an eagle after having been wounded by his treacherous wife's lover. The picture of Gwydion discovering his beloved friend as an eagle in a high oak on the banks of the Anvall, where the "great sow" is feeding upon the droppings and vermin of his terrible wound, is both graphically and emotionally astonishing. It combines largely undifferentiated elements of myth, geography, local legend, religious feeling,
and magic (all modern names and categories, of course), as well as a strong feeling that there is something to be understood quite apart from what is said. It is a very vague and primitive kind of allegory, where the "other-speaking" extends to a numinous excitement in which little has been isolated or named, and still less has been judged against any abstract idea or in terms of its value to us or to the protagonists of the story. We feel that the great sow is meant to be something, but she has more power over our emotions than we do over her importance. We are paralysed, and astonished, by our inability to name and identify; modern criticism has always been paralysed by the Mabinogion. As yet, fear and attraction, good and evil, are ambiguously combined. In these early legends, time and space do not exist either to be transcended or adhered to. In the story of Branwen, her brother Bendigeid Vran is both "the crowned king of this island...exalted from the throne of London," and "a vast mountain...which moved, and there was a lofty ridge on the top of the mountain, and a lake on each side of the ridge." The king's head is the mountain, the ridge his nose, and the lakes his eyes. Later on this same head, severed from the body, is carried to London from Ireland, where, buried facing the continent, it provides a paradise of forgetfulness for the king's followers, and a proof against any invasion of England. Obviously, even the most basic problems of space and time did not disturb the tellers and preservers of these stories in a fashion comprehensible to us. Yet, by the high Middle Ages, the terrors and beauties of such undifferen-
tiated and uncontrollable story landscapes would be completely subjugated to the will and order of God, and the nameless fears and insights of the human mind in a pre-cultural state would find organization, hierarchy and control within a system of cosmic unity developed by the Neoplatonic theologians of the early Christian church.

Of course, the Mabinogion does not contain the only illustrations of a primitive acceptance of all aspects, material and immaterial, of the phenomena of life. There are many indications in Beowulf of what is to us an ambiguous and as yet primitive consciousness, a consciousness both rich and natural, and also nearly helpless to protect or isolate itself from bombardment by any and all aspects of physical life, emotion, or dream. Grendel is real enough that some critics have postulated that he was a grizzly bear, or the memory of one, as they disappeared from northern Europe not so many centuries before Beowulf was written. On the other hand, his reactions, family life, underwater lair and sea serpent companions are obviously drawn from legend and magic. I hardly need add that the type of Christianity practiced by the people in Beowulf is not exactly Augustinian. There is very much of the magical and tribal remaining. Beowulf himself is a believable eighth century heroic youth whose exploits are impossible. Beowulf, Hrothgar, and Beowulf's king, Hrygac were real, historically documented people. Hrygac's bones are preserved near Strasbourg, as are records of his battles...of course, he was seven feet tall. It gets a bit confusing to the modern mind. Hrothgar's court is
certainly a good reflection of what we have learned about eighth century English and Scandinavian life through archaeology, but no one has been able to classify the role, either actual or symbolic, of Brothgar's "thyle," Unferth. All kinds of early literature display this quality of open acceptance of phenomena; besides the Mabinogion and Beowulf, the early folk tales of all nations, the legends of North American Indians, African and South American myth, and so on; indeed, many parts of the Bible and even of Homer preserve remnants of the same type of consciousness, serene in its acceptance of all forms of mental and physical life, precarious in its varying inabilities to judge or to separate facts and objects from myths and ideas. In plastic expression, we might cover the same expanse, we could discuss African, Aboriginal, Slavic or Indian art; but the earliest examples of Christian art, especially that developed by Christianized barbarians formerly so close to the primitive life, are both sufficiently "open," and closer to the medieval cycle I want to discuss.

Most people are familiar with Irish or Celtic manuscript illumination. The initials from the classic example of early Christianized Celtic art, the eighth century Book of Kells, are comprised of some of the most intricate designs ever created. In and about the confines of the Roman initials flourish geometric patterns of awesome mathematical complexity, interlacing serpents of Scythian and Norse origin, Coptic bird and lion motifs, and strangest of all, the flat, abstract, schematized figures of angels, saints, and disembodied heads and limbs
that one discovers either in unexpected niches, or as ad-
just to abstract, two-dimensional clothing where swirls, en-
trelac, and brilliant geometry have entirely usurped the fig-
ure's place. (See Plate I)

It is quite exactly as if some ancient mathematician, 
completely abstracted in a world of perfect shape, form, and 
color, where animal, vegetable, and human creation are all 
part of the same elevated concepts, were asked to express him- 
self on paper. He has special difficulty with the human form, 
for although in some ways as intellectualized as the humanists 
of Rome and the Renaissance, his culture is at opposite poles 
from theirs. His universal vision bears close resemblance to 
the undifferentiated primitivism of the Mabinogion, yet it is 
more "advanced" in that we know it is removed from receiving 
the world and its phenomena as a whole to perceiving and inter-
preting them as such. The abstract geometry serves as a back-
ground of beauty for Holy Writ, and the unidentified pagan 
beasts and swirling shapes have begun to be harnessed for a 
purpose as yet confused in the Mabinogion.

I might say here that I can compare the art and litera-
ture of different countries and different centuries of the me-
dieval period in Europe precisely because this period shared a 
common language, Latin, and a common goal, Salvation; holistic 
philosophy served to unite Europe on an idealistic and practi-
cal level unknown today. The problem with any aspect of me-
dieval Christian culture is not comparing it to other aspects, 
but is isolating it in the first place. When I discuss the im-
fluence of Augustine's fourth century Latin theology on the apparently far-flung monks of the Irish wilderness four centuries later, it must be clear that doing otherwise is like discussing Fielding with no mention of the eighteenth-century novel. Nationalistic tendencies did not really get established until close to the end of the period; neither did historical isolation. The people of the Middle Ages operated under an open system that permitted them to see all periods of history as their own, and all ideas and forms as God's.

I have pointed out that the moral and physical elements of primitive art are largely undifferentiated. Angus Fletcher speaks for many scholars of religion when he declares that in the conversion of Europe, Christianity fought the "superstitious proliferation" of the ambiguous gods and daemons of late Roman and barbaric religions by a "dualistic division of spirits into the good angels and the evil demons. The number of daemons does not decrease; they merely fall into two groups more sharply divided than in Pagan religious practice."6 This is not a strictly Christian tendency, but rather seems to be a universal step in the evolution of religion. Thus, in religions above a primitive level, we have the ambiguous gods split cleanly into two identities; the ambiguous Loki would become either a good messenger like Mercury, or an evil fire demon; ambivalent Arthurian figures would attain pure heroic status, for both Gwenevere, whose name in Welsh means "the white phantom," and Arthur, who committed the "Wicked Uncovering" of the head of Bendigied Vran, were once complex and elusive characters.7 Other
examples are Marie de France's strange werewolf in "Bisclavret," who would have to become a villain rather than a vague hero, and the character Unferth, whose status would have to be firmed one way or another, as the status of all beings was firmed in religions applying the good-bad duality, as the Egyptian Osiris and Set, the Persian Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, or Bielbog and Czernikog, the "white god" and "black god" of Slavic mythology. In any case, once the distinction is made, the natural tendency is categorization according to it, so that everything is allied with one principle, or the other. The characters of the Mabinogion and the forms of the Book of Kells are as yet hardly divided into categories, and retain much of their primitive moral and physical ambiguity. Though the words of the Book of Kells proclaim the hierarchy of God, the art form is archaic, and still depends on the undifferentiated ancient consciousness. If we move from eighth century Ireland to twelfth century England, however, a progression is obviously occurring.

My example is not strictly an ivory, but is a carving on English whalebone, whose shape has been in part dictated by the form of the bone. (See Plate II) The first thing we might notice is that the figures are far more lifelike than in the Book of Kells, with discernable bodies, more natural drapery, animated gestures, and far less geometric stylization; moreover, the figures graphically present the concepts of Sacred hierarchy. The Virgin is many times larger than the three magi, and looms over them like a fearful giant; the Child is nearly as large as
The Adoration of the Magi. Whalebone, English. 12th century
they are. She has been given preference in the utilization of space on the narrow bone, with all three magi crowded into an area about half her width; they do in fact look cramped, as they try rather unsuccessfully to keep their feet on the ground, hold onto their staffs, and present their gifts to the Child. The Virgin is not in a stable, but enthroned in a Byzantine basilica, as symbolically befits her spiritual rank. On the roof of the basilica are two symbols, an eagle and a man, who are the apostles Matthew and John. Below the figures' feet are the biting animals so common to northern barbaric art, and the centaur-archer symbol of the astrological sign Sagittarius. I need hardly point out that the position of the beasts and the apostles is hierarchic. There has been much Eastern influence on the piece, especially of Byzantine icons and ivories; the building behind the Virgin is a pure Byzantine type that never took material form in England. The draperies above the Virgin's head, wrapped around the corinthian columns of the arch, are of a type carried over from late Roman art, and are still to be found today in the icons of the Eastern church. At the Virgin's feet is a tiny but significantly placed date palm, and a grape vine. The organization of space, the identity of the figures, and their relationship to each other seems entirely arbitrary and barbaric unless we are familiar with the principles of Divine hierarchy. Then the proportions, positioning, and choice of represented figures is entirely logical and aesthetically pleasing, in that their meaning, rather than their appearance, has unified them. St. Augustine said that it did
not matter whether certain animals exist; what matters is what they mean. Joan Evans, in *Cluniac Art in the Romanesque Period*, calls attention to the "symbolic integration" of the decorations in the apse of Cluny, where the various separate elements have no visual coherence, but a unity that can be appreciated only with reference to the meanings which may be derived from them. This symbolic or allegorical integration of artistic decoration we shall see pervades medieval art, especially the art of the cathedrals, and once again illustrates the spiritualized medieval aesthetic that took delight in juxtapositions that to us, who judge these things in terms of visual coherence only, seem curious or ridiculous. In fact, it is just such curious juxtapositions that make the study of iconography imperative for the student of medieval or religious art, while the iconographic details in secular and modern art may be omitted without the viewer feeling himself entirely at a loss. It is surprisingly easy to convert the disinterested to a fascination for religious art, simply by explaining what the various curious figures represent and what they are doing; this opens doors of meaning to what otherwise appears rude, senseless, and unconnected with life.

While the eighth-century Irish manuscript is as yet abstracted and primitively ambiguous, the twelfth-century ivory already locates the elements of God's creation within the orthodox hierarchy, judges and names them, employs analogy and allegory, and illustrates the rich diffusion of artistic forms in twelfth-century Europe, where Byzantine influence has reached
the far-off isle of Britain and is capable of concrete expression. This judging and naming process is part of a developing ability to isolate different phenomena from the matrix of creation and so gain control over them; this ability steadily increases, and carries within it a natural increase in discernment which makes each isolated object more individualized both in terms of spiritual meaning and material reality. The Church fathers encouraged such discernment so that the laity could sharpen their ability to see the allegorical reflection of God's order and perfection, but like any innovation, this ability could be turned against the precise goals of its originators, and equip men even better for what the priests fought, that is, the pursuit and gratification of material desires. In this ivory, we can see that spiritual discernment and isolation have aided the same principles on the material level; the ability to observe, isolate, and express material reality has far increased over the Book of Kells, even as the understanding, organization, and expression of spiritual ideals has increased. Yet, by our standards, the ivory is very far from realistic, and retains some primitive ambivalence, and a certain repugnance for the isolating processes that threaten the mystical unity, which is unorganised but expressively intact in the Book of Kells.

We know, through the theologians, that the Virgin and the Child are Goods ultimately to be desired, that they represent Love, Beauty, Gentleness, Mercy; yet in this ivory, with their gigantic size, downturned mouths, staring eyes, strange hier-
archal poses, and generally inhuman aspect, they seem as much to be feared as to be desired. In other words, the primitive ambivalence towards numinous objects or personages is retained in the early twelfth century. This attitude towards the Divine is reminiscent of the earlier representations of Christ in art, where he appears not as harbinger of love and mercy, or even as crucified, but as Pantokreator, the First Cause, the awesome Judge, with a pale flat face and enormous, terrifying eyes. Only much later would he appear as meek and mild, his mother a symbol of feminine beauty and solace. Here she is most definitely still the Mother of God, and the magi, in their animated poses, seem to writhe before her majesty. Her clothes, minutely decorated with scallops, ellipses and parallel folds, and the complicated lattice-work masonry and Arabic arches of the basilica behind her belie a continuing interest in geometric form, now tamed and decorative rather than consuming; the interlocked beasts show their descent from barbaric entrelacement. But over all, and despite these primitive aspects, a very different form of expression is developing, one which would typify the medieval Christian aesthetic. As Auerbach puts it in Mimesis, the Sacred stories are indeed visually powerful, God creating Eve, Christ’s side pierced on the Cross, the holy men of the East coming to worship the little child; but when we are given their allegorical meaning, when we see Eve as the Church, the Spiritual Mother of Man being both of Adam’s rib, or Christ’s blood as the water of Life, or the Mother of God, the Resurrected Eve, being wor-
shipped by figures of the Pagan world,

...then the sensory occurrence pales before the power of the figural meaning. What is perceived by the hearer or reader, or even, in the plastic arts, by the spectator, is weak as a sensory perception, and all one's interest is directed towards the context of meanings. In comparison, Greco-Roman specimens... do not know the antagonism between sensory appearance and meaning, an antagonism which permeates the early, and indeed the whole, Christian view of reality. 12

An earlier and more sophisticated example of allegorical coherence and spiritual and material antagonism is the Book of Pericopes executed for Henry II and presented by him to the Cathedral of Bamberg in 1012. The precious and ornate cover is complicated, and the detail very difficult to photograph. (See Plate III) It is made of bits and pieces of other eras, with a gold base into which is set a series of Byzantine enamels representing all the apostles except Judas, with Christ at the top and roundels of symbols of the evangelists in champlevé enamel on either side. The base is ornamented further with pearls and precious stones, and frames a Carolingian ivory; Latin inscriptions form the borders. On the back, a silver panel contains roundels with representations of the Agnus Dei and personifications of Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance. Although the enamels and the ivory were made between one hundred and one hundred and fifty years before their incorporation of the book cover, the work is a coherent allegory. The ivory panel, probably dating from late seventh or early eighth century France, is highly sophisticated in technique, and unlike the more barbarous art of the north, draws much figural inspiration from Classical art.
There are four divisions of representation; above, cosmic forces in hierarchal order preside over the crucifixion; the hand of God descends, the moon and the sun in their classical chariots are represented just below Him and just above the angels, who are rendered in the large-handed, fluttering, animated style characteristic of Carolingian art. 13 The crucifixion is relatively straightforward with the Marys weeping to one side, John at the right, the speared side and sponge of vinegar; but added to the scene is a personification of the Church triumphant, who catches the blood from Christ's wound and then, still holding the chalice, takes the globe of the world away from a personification of Jerusalem; below the cross is the beheaded serpent of Evil, and, although it is not visible here, the cross is also the Tree of Life, and has on it little knots and branches and bark. Below the next level, which shows the three Marys at the tomb, is a scene of Last Judgement, where figures rising from the dead emerge from Roman tombs and scatter their coffin lids across the acanthus border; below them are three figures taken directly from Classical river deities, personifying Earth, Water, and Home. 14 The ivory, representing simultaneously the cosmic hierarchy, the forces of Nature, the Crucifixion, Last Judgement and Redemption, is linked to the symbols of the apostles and the evangelists by gold inscriptions reading,

Whoever. wishes to learn true wisdom will be pleased to have this treatise which is full of fourfold (truths). Words (grammata) by means of which the truth will wisely enrich those who follow them.
King Henry has decorated this completed carving of
Christ's wounds. 15

The inscription bears witness to the orthodoxy of the conception. Apart from catalogues, an iconographical description of this work and others like it is not really easy to come by. Most modern critics discuss style and the beauty and sumptuousness of the materials and colors. Yet even the richness of the materials was secondary to the allegory in the early Middle Ages, was in fact part of the allegory; the richness of gold and jewels was condoned only insofar as they were able, by their beauty, to evoke and symbolize the Perfection they accompanied. Like Auerbach's iconography, their beauty was to pale before the true Richness it reflected, and the donors and creators could partake of the Virtue of charity by relinquishing such opulence to the Divine.

Either in such concrete terms, or by vaguer stylistic inferences, the art of early and high medieval Europe was devoted to allegorical principles, to coherence by virtue of symbolic meaning, to revelations indirectly stated, to material significance relegated to spiritual illumination. These esoteric ideals were not always understood, even at the time, but they were the beliefs and aesthetic bases of the men responsible for artistic creation and for teaching the flocks. Abbot Suger, in his description of the ornamentation of the first gothic church, his revolutionary St. Denis, explains the means and end of the allegorical aesthetic of the medieval intelligentsia, and exposes some of their difficulties in communicating such conceptions to the masses.
...because... the diversity of the materials such as gold gems and pearls is not easily understood by the mute perception of sight without a description, we have seen to it that this work, which is intelligible only to the literate, which shines with the radiance of delightful allegories, be set down in writing. Also we have affixed verses expounding the matter so that the allegories might be more clearly understood.

This is the same antagonism between the desirable and the feared already discussed; in creating artistic objects calculated to inspire spiritual awe, reverence, and holy excitement, artists were constantly faced with ambivalence, with balancing opposing forces in order to obtain the correct tension between the material and the ethereal that would evoke the Divine.

On the most obvious level, medieval art is obsessed with precious objects; enormous resources were devoted to creating beautiful reliquaries, ciboria, Agnus Dei, vestments, altar-pieces, and so on of gold and silver, strewn with pearls, jewels, and brilliant enamels, as well as the illusion of preciousness in the gold backgrounds and jewel-like colors of illuminations and stained glass. Suger himself, though the patron of the new gothic architecture in Europe, in his work on his new church is far more interested in and inspired by the precious objects in his treasury, the golden altars and decorations, and the beautiful windows, than in the revolutionary construction. In fact, he sees the architecture mainly in terms of its new technical ability to accommodate an enormous amount of glittering stained glass, which will turn the church into one vast, shimmering jewel. Here is the antagonism between the material in terms of earthly, cupidinous wealth,
which only by its preciousness, and by the charity of donating it to the glory of God, can symbolize the true spiritual treasure. This is the manipulation of primitive awe and taboo, as well as man's animal nature, in the service of the hierarchal system of Sacred allegory, and its balance is very precarious. Such awe can be evoked stylistically, too, as in the English ivory and innumerable such works; but manipulation of precious objects is the most obvious way in which the ambiguous and ornamental aspects of allegorical thought are displayed in early Christian art. This materialistic adaptation of the simpler allegorical view of the universe expounded in St. Augustine was opposed by some of the Church theologians, notably St. Bernard, who finds the wealth and ornamental detail of Cluny both hedonistic and distracting; but apart from the Cistercians, there were few attempts to curb what was seen as initially pleasing and ultimately pious, according to the allegorical interpretations of such objects.

I hope this chapter has helped make it clear that allegory in the Middle Ages was a system based upon dogma, developed by the fathers of the Church, always leading to the same end, and comprising both active creation and interpretation. By it, the chaotic elements of pre-Christian and primitive cultures were synthesized and organized into concrete and static positions. Like myth, allegory retains a numinous and ambiguous contact with the Divine, but unlike myth, it imposes a dogmatic order and purpose. It employs symbol and emblem in the same way a train has wheels, and while deeply concerned with visionary
experience, its function was not so much to recount it as to interpret it. Its function was more than literary. In these terms, allegory reached its high point in the West, as with most cultural ideas, early in its development; that is, in Romanesque art in terms of plastic expression, and somewhat earlier in writing. Yet, elaboration, complication, decadence, and decline would continue well into the sixteenth century, and it is this phase of allegorical, Realist culture in the West that presents the most vivid contrasts to our own.
Chapter III

Medieval culture underwent a change in the twelfth century, a blossoming of ideas and forms hitherto unexplored, and only partially explained by such things as the cult of the Virgin and contact with Islam during the Crusades. The twelfth century saw the beginning of the gothic style in art throughout Europe, increased secularization of life, and a revolutionary change in the outlook towards women, resulting, among other things, in the first real Western love poetry, and an increasingly delicate and feminized aesthetic that influenced everything from the new churches to eating habits. More important to our purposes than any of this, however, the twelfth century witnessed the beginning of secular romance. It is neither possible nor to the point to try to rehearse here the various modern critical opinions on the provenance of this cultural change and its exact form of expression. The deadpan discussions of "Courtly Love" and "fin'amours" as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' highest concern and contribution to modern civilization are rapidly becoming outmoded in favor of more complicated and satiric readings of authors like Chrétien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus. The facts are that secular poetry, beginning in southern France, spread quickly throughout the country and evolved different forms; the position of women in society underwent a change, which both caused and reflected an increasingly delicate and feminized aesthetic; the first Arthurian romances were written down towards the beginning of the
century, and were flourishing all over Europe by its close; and gothic art and architecture moved to replace the heavier and more deliberate Romanesque.

All these things may be seen as natural, if dramatic, developments in the evolution of a society moving from primitive tribalism to sophisticated internationalism. The renaissances and revivals in Western culture always occasion some surprise, and we can never exactly articulate all their origins and ramifications; however, they always do happen, and in a fairly predictable sequence. In effect, the twelfth century is the "classical" phase of medieval Christian culture, and like any classical period, displays a vivid artistic and literary activity characterized by a nearly perfect balance or blending of the cultural antagonisms, whose imbalance results in primitivism on the one hand, or decadence on the other.

The twelfth century, in terms of a cyclic view of cultural development, was at a stasis between the Neoplatonic Realist attitudes that characterize its beginning, and the Aristotelian, Nominalist concerns which would in their turn gain ascendancy. The intelligentsia of the twelfth century were aware of the problems and antitheses of their cultural views, while still retaining them; they were medieval enough to hold to their bias for the spiritual, but they were sophisticated enough to view these attitudes with some objectivity. They understood a good part of the Nominalism they rejected; this understanding would increase in clarity as the former cultural bias became confused and even forgotten.
As before, the first forms of cultural expression to reflect a change are literary; romantic literature appeared in France in the beginning of the twelfth century, and its first major practitioner was Chrétien de Troyes. His work developed from Provençal love poetry, the generally sophisticated tenor of his culture, and the "matière de Breton," the Arthurian legend as developed orally in Britain since the sixth century. The historical Arthur was a Celtic chieftain who consolidated the British tribes against the Saxons for a short time between 480 and 540; but very soon after his death his qualities began to blend, in a manner characteristic of tribal culture, with the exploits of legendary kings, magical figures, half-forgotten gods, and popular stories in general. I have mentioned the early tales of the Mabinogion as examples of the tenor of these primitive stories. Arthur is mentioned with a casualness reserved for the familiar in Welsh chronicles, poems, saints' lives, and the Triads from about 500 until the millenium; on the continent, he appears rescuing Gwenevere over the doorway of the cathedral of Modena, and riding a goat on the mosaic floor of Otranto as early as the first decade of the twelfth century. By the middle of the century, these extensive hints had attained literary expression, in the histories of William of Malmesbury, Wace, and especially in the Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

That these sparse beginnings had, before the end of the century, led to the highly polished, complex, and open-ended romances of Chrétien de Troyes and the hundreds of rémaneirs
to follow him, points to their established existence in complicated and well-known oral legends. These stories were in effect folk tales, primitive both in expression and outlook. What writers like Chrétien or Marie de France did with such stories may be compared with what Shakespeare did with the Welsh myth of King Lyr and his daughters; they took the evocative ancient material and fashioned a sophisticated literature suitable to the tastes and interests of their own highly developed culture. Characters and plot were probably pre-established; Mario Roques, in his introduction to his edition of Yvain, remarks, "Il est assez facile de trouver des rapprochements entre les noms et incidents du roman d'Yvain, et des récits celtiques. Yvain, fils d'Urrien, peut être identifié avec Owein, fils d'Uryen, roi de Rheged dans le Nord de l'Angleterre..."5

The use that Chrétien made of these Celtic sources, is discussed by Auerbach in his section "The Knight Sets Forth," in Mimesis. He emphasizes Chrétien's charm, psychological refinement, subtle humor, and high degree of culture, and adds:

The grace and attractiveness of this style—whose charm is freshness and whose danger is silly coquetry, trifling, and coldness—can hardly be found in such purity anywhere in the literature of antiquity. Chrétien did not learn it from Ovid; it is a creation of the French Middle Ages. 6

Auerbach is careful to establish the role of the evocative Celtic myths, which is to a significant extent preserved, but is readapted to more sophisticated purposes:

"It is from Breton folklore that the courtly ro-
This "knightly ideal," as he goes on to describe it, is allied with some familiar ideas: an elect class seeking perfection by means of methods carefully regimented, hidden, not directly stated, and so understood only by the initiated. Auerbach alli es this ideal with the tenets of Victorine (i.e., Hugh of St. Victor), and Cistercian mysticism. The series of adventures always undergone by the knights of romance "...as if from the end of an assembly-line," are, in effect, part of a "fated and graduated test of election...the basis of a doctrine of personal perfection through a development dictated by fate."9

The depiction of political and social reality in the new romance form, while far more vivid than what had come before, is superficial or subjugated to other ends; the action and characters are idealized, and the ends they seek are internalized, and to some extent, mystical. The fact that the actual role of knights and the feudal system, in terms of social importance, was already beginning to decline, and would continue to decline almost at an equal rate to the rise in popularity of its idealization in the romance, indicates how strongly separated the ideal considerations of this period were from material or practical concerns. As Auerbach puts it, the ruling classes of Christian medieval Europe, almost from the beginning, described their position "in extrahistorical terms, as an...aesthetic configuration without practical purpose."10
He sees this as a kind of continuing defense against the rising power of the middle classes, but even at that it is a defense based upon an aversion for material considerations, and an affirmation of the superiority of internal, mystical, and hierarchal ideals, so universally accepted that it succeeded, to a great extent, in blinding the eyes of the bourgeois to their own position; they, too, trusted in a hierarchal conception of life.

Perhaps it would be best to turn to concrete discussion. Auerbach refers to the plot structure of the adventure of the fountain, and it is useful for me to do the same. Yvain, and Calogrenant before him, set out from the court of King Arthur in Britain or Wales, in quest of "aventure;" they both take, "un chemin à destre/ Fermi une forest espasse," a "right way," symbolically difficult, which brings them to the forest of Broceliande in Armorica, without any reference to or explanation of how they got across the English Channel. There they meet first with a "vavassour" and his lovely daughter, who reside in an isolated and beautiful castle where they are graciously and delightfully entertained. The next day, they meet a gigantic and grotesque villein, "...chevox mechiez et front pélé...oroilles mosues et granz...ials de cuete, et nez de chat..." who describes to them the enchanted fountain ahead and how it is to be approached. The knight in each case proceeds, despite the terrible predictions of the ugly villein, and precipitates at the fountain an incredible tempest by pouring some of its waters on a magic stone which is pierced by an
emerald and set with four rubies, "plus flanboianz et plus vermauz/ Que n'est au matin le solauz." After the storm, the terrible black knight Ezolados arrives, whose sole feudal function, as we learn later, is to defend the magic fountain. He defeats Calogreant, but is mortally wounded by the more noble Yvain, who manages to follow him back to his castle. There Yvain becomes invisible, thanks to the help of the maiden Lunete, who functions as an aide, go-between, and figure of Reason; she helps him win his enemy's widow, Laudine, whose love, in the highest chivalric sense, inspires him to the wonderful deeds of arms that fill the rest of the book, and wins him the title of Chevalier au Lion, and his position as one of the finest knights of Arthur's court.

This is a very typical medieval romance plot, full of secondary characters, lush description, innumerable adventures based around a central core of true love, and, as we discuss later, open-ended in the sense that a complete and satisfying terminus is seldom reached. Chrétien wrote in the middle of the century; by its end, Arthurian romance, inspired by or peripheral to his versions, would have appeared in the vernacular throughout Europe. By the end of the thirteenth century, we have the whole sweep of Arthurian legend in the intricate and anonymous conglomerations of the Vulgate Arthur.

Earlier on, I discussed the ambiguous demonic figures of primitive religion in terms of their being more strictly adapted to Christian use by hierarchal arrangement according to a good-bad dichotomy. The word "daemon," in fact, comes
from a term meaning "to divide," and therefore nicely accommodates its actual function of personifying and then dividing all aspects of the world into separate elements for purposes of understanding and control. These divisions of nature, once morally undifferentiated or ambivalent, under Christianity naturally become divisions with a hierarchic moral identity. So the daemon of the cat, formerly worshipped in Nordic countries as an adjunct of the goddess Freya, becomes a demon of Satan in the new system imposed by Christianity; the vague properties of the vessel of the Tuatha de Danaan, with its evocations of cornucopian fertility, becomes strictly the daemon of Christ's blood and God's grace, the Christian fulfillment of all desire. The function of such daemons in Christian literature is, of course, allegorical; they are compartments of universal and individual experience. The Psychomachia is, on one of its levels, a microcosm of the warring components of any man's soul. In the plot line just recounted, the characters in general can be seen as ciphers, or as daemons. The va-vassour's compartmentalized function is to provide hospitality for the knights errant who stumble upon his isolated castle; the horrible villein's is to grant suitably unsettling information concerning the quest; Esclados is the guardian, one might say, spirit, of the magic fountain; Lunete is the essence of a go-between and intimate; and so on. I am not trying to establish that all romances are strict allegories, only that they are closely related, and share many assumptions, including good-bad dichotomies and abstract characterization. In terms
of anagogic allegory, they too are concerned with progress towards a goal of perfection, and this progress is both compelling and hierarchal. Angus Fletcher, in discussing Spencer, says,

"In allegory such as The Faery Queen, each partial aspect that has been generated out of the main character (Sir Guyon) becomes available to the author for its development parallel to every other partial aspect. From being a person with a vague mixture of good and bad in his character, Sir Guyon is divided into parts of himself, and against each evil he has to fight the identical (sometimes very complicated) war."

The idea that the hero is fighting the impure aspects of himself in order to gain the perfection of his ideals is not always, of course, explicit; however, its implications were very much realized by the authors of medieval romance, who often illustrate their awareness of such "other-speaking." Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is an obvious example; the trials undergone by Lancelot in Le Roman de la Charette and its derivatives, the sword bridge, the lit perilleux, the cart, are all symbols of the inner fears and hesitations that stand between him and the attainment of perfect love, made manifest; fear of castration, of humiliation, temptations to lechery or to pride, and so on. By overcoming the exciting outer threats, we can also understand that the inner, more important ones, have been overcome as well. This inner titillation, the mysteriously understood profound meaning of simple romantic plots, accounts to a great extent for their enormous popularity ever since their inception. If what I mean by the allegorical quality of romance remains unclear, we have only to think of more modern
versions, like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, or the film *High Noon*, which preserve the good-bad Christian dichotomy, the daemonic characterization, the necessity for moral ascent, and the static hierarchy. Romance is an archaic form dating back to this period, and in this period all the allegorical, Realist ideals were still very much in force.

It is obvious, from the many studies of *l'amour courtois*, of the position of the nobility, the growth of commerce, and so on in the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, that the heightened religious consciousness of the Romanesque era was growing more secular and down to earth every year. Even as art became more capable of expressing the ethereal relationships of man and God, it became more interested in capturing concrete form, as I have already illustrated. Chrétien's description of clothes, of dinners and entertainments, and of mystic events like the appearance of the Grail, is more sensuous than any Christian literature before him. It is nonetheless concerned, as we have already discussed, with ideals that are sensuous only insofar as they are secular; with life idealized, with order and purpose. If the knight does certain set things, such as recognizing his lady's handiwork, spurning other advances, showing mercy to the defeated, if he never engages in treachery, is conventionally pious, keeps himself clean and comely, and so on, he is assured of success. If he fails in even one of the knightly virtues, he is lost. He is, in effect, an agent acting out the mandates of ideal conceptions, and this tendency, fairly loose in Marie de France, who is still so close to the Celtic forms,
actually becomes more rigid and ritualized as the Neoplatonic analogies on which it is based become more confused; cultures tend to cling to forms whose meaning has deteriorated with greater rectitude than when they were alive.\textsuperscript{14} As Fletcher points out, the romantic hero, in his role as daemonic agent, fears not reaching his goal far more than any dangers he might meet with on the way; he is compelled to climb ever higher. Lest we think that such romantic concepts can be divorced from similar theological ones, I have included a visual representation of the hierarchal climb to Truth, of a type still very common in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.

This mystic Hierarchy was made about the same time that Thomas was composing his \textit{Tristan}. (See Plate IV) At the top is the enthroned Christ above the spheres, designated as, "Creator of all Things, God—the First Cause—the Divine Will." The first two spheres are labeled "forma in potentia" and "materia in potentia," which corresponds to the Platonic idea of Pure Being Unmanifested. Below is Universal Spirit, that is, manifested reality, which lists the ten cognitive faculties and the Dionysian angelic hierarchy; beneath this are the four spheres of the soul, Anima Celestis, Rationabilis, Animalis, and Vegetabilis. Then begins the corporeal world, Nature containing the astronomic and equinoxal spheres, followed by the planets. Within these lie the four elements, and the "centrum mundi," All corporeal and spiritual conceptions are included in this schema below the First Cause; but it represents as well
the microcosm, the personal and practical allegory of ascent. The little men in the spheres rise to God as if on a ladder. The lowest figure is still bound to the domain of the elements, and a companion is dragging him up by the hair. Alongside the uppermost group is written, "Omi magister," then "ephebei," and "socii omnes" (all companions); alongside the lowest is, "cetera turba," (the remaining crowd), which probably refers to degrees of wisdom or initiation. 15

One could not ask for a clearer and more succinct exposition of the Dionysian system and of Neoplatonic theology in general. Its very existence would seem to witness to its continued importance, but in any case, in Chrétien's time, some of the Church's greatest Neoplatonic theologians, Hugh of St. Victor, Bonaventure, St. Bernard, and Honorius of Autun, were either writing and teaching, or had not even been born.

If we want a clearer idea of the wedding between the sensual and the allegorical habit of mind that characterizes the high Middle Ages, we can turn to the De Arte Honeste Amandi of Andreas Capellanus, written only a little while after Chrétien's Yvain, between 1179 and 1186. This is a book that has been grossly misunderstood by modern critics ever since Gaston Paris' coining of the term "amour courtois" first inspired their interest in it. Since the late nineteenth century, Andreas the Chaplin's little work has been regarded as a serious handbook of the attitudes of French courtly society towards romantic love, and a faithful exposition of actual practices and beliefs. Probably no other book serves so well to illus-
trate how far we have come from any appreciation and recognition of "other-speaking." There are some indications that the critics of the 60's and 70's are recognizing the irony, humor, and even broad satire in parts of the De Arte, but this is not so commendable if we consider what pain Andreas goes to to insure that his friend Walter does not misunderstand him. The work is not allegorical except in general attitude; that is, he holds entirely to Church dogma on matters of heterosexual love, but is not constrained by the modern separation of ironic and "serious" styles, which enables him to talk as if wholly indifferent to religious judgments, while continually hinting at, and finally spelling out, his actual stance. Many modern scholars find it convenient either to ignore his prologue and final book, where he makes his position clear, or to attribute the "contradictions" and "inconsistencies" to the chaplain's addled medieval brain.

In the prologue, Andreas makes it clear that the book is written for his friend Walter, who, "having recently been wounded by an arrow of (Love's)" does "not know how to manage (his) horses' reins properly." Andreas adds,

How serious this is and how it troubles my soul no words of mine can make clear to you. Therefore, although it does not seem expedient to devote oneself to things of this kind or fitting for any prudent man to engage in this kind of hunting, nevertheless, because of the affection I have for you I can by no means refuse your request; because I know clearer than day that after you have learned the art of love your progress in it will be more cautious, in so far as I can I will comply with your desire.

There then follow two books, divided into chapters, containing
all the quaint medieval precepts and attitudes towards love that delight modern critics. There are practical recommendations about keeping one's hair combed, avoiding homosexuality, buying presents, observing piety and kindness, and so on. There are dialogues between men and women of different classes seeking one another's love, as well as ways to keep your beloved's affection, solutions to various thorny romantic problems, and the very funny section on the heaven and hell of lovers, where the too amorous ladies are given over to whole armies of men, and the too prudish ones are constrained to sit on revolving bushes of thorn. There are the so-called transcripts of the Courts of Love of Marie de Champagne, which can be taken as actual sociological documents, fantasy on Andreas' part, or as references intended to show his knowledge and sophistication; if there were courts of love, it is likewise very difficult at this distance to judge how much of their activity was playful or ironic. As one critic says, it is hard to believe that in the twelfth century, all that amorous lovers really cared about was the "salaces of the upper parts of other men's wives." All this is followed by Book Three, which begins,

..friend Walter, if you will lend attentive ears to these things which we wrote down for you...you can lack nothing in the art of love...You should know that we did not do this because we consider it advisable for you or for any other man to fall in love, but for fear lest you might think us stupid; we believe, though, that any man who devotes his efforts to love loses all his usefulness. Read this little book, then, not as one seeking to take up the life of a lover, but that, invigorated by the theory and trained to excite the minds of women
to love, you may, by refraining from so doing, win an eternal recompense and thereby deserve a greater reward from God. For God is more pleased with a man who is able to sin and does not, than with a man who has no opportunity to sin. 18

The idea that a medieval cleric can dramatize both sides of this question is too much for most modern criticism. My edition, published in 1968, translates the title as The Art of Courtly Love, and says, "In the eyes of Capellanus, passionate love is an ennobling force. As a matter of fact, it is the source of all manly virtues." Concerning the final book, (the prologue is not mentioned) the editor says,

There are also signs that its author cannot accept the code he sets forth. The evidence for this is the strange Third Book, which flatly contradicts the principles set up in the first two. Is the third book an apology offered by the Christian conscience because of the unacceptability of Courtly Love? We do not know. 19

As if anticipating such difficulties, Andreas says,

Now this doctrine of ours, which we have put into this little book for you will, if carefully and faithfully examined, seem to present two different points of view. In the first part we tried to assent to your simple and youthful request and did not wish, on this subject, to give in to our indolence...If you wish to practice the system, you will obtain, as a careful reading of this little book will show you, all the delights of the flesh in fullest measure; but the grace of God, the companionship of the good...you will with good reason be deprived of, and you will do great harm to your good name, and it will be difficult for you to obtain the honors of this world...Perhaps we can do you good against your will. If you will study carefully this little treatise...and understand it completely and practice what it teaches, you will see clearly that no man ought to mis-spend his days in the pleasure of love. 20

Before this final exhortation, Andreas, like Boethius, says that pursuit of a partial good loses not only it, but all the
others as well; he also uses Isidore of Seville's derivation of the word amor, as coming from amus or "hook," "whence friends are called hami, 'hooks,' because they hold." Andreas also uses this word figuratively, as "bent by sensual desire," and translates Isidore's "catena caritatis" with "cupidinis vinculis." 21 Robertson, in his discussion of the De Arte, insists that reading the first two books in light of the third makes them satiric and very funny. Andreas draws on theology even outside of Book Three. In Book One, he assures us that in view of the wonderful effects of love, he would be a lover too, if not for the fact that love carries "unjust weights," and often, "leaves his sailors in the mighty waves." The first image is Biblical; Flaviacensis says that to use just weights is to obey the law of God, to act charitably and without selfish bias; the second figure comes from Fulgentius, who says of Venus that "they depict her swimming in the sea, for all things suffer shipwreck on account of lust." "O what a wonderful thing is love," exclaims Andreas, "which makes a man shine with so many virtues, and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, such good traits of character!" Robertson remarks, "At this point we may assume that Drouart la Vache, who tells us he sat laughing as he read the De Amore, probably began to chuckle in earnest." 22 That such irony is not constantly sustained does not, as we have seen, disprove its presence. I am not trying to say that no one took the new concern with romantic love seriously, or that no one practiced it; I am only trying to establish that, given the nature of the time and culture,
there are complicated attitudes to consider, including an antagonism between the spiritual goals of a very powerful and influential religious outlook, and the fairly new enthusiasm for and open interest in sensuality and secular affairs. Andreas expresses this antagonism fairly well, but there is indeed not one medieval romance before the fifteenth century where sensuality is embraced wholeheartedly, or where the sinful or spiritually dangerous or ridiculous aspects of romantic love are not taken into at least passing consideration. One thinks of the ambiguous medieval attitude towards the love affair of Tristan and Isolde, at once perfect and doomed; of Chrétien’s humorous treatment of Laudine being rapidly convinced that she should love her husband’s killer; of the consistent satire of love conventions in the thirteenth century “chanteable” Aucassin et Nicolette, where, for example, Aucassin, like the true lover, recognizes his lady’s handiwork in a pile of leaves and branches he finds in the forest, and becomes so excited he falls off his horse and sprains his shoulder.

The same kind of objectivity and humorous antagonism between these two vital interests of the high Middle Ages can be found in the plastic arts.

The feminine gothic aesthetic began to appear in architecture and the other arts by the second quarter of the twelfth century; in the thirteenth it reached its peak of classical expression, and by the early fourteenth was developing a somewhat fuller and more sensual aspect. During this period, many ladies acquired ivory caskets with representations of the characters of romance lying happily naked together in bed, as well
as mirror cases and combs showing lovers in suggestive em-
braces, presided over by the God of Love; sometimes the coup-
les play chess or dally with little dogs; occasionally there
is a "war of Love," where ladies in little castles shoot ro-
ses from crossbows at knights below, who pelt them with cata-
pults full of flowers; one would think that the only consid-
eration behind these secular ivories was delicate titillation.
There are, however, occasional hints of moral antagonism and
double meaning, as when the lovers are accompanied by a groom
who holds with difficulty the reins of rearing horses.25 Prob-
ably the most popular representation of the Tristan legend is
the scene of the Tryst beneath the Tree, where Tristan and In-
olde are forewarned that Mark is hiding in the tree where they
are holding their rendezvous; accordingly they deceive him by
behaving very formally and discussing him in glowing terms.
This scene, usually showing the two lovers on either side of a
little tree in which Mark's head is visible, is very often coup-
led with the theme of the unicorn's capture. Supposedly one
could only capture the beautiful unicorn, symbol of purity, by
having a young virgin lure him to her, where he could be spear-
ed by waiting hunters. We generally see a rather unsavory maid-
en holding him by the horn as he is killed, and the scene is
referred to as the Treacherous Virgin, and is associated with
the vice of Lust. We find it coupled with the Tryst beneath the
Tree from the early fourteenth century on, in diptyches, on
double corbels, side by side on caskets and capitals, in em-
broidery and on wooden misericords; it even forms a corbel in
the fifteenth-century house of Jacques Coeur.26 (See Plate V) The unicorn is used extensively as a mount for the virtue of Chastity, in complexes where the virtues are contrasted with symbols of corresponding vices or appropriate historical villains. This is frequent practice in churches from Spain to northern England, from the beginning of the thirteenth century onwards.27 To find the Treacherous Virgin so often coupled with the image of Tristan and Isolde in the act of deceiving Mark seems to indicate something ambivalent in even the fourteenth century's understanding of romance, if only a subliminal association with the vice of Lust and the treachery connected with an adulterous affair.

Even at the close of the century, we find a north Italian painted tray depicting Venus and her Devotees that is much more explicit. The worshippers of the goddess, among them Tristan and Lancelot, kneel in flowers among laden fruit trees before this travesty of a Vision of the Virgin. A naked goddess elevates above them, arms outstretched, crowned with jewels and surrounded by a golden nimbus. Not from her face, but from her vagina, the Rose of the romance, emanate golden beams which bless the lovers. Her wings are suspiciously pointed, and she is flanked by two naked cupids with bows and arrows, whose feet, interestingly enough, end in ugly birdlike claws. Even if we take this picture as decadent and ribald blasphemy, blasphemy demands an underpinning of faith. I prefer to see it as a vision that satirizes romantic love as well as religion, a consciously ambiguous condemnation that shows a moral understanding of both sides
135. Tristram, Lancelot, and Other Devotees of Venus.
TRAY, LOUVRE. NORTH ITALIAN. C.1400.
of the medieval attitude towards love. (See Plate VI)

If we assume that medieval culture, beginning in the twelfth century, felt itself pulled in this manner between the sacred and the profane, we might expect attempts to weld the two. Within the Church itself, such efforts are found in Thomism, but something should have been happening in the other direction as well; even as the Church embraced Aristotle, the profane should have reached for God; and so we have the romantic legend of the quest of the Holy Grail. Like the rest of the matière de Bretagne, the Grail legend had Celtic origins and was associated with Pagan religion, the hero Arthur, and Christian mysticism early on; like the rest it was given sophisticated literary form in twelfth-century France. Chrétien's unfinished romance, Percival, set down the basic story of the Arthurian search for the Holy Grail, with its main protagonists, Percival, Bors, Galahad, and Lancelot. The Quest grew with the rest of Arthurian legend, and by the end of the thirteenth century was an inextricable part of the cyclic romances; despite this, its tenor was, to some extent, opposed to the rest of the legend. Its themes of Joseph of Arimathea, the Fisher King, the Wasteland or "terre foraine," partly mythic, partly theological, are woven into the legend in such a manner that they serve to Christianize the entire complex, according to spiritual concerns that were both orthodox and popular. Its popularity is inseparable from the popularity of the legend as a whole, which seems to witness to a public taste for and need of Christian mystic and moral teaching even in escapist vernacular romance. It is as if
nothing were permitted to exist in even high medieval cul-
ture without some kind of religious reference.

To put it very simply, the moral put forth by the French
*Queste del Saint Graal*, with its humiliation of Lancelot, dis-
dain of Gawaine, and emphasis on three previously minor char-
acters, is to contrast chivalry in the service of the World
with that in the service of God; spiritual chivalry triumphs
utterly, and in this sense, this integral part of the Arthur-
ian legend discredits and condemns all the rest; again the an-
tagongism between the spiritual and the profane manifests it-
self in high medieval art. The doctrine expounded by the end-
less series of visions and sermonizing hermits in the Queste
is based upon Realist Christian theology of a popular and occult sort. It is about midway between the astrological and al-
chemical philosophies of the Middle Ages and the Victorine my-
sticism previously discussed, with elements of Celtic mythology surviving more vividly than anywhere else in medieval romance.

For these numinous qualities, it has always been popular with
historians and philosophers of the occult, and has served as
a point of departure for some of our more unorthodox literary
theories. For these reasons it was always mistrusted by the
Church, who did not encourage such reading, but who never en-
tirely condemned it, either. That the Quest is a religious
allegory in Catholic terms is not in dispute by anyone; that
its motifs and visions are symbols of a higher reality is man-
ifest not only by a style reminiscent of any visionary litera-
ture, but by a careful exegesis of each allegory by the ubiqui-
tous hermits. The creation and interpretation of allegorical truth is still intertwined, and the secular public of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries still evinces a delight in and understanding of "other-speaking" ultimately based on Realist principles. Moreover, the style of the Quest and of the cyclic romances in general is allegorical.

The process of analogy is endless; that is, no analogy can ever be brought to a satisfactory conclusion without either collapsing or seeking to extend itself indefinitely. Allegory, in this sense, is an unfinished style, whose attempt at time transcendence extends to its own methods. Its ending may be in heaven or hell, both indescribable and ineffable conclusions, or it may continue to simply repeat itself, since the action of inner moral struggle is endless so long as life continues. This cyclic tendency is obvious in Dante, The Faery Queene, or later allegories like Pilgrim's Progress and George MacDonald's Phantastes. The romantic or daemonic hero is static, he never tires or changes his nature. So the Arthurian knights are always prepared to venture forth in battle, so their adversaries continually reappear. The allegorical implications of the late medieval phenomena of the tournament should be obvious; they are watered-down dramatizations of the Psychomachia of the romance, where each participant is presented with a potentially endless parade of opponents, whose actions are so determined by ritual that the process may continue indefinitely without much danger, but with great honor for the knights involved.

Arthurian romance narrative is called the "tapestry tech-
unique," for each thread of plot is interwoven like a textile. For example, references to the Fisher King, Castle Carbonec, and the "dolorous stroke" of Balin and Balan are woven throughout the cycle, firmly entangling the threads of the Quest of the Grail with other elements of the legend. Each story is in fact not separate, but woven in and out of dozens of others; a story of Gareth will intrude upon an adventure of Yvain, but will include constant references and digressions to the stories of other knights, and will return to Yvain with Gareth's adventure unresolved, while Yvain is immediately presented with a fresh challenge when he completes the first. No knight's adventures are ever concluded, which had the advantage of allowing each successive remarqueur, over the several centuries of composition, to pick up the story of his choice where it left off, and thereby weave in his addition to the legend. In effect, the cyclic romances were constructed much like the great cathedrals. It is not uncommon for a medieval church to have a Carolingian crypt, a Romanesque nave, high gothic apse, a flamboyant gothic facade, sixteenth century towers and a Baroque altar; our concepts of stylistic unity and propriety are almost equally violated in Arthurian prose romance where the exciting tale of Yvain or Gareth is interrupted by so many homilies, moralizations, psychological asides, and long extraneous adventures of new characters, that by the time it is taken up again, we have forgotten all about it. Obviously the thirteenth and fourteenth-century readers did not have such difficulty with these methods; their use of them reflects
a natural expression of Realist conceptions of the universe, a two-dimensional treatment of narrative, a taste for the methods of allegory in every facet of life, a use of tradition, time and style that ignores our conceptions of originality, chronology, and unity. This taste avoids any attempt at conclusive finality; even Arthur's passing is ambiguous, and the Queste ends with Galahad and Perceval taken into heaven, while Bors and Lancelot return to where they started, to Camelot, where their adventures continue.

When I claim a certain mystic and religious content for the secular art of the high Middle Ages, it is natural that works like Jean de Meun's Romance de la Rose, Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan, and the apparently non-religious, "humanistic" works of Chaucer should come to mind as exceptions or objections. However, both Jean and Gottfried based their rather shocking allegories of sensual love on the precise form and method of theological allegory. Gottfried's language, in his allegorical Cave of Lovers, is liturgical, and he draws his images from St. Bernard's mystical interpretation of the Song of Songs, which means he is dependent for the appreciation of his subtlety and humor on his readers' continued familiarity with such matters. As for Jean de Meun, he was a university scholar and translator, among other things, of Boethius and of St. Alred's De Spirituali Amitia, which was used by Andreas in his Third Book, as Alred defines romantic love as cupiditv. Jean is described by Charles Dunn as a "scholastic," the theological positions taken by his figures of Reason and Genius are Thomistic; like
Thomas, however, he does not repudiate the "divine schema," and despite his outspoken sexuality, he still contrasts the earthly Garden of Love "..fictions that will fade," with the spiritual Good Shepherd's Park. The fact that parts of his work were denounced by the Bishop of Paris in 1377 and still raised controversy as late as 1483, points to continuing spiritual interest and a theological concern with even so profane an allegory.

As for Chaucer, I do not really wish to enter into a controversy concerning one of the literary geniuses of Western culture. I might only mention that it is certainly not farfetched to consider allegory of a similar bias as Jean's in The Parliament of Foules, and allegory of a more philosophical form in the Book of the Duchess. We cannot completely disregard the religious basis of such statements as,

Know thyself first immortal
And look to be all thy blisse in yow to shewe
To commune profit, and thow shalt not mysse
To come aright to that place desre
That full of bliss is and of soules cheere.

I might even go so far as to agree with Robertson when he says that in his handling of sensuous love, Chaucer shows more interest in analysing the vaguerities of cupidinous, base, or selfish love; than he does in praising its ideals, however we may interpret such a bent. Chaucer is indeed a special case. However, if his work were totally free of the antagonism between the spiritual and the sensual that we have been discussing, free of any interest in double meaning and the orthodox attitudes of the Church, why, at the late date at which
he wrote, did he feel it necessary to show Troilus blissfully free of the earthly bonds of sinful love at his death, and why, at his own death, did he feel the need to recant all his secular works? To hail his most sensual descriptions as the work of a genius, and to dismiss his repudiation of them as evidence of a mind naive, superstitious, and seeking to buy time in heaven, is neither consistent nor helpful. Probably it is no more helpful to regard Chaucer and Jean de Meun as joyously sensual modern poets free of the hierarchic and rigid moral system of the medieval Church, than it is to regard them as orthodox Augustinian clerics. That they can manipulate the Realist Christian tradition in the light of recent theological developments and their own bent is obvious; that they are free of it is not. Both these artists deal intimately with personification, with allegory, with adaption of tradition, and with theological influence. Their new sensuality is striking, but to ignore their interest in allegory is to deny some of the richest passages in medieval literature, as well as to deny the flexibility of their minds. Realist culture, far from dying with or before Chaucer, was more alive in his time than in the more rigidly emblematic century to follow, as we shall see. For the present, we can follow the late flowering of the symbolic aesthetic in two final examples of the plastic art of the High Middle Ages.

The Psalter of St. Louis was completed sometime between 1253 and 1270. It is unfortunate that it cannot be reproduced here in color. (See Plate VII) The figures, with their tiny
Abraham and Eliezer: Rebecca gives drink to Eliezer. Psalter of St. between 1253 and 1270.

PLATE VII
curly heads and swaying bodies, illustrate the delicate gothic aesthetic. The miniature is a biblical scene representing Eliezer before Abraham, and Rebecca giving drink to Eliezer. The pensive tilts of the head, as well as the exchanged glances, show the same interest in psychological introspection we find in the romance, and although this is a straightforward Biblical scene, the colors, postures, and elaborate architectural background make it seem a scene from fairyland or as if veiled in a delicate mysticism. The graceful pale-green camels, their heads swaying like flowers, drink from a green-lined, pale-blue trough; a leaded blue and gold background pierces through gothic tracery, like most manuscript illumination, in imitation of stained glass and gold-working. The whole scene shimmers like a jewel; it is framed by gothic arcades and bands of gold with red, gold, and silver vines against a blue, white and pink background, with each of the four corners formed by two entwined red-headed monsters whose tails become the vines. The atmosphere is reminiscent of the exaggeratedly refined, delicate exquisiteness of the romances of Chrétien. In its richness and grace it seeks to express the Divine, or at least to honorably adorn the sacredness of the story it tells. Its quality of sacred mystery is obvious in the use of elements of church architecture, and its style and purpose could be compared to the Queste del Saint Graal. We can see in it a concern with the spiritual and immaterial that is not iconographically explicit; an age more interested in material form, in perspective and worldly concerns, would never have
developed a style so expressive of refined, uncorrupted, and delicate spirituality. The St. Louis Psalter is far from the truly allegorical, Realist style of the English whalebone carving discussed earlier, but it is as yet unconcerned with robust form, solid gesture, perspective, or human individualization. Overt allegorical work abounds in this period, but I find it more useful to understand this bent of mind through its stylistic rather than its concrete expression, for it reflects a cultural phase that by definition avoids the overt, and depends, for its recognition and appreciation, on training and sensitivity.35

We turn from the end of the thirteenth century to the very end of the high Middle Ages, and one of the most beautiful works it produced, the Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, executed for this great artistic patron by the Limbourg brothers between 1413 and 1416. It suits our purpose admirably, being a combination of the sacred and the secular, a Book of Hours intended for religious use, but especially developed for the aesthetic delight of noble patrons, who had begun to use them in the fourteenth century. Millard Meiss calls its executors, the brothers Herman, Pol, and Jehanequin Limbourg, "pictoral. Nominalists," and it is true that their work presents what we might judge as the liveliest interest in external reality since the fall of Rome. Yet no one would call it the work of Renaissance minds; it is still medieval. The subject matter is, at best, traditional iconography reworked in original ways. The Garden of Gesthemane is pictured in convincing gloom of
night; there is unprecedented charm in secular detail like boys splashing in the nude in the calendar picture for August, or the famous realism of the February farmstead; but by and large, the iconography, the coloring, the drolleries and grotesques of the margins, the historiated initials, are beautifully evolved themes dating from manuscript illuminations one or even two centuries previous. The style in general is the culmination of the delicate gothic aesthetic discussed above, as elaborated in post-Giotto Italy and the Paris illuminations of Jean Pucelle, and brought to perfection by the Limbourgs, termed the "International Style," because influences between Italy and the gothic North, "flow back and forth almost to the point of promiscuity."36 The art of the Limbourg "represents a glorious end rather than a beginning;" all the currents in contemporary art, the International Style as well as divergent Burgundian and Flemish styles, meet in their work.37 The Italianism is mainly Siennese, and evinces itself in everything from iconography and acanthus decoration to Italianate architecture, and has given rise to the premise that at least one of the brothers studied in Italy. The other major tendency is what Panofsky terms "mannerism," and manifests itself in a taste for calligraphy and sinuous line rather than the plasticity of some of the earlier northern illuminators,38 in variegated colors, gold and silver at the expense of spatial illusion, in "excessive refinement of proportions, behaviour and dress of the figures; in richly ornamented armour,...textiles and jewelry; in a preoccupation with patterns within patterns,"39 in
other words, the culmination of the high gothic aesthetic. All this is combined with a naturalism so observant that we are able to identify nine of du Berry's castles from their portraits in the *Trés Riches Heures*, and so powerful that there is a new monumentality and palpability to much of the old iconography, especially the Gethsemene and Annunciation to the Shepherds' scenes. Moreover, there is a new reflection of social reality and stratification in the pictures of the seasons; leisure is given to the nobility, and the labors specifically to the peasants. Panofsky partly attributes this new emphasis on class difference as seen here, and in the excesses of fifteenth-century nobility in general, to the fact that such emphases and extravagances "tend to occur whenever the ruling class of an aging society begins to feel the competition of younger forces rising against it." In other words, we are dealing with an art form that climaxes the high gothic era in Europe, that, as an expression of an "aging society," presages its decline and decadence.

Of the full-page scenes in this extremely beautiful book, the greater part are conventional scenes from the Bible, as well as the calendar pictures of the seasons and labors. Besides these, there are extraneous additions such as the allegorical representation of Astrological Man, and two lovely round compositions, one of the Fall and Expulsion, and one of the city of Rome, as well as original iconography of the Fall of the Rebel Angels and the twilight Crucifixion. The miniature I have chosen to discuss unites the traditional and ori-
ginal aspects of the Limbourg brothers' art, the old allegorical and the new empirical way of viewing the world. It illustrates the text for the first Sunday in Lent, Matthew IV: 8-9, the Temptation of Christ by the devil after His forty days and nights in the wilderness: "Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, And said to him: All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." (See Plate VIII) The composition is very surprising; Christ and the devil have been relegated to the background, on the top of a distant and precarious mountain, while nearly the entire foreground of the illumination is occupied by a very palpable portrait of Jean de Berry's Chateau de Mehun-sur-Yevre, one of the Duke's seventeen magnificent palaces, and one of which he was especially proud. White swans, one of the Duke's symbols, swim prominently in the silver-gray waters of the river surrounding the castle; in the distance rise the castles and cities symbolizing the riches offered by the devil if Christ will worship him; they have been identified as Poitiers, Bourges, Monthery, and the fortress of Nonette in Auvergne. The boats evoke the wealth of commerce and of distant lands. Millard Meiss sees in the exaggerated prominence of the Chateau an attempt to flatter and please the Duke. No doubt the beautiful portrait had in part this intent, though it is somewhat tongue-in-cheek and ambiguous. However much one might find the sumptuous portrait flattering, there is no separating it from the text it represents. It is a part of the riches of
the world owned and offered by the devil to Christ, who utterly rejected it and them. Its prominence not only extols it, it makes it a kind of symbol of all the worldly wealth rejected by God, and as such the composition is at best a backhanded compliment, a moral dig. De Berry knew the precepts of the Christian life as well as the iconographers, and his well-known proclivity for luxury and magnificent possessions is being satirized. We know through the chronicles and inventories that Jean de Berry was on very familiar terms with his artists, and with the Limbourgs in particular, who gave him a present of a block of wood, elaborately decorated to look like a book, for New Year's, 1411. The little bear, another heraldic symbol of the Duke, tressed by a lion in the lower right-hand corner, is another little joke; it refers to "a bellicose incident in the Duke's luxurious but often troubled life; only recently he had been besieged by the Burgundians in Bourges, where he was forced to take refuge in the cloister of Notre-Dame to escape the...enraged populace."

It is doubtful that this particular dig is any more than that; certainly it is not the condemnation that might have occurred two or three hundred years before. Materialism is acceptable enough behaviour to be satirized or criticized rather than damned. Nonetheless, the iconography still implies ambiguity between form and meaning. However teasing such ambiguity has become, there is still an awareness of double meaning, of the Chateau as a beautiful and desirable treasure, and as a symbol of cupidity and the worthlessness of worldly riches as opposed to true spiritual
Goods. Despite its beauty, the devil still hovers over Mehun-sur-Yevre; the artists and patrons of the very end of the fourteenth and very beginning of the fifteenth centuries were still mindful of spiritual and moral "other-speaking" based upon the ancient lines of Neoplatonic and Realist doctrine.

The art of the Limbourg brothers represents the final flowering of gothic aesthetic. As Panofsky notes, the intimations of the character of fifteenth century Europe, and there are many, are still relegated to the expressive climax of the fourteenth. The palpability, atmospheric realism, plasticity, and interest in perspective first explored by Burgundian illuminators like the Master of the Boucicault Hours, were relegated to sinuous, jewel-like beauty and delicacy in the Limbourgs. But it was the heavy plasticity, the turn to the material, that would characterize the coming era.
Chapter IV

Because of its proximity to the Renaissance, the fifteenth century has received more diverse and profound commentary than much of the preceding medieval period. There are many important books dealing with its qualities in social history, literary, and art historical criticism, work by Henri Focillon, Roger S. Loomis, Emile Mâle, E. M. W. Tillyard, Arthur O. Lovejoy, Eugene Vinaver and others. I will refer especially to three excellent books, Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Johann Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, and Erwin Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting*. When these historians of art, literature, and social life discuss the fifteenth century, it is interesting to note that certain themes and judgements recur. All of them see the aesthetic and social outlook of the period as decadent, the close of the medieval era, a harbinger but not yet a positive expression of the Renaissance. A few art historians interpret the work of the great Flemish painters as part of a "Northern Renaissance," but they are overridden by the major critics, Mâle and Panofsky. Critics also refer to a primitivism in this decadence, both as if the end of the Middle Ages were primitive in comparison to the Renaissance, and as if primitivism and decadence were concomitant.

In the first chapter of this paper, I discussed the logical progressions of Realism and Nominalism. Nominalism, with its emphasis on the material and empirical, culminates in spiritual aridity and a complete corruption of human morals, for
moral order must be concerned with common good, and not with individual gratification. The progress of Realism on the other hand, results in the undermining of all individual and practical goals in deference to ever more rigid religious ideals, culminating in a kind of hallucinatory view of the universe in terms of symbolism, which gives rise to every abuse of religion; superstition, witchcraft, a chaotic confusion between the real and the symbolic, and a mania for classification, which, of course, is very close to a primitive lack of classification. As for the extreme forms of Nominalism, they are present as well in fifteenth-century Europe: individual self-interest, brutality and materialistic ostentation, the primitive form that would be harnessed by the new humanistic ideals of the Renaissance, to once more decay and revert to extremes. In other words, the extremes of either phase are close both to their opposites, and to each other. Primitivism and decadence are closely related, whether we are speaking of Realism or Nominalism, even as the balance reached in the classical periods of either mode of thought creates the same climate of reason, order, and flourishing art.

An example of the decadent mania for classification is the fifteenth-century organization of diseases according to their susceptibility to control by various saints: by an easy transition, the saint was credited with cause as well as cure, and hence worshipped and propitiated like a demon. Thus the primitive mind that the hierarchic classifications once sought to control is restituted by them. What was formerly based upon
a profound understanding of Neoplatonic analogy becomes a ritual attempt to control phenomena. Allegory is magical in that it seeks to control and to submit the world to Divine interpretation; but when the divine interpretation is debased or exhausted, the means to control becomes an end in itself. In view of the inexhaustible bounty of the universe, a moral chaos develops, different from, but comparable to, primitive ambivalence. In other words, the natural aim of allegorical hierarchy to unite the universe under God can work against itself and divide this vision into so many parts as to completely obscure its totality. Any cultural tendency can be turned upon itself by extremes of ignorance or extremes of familiarity; this results in its primitive or decadent phase. These phases, in Realism, are observable in paleochristian Europe, consumed by tribal magic and unorganized religious belief, and in fifteenth-century Europe, when all the principles of Neoplatonic theology had been wrung dry. Nominalism, for its part, in both periods exhibits its most violent forms: the excesses of materialism of the dying Roman empire, such as we find in Petronius' Satyricon, typify its decadent state, and the excesses of Burgundian nobility amply quoted by Huisenga exemplify its primitive awakening. In either case, the term "materialistic gratification" can apply to the extremes of Nominalism, even as "superstitious primitivism" can be applied to the excesses of Realism. That we have in general judged Realism by its excesses and Nominalism by its states of balance, is some measure of our own prejudice.
Scholars see the fifteenth century as simultaneously decadent and primitive, and they note the violent contrast between the late medieval religious obsessions, and the budding Nominalist ideas. Huizinga and Panofsky both contrast the pious acts of various famous patrons of the Church with their documented secular lives, their almost unbelievable excesses of ascetic humility and barbaric cruelty and greed, which bears witness to the point reached in the fifteenth century by the two opposed philosophies of Western culture. Huizinga remarks:

The whole history of the house of Burgundy is like an epic of overweening and heroic pride, which takes the form of bravura and ambition with Philippe le Hardi, of hatred and envy with Jean sans Peur, of the lust of vengeance and fondness for display with Philip the Good, of foolhardy temerity and obstinacy with Charles the Bold. Yet these men were also the first delineated royal personalities to arise since the Roman era, the first to be celebrated in portraiture, in individualized monuments; they were patrons of the arts, the direct precursors of the fabulous personalities and practiced connoisseurs of the Renaissance. Huizinga contrasts the beautiful spirituality of Van Eyck's or Van der Weyden's religious paintings with the vulgar, ostentatious entremets ordered by the same noble patrons, and executed by other religious artists, such things as a twenty-eight man band enclosed in a pie, an artificial whale bearing forty people, nude ladies enacting the Judgement of Paris, all arranged on huge banquet tables and spangled with jewels, gold cloth, real hair and shells, artificial stars, and so on. Here we
may see on the one hand the last flowering of medieval sym-
obolism, and on the other the growing delight in egotistic dis-
play and admiration of material wealth and abundance of a most
primitive and ingenuous type. That a dying age can also be
naive has presented many problems to critics of painters like
the Master of Flémalle and writers like Deschamps and Thomas
Malory; however, it presents no problems if we view the medie-
val expiring as the Renaissance rises.

This violent juxtaposition of the excesses of the two cul-
tural phases expresses itself metaphorically. There is a pseu-
do-conscious awareness of the decay of the old culture, even as
there is an unprecedented zest for enormous and lavish public
entertainment, the tournaments, Pas d'Armes, feasts, plays, pro-
cessions, grand entries and sabatements of the Burgundian and
French courts, forerunners of the masque and balls of the Ren-
aissance. Despite the almost hysterically festive nature of
these celebrations, it is poor form to praise the world, and
there is an unsurpassed fascination with the most morbid qual-
ities of death and physical suffering. Artists and writers
become adept at representations of putrefaction and decomposi-
tion; Deschamps says the world began innocent, just, and strong;
now it is like an old man fallen into dotage,

\[\text{Alâchés, chêtes et mols,}\\
\text{Vieuxx, convoiteux et mal parlant;}\\
\text{La fin s'approche, en vérité...}\\
\text{Tout va mal.}\]

Huisingsa says that on a popular level what is most striking
about the faces in the great Flemish portraits is the expres-
sion of sadness. No one who has seen the religious art or pop-
ular woodcuts of the period can forget the representations of putrefaction on the funerary statues, the skeletons covered with worms leading the Dance of Death, the horror story of the "trois morts et les trois vifs." There is, in fact, a beautiful, perhaps subliminal awareness of the progression of medieval culture in the sculptural decor of gothic churches. Early gothic capitals, pendants and so on, as well as stained glass and manuscript illumination, employed as vegetal motifs, besides the classical acanthus and grapevine, little buds and spring shoots. The mature gothic of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries used opened flowers and mature leaves. The fifteenth century flamboyant, however, employed the symbols of autumn and approaching winter, thistles, acorns, open seed pods, and the like. We could not ask for a more vivid aesthetic of decay. The medieval values had nearly disappeared; their forms and trappings were still revered, but there was a conscious sense of emptiness and impending doom, for the signs of the future were not yet recognized. The great fear of death, the obsession with its purely physical aspects, seems contradictory and even sacrilegious in a culture almost depressingly dogmatic and socially pious, supposedly devoted to belief in an afterlife and in the saving sacrifice of God. Yet, in a profound way, the fifteenth century was losing faith. Nominalism, pragmatism, and materialism were taking hold of man's minds, and the mystic analogies to God were being forgotten. The vivid sense that all they had known was slipping away, and their inability to recognize the new, resulted in an almost pitiable terror of the future, especially on a popular level.
and an archaic system of values and ideals, which preserved the medieval forms like so many holy relics. Even Thomas Malory, a modern if ever there was one, and restricted in his opportunities for personal opinion, makes three references to his age, all pessimistic, uncomplimentary, disapproving of change, and nostalgic for past security.

Piety, as Huizinga says, "displays all the qualities of the crudest fetishism;" Louis XI, for example, had himself annointed daily with sacred coronation oil in hopes of averting death, and kidnapped a hermit, the ascetic St. Francis of Paula, to keep as a kind of holy magic pet. There are long lists of obsessive-compulsive personalities and actual mad people who were revered in the fifteenth century as saints. Obviously, we are approaching mass religious delusions. Theology of the fifteenth century is characterised by form more than spirit; many new sects and orders sprang up; some, like the Congregation of Windesheim, tried to recapture the purity of earlier religious life, but others were on the level of cults and fads.

There was, as Panofsky notes, a "vigorou revival" of Augustinianism in the middle of the thirteenth century, which carries its influence to the iconography of the Van Eycks. Denis the Carthusian, Jean Gerson, Huyssbrœck, these are solid fifteenth-century theologians who are, in essence, Realist. Denis the Carthusian, or de Hickel, is typical of the period. His writings fill forty-five quarto volumes; rather than propagating novel philosophies or even taking sides, he simply
reproduces all that has gone before him; as sixteenth-century theology puts it, "Qui Dionysium legit nihil non legit." He is even more typical in his life, which is one of "mystic transports, ferocious asceticism, continual visions and revelations." He embodies both the fifteenth century's regard for and synthesizing of the past, and its violent and rather desperate piety. The real visionaries, Saint Colette, Saint Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Henry Suso, drink of Virgin's milk, are drenched in the hot blood of Christ; their visions profoundly influence fifteenth-century iconography, their experiences range from the truly inspired to abased fantasy. On the bottom of the pole is Alain de la Roche, promoter of the Adoration of the Rosary, and preceptor of the author of the Malleus Maleficarum, the infamous work on witchcraft which resulted in the inquisitions, persecutions, and tortures that have defamed the late Middle Ages. His writings are, as Huizinga says, "characterized by an excess of sexual imagination and by the absence of all genuine emotion." The sensual aspect of his, or Catherine's, or Bridget's visions reverts to the demonical, even as secular culture turned to physical morbidity and palpable decadence. As Huizinga says,

"Intensive mysticism signifies return to a pre-intellectual mental life. All that is culture is obliterated and annulled. If, notwithstanding, mysticism has, at all times, borne abundant fruit for civilization, it is because it always rises by degrees, and because in its initial stages it is a powerful element of spiritual development."  

This, however, is its final degree. After the fifteenth cen-
tury, its influence, instead of being transcendent, will be subjugated and particular.

If the religious values of the age had lost their basis, to be venerated in the extreme, ignored, or debased, the old feudal social structure, even emptier than the religious beliefs, received universal honor. Huizinga devotes four chapters to the discussion of fifteenth-century chivalric ideals; Auerbach's treatment of Antoine de la Salle's Madame du Chastel dwells especially on this social ideal; and as for Vinaver, he understands Malory's concern with such values as the major difference between him and his French sources. The "rise" of the middle classes was a fait accompli in the fifteenth century, particularly in the areas most typical of the age, northern France, Burgundy, the Netherlands, and England. From our emphatically economic modern point of view, by this time, feudalism and chivalry are "no more than a remnant of a superannuated order already crumbling into insignificance."14 The bourgeois merchant class will shape the future, and are already patrons of the arts and of the general magnificence of the times on a level equal with the dukes of Burgundy. All the economic, administrative, and judicial institutions of the modern era are being established. Yet,

'an assiduous reader of the chronicles and literature of the fifteenth century will hardly resist the impression that nobility and chivalry occupy a much more considerable place than our general conception of the epoch would imply. The reason for this disproportion lies in the fact, that long after nobility and feudalism had ceased to be really essential factors in the state and in society, they continued to impress the mind as dominant forms of life. 15
Knighthood, in the Middle Ages, anciently the real political power and protector of the realm, by the twelfth century already an ideal of erotica and romance with less political importance, becomes, by the fifteenth century, the privilege and duty of aristocracy, the great social order first established by the archangel Michael, the Stay of the World, and the ideal basis of all political and moral action in the earthly realm. In reality, the machinations of the princes were in calculated self interest, the armies were conscripted villeins and a few noble calvary, rendered increasingly useless by their immuration in literally tons of armour and the advent of cannon; yet, all the fifteenth-century chronicles, from which we have learned these facts, declare their contents paens to chivalry and honor, their aim to record "noble enterprises, conquests, feats of heroism and of arms." Carton's introduction to his edition of Malory claims the same purpose, though he does not ignore the middle class audience:

"I...have doon sette it in enprynte to the entente that noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyvalrye, the jentyl and vertuous dedes that somme knyghtes used in tho dayes...numbly bysechynge al noble lordes and ladyes wyth al other estates, of what estate or degree they been of, that shal see and rede in this sayd book...that they take the good and honest actes in their remembrance."16

This general ideal interpretation of secular life is discussed by Auerbach in his section of la Salle's *Renconfort de Madame du Fresne*:

"...a political and military occurrence, which belongs in a historical context well known to us, is viewed exclusively as a problem in the ethos of class. Nothing is ever said about the actual im-
portance of the fortress, about the unfortunate consequences which its fall would have for the cause of France and her king. On the contrary, the entire concern is with the knightly honor of the Seigneur du Chalet, with a pledged word and its interpretation, with the fealty of a vassal, with an oath, with personal responsibility... Everything practical is smothered under a luxuriant growth of solemn knightly ceremony."17

The ideals which, when strong, could keep to the background, as we noted in twelfth and thirteenth-century art and literature, now are called to the fore in every domain, and are artificially applied to morality, entertainment, and even political reality. Great princes will ceremonially challenge each other to hand-to-hand combat until well into the Renaissance; generals would give up advantageous ground to adhere to the knightly code; noble parasites like the Grand Bâtard and King René d'Anjou would fill their lives with dramatizations of romance, and wielded their political power in the interests of Pas d'Armes and ostentatious display.18 The prodigious growth, in numbers and influence, of chivalric orders in the late Middle Ages, served to glorify knightly honor and to preserve and defend the social hierarchy. Panofsky says,

"Here the old feudal aristocracies had to assert themselves, not so much against the rise, as against the actual intrusion of a new protocapitalistic class of merchants and financiers, and this resulted in... an inflationary spiral of social overstatement... The High Medieval orders had been founded for the conquest of the Holy Land or the colonization of the Slavic east. The orders founded from about 1350... were of purely social significance, uniting a group selected from the elite under the banner of ideals intended to maintain this very elite... it was only natural that the new manners and luxuries of the old nobility were imitated precisely by those whom they were meant to exclude."19
Huizinga discusses the fifteenth century orders of chivalry in much the same light, and Malory, in his redaction of the great Arthurian legend, seems to regard the Round Table as a grandiose contemporary Order, with all the pomp and ceremonious oaths of the ones he was accustomed to, the prototype and ideal of the Order of the Garter and the Golden Fleece, but basically the same thing. As Vinaver notes, "Phrases such as 'he was a good knight,' or 'the High Order of Knighthood' are too numerous to be quoted, but it is important to note that they are in most cases absent from his sources."

In fact, of Malory's two important additions to the legend, one is a short chapter entitled "The Great Tournament," which gave him an opportunity to show his characters engaged in the purely sham battles, formal courtesies, and discussions of chivalric points of honor with which the nobility of his day was so concerned. The closing words, "So than there were made grete festes unto kyngis and deukes, and revell, game, and play, and all manner of nobeles was used. And he that was curteyse, trew, and faythefull to hys frynde, was that tyme cherysshed," do give us a feeling of the emotional hold this ideal had upon the people, and why those whom it did not in any manner benefit also worshipped and upheld it.

If all the former mainstays of medieval Christian culture were preserved in a hollow state, with their actual meaning forgotten or decayed, one would expect the modality of allegory, the expression of the desire for classification, to be preserved in an equally violent and hollow state. As Émile
Mâle says, "Au XVème siècle, dans un âge voué à l'allégorie, la Psychomachie reparait partout..."22 The key word is "reparait;" the overt allegorisation of the early Christian period, for example, of the Book of Pericopes of Henry II, or of Isidore of Seville's encyclopaedia, to a large extent was sublimated in the high gothic age. The inner meaning of every object in the universe was so ingrained, and so balanced, that its comprehension tends to be expressed stylistically as much as overtly, as we already discussed. The great gothic cathedrals are each enormous allegories in stone of all the forces and objects of the universe, all histories and times, all emotions and desires, relegated to God. There are personifications, in the thirteenth-century statuary of the Cathedral of Strasburg, of the Church Triumphant, the Synagogue, and the "Prince du Monde;" but the whole ensembles of facade were understood as portents of God, and when we see stories of Moses or of the sacrifice of Abraham, no allegoresis is needed to understand that they are figures of the Salvation and Sacrifice of Christ. In the fifteenth century, however, allegory in its most overt, labeled forms, reappears with a vengeance. In everything from allegorical extremists of Holy Church (Olivier de la March riding an elephant) to the religious masterpieces of Van Eyck, from popular woodcuts and sermons to the language of courtship and the devices of poetry, the fifteenth century steeped itself in what had formerly been the highest and most profound mode of thought, without retaining anything, for the most part, but an awe of the form. The new use of
allegory did not entail invention of new allegorical iconography; in almost every case it revived or embellished personifications and groupings that had existed or languished in Church art as far back as Carolingian times. Mâle is somewhat disappointed that an age so fascinated with symbolism did not invent any of its own; but in light of what we know about its literature, politics and social customs, this is only to be expected. Subjects "que le XIIIème avait dédaigné," are resuscitated and popularized. The real medieval genius for allegory, except in Flemish painting, had expired, but the taste for it continued. A typical fifteenth-century allegory, besides constant reworking on the theme of the Psychomachia, would be the Bible Moralisée of 1404, made for Jean sans Peur, or the analogous Livre d'Heures de Rohan. On one page, in the background, we see Jacob wrestling with the angel; below, a monk kneels before Jesus, while a nobleman, indifferent to the Divine presence, prepares to go hunting, and a young woman, watched by the devil, admires herself in a mirror. In these works, nothing is left to the erudition or natural piety of the beholder; each allegory has a detailed commentary, lest the reality of the representation confuse its meaning. The commentary here says that the picture declares that when the angel touches the nerve of Jacob's thigh, it is God touching the heart of man, which as in the kneeling monk, fills him with contempt for the pleasures of the flesh and the world that surround him. This commentary is perhaps not strictly needed, but as the century wears on the allegories become so farfetched, and the desire for symbolic explication so intense, that
exegesis is an absolute necessity. In Alain de la Roche's
exegesis of the rosary,

"each of the words of the 'Ave signifies one of the
fifteen perfections of the Virgin, and at the same
time a precious stone, and is able to drive away a
sin, or the animal which represents that sin. They
represent other things as well: the branches of a
tree which carries off the blessed ones; the steps
of a staircase."23

On the secular level, allegory is habitually used in trials,
lawsuits, treatises, and explications of politics. The murder
of Louis d'Orléans by the Duke of Burgundy is fought—and de-
defended—via allegory; in chronicles, the seven electors of the
Empire signify the virtues; the five towns of Artois and Hain-
saul, which in 1477 remained faithful to the house of Burgundy,
are the five wise virgins. As Huizinga remarks, this is alle-
gory in reverse. It uses "things of a higher order as symbols
of things of a lower order...raising terrestrial things by
employing sacred conceptions merely to adorn them."24 We think
of the strange iconography of Claus Sluter's Moses Well, its
odd mixture of the ridiculous and the sublime. It was once
a huge Calvary, surmounting the well of the Carthusian monas-
tery of Champmol, of which now only the pedestal remains. It
is a grouping of the six prophets who predicted the death of
the Saviour, who, together with mourning angels on the cornice,
support and prefigure Christ on the cross. The composition
is a real "oeuvre parlant," arranged like a tableau vivante or
a float. "It rarely happens in sculpture," says Huizinga,
"that the written word is of such importance." Like the Book
of Pericopes, it is covered with inscriptions; each prophet
carries a scroll of his prediction.25 "The Well of Living Waters" is inscribed on the base; we may imagine the Carthusian brothers piously filling their buckets with the saving blood of Christ. The figures were polychromed in gold leaf, azure, and silver stars; the open spaces on the pedestal were filled with heraldic suns and initials, and the extremities of the cross itself were emblazoned with the coats of arms of Burgundy and Flanders. Yet despite the allegorical placques, the garish polychromy, and the theatrical nature of the composition, no one who has seen this work can deny it is one of the sculptural masterpieces of Western culture. Because of such stunning combinations,

"It is clear that to the men of the fifteenth century this genre did not appear so silly as it does to us... We are thus led to conclude that, to the mind of the declining Middle Ages, symbolism and allegory had not yet lost all their living significance..."26

I am not trying to say that we may read allegory into every work of the late Middle Ages; indeed there is none at all in Malory, who in this respect is different from other prose writers. I am trying to establish its continuing importance in terms of the cycle of development and decay of Realist culture. Allegory is a partner of Realism. When it is vigorous and subtle, Realism is strong; when it is obvious or hollow, Realism is in decline. That the study of Realism is still pertinent to an understanding of late medieval and Renaissance Europe is apparent not only by the plethora of allegory, but by the fact that the major works in these periods are unable to discuss them without reference to Realism, to Augustine, to
Neoplatonic Christian doctrine in general. 27

This remains the point of divergence between us and our medieval past; the predilection to see the world as a symbol, to see life as having a controlled and hierarchal meaning, to see the objects of our five senses as "spiritualis sub metaporphis corporalium." For those who have never experienced the idea of a deeper significance in ordinary things, a habit of mind common to the savage, the child, the poet, and also to the holy and insane, mysticism makes no sense, it has no basis, although such people must be rather rare. Realist philosophy is common to all religions, to the shaman, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, to all; if its precepts are forgotten, the religion itself becomes a hollow shell with no meaning, and ultimately no purpose beyond a social one. Realism is the basis of all religious mysteries, initiations, and rituals, and it is a concomitant of drug use, which of course is often an adjunct of mystic religions. The "heightened reality" claimed by all descriptions of the "mind-altering" drugs such as peyote, mescaline, lysergic acid, hashish, jimson, and to some degree, alcohol and the other narcotics, is precisely this phenomenon of seeing deeper significance in ordinary surroundings, of things taking on a daemonic or allegorical meaning, often in terms of a good-evil dichotomy, as described in Huxley's Heaven and Hell, but sometimes in terms of a harmony and rhythmic whole. Huizinga mentions the vague feelings of schizophrenic fear and menace, as well as the tranquility of finding hidden order in the world and our place in it, exper-
enced by most of us. These vague presentiments, irrational feelings, drug or visionary experiences, may be ignored, taken as they are, or they may be applied to the dogma of the Mysterious One that varies little from religion to religion. As William James puts it,

"By cultivating the continuous sense of our connection with the power that made things as they are, we are tempered more towardly for their reception. The outward face of nature need not alter, but the expressions of meaning in it alter... It is like the difference between looking on a person without love, or upon the same person with love... When we see all things in God, and refer all things to Him, we read in common matters superior expressions of meaning."

This attitude has all the historical and cultural implications we have discussed, but it may exist at any time on the personal level.

In the second chapter, I discussed at some length the ambiguous quality of the Realist attitude in its cultural beginnings, and its subsequent predilections for irony, double-entendre, and satire. In fact, it is a characteristic of the Middle Ages that the line of demarcation between what we consider "seriousness" and "pretending" is often lacking, even as a careful and willful separation of the two is characteristic of our own sense of propriety. This has something to do with the evolution of the classical idea of the separation of styles, discussed so well by Auerbach in Mimesis. The Middle Ages was most scathingly criticized by the neoclassicists of the eighteenth century for its complete disregard of the differences between tragedy and comedy, high and low style, irony and exposition; indeed, the presence or absence of such melding of
styles and attitudes is yet another indication of the evolution of Realist culture.

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, as in the Mabinogion or the Book of Kells, there is almost no differentiation of styles or values. Later differences are recognized, but willfully played upon, since all things, in the scheme of creation and in the eyes of God, are essential realities. The fact that we still encounter some difficulty in separating "truth" from fantasy, and seriousness from pretending in some of the works of the fifteenth century, is an indication that Realism still had a hold on human consciousness; the fact that by the high Renaissance such attitudes were being pretty well sorted out shows how close it was to losing its influence.

When Huizinga discusses the violent attachment of the Burgundian nobility to their Orders of Chivalry and their knightly ideals, he has in the same breath to include their own mocking of its excesses. Probably this facility for serious pretense is the greatest problem encountered by the serious modern when confronted by Jean de Meun, Chaucer, or Andreas Capellanus; it is still present in Deschamps, in the facetious Vows of the Heron, the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, and many other obscene or specious allegories that we, having acquired more regimented attitudes, find puzzling. Huizinga remarks of the Miroir de Mariage, that

"It is very hard to decide what was the personal conviction of the poet, and to what degree he was serious... To distinguish clearly the serious element from pose and playfulness, is a problem that crops up in connection with nearly all the mani-
It is obvious that any culture that does not require empirical proof to ratify existence would naturally display ambiguous attitudes towards serious concepts; it sees both the reality and the immaterial quality of any idea or object, its exaltation and its negation. It is only a culture that believes some things may be proven and others rejected that can categorically accept or deny concepts with any degree of consistency. Therefore we might expect a strict separation of styles and a strict degree of seriousness or clearly announced pretense in a strongly Nominalist phase of culture, and a muddying and amalgamation of such concepts in a Realist phase; this is exactly the case.

In Deschamps, as mentioned, there are still some residues of ambiguity and irony; for Malory, however, writing about fifty years later, everything is serious. Vinaver goes into some detail concerning Malory's treatment of his fourteenth-century source's satiric character Dinadan. Dinadan's function, in regards to what we know about medieval literature, is traditional; he is the "scoffer and japer" who satirizes the chivalric and amorous ideas of his fellows, he is the note of ambiguity and objectivity we discussed that makes Andreas, Chrétien, Aucassin et Nicolette, and more primitively, Unferth, so intriguing and difficult to modern readers. Malory, however, removes these qualities whenever possible. Although he is unable to obscure Dinadan's character completely, he obviously resented Dinadan's shocking comments, removing or shortening those he could not
The curious objectivity of Realism, seeing every concept "in bono" and "in malo," is replaced here by another kind of duality, that of rational acceptance or rejection, the Aristotelian concept of consistency. If chivalry is shown to be good, it therefore cannot be criticised. As a proven fact, its opposite view is not only disapproved of; whenever possible it is denied existence.

In Van Eyck, as we shall see, there is a certain amount of ambiguity in his representation of things both as physical reality, as a perfectly rendered lily, and as symbols of abstract concepts, such as Purity. Yet, by disguising these symbols so that they resemble not visions, but everyday reality, Van Eyck is to some extent concealing their ambiguity. I already discussed the medieval use of symbolic rather than visual unity, which results for us in so many curious and ridiculous visual juxtapositions. The absurdity of these combinations is either consciously removed or disguised in fifteenth-century art. The line between reality and fantasy has greatly hardened, a separation that implies at once Neoclassicism and Nominalism. Already the major way of looking at the world is via empirical reality; Caxton's major concern in his preface to Malory's works is not so much to extol their entertainment value as to establish that Arthur was a historical English king, and therefore the reading of his life is a viable, empirical and not a frivolous pastime. This has been the bent of mind ever since, when reading fiction or non-fiction, when discussing factual or "serious" topics as opposed to fanciful, unproveable.
ones. This inherent value judgement places Nominalism in a somewhat poor position to judge Realism. Balance is reached by compromise, not repudiation.

Since Nominalist and Realist attitudes are to some extent destructive of one another, however, attainment of balance is as delicate and dangerous as it is morally necessary.\textsuperscript{33} Art historians who try to understand the iconography of medieval and Renaissance art, for the purpose of comprehending its original intention and impact, are rare. In this period, Mâle and Panofsky, of the major critics, are just about alone.\textsuperscript{34} In literature, the Realist-Nominalist controversies raging around authors such as Chaucer, Jean de Meun, Andreas Capellanus and Shakespeare have in some cases almost a paralysing effect on the continuing growth of our enjoyment and knowledge of them. What is needed is some kind of acknowledgement that both approaches are viable, and that they have always coexisted, of necessity, despite shifts in prominence. Not only is such an inter-philosophic judgement desirable, but an international and interdisciplinary one is necessary as well. It is virtually impossible to discuss Thomas Malory in terms of English rather than French literature; it would be equally ridiculous to try to follow the development of Flemish painting without reference to the French and Italian schools of the International Style, or to discuss the social practices of the English court without referring to the French and Burgundian courts with which it was so promiscuously aligned. It is significant that the three major critics I have been discussing refer to visual as well as lit-
erary art, and to social customs as well in their discussions of the fifteenth century. This period, in fact, seems especially to lend itself to this treatment. Panofsky quotes poems by Deschamps and Charles d'Orléans in his discussion of the International Style in France, and Auerbach insists on the visual quality of the "creatural" prose of La Sale. Vinaver, too, emphasizes Malory's visual descriptions as setting him apart from his intellectual French source. Indeed, the very ponderous, materialistic aesthetic of the age seems to seek visual reality, or as Huizinga says, tries to give "concrete form to every concept of the mind." Sight predominates, a predilection associated with the already mentioned atrophy of original thought.35 We will now investigate some of the correspondences between the visual and literary aesthetics of Malory and Jan Van Eyck.

Flemish painting in the fifteenth century holds a position in the development of medieval aesthetic somewhat analogous to the gothic phenomenon of the twelfth century; that is, the departure from the traditional forms of medieval art, especially in terms of technical method and style is so striking that some critics have tried to classify it as a precursor of the Italian Renaissance and see in its extreme concern with sensory realism and its facility for reproducing light and texture, as well as its use of perspective, as a triumph of rational methods, a rebirth of humanism and an eschewing of the medieval spiritualism that had vilified and belittled the world of human perception. These critics, however, are few. The unassailed scholar
of Flemish painting in the fifteenth century, Erwin Panofsky, takes the position that these awe-inspiring visions of reality, almost microscopic in their perfection and clarity, are indicative of the decay of medieval thought. Here we find the phenomena I have been discussing, the point at which the decay of Realism meets the primitive expression of Nominalism, so that the two are, in effect, one.

The new facility with space and light and mimesis—the imitation of reality—develops so rapidly that even if we follow the precursors of this form, the International Style, the Boucicault Hours, Melchior Broederlam, and Jean Malouel, we are still hardly prepared for the crystalline colors, the solid bourgeois interiors, the amazing, blue-misted perspectives, the very splinters on the wood and hairs on the heads of the Master of Flemalle's London Madonna or Herode Alterpiece. The Madonna in Glory at Aix-en-Provence sits so heavily on a wooden Burgundian bench draped with cloth that we expect her to come crashing down upon the seated prelates and kneeling donors beneath her. At her feet, convincingly interrupting the heavy folds of her gown, is a crescent moon, symbol of Marian purity, astrological and alchemical symbol of the soul. But here it is truly a man-made object, a crescent of gilded wood or possibly tin, a piece of furniture as tangible as the bench she sits on. The ability to imitate reality stylistically has finally overpowered the ability to visualize the ineffable spirit. But it has not yet overpowered the interest in that spirit.

The ridiculousness of this man-made symbol is resolved
later in Flemish painting by Jan Van Eyck, who develops what
Panofsky terms "concealed or disguised" symbolism. Reality
was so firmly entrenched that after the opening years of the
fifteenth century, it could not be easily dismissed; yet, on
the other hand, "the world of art could not at once become a
world of things devoid of meaning."36 The new form of symbol-
ism admirably enabled Flemish painting to serve both masters.
As never before, these pictures were sensual objects to be
enjoyed in themselves; secular subjects appeared in greater
profusion, and portraiture as perfect as any in the history of
art developed to gratify the ego and memories of middle class
burgers and artisans as well as kings and nobility. Yet, the
deeper artistry and genius of these works is lost to us if we
do not interpret them according to traditional, medieval, Neo-
platonic symbolism. The symbols are now concealed, but as with
Augustine's praise of allegory, their discovery is rendered all
the more delightful by their "difficult ornamentation." As
Panofsky puts it,

A non-perspective and non-naturalistic art, not re-
ognizing either unity of space or unity of time,
can employ symbols without regard for empirical prob-
ability or even possibility. When the illuminator of
ca. 1275 wished to evoke the ideas associated with
the Pelican in Her Piety he could simply draw a Pel-
ican in Her Piety on top of what is both a cross and
a tree, but when Jan Van Eyck wished to do likewise
he had to introduce her under the guise of a little
brass group surmounting the armrest of an apparently
real throne. 37

This "disguised symbolism," like nearly every other medieval
concept, did not suddenly appear, but had existed for some time,
notably in statuary symbols of the trecento. In early Flemish
painting, however, it became a general principle, applied
to every object, man-made or natural. Panofsky says the two
methods,—late symbolism and early naturalism, were correlates:

The more the painters rejoiced in the discovery
and reproduction of the visible world, the more
intensely did they feel the need to saturate all
of its elements with meaning. Conversely, the
harder they strove to express new subtleties and
complexities of thought and imagination, the more
eagerly did they explore new areas of reality.

We shall investigate a Flemish painting of the first half of
the fifteenth century, in which "all meaning has assumed the
shape of reality...," the Adoration of the Lamb.

This enormous work, perhaps the most impressive surviving
painting of the Middle Ages, was probably begun by Hubert Van
Eyck, who died in 1426, and finished by his brother Jan by
1432. It is a folding altarpiece which consists, when closed,
of an Annunciation on four panels, surmounted by the Cumaean
and Erythrean sibyls and the prophets Micah and Zechariah;
derneath are portraits of the donors, Joos Vijd and his wife
Elizabeth Borluut, and imitations of statues of St. John the
Evangelist and St. John the Baptist. The interior shows, above,
the Trinity in one Christlike personage, in Glory, with the
crowned Virgin, reading, to His right, and John the Baptist,
pointing, to His left. The two panels on either side of this
group represent musical angels, and Adam and Eve, surmounted
by grisaille representations of Abel's offering, above Adam,
and the first fratricide, above Eve. The five panels below are
our principal concern and represent a heavenly scene, or Aller-
heiligenbild, where the Mystic Lamb, on an altar with his
blood flowing into a holy chalice, is surrounded by praying,
censing angels bearing the instruments of the Passion; in the
foreground is the fountain of pure water, to the left holy
personages representing Old Testament prophets and the Pagan
Blessed; to the right are the Apostles and Martyrs. Behind
are the Confessors and the Blessed Women, the female saints,
martyrs, and virgins of the Church. In the total of four pan-
els on either side of this scene, we see, as if hastening to
the center, to the Lamb's left the Holy Pilgrims and Hermits,
to the Lamb's right, the Righteous Judges and Knights of Christ.
(See Plate IX) The background to the whole scene is strewn
with every type of plant, tree and bush, simultaneously in
flower, with soaring spires and domes of beautiful cities in
the distance. The entire retable is supplied, like Sluter's
Moses Well, with inscriptions on the frames, thrones, haloes
and robes of the holy, as well as with scrolls, specifying the
identity and meaning of the personages.

The major iconographic controversy centers around the cen-
tral representation of the Deity, who looks like Christ but has
several attributes of the Father, and on whose mantle is written
"Rex regum, Dominus dominicorum," of which St. Augustine said,
"In these words neither the Father is specially named, nor the
Son nor the Holy Ghost, but the blessed and only Potentate, the
King of Kings—the Trinity itself." Such representations are
not uncommon, and are called Dèsis; however, if we look below
this figure's feet, we see the Holy Ghost in the Dove, and the
Christ symbol of the Mystic Lamb, so that, if the retable is to
be read as a whole, the paradise scene would include two of the Three Persons, and would be presided over by God the Father. Panofsky postulates that the composition and even the height of the panels was changed after Hubert's death to accommodate a revision of the entire retable; for our purposes it is only important that we realize that the iconography has been tampered with and so does not agree in every detail with traditional arrangements. The general mode of symbolism, however, in its materialistic clothing of archaic mysteries, is as typical of the century as we could wish.

The Allerheiligenbilder, or All Saints picture, dates to Carolingian times, and takes its iconography from the liturgy of All Saints' Day and from Revelations V, 6-12 and VII, 2-12, with the Lamb "as it had been slain" surrounded by a great multitude of worshippers. The Augustinian revival of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries already mentioned, added features of the Civitate Dei; the worshippers were diversified, musical angels and the Heavenly Jerusalem were added, and the Lamb was replaced by a triune deity, and in this form it enjoyed great popularity. The Ghent altarpiece is the only known representation incorporating the Mystic Lamb for at least three or four centuries, and in this respect displays a taste for an allegorical subject "que le XIIIème aurait dédaigné." There are many Augustinian features, the prominence of the Virgin and the Baptist, the triune Deity, if it is such, and the singing angels, but the presence of the Dove and the Lamb takes us back to archaic iconography. This muddle points, I think,
beyond practical considerations. At least, it is typical of the century's fascination with the form rather than the content of tradition. It is as if, in the desire to evoke the holy, all the most ancient and numinous representations could be included, even if mutually contradictory. It is odd that a work so immense and expensive would be permitted to contain such an iconographic jumble unless, besides the practical aspects such as Hubert's death and the tastes of one or more donors, such a plethora of holy ideas could be appreciated in themselves. The open retable is far less coherent than Jan Van Eyck's other work, and it is obvious that practical considerations, in an artist so brilliant and subtle, are responsible for its present state. Yet, it is significant that when the painting was officially interpreted by the Church rhetoricians in 1458, no mention was made of these incongruities, the wingless angels, the prominence of Adam and Eve, the Virgin's casual attitude, the Baptist's elaborate dress; the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries accepted the central figure as God the Father and enjoyed the mystic apparitions of Lamb and Dove with no apparent confusion.  

From traditions coeval with the development of medieval civilization, the Van Eycks created a kind of crystallization of the piety of their age. The symbols and groupings are very ancient; yet they are clothed with a microscopic realism, a concern with material detail that has never again been equalled. The reality of the outdoor landscape is almost perfect. The purity of the water in the fountain, its convincing ripples
are scientifically accurate; the detail of the vegetation permits the identification of forty-two different species, the architecture is perfectly detailed, the faces individualized, the clothes palpable, and the light is perfect and always from the right, inside and out of the retable, just as it comes from the window of the crypt chapel for which it was executed. All this points not only to an interest in material reality, but a delight in it, a delight that was paradoxically subjected to the traditional delight in the spiritual. The purity of the water fulfills its sacred metaphor, the perfect lilies above the heads of the martyrs symbolize the virgins entering behind them, and the light especially is developed by Van Ryck as much for its symbolic expression as for spatial verisimilitude.43 This spiritual quality is apparent in its very detail and especially in its feeling of stasis; figures, for all reality of form and detail, are frozen in time and space like the emblems that they are. This is apparent in his most ponderously symbolic efforts, the strained faces of the wingless angels, which have been rightly compared by Huizinga to the heavy Burgundian rhetoric of Chastelain, or the stiff, hierarchic figures of the Madonna of Canon George van der Paale, which Panofsky calls "inexorably symmetrical," and "crystallized." Here St. George is frozen in the ridiculous gesture of tipping his helmet to the Virgin, and all the figures look, for all the world, like a tableau vivante amid their crystallized furs, rugs, complicated armor, and jewel-encrusted crowns. Van Ryck is a modern and archaic paradox. Panofsky characterizes
him as a Nominalist when he says,

"only a keen intellectual curiosity could have devoted so much interest to theological texts, chronograms, astronomical details, cabalistic incantations and even paleography. Only a logical mind could have so thoroughly refined and systematised the principle of 'disguised symbolism.' Only the instinct of a historian could have rediscovered the indigenous Romanesque and recaptured its spirit. And only an imagination controlled and disciplined by geometry...could have determined the impeccable proportions of Eyckian architecture."

But he understands him as a Realist, a man of the Middle Ages when he says that a picture by Van Eyck claims to be more than just a painting;

"It claims to be both a real object—and a precious object at that—and a reconstruction rather than a mere representation of the visible world...there emanates from it a strange fascination not unlike that we experience when permitting ourselves to be hypnotized by precious stones or when looking into deep water...This miracle was brought about by...a technique so ineffably minute that the number of details comprised by the total form approaches infinity. That which is tiny in terms of measurable magnitude yet is large as a product of the infinitesimally small; that which is sizable in terms of measurable magnitude is yet small as a fraction of the infinitely large...Jan Van Eyck's eye operates as a microscope and as a telescope at the same time...so that the beholder is compelled to oscillate between a position reasonably far from the picture and many positions very close to it. And while thus being reminded of the limitations of nature, we share some of the experience of Him who looks down from heaven but can number the hairs of our head."

He goes on to say that such perfection is bought at a price, namely the price of humanism, of mimesis; human emotion, drama, and animation are less important to Van Eyck. The emphasis is on quiet existence, indeed on stasis. His technique actively illustrates the medieval concept of microcosm and macrocosm, and human interest is yet sacrificed to the Divine. Van Eyck
is a product of his age, his unique genius, and an example of a profoundly religious mind, which is as much beyond as it is a part of the fifteenth century. In his *Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini*, he demonstrates how his approach and his technique could "abolish the borderline between 'portraiture' and 'narrative,' between 'profane' and 'sacred' art."45

This small painting is a double portrait, a legal marriage certificate, and a mystical celebration of the sacrament of marriage. As in the religious pictures, every object and arrangement has an esoteric meaning. The single candle burning in the beautiful chandelier signifies the presence of Christ, and was known as the Brautkerze, the "marriage candle." The nuptial bed, so clearly invoked—as Panofsky says, the marriage need not have taken place in a bedroom except for symbolic reasons—is accompanied by a little statue of St. Margaret, patron saint of childbirth, surmounting the chair near it, which is hung with a dust broom, a popular symbol of chasing away the devil. On the window are pieces of fruit, symbolizing, as in the "Inge Ball" and "Lucca" madonnas, the Innocence before the Fall. The crystal beads and mirror decorated with scenes from the Passion directly behind the couple are overt symbols of sacred purity. The little dog, standing somewhat stiffly between the couple, represents marital fidelity; and as Panofsky says, "there is little doubt that the discarded pattens in the lower left hand corner are intended...to remind the beholder of what the Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai."46

The symbols in Van Eyck are not permitted to violate the laws
of the senses. The only exception is an early work, the Madonna in a Church of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum of Berlin. Here the size of the Virgin and the unnatural northern light provide the indications that she is not represented in a church, but as the Church. This is further testified to by the choir of angels, not priests, celebrating the Missa Beatæ Mariae in the apse, and the text embroidered on Mary's robe, which occurs on the Altarpiece of the Lamb, and says,

"It (meaning Divine Wisdom as diffused in the Universal Church and embodied in the Virgin Mary) is more beautiful than the sun and above the whole order of the stars. Being compared with the (natural) light, she is found before it. She is the brightness of eternal light, and the flawless mirror of God's majesty." 47

Such beautiful and mystical achievements may seem a long way from Malory's story of Arthur. Van Eyck as an artist is on a level rather higher than Malory is as a writer; moreover, similarities between the aesthetics and aims of painting in the Netherlands must be tenuous when compared with English prose of thirty or fifty years later. Yet the two, if not in discipline, language, talent, inspiration, or even influence, do share a common value system. Both concern themselves with reworkings of ancient tradition; both share an odd combination of decaying Realism and primitive empiricism; both obtain their finest effects from a type of visual expression; and both employ technical innovations that violently foreshadow the Nominalist future, while retaining a taste for archaic form and matter. Moreover, both, despite their comparative modernity, represent for us, on a popular level, the essence of the Middle
Ages.

In the iconography of the Altarpiece of the Lamb, there are two groups whose heavenly prominence has occasioned some surprise. These are the Righteous Judges and the Knights. The latter receive mention in the Golden Legend's version of the All Saints vision, but in the Mystic Lamb, they are given a whole panel. (See Plate I) They are significantly on the Lamb's right, directly behind the Old Testament prophets, emerging from some rocks as if about to enter the central scene. As we can see in the detail, the three armoured knights in the vanguard are perfect manifestations of the fifteenth century chivalric ideal; they could be Lancelot and Galahad, or any of the romance heroes. Behind them are the royal knights, in sumptuous cloaks and crowns. The nine personages have been variously identified as the three archangels, King Arthur and Charlemagne, the Dukes of Burgundy, and so on; as Alfonso Die- rick points out, however, had an artist like Van Eyck intended them to be identifiable, they would be so. They are sym- bolic representations of the holy ideals of the old feudal order. That they retain so exalted a place in the iconography of a middle class artist whose chief patrons were also members of the bourgeoisie, is corroboration of Huizinga's thesis that the chivalric ideal was still held to be the moving force of fifteenth century life. The order of the Christian universe is grouped around the Lamb, including, besides ascetics, martyrs, virgins, confessors, and hermits, la vie contemplative, the judges, rulers, and Christian knights of the temporal vie
active. That the active world is intruded in an unprecedented manner, particularly the Just Judges, who, as Panofsky says, have no hagiological status at all, whether explained by the wishes of a donor or by other reasons, witnesses the general invasion of the active, material, and secular into the sacred in this century.

A comparison with Malory is here hardly necessary. The knights are perfect representations of the chivalric ideal, as are Malory's. Like the more grandiose St. George of the Madonna of Canon van der Paele, they are clothed in contemporary armour and embody the contemporary masculine ideal. They might be illustrations of an Arthurian episode, like the tournament at Lonasen or at Winchester, except for a lingering aura of spirituality, almost gone in the Just Judges, that betrays their allegorical, hidden meaning as representations of holy Ideas gathered around the Mystic Lamb. In Malory the double entendre of Realism is nearly gone. In this respect he is more a man of the future than Van Eyck; while Van Eyck seeks to clothe the old ideas in the new form, Malory has cut the ties with them, and indeed no longer recognizes them. Van Eyck gives Realism its climactic expression; Malory seeks to preserve the ideals of the past, but in reality he no longer can identify or understand them. He tries to be archaic and conservative, but his concerns are temporal and humanist. Yet he is medieval in that he does not recognize his own position— he clothes his Nominalism in the archaic, even as Van Eyck covers his symbolism with empirical reality. In this respect the
two are corollaries, and the understanding of one enhances
the understanding of the other. They are not contradictions,
but two faces of the same phenomenon, the change from the
Realist cultural phase to the Nominalist.

Thomas Malory, according to the colophon at the end of
his work, finished his "book of Arthur and his kynghettes" in
1469. Little is known of his life or his identity, except
that he was a knight, and he wrote while in prison.49 Whatever his exact identity, he was a member of the English minor
nobility, and he managed, at such a late date, to produce the
only Arthurian cycle in English, a cycle so compacted and dif-
ferent in technique from its French sources, that it became
the link that kept Arthurian romance alive through The Faery
Queene and The Idylls of the King to present day novels and
cinema.50 There is some controversy over whether he intended
his work to be read as a whole book, like a modern novel, or
whether he was writing a series of romances. In the context of
this discussion, this controversy is only relative; compared to
modern concepts of unity, Malory's work is disjointed and seg-
mented; but compared to the narrative style that had gone be-
fore, it is amazingly modern. It is in reality a transitional
form, and our difficulty in classifying it is largely a function
of critical vocabulary.51

Despite his technical role as translator, it is clear
from the early stories, and even more from the later ones, that
Malory handled the Arthurian legend in a manner very different
from his predecessors. This legend was, for him, not an ex-
pression of a delicate and otherworldly culture, or even a round of fantastic and entertaining adventures, but a kind of history of England and of chivalry, governable by the same empiric laws of time and space that applied to normal fifteenth century life. Although it means departing from or changing his source, whenever possible he eliminates magic and the supernatural; whenever possible he localizes time and place in the recognizable and everyday; and whenever possible he restores narrative chronology, though this is very difficult, and emphasizes consistency in characterization.

Nearly all critics of Malory agree on this avoidance of the supernatural, and nearly all note its paradoxal consequence of heightening the mysterious effect of the few that remain. Malory dismisses, "in very summary fashion," an episode in the Suite du Merlin where Morgan le Fay changes herself and her followers into rocks; he eliminates mention of her gift of prophecy; and he makes Accolon, whose major threat to Arthur in his source was his magical power, into a simple traitor. In Malory's version of the Knight of the Cart story, Gwenevere is kidnapped by Meleagant and taken, not to the mysterious "terre foraine" of the French romance, but to "a castell of the gyffte of kynge Arthure within seven myle of Westmynster," an "owre and a halff" by cart from the Thames. Words and phrases added by Malory to his source abound in such specifications as, "the fifth day aftir;" "five hondred;" "two owres and more;" "on Whitsonday;" "the kynge of Walys," and other such precisions of time and place.
Within the narrative itself, Malory's method is to shorten and rearrange the episodes, and to tie them together by means of connecting passages. Vinaver gives ample examples of this method. Earlier, I discussed the methods of the French "tapestry technique," and the ways in which it expressed the Realist notion of the universe. Vinaver visualizes the difference between the cyclic technique and Malory's by taking two story themes from Malory's "Book of Sir Launceston and Queen Guinevere," and the corresponding section of his source, the Mort Arthu, calling the first theme, "the poisoned apple," "a," and the second theme, "the fair maid of Astolat," "b." In the Mort Arthu, the appearance of the two themes can be schematized as follows:

\[ a_1 b_1 a_2 b_2 x b_2 z b_2 m b_2 n b^2 p a_3 a_6 a_4 b_3 a_5 \]

In Malory, this is reorganized into:

\[ a_1 a_2 a_3 a_4 a_5 a_6 b_1 b_2 b_3 \]

Vinaver does the same thing with the patterns in Malory's "Tale of King Arthur" and its source, the Ruth Merlin. As he notes, in the French works the themes are completely interwoven; in the Mort Arthu, the narrative begins and ends with the "poisoned apple," but fragments of it alternate with fragments of the "fair maid of Astolat," which in turn are split into as many as seven shorter sections, interspersed with stories belonging to neither theme \((z, x, m, \text{ etc.})\), which will continue a more or less unending tapestry of alternating, fragmented, and interspersed themes of their own. This pattern, typical of the cyclic romance, is, to put it mildly, "a feature unpalatable to modern
Obviously, it was just as unpalatable to Malory, separated from us by more than five hundred years, but from his source by only about a century and a half. He has disentangled the separate stories, discarded some, and arranged the rest in what we would still consider correct chronological order. In other words, his tastes are ours; he is concerned with horizontal, not vertical time, and physical, not Divine, law. If no other tendency could be found to identify him as a modern, this one would nearly suffice.

As for character consistency, books have been written about his coherent treatment of Guenevere, Lancelot, Gawaine, and Arthur, who appear in so many guises in the French cycle that they each seem to be several people. Malory is the first to reconcile the idea of the strong king who defeats the Romans and forges the Table Round, with the romantic foil who either does not notice, or does nothing about, the relationship between his queen and Lancelot. In Malory, the second characteristic becomes a function of the first, of his chivalric loyalty and goodness. He knows of but does not wish the infidelity called to his attention, because of his love for Lancelot. Malory generally calls upon the authority of his source when he is about to make an addition. This original passage begins,

For, as the Freynshe booke seyth, the kynge was full lothe that such a noyse shulde be uppon sir Launcelot and his quene; for the kynge had a dem-yng of hit, but he wold nat here thereof, for sir Launcelot had done so much for hym and for the quene so many tymes that wyte you well the kynge loved hym passyngly wele.
The Arthur in the *Morte Arthure* mourns that such a noble man should be a traitor, but does not hesitate to take action against him. In the *Morte Artu*, he urges the brothers to act without delay; these reactions, in light of his later regret over the war with Lancelot, make him appear not only blind, negligent and vengeful, but imprudent as well.

Moreover, the story that really establishes Arthur's status as a king, "The Noble Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius," is not placed, as in Malory's two sources, directly before Mordred's betrayal and the dissolution of Arthurian civilization, but instead very early in the narrative, just after the story of Merlin and the initial adventures that establish the tone of the Arthurian world. Malory's version closes with Arthur's great victory over the Romans, and is followed, not by his betrayal, but by stories of Lancelot. The dissolution of the Round Table does not take place until one thousand pages later, and is initiated not while Arthur is absent fighting Lucius, but while he is in France laying unwilling siege to Lancelot. The effect of this arrangement, even if it cannot be proven that it was intended, is to emphasize the king's greatness initially, so that it shines throughout the stories; moreover, it effectively attributes his downfall not to unforeseeable "jeux de Fortune," as in the French, but to the unfortunate results of the Queste, which now occupies the Lucius position, and to the passion between Lancelot and Guenever, which destroys the Arthurian world from within.

Besides these modern innovations, Malory shows himself a
man of the transitional fifteenth century in his conformity to its popular values. For all his affinities with Nominalism, he is still concerned with the forms and trappings of decayed Realist culture. His work, like Proissart's or Chastellain's, is, to a great extent, a paean to chivalry. His Lancelot is more delineated than any other character, not because he is a perfect lover or a just ruler, but because he is the ideal of the "erthely knyghte." I have mentioned Malory's conception of the Round Table as a kind of grandiose fifteenth-century chivalric Order. When we list the words and phrases added to the stories, they overwhelmingly concern the themes of Chivalry, or Lancelot's role as the Perfect Knight; examples are "by your feyth and trothe that ye owghe to the Hyghe Order of Knyghtehode;" "Payre dre brother," seyde he, 'remem-
ber of what kynne we be com of...rather, brothir, suffir deth than to be ashamed;" "Than was the cry huge and grete, how sir Palomydes the Sareyn hath smytyn downe sir Lancelot's horse...and seyde hyt was unknyghtly done in a turnement to kylle a horse wylfully, othir allys that hit had bene done in playne batayle lyff for lyff." Such examples are numberless, but Ma-
lory's final tribute to Lancelot, which finds only a pale pro-
totype in the alliterative Morte Arthur, gives some idea of the importance of this conception to him:

"A, Lancelot!...thou were heode of al Crysten knyghtes!...thou were the curtest knyght that ever bare sheeld! And thou were the truest frende to thy lovar that ever bestrade bore, and thou were the trewest lover, of a synful man, that ever loved woman, and thou were the kyndest man that ever strake wyth swordes. And thou were the god-
elvest persons that ever came amonse press of knyghtes."
Malory's admiration of the ideals of knighthood is most obvious in his version of the mystic part of the legend, his "Tale of the Sankgreall." Significantly, it is the least original of his works, and except for omissions and minor alterations, it is a translation of the *Queste del Saint Graal*, the fourth branch of the thirteenth-century Arthurian prose cycle. The few additions or changes are all the more revealing, however; in general, they have the effect of altering the emphasis from spiritual quest to knightly adventure. Whether Malory did this purposefully, in order to serve his conception of the importance of the chivalric social structure, or whether he simply no longer comprehended the religious implications of his source, is difficult to tell. For example, when he comes to the phrase, "sus la foi que tu dois à Celui qui hom lige tu es et en qui servise tu t'es mis," he translates it, "for kynge Arthure's sake." 59 His mind had become either too secularized to recognize the spiritual metaphor, or too Nominalist to sympathize with it. He replaces the French "chevaillerie célestial" with the phrase, "virtuous living;" when sir Lionel is condemned for having "en soi nule vertu de Nostra Seignor," Malory says that Lionel is a "murtherer...who doth contrary to the Order of Knyghthode," even though there is nothing in Lionel's record in the Arthurian cycle to warrant such a description. 59 When Lancelot confesses his great sin to a hermit, he says in French, "...ja mes à la vie que je ai menée si longuement ne retournerai, ainz tendrai chastée et garderai mon cors au plus nettement que je porrai," which Malory translates as
"from henceforward I caste me, by the grace of God, never to be so wicked as I have been, but as to sew knyghthode and to do fetys of armys." 50

As for Lancelot himself, Malory consistently tones down the condemnations and humiliations he suffers in the French Queste, and emphasizes instead his relative success. In the Queste, "Lancelot was an example of earthly chivalry humbled in the endeavour to make itself worthy of divine grace, and Lancelot's humiliation was as necessary a part of the story as Galahad's triumph." 51 The fact that Malory tampers with this basic principle shows how far he was from understanding the symbolism and spiritual aims of his source. Lancelot's major virtue, according to the Queste, is his willingness to repent; in Malory, it is his knightly behavior to his opponents, his active defense of damsels and sparing of the defeated, in effect, his adherence to a code of humanistic morality. In Malory, Lancelot's main sin is that "he ys nat stable," that is, as best of "ony sinfull man of the worlde," he is human. In the Queste, his sin is lechery, the coveting of Arthur's queen, and the story says he repents "moult qu'il est oncques fole amor envere la royne, car il a usé son tempe." The phrase, "usé son tempe," harks back, of course, to Andreas' admonition to his friend Walter, "...therefore it is not advisable, my respected friend, for you to waste your days on love," and to similar phrases in Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor. All this is ignored by Malory. 52 He does not, like the highly educated and religious Van Ryck, employ concealed symbolism; rather he avoids
symbolism, if he can. When the knights first set out on the Quest, the French emphasizes that each took, like Ivain, the "right" or most difficult way, "là ou il la voient plus empese." Malory says, "every knight toke the way that hym lyked beste." Yet, he reproduces faithfully scores of holy allegories, numinouse admonitions, and fantastic visions, because, like Van Eyck, and even more like the humbler intellectuals of his age, he is concerned with the preservation of the ancient religious form as a good in and of itself. His piety, as we might infer from his treatment of the Grail and his numerous colophons invoking God's help and the prayers of his readers in releasing him from prison, is largely subjective. However, piety is a concomitant of good knightly behavior, like "virtuous lyving," so his knights are pious, in the sense of going to church, giving alms, invoking the name of God, and so on. Malory's religious sentiments, we might say, are beyond superstition and decadent mysticism; they are practical, social, and concerned mainly with propriety. The numinous nature of the Quest serves in Malory's additions and departures from his source, not to undermine but to lend importance to his vision of knightly society. Holiness, in the fifteenth century, is still respected in form, if not understood in essence. Malory ends his works with an original paragraph that has little to do with real pious feelings, and much to do with elevating the social character of Lancelot and glorifying the surviving members of the Table Round:

For the Fresashe book maketh menyon—and is auctor—
yessed—that syr Bors, syr Ector, syr Blamour and syr Bleoberis wente into the Holy Lande, thereas Jesu Chryst was quycke and deed. And amose as they had stablyshad theyr londes, for, the book seyth, so syr Launceston commannded them for to do or ever he passyd oute of thys worlde, there these foure knyghtes dyd many batayllles upon the mys-creantes, or Turkes. And there they dyed upon a Good Fryday for Goddes sake. 63

Malory's positioning of the Quest, intentional or not, gives the impression, dear to the Nominalist's heart, that spiritu ism is socially destructive, an impression that T. H. White emphasises in The Once and Future King. His religious attitude, his technique, are modern. So. is his writing style.

I mentioned Huizinga's and Auerbach's thesis that aesthetic in the fifteenth century was visual, concerned with crystallized, palpable form, a taste which can result in extremely lively bursts of descriptive vision, or in statuesque, frozen tableaux vivantes of either art or rhetoric. In Malory, this visualizing tendency, like the one in Van Ryck, is his major claim to being not only a translator and preserver of chivalric legend, but an important English author. As Joseph Bédier enthusiastically puts it,

"Le hasard voulut qu'il fût bon écrivain, si bon que sa prose n'a presque pas vieilli. Aussi cette ample composition... maintes fois réimprimée au temps d'Elisabeth et jusqu'en plein dix-septième siècle, et tout au long du dix-neuvième en des éditions sans nombre, demeuré-t-elle un livre classique, l'un des joyaux du trésor qui forme, en Angleterre, le patrimoine spirituel de la nation. Mystérieux pouvoir du goût, d'une langue saine, d'un bon style! Ce Malory ne fût qu'un traducteur, un adaptateur: sans lui pour-tant, dans l'Angleterre d'aujourd'hui, ni la poésie, ni la pensée, ni l'art ne seraient tout à fait ce qu'elles sont. 64"

Like Van Ryck, Malory's facility with visual effects, so well
appreciated by Nominalist culture, is both a function of his times, and a proof of unique genius quite beyond times or influences. Vinaver often discusses the "miracle" of Malory's prose style, by dissecting his exact departures from and inclusions of the words of his sources, his talent for picking out the most important and striking phrases, his ability to follow a story line or a characterization despite constant interruptions, digressions, and contradictions. Part of all this is his talent for sensual detail, for description that immediately brings the sound, texture, smell, or color of a thing into perfect mental focus, a talent again revealed in comparison to his most Realist source, Bauduinet, in describing the aesthetic of the thirteenth century prose romances—a description that, in its general form applies to its art as well—saying that the Queste del Saint Graal is

pour l'esprit et non pour les yeux: La réalité matérielle est absente de ce livre; les personnages y flottent dans un décor étrange, impossible, et qui ne parle guère à la sensibilité; les formes et les couleurs s'y dissolvent en abstractions. ...C'est peut-être le charme le plus singulier de la Queste que l'esprit y est continuellement suspendu entre l'en-vraisemblable et l'abstrait. 65

Nothing could be further from a description of Malory's style. Most allegory, despite minute description of the objects serving the theological argument, is hard to picture in terms of the sensual world. 66 Malory's work has always inspired illustration of the most copious kind; indeed there are few scenes he describes that could not be visually represented, even in his version of the Quest. Common examples are his translation
of "une grant eve rade," as "rough watir whych rored;"
or the inevitable "nef ayse u lit moult bel, apareilles de
toutes les riches choses dont biax lis peut estre apraeilles;"
of the Maiden of Astolat, as a "barget coverde with blacke
samyte over and over," in which Elaine is placed "while her
body is hot;" or "the wordis wente to hys herte," for the
French "lez...paroles n'a il mfe oubliés ne oublieria ja mais
tant qu'il vive;" or Perceval's lion, not "aloit tounsours ori-
ant et courant après lui et faisant grant joye," but the imme-
diately visible, "wente allway aboute hym, fawnynge as a spay-
nell." These examples are important and helpful inso-
far as they indicate the general difference between the texts.

On one occasion, Malory even succumbs to the contemporary
taste for rhetoric. In an entirely original passage, he per-
sonifies winter and summer, and makes rhetorical comparisons
to love; in general, however, he uses neither allegory nor rhe-
toric, but like the popular ballads of his time, or the more
talented poets, like Villon and Christine de Pisan, he depends
on "l'état essentiel de la parole." On the rare occasions
when the prose of Proissart or Chastellain breaks through its
bombastic conventions, it very much resembles Malory's. Auer-
bach emphasizes "creatural" and "visual" representation in
Antoine de la Sale. We can certainly see the poor distracted
child of the Seigneur du Chastel, crying, "hélles, hélles, je
vois morir, morir, moriri!" dont en criant et en plourant, re-
gardant devant et derrière et entour lui, a vostra coste d'-
arne que je portoys, lasse my! et il me vist..." Indeed, we
are spared nothing, sensually, including the "jambes eschiées..
jusques aux os." This "creatural realism," which Auerbach
considers a symptom of the fatigue and barrenness of the epoch,
yet survives to become the quality which separates the human-
ism of the Renaissance from its classical progenitor; again
a curious welding of primitive Nominalism and decayed Realism.68

These other prose writers of the time, however, remain
inferior talents; Malory is the one prose writer of the waning
Middle Ages to combine the features of the old Realism and the
new Nominalism in sufficient balance to produce real art. He
does not write history, but like Van Eyck draws from the tra-
dition of the Realist medieval culture; his modern, Nominalist
attitudes and knowledge give that tradition its final and
crystalline form. On a popular level, the madonnas of Van
Eyck and the tales of Malory seem to express the essence of
the Middle Ages. Malory was first and foremost a translator
"reducing" the French legend into English, and his stories
retain even the ancient Celtic flavors of magic and symbolism,
while translating them, not only into English, but into "mo-
dern" language; so the most modern tastes can find delight
in the perfect form and detail of a Van Eyck, while sensing,
in the disguised symbolism, all the mystery of the Dark Ages.
Malory was far less a Realist than Van Eyck, whose finely de-
detailed, micro-macrocosmic technique, though not his concern
with mimesis, was imitated for only a century, when its sym-
bolic sanctification of the world was forgotten. Malory's
role was to preserve these symbolic aspects in his adaptation
of the great epic of the Holy Grail and of Arthur, to make
them significant and convincing, even to Nominalists. As Vinaver says,

He may have misunderstood the Grail doctrine, confused the whole spiritual issue and omitted some essential parts of the narrative; for all this, it is through his version and not through the French Queste that the symbol of the Grail has reached in our imagination that degree of reality without which no symbol can live:

"Thon anone they harde crakyngs and crynyngs of thundir, that hem thought the palyse abolde all to-dryve. So in the mydys of the blast entyrde a sonnebeame more clerer by seven tymys than ever they saw day, and all they were alyghted of the grace of the Holy Goste...Then enterd into the halle the Holy Gryale coverde with myght sayte, but there was none than myght as hit nother whom that bare hit. And there was all the halle fullfyled with good odours, and every knyght had such metis and drynkes as he bestes loved in this worldes." 69

As for Malory's conception of the Arthurian legend as a whole, it is through him that it has changed from romance to mimesis. The romantic Arthur's downfall was seen in symbolic Christian terms; Arthur reaches the pinnacle of earthly power and glory, but he is still subject to Fortune, as is everything which is not founded in the true and unchanging joys of God, and Fortune brings his defeat. Arthur was so clearly understood in this role, that he is often pictured as the figure surmounting representations of the Wheel of Fortune. 70

When Arthur is defeated and mortally wounded in the Mort Artu, he cries: "Fortune qui m'a esté mere jusque ici, et or m'est devenue marraixtre, me fet user le remenant de ma vie en douleur et en courroux et en tristesse." 71 The corresponding speech in Malory is
Malory is at his humanist best in the last book of his work, in which he departs from his source as never before. The symbolic role of the Temporal King is erased; Arthur's fall has nothing to do with a moral demonstration of the true order of the universe, but is instead a mimetic tragedy caused by the passionate relationships between Lancelot, Guenevere, Gawaine, and Arthur, who are complex mixtures of good and evil, not the daemons of romance. I need hardly point out that human tragedy is not viable to the Realist mind; men are saved or damned according to their free actions and will, and they are watched over by God's order, all of which eliminates the element of helplessness so central to tragedy. By making Arthur's brilliant social order the victim of a set of circumstances, Guenevere and Lancelot's love, Gareth's accidental death, Gawaine's need for revenge, Arthur's tragic hesitations, Malory both elevates the ancient legend to the highest form of mimetic art, and exhibits his complete separation from a Realist understanding of the universe. It is only in Malory that Lancelot, given the grace to perform a miracle, weeps, "as a child that had bene beatyn." It is only in Malory that he dies "groveling" on Arthur and Guenevere's grave. The dream referred to above is a symbolic vision of the Wheel of Fortune, including an apparition of the dead Gawaine, who warns the king of his death and how to avert it. But when recalling it, Malory's
Arthur refers only to his beloved nephew.

It is in this form, as primitive but essentially mimetic tragedy, that the Arthurian legend has been kept alive for the past five centuries. Perhaps, as Bédier says, everything would have been different without it; at any rate, it is an important link between modern sensibilities and the civilization that originally created it. By reading Malory, we are led into our own past, even as in him that past is transcribed for the future.
Chapter V

I have tried to trace the Realist phase of Western culture from its first concrete and coherent expression in the fourth century to its decay in the fifteenth. Obviously, it did not then entirely disappear, as any reading of Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture* or of Pope's "Essay on Man" will illustrate. It did, however, cease to be the dominant form of thought and expression, steadily, besides a few largely specious revivals in the nineteenth century, decreasing in influence and coherence to its present position, where, as a mode of thought, it has little influence on the practical aspects of Western life. Yet, despite this general submergence, post-medieval Western culture can still be discussed in terms of Realism and its allegorical expression.

Soon after the Renaissance, allegory did become, to a large extent, the narrow literary mode that it is considered today; that is, it lost its transcendent basis and its relationship to the medieval philosophy of Realism, retaining, predictably enough, only its form; personification, ornamental imagery, daemonic characterization, and so on. What I have defined as "allegory" depended upon the Dionysian world view, the Victorine goal of knowledge, the Augustinian progress to God. It concerned, to varying degrees, the fragmented parts of man, the microcosm, seeking union with the Divine. It seldom appeared in a pure form, but, as I have tried to illustrate, the idea of its function spread through all aspects
of life. This specific form of allegory has never disappeared, of course. We can cite a work of enormous influence, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where the Realist ideas are preserved in as clear a form as they had in the Middle Ages, the American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose allegorical morality rests upon the medieval Christian basis, and the perfectly orthodox doctrine of the works of the Victorian children's novelist, George MacDonald. In general, however, allegory, like the old social structure and the old religious beliefs, lost its core and declined in popularity. It became what I referred to before as "secular" allegory, "other-speaking" in the sense of clever extended metaphor, which symbolized not mystical goals, but political and social ideals. In this form, allegory came to serve irony and satire, and is used as a weapon of political propaganda. We think of Swift, Defoe, Orwell, Huxley, and so on.

The close relationship between science fiction and the work of Orwell, Huxley, or Zamatin, illustrates the basically allegorical character of this modern romance form. Indeed, as Fletcher points out, allegory in both a secular and spiritual sense survives in the modern romance forms, the love stories, murder mysteries, horror stories, the Western and science fiction where daemonically "good" heroes battle daemonicly "bad" villains—often clearly understood as aspects of themselves—to predictable moral conclusions. The extreme popularity of these literary and cinematic anachronisms in twentieth-century Western culture goes far to illustrate
the fact that the study of the genesis of allegorical romance in the Middle Ages is not without bearing upon modern taste and preoccupations, and that an understanding of Realism is not immaterial to the needs and desires of a Nominalist culture.

We might say that the purpose of the Realist type of allegory is akin to the psychological effect of the mathematically abstract; both are stabilizing. "In a world of hardly controlled flux the mind seeks some point of repose and security, and finds it in abstract, linear, schematic, ornamental designs." Dionysian hierarchy is just such an abstract, linear, schematic, ornamental, and comforting, design. Bernard Bronson thinks that mathematics replaced allegory as a useful, concise abstraction tool for men after the eighteenth century. Later, however, like everything from drama styles to national concerns, empirical science underwent a kind of stylistic separation, in this case from the arts, and thence from human experience. Mathematics withdrew so far into the abstract that its application to human life is now almost forgotten, or at any rate, seldom emphasized. Therefore, man was left with small spiritual comfort. We are reminded of Kafka's, "O for a household god to keep beside me!", the desire of literary critics for a "new mythology," or the precepts of Jung's Modern Man in Search of a Soul. In this context, it is interesting to note the tendency towards allegory in the American novel.

Until quite recently, a really significant number of the
greatest names in American fiction either used directly, or maintained close affinities with, allegory in the Realist sense. Nominalism, which places man and his rational powers separate from and above all the forces of nature and his own imaginings, does not develop until a culture is town-based and civilized. All of the peoples of the world now living in direct communication with nature have Realist philosophies; only the security of civilization permits Nominalism. In America, it is as if European man, when confronted with the awesome wilderness of the new continent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, automatically reverted to the ancient philosophy. At any rate, there seems to be a stronger allegorizing tendency in the works of American literature and popular culture than in the continental counterparts. Even Conrad, when he intrudes the civilized man of Europe into the dark continent of Africa, uses a Realist-based allegorical expression. One thinks of Hawthorne and Melville, but also of Faulkner, Nathaniel West, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Stephen Crane, and popular works like Horatio Alger, the typical Hollywood movie, and so on. That Hawthorne, for example, exhibits medieval traits, even in the detrimental sense, has always been apparent to critics. Yet to read The House of the Seven Gables not just with some vague idea of Puritanism, but with the Realist conception in mind, does, as in most such allegory, enormously increase its personal and emotional value. I am not trying to say that Hawthorne was some kind of Augustinian, but that he was a religious man, in the profound sense, and that
true religious understanding in the West results in an inner approach to life that is Realist and Neoplatonic. Ahab's pursuit of the White Whale has undergone a great amount of exegesis; the affinities of the story, despite its naturalistic trappings, with the allegorical form are obvious. I say "naturalistic trappings," because, if the literary mode of allegory hardly ever appeared in pure form in the Middle Ages, where commentary, as in Boethius or Jean de Meun, often makes us forget all about personification, it is even less likely to do so in a Nominalist era, with its taste for mimesis and naturalism.

There is so much naturalistic detail in modern works inclined towards allegory, that its presence can easily obscure the inner meaning, much more easily than it did in the days of Thomas Usk. As Northrop Frye and Angus Fletcher say, we must allow for degrees of allegorical intention. The gift for and use of mimetic expression does not mean that a author cannot imply hierarchal, spiritual truths through it, as Dante and Van Eyck plainly illustrate. The study of thought, the criticism of art, should not be an "either-or" activity. Because we cannot say that William Faulkner is an allegorist does not mean we can deny him any allegorical intention or affinity. As Fletcher says, enigmatic, emblematic, occasional or occult allegory, elicits only particular doubts as to the intentions of specific symbols. But, there are works where it is by no means clear that we have a warranty for any allegorical interpretation at all. There are works where, though emblematic devices appear from
time to time, they do not predominate, nor do
they override mimetic counter-movements. These
works...are even more important to the theory of
allegory than those others, where there might be
particular questions of intent...they raise a
doubt as to the boundaries between allegory and
other modalities of literature. 3

Pseudo-Dionysius says, "...l'exégèse d'une seule de ses images
paradoxalement éclaire par analogie tous les symboles du même
type," so I will try to be brief in my examples. 4 In Faulkner,
we find the allegorical indications of obsessed, single-minded,
daemonic characters, engaged generally in a journey or pro-
gress, as well as the judgement of criticism that he is "vi-
sionary," "symbolic," "mythic," and so on. As I Lay Dying is
perhaps the most obvious example of Faulkner's interest in
strange, one-dimensional, anti-human characters fulfilling an
obsession. Joe Christmas, and to a lesser extent, Lucas Beau-
champs, are symbols of the corrupted racial relationships in
the South that Faulkner considers "cursed." The names are
symbolic, especially in Light in August, Joe Christmas for the
sacrificial victim, Joanna Burden for the obsessed spinster
who tries to expiate the sins of her race by devoting herself
to missionary care of local blacks, Reverend Hightower for the
town recluse obsessed by purity. Fletcher says that the idée
fixe that characterizes daemonic behavior, reflects the static
position of any agency in a universal hierarchy 5 In As I Lay
Dying, one of Faulkner's favourite images is that of stasis;
his train of characters with their grisly burden are repeatedly
frozen into timelessness, and this image recurs even in his
comic story "Spotted Horses." Anyone who has ever tried to
disentangle a single story line from any of the works in Go Down Moses has had direct experience with medieval tapestry technique, and the elaborate interrelationships of his mythical county in Mississippi have much in common with the atmosphere and technique of epic and cyclic romance. The allegorical intent of "The Bear" is overt, and in it, Faulkner's strange swelling style and his facility with emblem and "difficult ornament" makes a final comprehension of his meaning a challenging and profound experience. As Maurice Valency says in In Praise of Love, "It...brings about an enhanced participation on the part of the reader, who has a feeling, if he succeeds in penetrating the poet's meaning, of greater intimacy than less exclusive types of poetry can afford;" this is a modern judgement in pure Augustinian terms. 6

Even a less "mythic" American author like F. Scott Fitzgerald shows allegorical affinities in his numinous treatment of the idea of wealth. In novels like The Great Gatsby, or the stories of Babylon Revisited, wealth is seen ambiguously, as both cursed and desired, and to some extent, the characters of these works are ciphers, whose major function is to personify various reactions to, or obsessions with, wealth.

It must be noted that there is no longer any clear-cut hierarchy upon which these various abstractions move, except perhaps in Hawthorne; the solid abstraction of the world according to orthodox Catholic doctrine survives only in a few strongly religious authors, like Blake, MacDonald, Hawthorne, or Ruskin. However, there are still many men concerned with
spiritual truth, with numinous visions, and with abstractions of morality. They have been deprived of a sure dogma and a spiritual world view, so that, depending upon their character, they react in negation. All Realist allegory has the obvious goal of Divine Wisdom, of union with God. This goal is often called the Center, insofar as it is perceived as an inner rather than an outer journey. As I have said, this goal could be lost only voluntarily and willfully, so there is no such thing in Realist allegory as tragedy or failure in our sense. Without the comforting stability of Dionysian abstraction, however, the center of man's quest for knowledge and truth is increasingly seen in negation.

Man's position in an ordered universe was largely maintained through the eighteenth century, but the advent of Romanticism exposed the hollow quality of religious beliefs, what W. W. Robson terms their "spiritual sickness." The corollary of Romantic idealization, he says, is, "selfishness, incapacity for a mutually respecting relationship with another, inevitable disappointment, weariness with oneself, a sense of irretrievable waste and loss." We find this dark spiritual pessimism in Hardy, but it is recontextualized in Kafka and Conrad, who employ what Fletcher terms "katagogy," where the former Center of Heaven of the allegorical traveller becomes an ever-constricted Hell. Fletcher says:

Kafka's allegory, despite the desire of his admirers to call it by the more fashionable name of 'myth,' elaborates an imagery which we can call 'ornamental' in both the strict and the loose sense of the term, even though at first we may not know
It is true that Kafka's characters either descend into an ever more nightmarish reality, or are prevented from moving at all. Conrad's imagery likewise depends on a descent, but its use of Dantean and Catholic symbolism makes its worldview of descent more an exact (and ultimately orthodox) negation. Conrad is basically a believer in world order, although he displays its negative aspect; Kafka negates order itself, with the result that his characters are trapped in a spiritual void, the concomitant of extreme Nominalism; that this is to some extent a cultural tendency is obvious by the reappearance of a pointless, arid void in the works of Beckett and Pinter, in Ionesco's _Rhinoceros_ , in _The Insecta_.

The idea of mysterious and significant correspondences, which is ultimately the idea of cosmic order, is not, either because of its negation in such works, or its more general neglect in favor of more purely mimetic expression, erased. We find it, albeit in a rather bloodless form, in the art and theory of early twentieth-century Surrealism. We have only to think of the paintings of Dalí, de Chirico, and Ernst to perceive their emblematic and mystic quality, their attempt to create another kind of universe with obtuse symbols. Tristan Tzara and André Breton indeed specified that their art
was seeking a new dogma, and Breton's *Manifestes du Surrealisme* tries to provide it. His requirements for a Surrealist image could as easily be for an allegorical one. He says that such an image embodies contradictions; one of its terms is hidden; it starts out sensationally, then abruptly closes the angle of its compass, that is, embodies a deception; it possesses the character of a hallucination; and it lends to the abstract the mask of the concrete. His long discussion, with its quotes from William James, Novalis, and Huysmans, of his group's "new" concepts and new dogma, strikes one as naive. From such a close view, it is difficult to tell to what part of the evolution of culture such ideas belong. Surely Breton's *Nadja*, in which he discusses his relationship with a visionary girl on the brink of madness, has the quality of dilettantism. He finds the girl's visions exciting, fascinating—one is tempted to say stylish—in and of themselves. He neither looks in them for order or coherence, nor does he try to help her through the torturous ones. When he is with her, he finds the entire world daemonic, as she does, but he takes frequent vacations, leaving her to eventual collapse and institutionalization.

This odd attitude of curiosity and personal separation, besides Surrealism, generally characterizes the modern popular interest in the occult, in astrology, alchemy, magic, exotic religions, and so on, that periodically renews itself in the West. Its last revival was in the late nineteenth century, and it is presently again in high favor. It indicates some—
thing about the popular search for spirituality in an age of empiricism, and as such something about Realism in our times. It is a kind of selfish secularization of real mysticism, yet it is a real concomitant of Realist thinking, and had great power in the Middle Ages. Hugh of St. Victor has words that still describe this attitude:

There are...others who delight to hear the words of God and to learn of His works not because these bring them salvation but because they are marvels. They wish to search into hidden matters and to know about unheard-of things—to know much and to do nothing. In vain do they gape at God's power when they do not love his mercy. What else can I call their conduct than a turning of divine announcements into tales? It is for this that we are accustomed to turn to theatrical performances, for this to dramatic recitations—namely, that we may feed our ears, not our mind.

Despite this aspect of modern Realist inclinations, there is evidence in an increasing interest in Divine correspondence of a rather more profound sort, and in a medium well adapted to the visual and ornamental aspects of allegory, the cinema.

Early films in America, with their inevitable villains, heroines and ending morals reflected the popular romantic drama from which they were taken. Later, more sophisticated cinema was still often used for allegorical purposes; one thinks of the propaganda movies of the forties, the many predictable romances, crime stories, and westerns, the adventure or journey stories, the Dance of Death themes like Ship of Fools or Lifeboat. These are are naïve allegories, especially as concerns an audience's rather instinctive understanding of them; but very recently, some European cinema has concerned itself with
the "difficult ornament" and hierarchal ideas of more sophisticated allegory. Examples are Performance, Jan Kadar's Adrift, Visconti's The Leopard and Death in Venice, and Fellini's Le Dolce Vita, Satyricon, and Le Strada. Fellini especially lends himself to allegorical examination because of his lavish use of ornament, and his unsurpassed ability for creating hallucinatory vision. Le Dolce Vita is a morality fable, concerning one man's choice between the "right" way and the "wrong" way, between simplicity and depravity; Le Strada has to do with the hierarchal concepts of place and purpose; Satyricon defies analysis, but has something to do with a visionary and moral judgement against materialism. Visconti's two works are concerned with the annihilation of ordered culture, and with the concept of beauty and its seductive dangers to a man's soul. His major allegorizing tendency expresses itself technically in his slow, monumental pace, his almost obsessive concern with decoration, with perfection of dress and setting which, as in many other visual allegories, in Van Eyck or in Dürer's Monumental Car, threatens to destroy the other aspects of his art. As for Performance, it is an allegorical and ethical discussion of the title word. The two protagonists are mystic correspondences of each other, rather as the lion equals the eagle in the cosmic hierarchy. Both are concerned with the dangerous and symbolic aspects of performing, with the conscious separation of ego from act, with the manipulation of others, with the rigors of art. Their relationship is similar to that of the
superior hero and the superior villain of the western, with the difference that this movie consciously symbolizes this relationship, and concerns itself virtually with nothing else. Every significant action of Chas in the first half of the film is ceremonially duplicated by Taylor in the second; these duplications are so subtle that they will not be noticed on a first viewing. Both characters are "stuck," as Taylor's girl puts it. In the context of progress symbolism, this is obvious enough. Chas is given a drug and then forced into an awareness of such correspondences, partly by means of kosmos; he is decorated to resemble the eccentric, long-haired Taylor, he is given Taylor's women, and, by implication, Taylor himself. Once the correspondence is acknowledged, Chas' impending death must be accompanied by Taylor's—hence the danger of such acknowledgement—and in the final frame, it is not Chas' face we see driving off with the gangsters, but Taylor's.

The meaning of all these films is based on some conception of universal and static order. The world is so morally ordered in Kador, that if his protagonist is untrue to his wife, even in thought, disaster follows. Since Chas and Taylor are stuck, death is inevitable, and even a spiritual release, as implied by the shots of Egypt and Afghanistan as the bullet enters Taylor's brain. It is true that these films, except perhaps for Satyricon, emphasize a negative choice; Marcello chooses depravity, the wife is betrayed, the beautiful society of the Leopard is destroyed, the professor is fatally seduced by beauty. Yet the drama of these rejections and failures
rests upon the real possibility of goodness and salvation, of a right choice that is rejected, not a set of inescapable circumstances, upon a static order that frames and directs the action. Both Performance and La Strada are ambivalent. The characters die, but in Performance there is the idea of union and completion, and in La Strada, that the girl has touched and changed the Quinn character, and so served a purpose. Moreover, in these films in general, we feel that their creators first conceived of the abstract, and then "masked it in the concrete," which is to some a true measure of allegorical intent.

Rosamond Tuve says that the modern poet "can no longer range subjects in an order of elevation or importance;" Fletcher says, "A world like ours, in which theological values are doubtful, cannot hope to represent the goods of existence, whether material or spiritual, in the higher terms of metaphysics;" and Bronson mourns "our all but universal inability to reach any compelling generalizations." Nietzsche said, "You will either destroy your reverence, or yourselves;" what he meant, I think, is that a consciousness of the spiritual, metaphysical, and hierarchal mysteries of a universal order is, in one way or another, necessary to man's understanding of himself. Man is the Divine Animal, but if he cuts himself off from either of these aspects, he will eventually cease to exist. In this sense, perhaps, the Realist view is the "true" one, though it must be balanced by practicality. It can only help us, at this cultural stage, to know something of the
spiritual traditions of Western culture, so that we can understand, not only objectively, but subjectively and personally, the emotive implications of the old and new art and literature I have been discussing. Such understanding must be sought; allegorical conceptions require theological groundwork, and a "rich store of ideas;" moreover, their discovery is voluntary. As Fletcher says, "one must come to such imagery with a desire to see its paradigmatic meanings." The reward for this effort can be considerable. One of the creative geniuses of our culture, William Blake, says, "Allegory addressed to the Intellectual Powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding, is my Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry." Perhaps in light of the continuing ecological crisis, we may learn to have more sympathy for a hierarchal conception of the universe, as we discover that each one of our destructive actions in nature can have such far-reaching effects. In the sixteenth century, Castiglione said:

Behold the constitution of this great fabric of the world, which was made by God for the health and the conservation of every created thing... these things...have an influence upon one another through the coherence of an order so precisely constituted that, if they were in the least changed, they could not exist together and the world would fall into ruin; and they have such beauty that the mind of man cannot imagine anything more beautiful. 

We think also of George MacDonald's more emotive and poetic expression of this order:

Those who believe in the influences of the stars over the fates of men are, in feeling at least,
nearer the truth than they who regard the
heavenly bodies as related to them merely by
a common obedience to an external law. All
man sees has to do with man...No shining belt
or gleaming moon, no red and green glory in a
self-encircling twin-star, but has a relation
with the hidden things of a man's soul, and,
it may be, with the secret history of his body
as well.
They are portions of the living house wherein
he abides.
Notes to Chapter I

1 Proclus, Commentary of the Timmaeus, I, 1718.

2 By this I assume he means the fourfold method of interpreting sacred texts, also of Augustine and Bede, i.e., historia, allegoria, tropologia, and anagogia.


6 Borges, p. 163.


8 Isidore of Seville, Etymologiarum Libri ii (Migne), PL 82, col. 115. The former is from the Prothemata Glossae Ordinariae (Migne), PL 113, col. 63.

9 See Eric Auerbach, "Figura," in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York, 1959), and Bronson, p. 167.

10 Borges, pp. 163-64. See also I. A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, pp. 133-34, "Words are not a medium in which to copy life. Their true work is to restore life to order." This description of the use of words has bearing on my discussion of the development of allegory, Chapters II and III.


12 P. 150; quoted from Augustine's De Genesi ad Littram I xxi (PL, XXXIV, 262).

13 See my discussion of the Thomist controversy below.
14. See Fletcher, p. 135; "Man, in his divinity, could imitate the creation...by his artistic efforts, and the scholar could regard himself as participating in the creation by an active aesthetic response to nature, taking it 'cosmically' rather than hedonistically."


21. See Auerbach, Mimesis, pp. 64-66.

22. Didascalicon, p. 125.

23. Mimesis, p. 137.


25. See also "figura," p. 436.


30. p. 47

31. See Chapter III.


34 Bloomfield, *p. 79*. See also *p. 77* and note24, *p. 80*.

35 see Henri de Lubac's discussion of modern attitudes in Exégèse Médiévale (éditions Montague, Paris, 1959), *p. 15*; "Que l'on renonce enfin à voir, jusque chez les plus grands de ces hommes, 'de grands enfants.' Que l'on ne se croie plus obligé de manifester sa surprise, comme en face d'un 'anachromisme' ou d'une 'énigme' chaque fois que l'on découvre chez l'un ou l'autre 'quelque aperçu extremmement judicieux,' quelque supériorité d'ésprit ou de culture; ou de n'admire jamais l'une quelconque de leurs œuvres qu'en lui faisant l'honneur de la juger digne de nos œuvres modernes."

36 *City of God*, 16:2.

37 *Pseudo-Dionysius*, pp. 120-21.

38 *pp. 139* and 143-44. re E. M. W. Tillyard, quoted in Fletcher, *p. 290*: "Indeed, what appears to aim at a very hampering rigidity may actually result in the elusive, ambiguous and iridescent. If all three or four senses are not maintained but come and go, there must be a transfer from complex to simpler scales of allegory and back again; such acts of transfer will themselves become the habit of mind."

39 Augustine, *De Genesi* (PL XXXIV, 262), I, xviii.

40 trans. W. W. Goodwin (Boston, 1878), *p. 132*.

41 *p. 112*.

42 *II, 7-8*.


44 *Pseudo-Dionysius*, *p. 121*.

45 (Princeton, 1966), *p. 144*.

46 *p. 359*.


48 (Albany, 1959), *p. 11*.


50 quoted by Robertson in Preface to Chaucer, *p. 287*. 
51 Didascalicon, p. 128.


53 quoted in Fletcher, p. 9.
Notes to Chapter II

1See Kenneth Jackson, The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition (Cardiff, 1961).

2Mabinogion, trans. Lady Charlotte Guest (London, 1937), p. 73. See also Glyn and Thomas Jones' revision of Lady Guest's translation, p. 72.

3"Branwen the daughter of Lyr," p. 41.

4See my paper, "Unferth; Evocations," written for Dr. Mason, Simon Fraser University, Spring, 1969.

5Cf. the cultural exchange afforded by the Crusades and pilgrimages, the eclectic and oriental qualities of all Romanesque art, the enormous area converted by Irish monks, the cultural exchanges involving travelling artists and architects, the rapid spread of romance literature, which appeared in translations and original forms in every country of Europe less than a century after its inception in France.

6Fletcher, p. 46.


10See Fletcher's discussion of taboo and "holy dread," p. 225.

11For example, Byzantine encaustica and the mosaics at Hagia Sophia; the cover of the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram, c. 870; the cover of the Lorsch Gospels, early ninth century; this tradition was carried well into the twelfth century, with innumerable "Christ in Majesties" presiding over the Last Judgement, as the tympanum of the west doorway of St. Lazare of Autun, c. 1135; also at Moissac, Charlieu, St. Julien-de-Jonzy, and Vezelay. Cf. Early Medieval Art John Beckwith (New York, 1964); also Medieval Art Sharon Gallagher (New York, 1969).

12Miscell, p. 42.

13As developed in the ninth century Utrecht Psalter. See Beckwith, pp. 44-50.
see the catalogue by Prauke Steenbach, Der Kirchliche prächtainband im frühen mittlealter (Berlin, 1965).

15 "Qui sophie querit cognoscere vera hoc (ma) thesis plene quadratum plaudet habere. Grammata en qui vera esse sophie fulsere sequos ornat perfectum rex he inrih stemmate sectam." I am indebted for this translation to Mark Czernicki.

16 see Beckwith, pp. 111-12. See also Ernst Kitzinger, Early Medieval Art (Bloomington, 1964), pp. 82-85.

Notes to Chapter III

1. See Allegory of Love for the first stance; lectures and conversations with Richard O’Gorman, now Dean of French at the University of Iowa, at Indiana University, 1967-69.


3. There is only one specifically Arthurian tale in the older stories, and that is "Culwch and Olwen;" the other Arthurian stories in the Mabinogion are adaptations and translations of later continental material. See Ashe, p. 46.

4. See Ashe, p. 7; also Roger Sherman and Laura Hibbard Loomis, Arthurian Legend in Medieval Art (London, 1938).


6. p. 115.

7. p. 114.

8. p. 119.


11. See Yvain, pp. 10 and 14.

12. See Fletcher, p. 55.


14. See Chapter IV.


Robertson, p. 442.

p. 44:

Locke, pp. iv and vii.

p. 53.

Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, 10. 4-5. See also St. Ailred, De Spirituali Amitia (PL 195), col. 663.

see Robertson, p. 400. Fulgentius was a Realist theologian of the sixth century.

see A. T. Hatto's introduction to Gottfried von Straßburg's Tristan (Baltimore, 1967), p. 30. None of Chrétien's romances deal with adulterous love except for the unfinished Chevalier de la Charette; Lancelot and Gwenevere's passion is blamed, to a large extent, for the decimation of the Round Table in the prose Lancelot, and accounts for Lancelot's spiritual failure in the Queste del Saint Graal; see Chapter IV.

ed. Mario Roques (ly recently, this very funny poem was considered a serious document of the ideals and social habits of thirteenth century French nobility. See Roques's introduction, and the English translation by W. W. Comfort.

This figure, already mentioned in Andreas, was a common symbol of Reason being overcome by Lust in theological writings.

French ivories, 1325-40; misericords in Chester and Lincoln Cathedrals, c. 1380; embroidery at Hatfield, 1370; English wooden casket, 1550; corbel at Bruges, 1376; capitals at Caen, 1350. See Loomis, figures 128-32 and 142.


Emile Mâle says, "Chaque fois il faut vaincre--belle idée et d'une vérité éternelle," p. 337. See Fletcher, p. 177; also Riches, pp. 133-34.

see Hatto, pp. 14-16.

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the
32 Dunn, pp. xvii-xxvii.


34 See Robertson, p. 462.

35 Cf. the Crucifixion of the Psalter of Yolande de Soissons, ca. 1275, discussed by Panofsky in Early Netherlandish Painting, figure 1; an overt allegory in the same style as the St. Louis Psalter, it shows the cross as the Tree of Life, surmounted by the symbolic pelican feeding her young with her blood. The witnesses below include St. John, the Virgin and Centurian, and also Moses and the prophets Balaam and Caiaphas. The Virgin's breast, in literal illustration of Luke II, 35, is pierced by a sword. The whole is viewed through a window of gothic tracery, thereby implying past, present, and future.

36 Early Netherlandish Painting, p. 20. See also Chapter one, and Millard Meiss' preface to the Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry (New York, 1969).

37 Panofsky, pp. 61-62.

38 Cf. the Boucicault Hours, Jacquemart de Hesdin, etc.

39 Panofsky, p. 67.

40 See Meiss, plate 121.

41 See Meiss, commentary to plate 121; see also his introduction, pp. 18-19.
Notes to Chapter IV

1. See Lovejoy, pp. 322-23.

2. Huizinga, p. 174. He notes that in his Colloquies, Erasmus satirises this contemporary belief.

3. See Fletcher, p. 301 and pp. 342 and 343. See also Malinowski, p. 23.

4. p. 27.

5. See Chapter XIX; Burgundian entremets were designed by some of the finest artists of the period, Jacques Daret, for example. Van Eyck himself is known to have polychromed civic statuary and designed heraldic banners. See p. 253.


7. Quoted in Huizinga, p. 36.


11. Denis, like the Aeropagite, defines God by negation. See Huizinga, p. 223.


13. Huizinga, p. 224. See also pp. 190 and 200, and Auerbach, p. 217: "In the fifteenth century, religious realism exhibits symptoms of excess and crude degeneracy."


15. Huizinga, p. 57.


17. Auerbach, p. 213.


19. Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, p. 68.

31 see Vinaver's commentary, p. 1408. A comparison would be Malory's treatment, on pp. 593 and 758, of the corresponding speeches by Dinadan in MS. E.N. fr. 554, col. I. Often he only mentions Dinadan's "japys," or that Arthur and Lancelot "lowghe that unnethe they myght aytte," while avoiding mentioning why.

32 see ahead.

33 see Panofsky's discussion of the sensitive problems of art historical exegesis, pp. 142-43; see also Fletcher, p. 73.

34 It must be noted that part of this tendency is due to the difficulty of iconographic study.

35 see Huizinga, pp. 277 and 284-84; Fletcher, p. 98; and Panofsky, pp. 68-69.

36 Panofsky, p. 141.

37 pp. 140-41.

38 p. 142.

39 see Panofsky, pp. 214-15; also St. Augustine, De Trinitate, I 6, 9. The attributes of the Father are the Papal crown and the Old Testament epithet SABAOT spilled out in pearls on His robe; the Christ symbol of the Pelican in her Piety decorates the cloth of honor behind the figure.
40 This is further complicated by the work of the laboratory of the Musées Royaux de Belgique, who have discovered a semicircle of gold leaf with slightly divergent rays coming from it, underneath the representation of the Dove.

41 For the first type, see Panofsky's text illustration 1 and 2, and for the "New Style" All Saints Picture, see p. 213; it was used in illustrations for Augustine, the Golden Legend, Breveries and Hours of the Trinity, and for moral treatises.

42 See the Kronyk van Vlaenderen of 1458; Durer's Diary of 1521. Subsequent copyists did correct all the iconographical errors; see the work of Jan Gossart and Gérard David, plates 321 and 488 in Panofsky.


44 pp. 178-80 and 181-82.

45 Panofsky, p. 203.

46 p. 203.


49 I refer the reader to William Matthew's very interesting book on this question, The Ill-Framed Knight (Berkeley, 1966).


51 For the two sides to this controversy, see Vinaver's introduction and R. M. Lumiansky, ed., Malory's Originality (Johns Hopkins, 1966).


53 Malory, p. 792.

54 Malory, pp. 444, 473, 906, 729; for complete lists of such words and phrases, see Vinaver's commentary, especially on the "Tale of Sir Tristram."

55 Vinaver, pp. 1572-75; see introduction and pp. 1586-91.
56 see Vinaver's discussion of Lancelot, pp. 1621-26; see also Bennett and Luminansky.

57 p. 1163.

58 Malory, p. 1259. See pp. 636-37, 475, 408, 739, 552, and Vinaver's commentary for other examples.

59 see Vinaver, pp. 1535-36.

60 see Albert Pauphile, ed., La Queste del Saint Graal (Paris, 1940), pp. 70-71, and Malory, pp. 898-99.

61 Vinaver, pp. 1536-37.

62 see Andreas, p. 52; MS. B.N. fr. folio 533, col. I; and Malory, p. 863.

63 p. 1260.

64 preface to Romans de la Table Ronde nouvellement rédigés par Jacques Boulenger (Paris, 1923), pp. iv-v.


66 this tendency is obvious in Boethius and Alain de Lille, where Nature's gown is described in great detail, yet we have difficulty in picturing her with the poet. It still exists in The Romance of the Rose, where despite ample descriptions of décor, dress, architectural detail and the like, we still find it hard to situate the action in the real world.


68 see Auerbach, pp. 209 and 229.

69 p. 865. See Vinaver, pp. 1541-42.

70 the Wheels of Fortune forming the rose windows of the Cathedrals of Trente and Basle; manuscript illumination of the early fourteenth century. See figure 245 of Loomis, also Raimond van Marle, Iconographie de l'art Profane au Moyen Âge (La Haye, 1932).

71 pp. 222-23.

72 p. 1238.

73 see Vinaver, pp. 1648-52, and 1615-26.
Notes to Chapter V


3 Fletcher, pp. 310-12.


5 p. 61.


8 pp. 143-44.


10 Didascalicon, p. 134.


12 p. 252.

13 Complete Writings, p. 246.

14 *Book of the Courtier IV*, p. 337.

15 *Phantastes*, p. 89.
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