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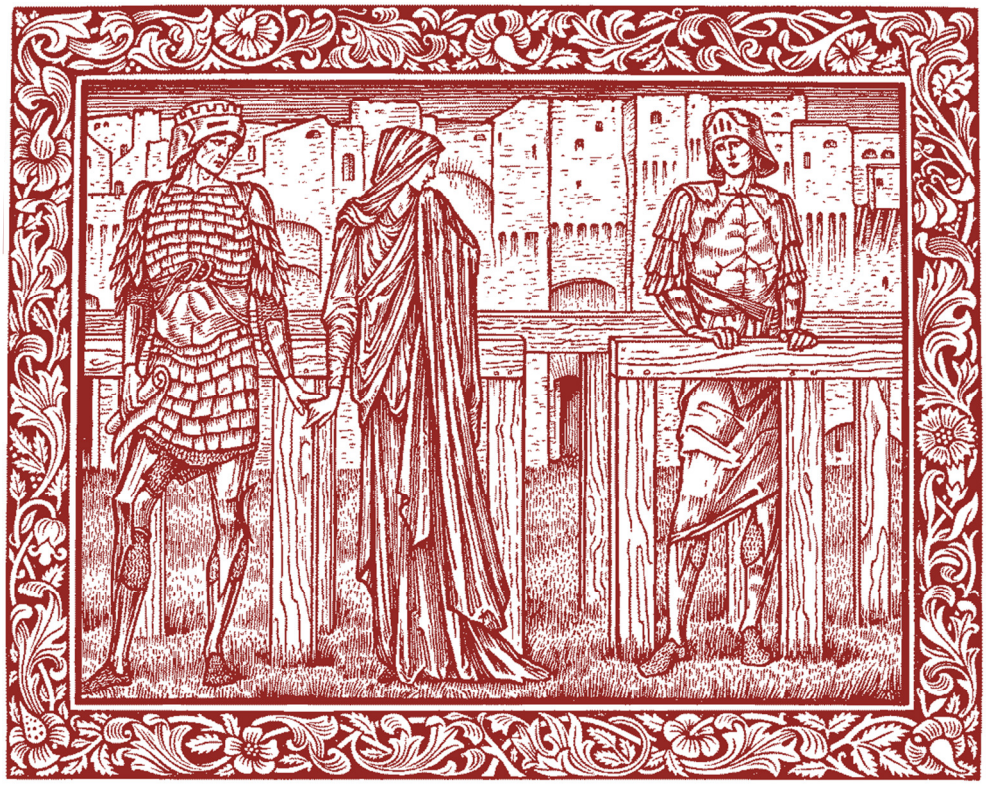

IX

THE *ROMAN VAN WALEWEIN* LACED WITH CASTLES

Bart Veldhoen

The thirteenth-century Middle Dutch *Roman van Walewein* strikes one as further removed from its source-material than is usual in the English Gawain-romances of the fourteenth century. Undoubtedly most of the motifs out of which it has been composed have a long history, but *Walewein* seems remarkably independent of their ancient significations in Celtic or other folklores. Penninc and Vostaert have produced, in that sense, a very literary tale, in which the motifs serve the particular and marked purposes of the narrative in hand.

From these motifs I have chosen to discuss the castles in *Walewein*. Although they never were a fully developed *topos* in medieval literature, at least not recognized as such in the *artes poeticae*, they are naturally images of the noble life, and suitable for analysis because they are such concrete tangible expressions of the owners' positions. In a quest-romance they might very well help us find out where we are. And in a symbolic reading they may reveal something of the protagonist's character and the nature of his adventure.

A sociological approach has been attempted by Muriel Whitaker for the castles in Malory, taking some of her clues from Rose Macaulay and from Erich Auerbach.[1] She sees the castles as spaces separated from the rest of society for a privileged class, set apart from the *mores* of actual society. King Arthur's castles, especially, at the beginning and end of adventures are seen as the highest 'imagination' or expression of the noble: refined and elegant, in which ladies play a relatively large part. That, by the way, is what I think Walewein still has to learn in *Walewein*. This is the place where the ideals are shaped, also the ceremonial centre reflecting the

[1] M. Whitaker, *Arthur's Kingdom of Adventure: The World of Malory's Morte Darthur*. Arthurian Studies 9 (Cambridge, 1984); R. Macauley, *The Pleasure of Ruins* (London, 1964); E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W. R. Trask (Princeton NJ, 1953).

harmony of the empire–kingdom (hence the ritual observances), the home of the social graces constituting the difference between the *cortois* and the *vilain*, and of the noble moral qualities of loyalty and faith, generosity and compassion.

This approach distinguishes between castles connected with King Arthur's political and judicial roles and those connected with his 'romantic' role. They notice that Caerleon commonly functions as the King's Seat, the centre of power. Carlisle usually features in stories of rebellion, war, disobedient barons and disintegration. The castle of London is the scene of more private, judicial problems. On the other hand, Camelot is the ceremonial centre, the place where knights are dubbed, where the Round Table has its natural seat, where 'the king's peace' and 'joy' reign. The Pentecost-courts, with their vertical exchange of tax-paying and rewards, and disputes about land, typically belong in Caerleon, Carlisle and London. Also King Arthur's coronation and wedding take place there. Camelot is the place for horizontal exchanges: the exchange of wassail-gifts at Christmas and New Year, or the weddings of knights at the end of their adventures, and the love of Queen Guenevere and Sir Lancelot.

Concerning the increased role of the ladies, Whitaker points to the influence that Celtic stories of fairy mistresses entertaining mortal lovers in Otherworld castles has had on the formation of the Arthurian world, and especially on the functions of the castles in it. The courtly ladies have now taken over from the fairies, but the aspects of 'hospitable castles', 'castles of delight', 'castles of healing' and castles with dangerous magical objects in them are traces of that influence.

In a narratological approach, analyzing the 'syntax' of story elements, the castles also function as 'closed' communities, standing in contrast to the surrounding wild and desolate landscape. In the castle the knight errant is among equals, temporarily; games are played to underline the civilization of the castle compared to the lands in which they are situated. In the wilderness the knight is out on his own. Yet, in spite of the 'home ground' function of the castles, an element of otherness is always present in them. The errant knight is bound to find, in these ordered communities, norms and values that are different from those of the community from which he started (King Arthur's castle), ranging from only slightly to vastly so. They are always Other Worlds.

Apart from, again, Auerbach's study, I found a stimulating example of such an approach in a short chapter from J. D. Janssens' (unpublished) dissertation, which took its clue from Joseph Bédier's description of the quest as 'une route jalonnée de châteaux' (a road interspersed with castles).[2] He

[2] J. D. Janssens, 'Analyse van de Structuur en de Verhaaltechniek in de Hoofse, Oorspron-

suggests that castles function as episode-markers and that they reflect the nature of the particular adventure. He goes as far as to call them 'solidified' and 'imaged' action (my translation). That is my starting-point for this discussion of *Walewein*. But I would like to take the analysis one step further. Janssens was struck by the fact that the way in which the approaching knight perceives the castle – the subjective impression – always plays as important a part in the description as the 'objective' information supplied by the omniscient narrator. To me, that is justification for a reading of the castles as reflections of the protagonist's character or state of mind at that point, and/or as reflections of the nature of the confrontation taking place there, in something like psychological terms.

In order to make my, in practice, symbolic readings possible I would postulate, provisionally, a narratological typology of castles in the Arthurian world of three major types. The classification itself is not the point here, and there are confusing possibilities of overlap, but some kind of distinction of types is needed to make reference and comparison possible. My first major type is 'Lady' castles, where the role of ladies becomes dominant for the male protagonist's character. This type may bear traces of the contemporary allegories of body and soul represented as a lady in a castle, or may go back to Celtic *fée*-lore, but the confrontation with the other sex as part of the hero's quest dominates the image. The second type would be 'Otherworld' castles, in which the confrontation with other *mores* is the determinant factor and in which, consequently, the element of parody is prominent. I am borrowing the term 'parody' from literary genre theory, rather than using suggestive words like 'travesty' or 'caricature', because it is the generic function that I want to stress. Analogous to the literary meaning, I use parody to signify that these castles have their basic pattern in common with the starting-point castle, but show differences in details. These alternative details then result in a changed moral–ethical function. And just as in literary theory parody enables the genre to renew itself, I believe that confrontation with Otherworld castles revitalizes the given *status quo* of the Arthurian ideals which are the hero's starting-point. Finally, an element of satire is always present in parody, which I think is also the case in the function of the Otherworld castles. My third type is that of the 'Evil Custom' and *Orgueilleux* castles, where the unlawful use of force and power is the main issue. As I said, there may appear to be an amount of overlap and mixture, but the narratological bases of these three are sufficiently different to make the distinctions helpful. The symbolic interpretations do not, of course, depend on these categories but will be strictly based on the particular instances and contexts.

kelijk Middelnederlandse Ridderroman' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Leuven, 1976), pp. 411–26; Bédier is quoted on p. 411.

In the following symbolical approach the Lady castles and the Otherworld castles will both appear to be concerned with the identity of the visiting knight, but the Lady castles will reveal more of the hero's personal character, whereas the Otherworld castles will have more to say about the social implications of his idealism. The Evil Custom castles do not reveal the protagonist but the kind of order or disorder in which he is operating and in which his ideals are given shape. In *Walewein*, the origin, Celtic or otherwise, of the Otherworld and Evil Custom castles is no longer operative in the symbolic functions. Chessboards, beds, white harts and such now function 'merely' as collective symbols of initiation. Macho-male arrogance or political or elitist arrogance are the issue here, not any original magical or mythological significations, although these may originally have served the same purposes. The otherness now operates as parody or instructive social alternative; what may once have been hostile has here become challenging to the 'closed' world of the opening. The central question has become: what makes a good knight (or king) in contemporary, though poetical, terms?

So we start at King Arthur's castle, which in *Walewein* is Caerleon: 'Die coninc Artur sat tenen male / Te Carlioen in zine sale' (King Arthur was holding court in his hall at Carlioen; 33–34). According to the sociological analysis mentioned above the story is set, then, at King Arthur's royal seat, his centre of power. This is not to be a story of war or rebellion, nor one of a private moral crisis in chivalric ethics. The choice of Caerleon might suggest that sovereignty itself is the subject or object of this adventure. This may seem a rather surprising claim, the more since that issue is not raised explicitly anywhere in the story, except at the very end, somewhat half-heartedly:

> Sulke willen segghen hier
> Dat Walewein, die ridder fier,
> Trouwede Ysabele die scone,
> Ende hi selve coninescrone
> Spien na des conincs Arturs doot.
> Maer in gheloefs clene no groot;
> In wilre nodan niet jegen lesen,
> Want het mochte wel waer wesen. (11103–10)
>
> (There are those who would claim that Walewein, the brave knight, then married the fair damsel Ysabele; and that he himself wore the crown after King Arthur's death. But I don't believe it in the least; nevertheless I won't deny it, for it could well be true.)

Yet there are more indications, of various kinds, to make a reading of *Walewein* as a story about succession to kingship plausible. A connection

between Ysabele and the sovereignty may be implied in the quotation above, and the analogy with a group of romances from the British Isles discussed by Manuel Aguirre might point to another corroborating detail.[3] In these romances the lady represents the sovereignty (symbolically), and the key of the issue is not only that the knight should marry the lady who represents the sovereignty, but that he should grant the cardinal choice to her. And that is precisely what we see happening in *Walewein*. When Walewein and Ysabele are approaching King Amoraen's castle – for whom Walewein was supposed to fetch the lady to be his wife – and our hero is explaining the original deal, to the great dismay of the lady, the debate between them is concluded as follows:

> Die joncfrouwe hadde groten toren;
> Soe seide, 'Ay lace! Wat segdi?
> Suldi enen vremden coninc mi
> Voeren ende presenteren up minne
> So ben ic ene grote keytivinne!
> Eer salic mi tleven nemen.
> Owi! Ende hoe soudijt ghetemen,
> Wel soete amijs? Want ic ne dede
> Noit jeghen ju aerchede!
> Grote weelde hebbic ghelaten
> Ende heerscapie utermaten!'
> Walewein sprac, 'Lieve joncfrouwe,
> Ic kenne dit wel. Lact juwen rouwe!
> Ic belove ju, goedertiere,
> . . .
> In beswike ju niet! Troest ju in desen.
> Also ghi wilt, also saelt wesen.'
> Soe seide, 'Here, ic weets ju danc.' (9420–37)
>
> (The damsel was very upset; she said, 'Alas! What did you say? If you take me and present me to some strange king to love then I will be a miserable wretch indeed! I would sooner take my own life. Woe is me! How could you justify such a deed, my sweet love? For I have never played false with you! I have left great wealth and immense power behind!' Walewein spoke, 'Dear damsel, I know this well. Do not be sad! I promise you, mild-hearted maiden, . . . I shall not desert you! Take solace in this. Just as you wish them, so shall things be.' She said, 'My lord, I thank you for these words.')

3 M. Aguirre, 'The Riddle of Sovereignty', *Modern Language Review* 88 (1993), 273–82, discusses Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, Gower's tale of Florent, *The Weddyng of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell*, *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine* and some Irish analogues. S. Eisner, *A Tale of Wonder* (Wexford, 1957), mentions further Welsh, Breton and French cognates.

The 'Also ghi wilt, also saelt wesen' (9436) strikes me as the handing over of sovereignty, which in the other romances is the condition for acquiring it. And after all, Walewein is King Arthur's natural successor: King Arthur has no legal offspring and, by the principles of inheritance through the female line, the sister's son would be next in line. Geoffrey of Monmouth had already recognized the fact, when in his *Historia regum Britanniae* (viii, 15) he had Merlin prophesy to Uther at the death of King Aurelius Ambrosius: 'The beam of light, which stretches towards the shore of Gaul, signifies your son, who will be a most powerful man. His dominion shall extend over all the kingdoms which the beam covers. The second ray signifies your daughter, whose sons and grandsons shall hold one after the other the kingship of Britain.'[4] All this gives more meaning to the fact that it is a chessboard which sets the quest of *Walewein* in motion: the game of the Death of the King (from Persian *shah-mat*/checkmate, 'the king is dead'). Although the game of chess is commonly an attribute of Fortuna (cf. Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*), it is interesting to notice that, in connection with Gawain, Mildred Leake Day pointed to a connection of Fortuna and chess with the Celtic Sovereignty.[5] If nobody else does, King Arthur appears to recognize the chessboard as a portent connected with his kingship. He realizes that whoever has the chessboard has the kingship. In the light of that realization his first reaction makes sense:

> 'Die up wille sitten sonder sparen
> Dit scaecspel halen ende achter varen
> Ende leverent mi in mine hant,
> Ic wille hem gheven al mijn lant;
> Ende mine crone na minen live
> Willic dat zijn eghin blive.' (71–76)
>
> ('To whomsoever will mount without delay and pursue and capture that chess-set and deliver it into my hands, I will give all my land; and my crown after I depart this life by my will he for himself shall hold.')

It is, literally, worth his kingdom to him! The connection with the sovereignty also gives a deeper meaning to his ritual formula:

> 'Ic sect jou allen in corter talen
> Ic salre selve achter riden.
> Ic ne wils niet langher onbiden,

4 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 201.

5 M. Leake Day, 'Foreword' to John Matthews, *Gawain: Knight of the Goddess* (London, 1990), p. 15.

Eert mi alte verre ontfaert.
Ic bem die gone diet beghert,
Dat ict weder halen sal,
Mine lette ramp ende ongheval,
Eer ic meer te Carlioen kere,
Of ic blive doot inde ghere.
Ic salre jou mede doen die ere:
Ic soude met rechte zijn jou here –
Nu salic zijn jouwer alre knecht.' (94–105)

('I say to you all in few words that I shall ride after it myself. I don't intend to tarry any longer lest it fly entirely beyond my reach. I am the one who desires it, so I shall retrieve it before I again return to Carlioen, provided that disaster or mishap do not prevent me, or may I perish with this wish unfulfilled. I will honor you as follows: I would by rights be your lord – now I shall be to you all a servant.')

King Arthur's superior vision, as a result of his superior position, is also suggested by the physical details of the castle from which Walewein is setting out. First Keye (174) and later all the others (207) are watching Walewein's departure through the windows – the same through which the chessboard had entered (49)? – but the king (and the queen) are watching from the battlements (204). Since the windows and the battlements are the *only* details given for Caerleon, it seems justified to me to attach particular importance to them. If windows symbolize eyes, everyone present is seeing things come and go through the eyes of the community. King Arthur's superior vision of the issue, namely his awareness that his sovereignty is at stake, which concerns him above all others, is expressed by the royal couple's superior position on the battlements, which also gives them the farthest-reaching view.

Walewein's view decreases in the meantime. He is led into a valley, then finds his path blocked by a mountain, where the chessboard leads him into darkness. And although my subject is the castles, some consideration will have to be given to the barriers between them. The mountain-cleft with the dragons between Caerleon and the Castle of Wonder, the water and tunnel at Ravenstene, the river and tunnel at Endi, but also the evil-custom Toll before King Amadijs' castle, are barriers indicating that Other Worlds are entered and that confrontations with other customs and values are at hand. That is their function in a narratological analysis. The result of crossing these barriers is an *Umwertung* (reorientation, revaluation) in the protagonist. But in *Walewein* these barriers are so particularly symbolic that, I think, the nature of the *Umwertung* is also suggested by them. The Custom-Toll prefigures, or captures the essence of, the whole 'knape' episode inasmuch as that whole episode concerns the arrogant withholding by force of one's rightful possessions; while the tunnels in Ravenstene and

Endi are both connected with the introduction of the lady, as we shall see. And the mountain and dragons before the Castle of Wonder, with their purgatorial initiation or life-and-death struggle, suggests that something has to be lost and something has to be healed, as an introduction to the significance of the Castle of Wonder, the home of the chessboard. The high density of these otherworld-markers seems to make *Walewein* a typical Gawain-romance; his role as mediator between different worlds has often been noted for many of the romances in which he features.[6]

Having been lured out of the closed community of King Arthur's Caerleon, Walewein has had to prove his individual worth in the wilderness separating the different castles, without the support of his reputation. In the wilderness the true stuff is shown, and Walewein does not exactly come away unscathed from his first performance. The first step of his quest stresses deprivation more than gain; he may have won through, by his personal prowess, but a lot of his pride has had to stay behind before he reaches the golden Castle of Wonder. Quite a contrast, obviously, with his glorious return in the end, when the 'revaluated' hero need not be led through purgatory again, but 'merely' has to pass the Black Knight (Estor) to show his newly deserved character – including the lady – before he comes home to King Arthur's court.[7] It was the pursuit of the chessboard that led him through the cleansing initiation on his way out, but only to have his chivalric pride restored by another kind of pride, as a first step. The Castle of Wonder with its gold decorations and mechanical contraptions suggests itself as a symbol of pride, though of another kind than Caerleon's. It is not hostile to Arthur's kingdom, but a parody, almost a travesty of the traditional splendour of King Arthur's court. And just as with Hautdesert in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the protagonist does not only 'overcome' the parody but learns from it as well; the confrontation brings the most important virtues into relief. The Castle of Wonder is a parody of Caerleon in that both show a basic pride, which is self-confirming. Walewein first sets out with the Arthurian aristocratic pride of rank and privilege, a 'superior' pride of honour. First he declines to catch the chessboard straightway, although

> [he] hadt wel metter hant ghevaen,
> Maer hi liet dor der gore tale

6 See, e.g., C. Machann, 'A Structural Study of the English Gawain Romances', *Neophilologus* 66 (1982), 629–37.

7 I follow Minderaa's suggestion, in his structural analysis of *Walewein*, that the Black Knight episode has been misplaced and should have come between the Castle of Wonder (where the Sword with the Two Rings was left behind) and Cardoel: F. Minderaa, 'De Compositie van de Walewein', in *Arturistiek in Artikelen*, ed. F. P. van Oostrom (Utrecht, 1978), pp. 77–88.

Die boven laghen in die zale:
Hadsine sien daer achter vaen
Endt hem danne ware ontgaen,
Si mochter mede hare sceren maken.
Hine liet om el ne ghene zaken. (218–24)

([he] could have caught it in his hand, but he let it go on account of the gossip going on up in the hall: if they were to see him capture it and if it were then to escape him, they would make a mockery of him. He did not let it go for any other reason.)

He is, apparently, greatly concerned about the figure he is cutting. Then, after the fight with the dragons, alone on the mountain-ledge and reluctant to go on, he decides to jump because

Nu moeti avonturen zijn leven;
Hi seide, 'Sterve ic, ic come ghedreven
Weder daer men mi sal kinnen.
Hier mochtic lettel prijs ghewinnen.
Storvic hier,' sprac doe die here,
Menne ghevreeschte nemmermere
Waer dat ic becomen ware.' (697–703)

(Realizing that he must risk his life, he spoke, 'If I die, I will drift to where people will recognize me. Up here there is little honor to be won. If I were to die here,' the knight said, 'Men would never come to know what had become of me.')

His insistence on honour, his established reputation as the prime member of King Arthur's 'proud' court, is confronted by the Castle of Wonder's pride in self-sufficiency, an aspect to which the 'gold with inscriptions' (794) testifies.

Certain of the features of the Castle of Wonder are known from other castles in Arthurian literature. The combination of the name Castle of Wonder(s) and a chessboard is found at the end of the Mabinogion story *Peredur Son of Efrawg*, a Welsh analogue of Chrétien's Perceval-romance.[8] That Castle of Wonders is also a 'castle within the lake'; in it Peredur finds a chessboard (*gwyddbwyll*) playing against itself. He throws the board into the lake, symbolizing, I think, his own unwillingness to succeed to sovereignty and marriage, with which the immediately preceding episode had ended: he had just rejected the offer of half a kingdom and the king's daughter for his wife. Peredur is then requested to retrieve the

8 *The Mabinogion*, trans. G. Jones and Th. Jones, rev. edn (London, 1989), 183–227 (pp. 224–27). Several elements of this story also occur, in different order, in the Second Continuation of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*.

board, and when he succeeds in this after some arduous adventures, including the slaying of a Black Man, he is then able to end definitively all the troubles King Arthur had, with the help of Gwalchmei, the Walewein-analogue. This analogue may support my suggestion that the chessboard is connected with succession and sovereignty.

The combination of the name of the castle (Castle of the Marvel) with a Wondrous Bed, and with separation of ladies and a blind jump, is also to be found in the Castle of Chanpguin (so named in line 8817) at the end of Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal*.[9] Admittedly, the bed there is the opposite of a healing bed – in fact, Gauvain is attacked by arrows and bolts and a lion in it, through which he gains the lordship of the castle – and the blind plunge at the Perilous Ford is to get *out* of this otherworld, but also to get back in; yet the fact that those details occur together there justifies an assumption of a certain amount of parallelism with *Walewein*. John Darrah associates the Castle of Chanpguin with 'the ritual of Nemi', the periodic murder of the king by his successor as described by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, so again with succession to sovereignty.[10] My symbolic reading of Chrétien's castle would be that the attack on Gauvain by the arrows and lion suggests that his male pride has turned against the protagonist. He has to learn a new kind of manhood at the hand of the ladies inhabiting the castle, a manhood based rather on the protection of the weak and on service to the community. And since a similar *Umwertung* also appears to be operative in *Walewein*, I suspect that the symbolic complexes of the Castles of Wonder are indeed analogous.

The fact that King Wonder sends Walewein out to acquire the Sword with the Two Rings might support, on the symbolic level, the idea that Walewein needs to achieve a new kind of manhood if he is to 'achieve' the chessboard. The Healing Bed has cured Walewein to the positive social virtues of compassion and self-sacrifice, as the ensuing 'Knape' and 'Toll' episodes amply illustrate. The 'new' Walewein shows generosity and humility in the following quest instead of the original chivalric pride, almost arrogance, which King Arthur's court still demonstrates at this point, epitomized in Kay and only barely held in check by Lancelot, when the Knape arrives there on Gringolet, Walewein's horse (1710–85). Yet the Castle of Wonder itself is still a symbol of pride in masculine self-sufficiency, perhaps of *macho* power-politics, with which the ladies want nothing to do. There is no reason to look towards Celtic *fée*-lore for an

9 Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances* (including *Perceval*), trans. D. D. R. Owen (London, 1987), 374–495 (pp. 469–95).

10 J. Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romances* (Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 224 and 229; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged edn (London, 1957), chapters I–II.

understanding of why the ladies keep themselves aloof from this in physical segregation, even if in Chrétien's case that suggestion was still open. In *Framing Medieval Bodies* Roberta Gilchrist reminds us that it was becoming customary to devote special spaces to the women in castles, usually in one tower to which they would be more or less confined. She gives examples of castles in England from the twelfth century onwards, and states that the higher the status, the stricter was the segregation of men and women.[11] Yet, in *Walewein*, the separation of the ladies looks odd and ominous; Walewein even asks about it (1114–17) – unlike Perceval in the Grail-castle. Considering the important role that is conventionally ascribed to ladies in the process of civilization, the situation at the Castle of Wonder suggests, symbolically, that their separation is the condition on which its masculine pride is based. *Walewein* as a whole, however, seems to plead for an integration of the feminine in order to achieve an ideal or successful character. The story shows a gradual involvement with ladies, with beneficial effects, from the total segregation at the Castle of Wonder via the Red Knight's lady to the love of Ysabele. That the Red Knight's lady functions in this pattern is borne out by the explicit emphasis on the importance of women in that episode: 'Van vrouwen comt ons alle ere' (Women bring us all honor; 3813); 'Doet dit in alre vrouwen ere' (Do it for the honor of womankind; 3839). I think the civilizing feminine influence is at work on Walewein there, when he is showing mercy to the Red Knight (after the Sword of justice had dealt him his death-wound), and again to the third of his followers (who was less overweeningly proud than the others; 4276–352). The Red Knight is further linked to the ladies-pattern because it is his ghost who rescues Walewein and Ysabele from the dungeon of Endi, where they were imprisoned for their love (8366–465).

But before Walewein can make it from the mountain-cleft to the first tunnel, his revaluated manhood is first shown, or tested, in the Knape-episode. This plotline is marked by no less than four castles, three in the episode itself, the fourth the Knape's own, which figures on Walewein's return journey. These are not Other Worlds, but they belong rather to the Evil Custom or *Orgueilleux* category. The first one is literally an Evil Custom: a toll-castle, where armour and horses must be given up (1556–92). The narrator refers to its 'quade zeden' (evil deeds; 1560) which were perpetrated 'met overmoedicheden' (with overweening pride; 1561). We are here dealing with a social disorder: the unlawful use of force or power. On the symbolic level passing knights are robbed of their manhood (armour and horse) and even of their identities. On a second

11 R. Gilchrist, 'Medieval Bodies in the Material World: Gender, Stigma and the Body', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. S. Kay and M. Rubin (Manchester, 1994), 43–61 (esp. pp. 50–55).

symbolic level this also tells us, in stone, the essence of what had happened to the Knape: his brother's murderer, and even also the king, have not robbed him of his possessions but of his identity. He must try and acquire a knight's identity with next to nothing to go on. In the toll castle we see Walewein penetrating to the heart of the Evil Custom – entering the gates before the gatekeeper could close them (1659–61) – rooting it out thoroughly and putting an end to it, by locking the gates and throwing the keys away (1694–99). Walewein's murdering everyone ruthlessly must not, I think, be seen as a reversal to his old Arthurian pride, but as a social function performed thoroughly and therefore admirably. The pride was on *their* side; their arrogance was *orgueilleux*. Walewein is still the generous, humble, self-sacrificing character that he showed to the Knape when he gave him his horse. The suppression of the Evil Custom is another of the chivalric social ideals given shape.

The second castle of this evil-custom plotline is King Arthur's court at Cardoel where the Knape is dubbed knight. I suggested above, referring to the Knape's suspicious reception there, that it functions also as a 'proud' castle in this episode. It still shows the aristocratic arrogance which Walewein has already lost, and therefore shows its darker side as a self-regarding court by being linked momentarily with the *orgueilleux* castles of this plotline. On the symbolic level it is Walewein's identity, represented by his horse Gringolet, that overcomes the arrogance and suspicion and moves King Arthur's court to positive social action. They only 'recognize' the Knape because he is supported by Walewein.

Something similar happens at the third castle of this plotline, King Amadijs' castle, where the Knape's judicial combat takes place. There is nothing wrong, basically, but the execution of impartial justice is a matter of words rather than action. In the hands of the narrator the conduct of the affair receives a slant of unfairness and reluctant justice, as if, again, only Walewein's example wins recognition for the Knape's right of protection from the king. Again Walewein's fierce and thorough administration of justice is offset, here by the initial assignment of the epithet 'mild' to him twice (1880 and 1886), as if that is what is wanting in King Amadijs. The king is made to look like an inspector rather than an administrator of justice:

> Die coninc es ghestaen mettien
> Ten veinstren ende heift al versien
> Die daet die Walewein heift ghewrocht.
> Nu alreerst es hi bedocht
> Omme den knape ende om zinen vrede. (2239–42)
>
> (The king was standing at the window and saw all the deeds performed by Walewein. Only now do his thoughts turn to the youth and to his promise of peace.)

The watching at the window, at Caerleon, at Cardoel and here, becomes a symbol for how ineffectual self-reflecting chivalry is, unless 'der avonturen vader' (the father of adventure) Walewein moves (it) into action. In the Otherworld castles (Wonder, Ravenstene) the occupants are at least playing games outside, not standing at the windows. Those are socially positive castles, whatever else may be wrong with them. After King Amadijs has followed Walewein's example, and full protection has been given to the Knape, the castle becomes an 'ordinary' hospitable castle. Noticeable, however, is the central role given to the queen in the reception and recognition of our hero (2520–78). This is the first step in what I earlier pointed to as the gradual integration of the feminine element.

The fourth castle of the Knape-plot is the Knape's own, to which Walewein comes on his way back, in possession of the Sword and the Lady but still haunted by the results of his activities. This time the Evil Custom and *Orgueilleux* situation is reversed. In the Knape's castle, Walewein's by now fully developed identity does not have to prove itself any more, but is given recognition by his equals, in three stages. It is telling, by the way, that this full recognition is shown in the Knape's castle, who derives his identity directly from Walewein, and not in King Arthur's court at the end. The first stage of the recognition is when Walewein's arrival is interrupted by the narrator for a brief mention of Estor's praises of Walewein – praises the more pure because Estor is not aware of his opponent's identity (10180–99). The second recognition is in the form of a summary rehearsal of Walewein's part in the original Knape episode: 'Die troestre was van allen dinghen' (the bringer of comfort in all difficult situations; 10218). The final recognition comes when Walewein and his new *alter ego*, the Knape, are victorious over the *orgueilleux* Duke who is laying siege to their castle. This is recognition rather than assertion, I think, because the *orgueilleux* is now outside the castle and the ideal character within. The Knape, now lord of this castle, is following Walewein's example, and thereby confirming it. In other words, Walewein's fully developed character is given concrete shape, is established, in this castle. The price for this ideal is high, as the particularly long and bloody battle shows, but the final justice, with forgiving and reparations, is supreme. This is the end of Walewein's quest, in terms of social relevance. The rest is a matter of settlement.

But returning from this final recognition to the heart of the story, we must see Walewein receiving his first recognition, after the Wonder and Knape episodes, at Ravenstene, King Amoraen's castle. Ravenstene, like the Castle of Wonder, is marked by a conspicuous barrier: it is on a tall rock by the sea, only approachable at low tide; and even when Walewein is on the island itself he cannot see it until he has passed through a gate and a tunnel. Therefore one's first impression is of an Otherworld castle. The tall rock and enclosure by the sea make Ravenstene manifest itself as a closed

court of aristocratic pride; what I called a parody-castle. And the fact that Walewein is confined on the island reflects symbolically that he is not a free agent there. He came to fulfil a mission, and will leave again with another mission. So he must conform to the norms of this otherworld. But the barrier has a dual nature: first the access to the island is hard to find, but the hoof marks of many horses show the way (2898–2919). This shows the castle as a court(-parody), a gathering-place of knights. However, once on the island, he can no longer see the castle: 'het is mi zere oncont / Waer waert ic nu gheraket bem' (it is a complete mystery to me where it is I now am; 2936–37). The path to the castle leads through 'Ene porte wide ondaen' (a gate opened wide; 2941) and 'Up waert duer ene haghedochte' (upward through a tunnel; 2956). This, I will suggest, shows a connection with the ladies-pattern. Walewein has come to do something, and to learn that there is something else he must do. He has come to win the Sword, which is shown to be a dual achievement. It will appear that he has already earned the Sword by what he is. But later he will learn that the Sword is not a self-sufficient end, but only a means to a greater end. On the symbolic level he is taught that one cannot call manhood one's own (of which I take the sword to be not only an attribute but a symbol) unless it serves the purpose of gaining union with a lady through it.

At this civilized court, where the courtiers are actively training and playing (like at Wonder's, but unlike Caerleon), the king already knows Walewein by name: 'Ene rose ne bloeit niet up de bome / Also scone als Walewein boven hem allen!' (There is not a rose blossoming on its bush that is as fair as Walewein, finest of them all!; 3046–47). He receives praise and admiration for his original character; he is remembered by his reputation ten years ago when he already was the Father of Adventure (3170 and 3211). In a sense, this admiration for, and possibly the modelling itself on King Arthur's court of ten years ago, is what makes King Amoraen's court a parody of the former's original values. Apart from that, this is really a recognition-scene for Walewein, with affirmation of his greatness rather than the need of a test. In more than one sense Ravenstene is a parody of Walewein's original self, since it reflects his fundamental greatness but also shows his present shortcoming: the absence of a lady to 'mould' his masculine pride. When King Amoraen asks Walewein for help, he freely offers him the Sword with the Two Rings before the latter has had to ask for it. Even the Sword itself 'recognizes' Walewein when 'Over appel ende over hilte bede / Spranct vor Waleweine uptie aerde / Oft ware een mensche die beghaerde / Omoede te soekene ende hi mesdaen / Hadde' (it sprang, pommel over hilt, to the earth before Walewein, as if it were a man who had sinned and sought mercy; 3348–52); it does homage to its new master, of its own accord.

But the parody is shifting away from recognition of a proud masculine

reputation towards the want of a leading lady. The dual nature of Ravenstene makes the acquisition of the Sword conditional, after all: there will be a test involved. King Amoraen states: 'Here, nochtan eist mi bleven, / Maer jou so eest al ghereet, / Up een covent, up een beheet' (Sir, it is still in my possession. But it is at your disposal, on one condition, with one stipulation; 3260–62). The condition is, of course, that Walewein should fetch Ysabele for King Amoraen. If we read the description of the sword with a phallic *double-entendre*, it provides an accurate image of the nature of that quest. It might even hint at the reason for King Amoraen's sudden death later on, in those symbolic terms, after Walewein made love to the lady himself and thereby 'struck' Amoraen with his own sword.

> 'Here Walewein, jaghi, al u leven
> Mochti wel draghen tgoede zwaert,
> Ende zeker zijn ende onvervaert,
> Indien dat ict jou gave bedect:
> Up wat manne daer ghijt up trect
> Diene mochte vor jou niet ghestaen.
> Al wildi mi selven slaen
> Ende van minen live deren
> Wilt, inne mochte mi niet verweren
> Trocti tswaert, dat wetic wel –
> Sine maniere die es so fel –
> Indien dat ict jou hadde ghegheven,
> Nochtan dat ict al mijn leven
> Hebbe ghehadt in mijn bedwanc.' (3272–85)
>
> ('Yes indeed, Sir Walewein, you might wear the good sword all your life, remaining steadfast and valiant, if I were to give it to you sheathed: no man against whom you drew the sword could stand before you. If I were to give you the sword and drawing it you wished to strike me – this I know full well – and deprive me of my life, I would not be able to defend myself – it is so dangerous by nature – even though I have had it in my power all my life.')

Amoraen's idea is that the lady is to be fetched in a chaste and continent manner. But the king of the parody-castle will die for his presumption, because the lady is for the best man, the man who proves himself so in action, not just in desire.

And the best man will not be complete without the lady, the story suggests. King Amoraen's parody-role is to introduce the notion that the owner of the Sword should also acquire the lady, the parody being that Walewein is the better man, a fact which Amoraen recognized without seeing the implications. His castle Ravenstene symbolizes this notion in being the 'home' of the Sword and having a tunnel-access, like Endi. If the Sword symbolizes the male, the tunnel symbolizes the female, and in Endi

they come together. It is therefore telling that Ravenstene not only has a tunnel access and exit as well, as an image of the desired union, but that the fullest description of Endi is, in fact, given at Ravenstene (3454–593).

So, if the Knape episode, following the Castle of Wonder, shows Walewein's 'healed' pride in action, the Red Knight's episode, following Ravenstene, shows the new attitude towards ladies in operation. The lady-theme, really set in motion by Ravenstene, is spun out at least as much if not more than the 'pride'-theme, in which we saw five castles involved. Before reaching its culmination in Endi, it has been present in the separation of the ladies in Wonder, in King Amadijs' queen doing the honours, in Ravenstene explicitly as the new mission, and then turning into action in the Red Knight episode – indeed a gradual integration, and one closely connected with the pride-theme, as the intertwining of the two in Castles Wonder, Amadijs and Ravenstene shows. *Entrelacement* is, I believe, one of the earliest forms of exploring cause-and-effect in narrative. A final indication of the role that Ravenstene plays in the ladies-plot is the fact that it is at Ravenstene, on the way back, that Walewein places the sovereignty choice into Ysabele's hands, as I suggested earlier (9420–37).

King Assentijn's castle at Endi is the only castle in *Walewein* fully devoted to the lady-theme, a lady-castle, as I termed it in the opening pages, where the identity of the protagonist is explored on the personal rather than on the social level. In its substantial symbolism we are witnessing a development from desire to love. The integration of the ladies' civilizing influence in the male hero's character begins here and, via the duke's pavilion and castle, reaches its completion at the return to Ravenstene, where the sovereignty question is formally posed and answered.

Walewein sees his approach to his Dutch Brynhilde blocked by a fiery river. This purgatorial river and its sword bridge have received so much critical attention since Laura Hibbard's article on Chrétien's sword bridge that we can be brief about them here.[12] I accept Hibbard's point about the purgatory river as a clerical 'set' allegorization (p. 183), but neither such an allegory nor the pre-Christian judgment tests mentioned in the article seem to me to be operative any longer in *Walewein*. The venerable image functions here 'merely', though powerfully, in the pattern of masculine and feminine approaches and in that of passion and love. I also accept her suggestion about an oriental origin of the bridge-and-river image, because, after all, the name Endi itself suggests an oriental *locale*, and some of the objects in the castle, such as the Golden Tree, also seem to be of oriental

[12] L. Hibbard, 'The Sword Bridge of Chrétien de Troyes and its Celtic Original', *Romanic Review* 4 (1913), 166–90; for the subsequent discussions see the Bibliography and Notes in Johnson, ed., *Roman van Walewein*.

origin, as A. M. E. Draak already pointed out.[13] The fact that Walewein's lance is burnt and 'verblaect / Algader tere couder cole' (reduced entirely to cold ash; 4990–91) in this fiery moat (and again in 5024–30, and his foot likewise in 5076–81) indicates symbolically that this kind of proud, direct approach, as if he has a right to the lady, is denied, because it is the wrong kind of desire. If he is to attain to 'grace', like the souls in the Purgatory River (5825–29), he must be cleansed first. It seems to me that the sword bridge and the tunnel constitute two alternative choices, symbolically similar to the sword bridge and the underwater bridge at King Bademagu's castle in Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*; a choice between a masculine (sword bridge) and feminine (tunnel) approach to the attainment of the lady. Walewein learns that a purely masculine approach is not advisable for him in this case; his horse 'would carry no one over' that sword bridge (4969). His retreat into the Vrijthof will initiate him into the feminine approach.

In the Vrijthof, a *hortus conclusus*, there are 'many beautiful roses' (5114) among other flowers. An allusion to the *Roman de la Rose* comes to mind, which is later corroborated when Walewein, locked in the dungeon at Endi, is contemplating his love for Ysabele and calls her 'rose boven allen blomen' (the rose that surpasses all other flowers; 7728). Although Endi is still unapproachable, Walewein has reached his *mandala* – dream-symbol of the search for integrity – where completeness and self-unity will be achieved. The same *mandala* suggestion can be read into the Endi castle's twelve walls and gates, reminiscent of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Apocalypse (21. 2–12). The river, the Edenic garden and the tree in Endi strengthen this suggestion.

At the same time the Vrijthof contains elements of testing; it is only the opening to the right way, but the road itself still has to be gone. For Roges it is a trap, in his self-contained misery. But it stresses, for Roges and Walewein, that both the cause and the solution of their present troubles are connected with ladies and love. We are told that Roges had been taught chivalry by his mother (5328–62), and had been ruined by another lady's (his stepmother's) false idea of service to ladies (5434–754). Integration of the feminine element seems to have been problematic for Roges, just as it still is for Walewein at this point. In this pattern it is, therefore, significant that the narrator mentions a little later, after Walewein had entered the wicket-gate of Endi Castle, that the latter, too, is using 'consten / Die hem sijn moeder heeft gheleert' (skills which his mother had taught him; 6304–5). This insistent stress on the contributions of ladies to the hero's character also finds expression in the theme of grace and mercy which

[13] *Onderzoekingen over de* Roman van Walewein (Haarlem, 1936; enl. rpt. Groningen/ Amsterdam, 1975).

plays a key note both in the Vrijthof – 'ghenaden' (mercy) and 'milde' (5261–62) – and in Endi during the 'wicket-gate' scene: 'dor ghenaden' (in the name of grace; 6255 and again 6264); 'Daerne hadde niemen genaden' (no one there was willing to show mercy; 6268). Grace and mercy have become Walewein's justification for his attack on the castle.

First the tunnel and later the dungeon at Endi are not only symbols of the feminine, but also of death-and-rebirth. Something has to be lost before the next stage of integration is achieved. On the 'objective' symbolic level Walewein must leave his horse behind before he can enter the tunnel: 'Ju paerd dat moet hier achter bliven; / Brochtijt daer, men sout ontliven' (Your horse, however, must stay here; if you took him with you, he would be slain; 6015–16). And before Walewein is thrown into the dungeon, King Assentijn knocks the Sword out of his hands: '. . . hem uter hant ontscoet / Sijn swaert, .xiiij. voeten verre. / Doe was mijn her Walewein erre / Ende droeve in sinen moet' (this sword flew out of his hand and landed fourteen feet further on. At that Sir Walewein was overcome by fear and great despair; 7260–63). The loss of the horse and sword (masculine attributes) suggests that the tunnel and especially the dungeon symbolize the loss of unintegrated masculine pride; in the dungeon Walewein is at the lady's mercy. The *Umwertung* suggested by the tunnel and the dungeon is towards feminine integration. The alternatives of the sword bridge and the Sword itself are given up.

The lady's descent into the dungeon similarly entails the giving up of parts of herself. Her first thoughts on entering the dungeon are about her father's gifts to her of the garden, the golden tree, the birdsong, the fountain embraced by an eagle: 'Ic dar nodan wel metten monde / Segghen dat ic mi van al gader / Eer halmen soude ende oec minen vader / Ende vrienscap verliesen euwelike / Eer ic den ridder sloughe swike' (I dare even to say for all to hear that I would rather give up all of this and lose the love of my father forever as well, than that I should forsake this knight; 7812–16). For the lady, too, there is loss involved in the progress towards social integration; in her case the loss of the pleasures and magical life of innocent childhood.

After the choice, on either side, for 'death-and-rebirth', the story moves from the dungeon to its opposite: the chamber of love. Its underground location indicates that this is still part of the cycle of deaths-and-rebirths. There is another dungeon at Endi still ahead, and another trip through the tunnel, and yet another dungeon at the duke's castle, before their love comes out in the open at Ravenstene. This beautiful but secret chamber suggests passionate but socially unacceptable love at this point, an inevitable *eros*-and-*thanatos* affair, like Dido and Aeneas', or Tristan and Isolde's. The parallel with the latter pair of famous lovers is suggested because there, too, the love-making is spied upon by a servant-knight,

through a hole in the wall. In Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* the lovers retreat to a cavern 'when, desiring to make love, they needed privacy'.[14] In this Cave of Lovers they are spied on, and subsequently betrayed, by one of King Mark's huntsmen through a little window. In his section on Underground Chambers, John Darrah concludes from a large number of examples that these meetings were originally between the hero and a sun or moon goddess, or a representative or an idol of her.[15] He does not include the scene in *Walewein*, although Walewein's traditional association with the sun might have warranted inclusion. But again, traces of the original signification of this image do not seem to play a noticeable role in *Walewein* beyond the possible intertextual reference to Tristan and Isolde for this stage of the development. What the chamber of love as counter-dungeon adds to the characters is the idea of the mutuality of this love. Walewein defends Ysabele more than himself when King Assentijn attacks them in the chamber, but Ysabele, on her part, offers to stay behind and suffer the consequences in order to enable Walewein to escape.

> 'Wel soete minne, te groten grieve
> Sal onser tweer minne enden:
> Mijn vader comt ende wille ons scenden!
> Wi sijn bespiet ende gewacht
> Vullike toe metter jacht!
> Vliet in die duwiere met haesten groot
> Of ghi sijt nu sekerlike doot!
> Ende ic sal hier buten bliven:
> Eer mi mijn vader sal ontliven,
> Al waert dat ghi ju settet ter were,
> En mochte ju helpen min no mere.'
> 'Lief,' sprac mijn her Walewein,
> So waric dan een groot vilein
> Soudic mi selven daer toe gheven
> Te vliene daer ghi verlort ju leven.
> Het ware mijn lachter al te groot.
> Eer salic bi ju bliven doot!' (8100–16)
>
> ('Sweet love, our mutual love is to come to a grievous end: my father has come and wishes to harm us! We have been spied upon and found out! Make haste and flee quickly through the passageway or you are certain to perish! I shall stay out here: even if you were to offer resistance, you would not be able to help at all before my father would slay me.' 'Dearest,' said my lord

[14] Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, with the *Tristran* of Thomas, trans. A. T. Hatto, rev. edn (Harmondsworth, 1967), 261–71 (p. 261).

[15] Darrah, *Paganism*, pp. 166–71.

> Walewein, 'I would be a cowardly knave if I were to bring myself to flee while you lost your life. My disgrace would be too much to bear. I would rather perish with you!')

It is remarkable that the tunnel which Ysabele had had specially made, as if for an occasion like this, is first introduced and then never used. They are captured and incarcerated – another symbolic death, but now for both of them – only to be set free by the ghost of the Red Knight. These details support the idea that their new mutual love is not yet of a kind to set them free by its own power. It is Walewein's rescue of the Red Knight's lady, and the mercy he had shown to the Red Knight, in other words the social implications of the ideal attitude, which has granted them another cycle of progress in their development.

Before their love becomes 'free' at the return to Ravenstene, one more cycle of death-and-rebirth has to be gone through, symbolized in the dungeon at the Proud Duke's castle. This cyclic build-up apparently shows that personal love has to prove itself under various circumstances before it is recognized as socially relevant. The ultimate love test or love initiation takes place at an *Orgueilleux* castle. I pointed out above that the ladies-theme and the pride-theme were intertwined at the outset; here they come together again, in a final confrontation. At the risk of over-simplification I will stick to my subject, which is the symbolic role of the castles in this story, and therefore disregard the rich implications of the meeting with the Proud Knight, the Proud Duke's son, as I will likewise disregard the Black Knight episode later on. What matters for the pattern I am exploring is that Ysabele, Walewein and Roges find their quest blocked by the typical *Orgueilleux de la Lande* pavilion of the duke, and that, as a result of Walewein's proud defence of his right over Ysabele, they soon find themselves in a dungeon again. The pattern of the dungeon as a love test is immediately picked up again by protestations of mutual love and by each taking the blame for the other's misfortune (9112–24). The idea of a love test is confirmed by Walewein's conclusion: 'Walewein horde die vriendelichede / Die Ysabele tote hem sede; / Hi peinsde wel dat die joncvrouwe / Hem met herten was getrouwe' (Walewein heard the kind words which Ysabele spoke to him; he concluded that the damsel was true to him in her heart; 9125–28). In the larger pattern, now follows what turns out to be the penultimate test or initiation: the cruel gaoler hurts Ysabele, Walewein goes berserk and breaks his chains with his bare hands. 'An impossible feat', the narrator comments, 'I think it was the might of God that did it' (9216–17). An act of love and pity, and nothing else; and it opens the way for them: on the story-level Walewein opens four doors with the keys he had 'won' from the gaoler, on their way out.

The immediate next scene, on their way to Ravenstene, is what I called

the formal posing of the sovereignty question, which I consider to be the ultimate test. The following honourable welcome at Ravenstene only confirms, as the story tells us explicitly, 'Dat sine boetscap was wel gedaen' (that his mission had been accomplished; 9578). The duke's return on the scene with the siege of the Knape's castle also only confirms the achieved position, as I argued above in the discussion of the Knape episode.

This attempt to 'read' the castles in *Walewein* cannot, of course, hope to do more than laying bare the underlying solid pattern of the story. There is much more, in terms of attitudes being contrasted and questions of social order being explored. But the *galon* of castles does show that analyses of *Walewein* based on the opposition of order and *inordination* are necessarily simplifications, because these are linear concepts, whereas *Walewein* clearly has a cyclic pattern for its basis, like practically all Gawain-romances. This is a story of additions and improvements, halts and new starts in a character who already has a fundamentally good disposition. The Lady castles add the civilizing influence of love integration. The *Orgueilleux* and Otherworld castles show that there are many different forms of aristocratic pride. The patterning of the three types leads to the conclusion that only pride combined with humility, compassion and mercy gives the aristocratic defender of the realm everything required to reach the desired end.