Gender and Jealousy in *Gereint uab Erbin* and *Le Roman de Silence*

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The medieval Welsh prose version of the story of Gereint (Erec) and Enid differs from its cognates in French and German by attributing the motive of jealousy to Gereint as the reason why he decides to test his wife's devotion. This theme of jealousy draws attention to an uneasiness in the text about Enid's noble status and the concept of gender. The story of Gereint and Enid, in common with the French *Roman de Silence*, finds itself demonstrating that both gender and class are constructed through a social performance that must be continually enacted. (HF)

The process of literary analysis, by which a text is interrogated until it yields up its secrets, is based on an assumption that texts have full control of their possible meanings. Yet texts can, and mostly do, mean more than they ever intended. As Paul Strohm has said: 'A necessary task of theory is precisely to provoke a text into unpremeditated articulation, into the utterance of what it somehow contains or knows but neither intends nor is able to say.'[1]

What is it that the tale of *Gereint uab Erbin* knows but cannot say? By reading it in the context of contemporary gender politics, exemplified specifically in the thirteenth-century French romance, *Le Roman de Silence*, we can perhaps 'provoke' it into revealing those anxieties that are suppressed or evaded through the totalizing operations of medieval fictional discourses.[2] As in so many medieval romances, these unexpressed concerns focus on class and gender, two of the most potent aspects of social identity in a hierarchical and patriarchal order. While it suited an upwardly-mobile gentry to believe that nobility was like gender, something natural and innate that could be manifested in any individual regardless of birth, the operations of *Gereint uab Erbin* persistently demonstrate, against the text's will, that not only class but gender as well are social constructs. By invoking a theme of jealousy that is unique to the Welsh version of the story, the text inadvertently opens up a space in which the pre-eminence of nature is undermined by the success of social performance.

At its most explicit level of meaning, the tale of *Gereint uab Erbin* (like many other medieval romances) presents the theme of the coming-of-age

of the hero. Gereint's fitness to rule a kingdom—his ability to make the transition from boyhood to manhood—is established through a series of rites of passage, including his early defeat of 'Marchawc y Llamysten' [the Knight of the Sparrowhawk], his marriage to Enid, his succession to kingship, and the series of heroic adventures on what I will call, for the sake of brevity, the 'journey of tests' with Enid. Prompted by speculation among his peers that Gereint's military prowess has been undermined by his marriage—a feeling possibly shared by his wife—the journey is a chance for the hero to redeem himself and prove his worth. By the end of the tale, the boy has become a man; through acts of chivalric valor, he has earned the right to be recognized as the legitimate ruler of Cornwall and a worthy vassal of Arthur.

The tale also presents us with the testing of the heroine, Enid, by means of the 'Patient Griselda' motif of the ill-treated wife.[3] Like Chaucer's Griselda in 'The Clerk's Tale' and Shakespeare's Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Enid's loyalty and submission, indicative of her suitability to be the wife of a significant regional king, must be established beyond doubt by a series of humiliating events that test her commitment to Gereint and her acceptance of his lordship. Handbooks instructing noblewomen on how to be good wives—ranging from Books of Hours to *miroirs*, such as those written in the fourteenth century by Geoffroy de la Tour-Landry to his daughters and by the Ménagier de Paris to his wife (a tract that includes a version of the Griselda story)—all emphasize a wife's duty to respect her husband's honor, while empowering the husband to correct his wife's faults in whatever way he chooses.[4]

Gereint's control of Enid and her manifest subordination to his will are important aspects of the hero's redemption, dramatized by Gereint's uncertainty of Enid's love before he begins to 'train' her. If we can discern any functional purpose in the story of *Gereint*, it is surely connected to this major theme of the warrior nobleman's coming of age, expressed firstly through the display, testing, and proof of his military valor, and secondly through the 'training' of his wife to demonstrate the loyalty and respect owed to him.[5]

Yet this analysis of the tale leaves us not with a satisfying structural completeness, but with a number of ambiguities, loose ends, and interpretive difficulties, the residue left behind from a 'common-sense' reading that focuses on intended meanings. Why, as Roger Middleton has pointed out, does Gereint miss the hunt at the opening of the tale and end up riding with Gwenhwyfar and her maid?[6] Why, in contrast to the French romance of *Erec et Enide*, does Gereint display jealousy and make his wife wear her oldest, not her finest, clothes on the journey of tests?[7] Why does he command Enid to keep silent, and why does Enid repeatedly ignore the command? The answers to these questions can be found readily enough in the logic of the plot: Gereint misses the hunt in order to have the encounter that leads him

to Enid, Enid disobeys his orders in order to prove her devotion by saving his life, and so on. What is more complex is to decide what these ambiguities signify—literally, what meanings can be made for them.

Such moments when we lose confidence in the naturalness and 'truth' of the story are the ones that deconstruct its apparent intentions, revealing the ideological norms that hold it together and which are passed off as common sense. Interpretive difficulties in the plot alert us to points of ideological strain, where naturalized assumptions are deconstructed, as Jacques Derrida argues, or where the 'textual unconscious' shows through, to use Pierre Macherey's phrase.[8] The tale may well function as a test of Gereint's fitness to rule and of Enid's loyalty, but, like *Le Roman de Silence*, it is structured around anxieties relating to gender and status as markers of social identity in a courtly context.[9] However much the text insists on the 'common-sense' truth that gender and status are natural and innate, and that they pre-exist social identity, it cannot help itself from demonstrating that these are in fact the manifestions of social roles. Throughout the tale, we are shown that social identity is brought into being through social performance, a contradiction of 'nature' that creates an unresolvable tension in the story.

THE JEALOUSY TOPOS

One of the most obvious differences between the Welsh *Gereint* and the French *Erec et Enide* is the theme of jealousy that occurs in the former but not in the latter. Whereas Erec's journey with his wife appears to be motivated by the wounded pride of the hero whose knightly reputation is compromised by his role as courtly lover, Gereint's journey is explicitly motivated by his fear that Enid is secretly in love with another man. Here is Enid's lament and Gereint's response to it:

> A boregweith yr haf yd oydynt yn y gwely (ac ynteu vrth yr erchwyn, ac Enyt a oed heb gysgu) y mywn ystauell wydrin, a'r heul yn tywynnu ar y gwely, a'r dillad gwedy ry lithraw y ar y dwyuron ef a'e dwy ureich, ac ynteu yn kyscu. Sef a oruc hitheu, ydrych tecket ac aruthred yr olwc a welei arnaw, a dywedut, 'Gway ui,' heb hi, 'os o'm achaws i y mae y breicheu hyn a'r dwyuron yn colli clot a milwryaeth kymeint ac a oed eidunt!' A chann hynny ellwg y dagreu yn hidleit yny dygwydassant ar y dwyuron ef. Ac un o'r petheu a'e deffroes ef uu hynny, y gyt a'r ymadrawd a dywawt hi kyn no hynny. A medwl arall a'e kyffroes ynteu, nat yr ymgeled ymdanaw ef y dywedassei hi hynny, namyn yr ystyryaw caryat ar vr arall drostaw ef, a damunaw yscaualwch hepdaw ef. (ll. 707–20)
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> [And one morning in the summer they were in bed (he was on the outer edge, and Enid was not asleep) in a chamber of glass, and with the sun shining on the bed, and the clothes having slipped from his chest and his arms, he was asleep. Then she looked at how beautiful and awesome was the sight of him which she saw, and said, 'Woe is me,' she said, 'if it is because of me that these

> arms and this chest are losing all the fame and valour that once were theirs!' And with that her tears came streaming down until they fell upon his chest. And that was one of the things which woke him, together with the words she had spoken just before that. And a new thought disturbed him, that it was not out of concern for him that she had said those things, but because she was contemplating love for another man instead of him, and wanted some privacy away from him.]

This motif of jealousy, present only in the Welsh text, is an interpretive crux that has prompted wide debate about Gereint/Erec's possible motivation for the journey, and for his anger, in all versions of the tale.[10] A number of scholars have argued that the French *Erec* is less coherent and even flawed because of the lack of this clear (and apparently entirely reasonable) motivation for Erec's treatment of his wife.[11] Some readings assume that Erec's jealousy is in fact implied by Chrétien de Troyes because that is the most obvious explanation for his cruel and prolonged testing of his wife, including exposure to attempted seductions by other men. R.S. Loomis has asserted that: 'Erec's harsh behavior to Enide is best accounted for by the motive of jealousy, suppressed by Chrétien but retained in *Gereint*.'[12] A.T. Hatto has argued that in the German version by Hartmann von Aue, Enite reveals her thoughts only because she fears Erec will accuse her of 'other things,' hinting at an implicit motive of jealousy.[13] He concludes therefore that: '*Gereint* is the only version perfectly consistent in its narrative sequence.'[14]

Brynley Roberts, on the other hand, is not inclined to see the jealousy topos in *Gereint* as anything significant, or to consider that, on the basis of this motif, the Welsh version is any more coherent than the continental ones. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of Gereint's reputation as a warrior and leader, suggesting that the theme of the story is Gereint's attempt to prove himself in these roles, while also testing Enid's faithfulness. Given this focus for the tale, he regards the theme of jealousy, gratuitously introduced, as something that brings a 'popular' element into what should have been a courtly and chivalric tale:

> Rhaid i Erec ei brofi ei hun yn filwr a rheoli ei deimladau cariadus at ei wraig fel mai diben eu taith yw ennill y cydbwysedd hwnnw iddo. Collir llawer o hyn yn *Gereint ac Enid*. Erbyn y drydedd adran trawsffurfir y tyndra sifalrïaidd, astrus a chymesuredd yr amrywiol swyddogaethau yn rhywbeth llai arwyddocaol, mwy poblogaidd amgyffredadwy—dicter cwcwallt.[15]
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> [Erec has to prove himself as a warrior and control his loving feelings towards his wife, so that the point of his journey is to achieve that equilibrium for himself. Much of this is lost in *Gereint ac Enid*. By the third section, the chivalric tension, the difficulty of balancing the various duties, is transformed into something less significant, more popularly comprehensible—the anger of the cuckold.]

Whether Chrétien's version is regarded as more or less coherent than the Welsh version, all critics assume that the jealousy topos in the Welsh *Gereint* is part of an earlier and more primitive form of the story deliberately omitted from the more sophisticated continental versions. Neil Thomas argues, for example, that the topos proves that the tale of *Gereint* is generically 'heroic' rather than 'courtly,' belonging to a pre-Geoffrey of Monmouth world in which martial activity is crudely equated with sexual virility. What Gereint experiences, he claims, is not so much jealousy as fears of failure as a warrior and therefore as a lover. This Welsh story of 'primitive passion was...rendered obsolete by the hugely influential *Historia Regum Britanniae*,' which ushered in a world of courtly decorum where military skill and a spiritually ennobling love became the defining features of chivalric knighthood.[16]

It is just as likely, however, that the jealousy topos is not a primitive survival but was worked in to the story of *Gereint* as part of its transformation from courtly French romance to native Welsh prose tale, embedded in traditions of folk-tale and moral *exemplum*. It explicitly draws attention to Gereint's immature impetuousness and the status of Enid's chastity and loyalty, all of which are to be tested and tempered by the journey. But there remains something rather inexplicable about the jealousy motif and exactly why it was introduced into the tale. It is one of those ambiguous moments in the tale whose polysemy—opening up numerous possible interpretations—exposes flaws in the apparently seamless logic of the plot.

Far from being accidental or a primitive survival, the motif of jealousy serves a crucial function: in undermining the sense of self, it draws attention to social identity as a major preoccupation of the Welsh narrative, one that is specific to this text and not to its continental cognates. The identities of Gereint and Enid appear to be fixed and stable, bestowed somehow in advance of their appearance as characters, yet ambiguities remain, particularly with regard to gender and social class. In the case of Gereint, his sexuality is problematized. It is not simply that his virility is compromised by his lack of military endeavor following his marriage; the jealousy motif introduces a more profound questioning of his masculinity, normatively defined, as a crucial aspect of his identity. In the case of Enid, it is her social class that has a question mark hanging over it. As the daughter of an impoverished nobleman, discovered by Gereint living in humble circumstances, her social status is ambiguous. Despite her noble birth, the restoration of her father's land, and the 'Cinderella' transformation of Enid on her removal to Arthur's court and subsequent marriage to Gereint, her 'courtliness' is yet to be proven. Gereint's jealousy problematizes Enid's position in courtly society by questioning the appropriateness of her behavior.

These ambiguities of gender and status appear to be settled by the marriage of Gereint and Enid, but the motif of jealousy, the fulcrum of the story,

exposes the unease that still remains. Would Gereint be so easily roused to jealousy if he were confident of his sexuality and trusted Enid to behave in ways appropriate to her status? The second part of the story, the 'journey of tests,' needs to reiterate what has already been provisionally established in the first part, that Gereint has matured into adult masculinity and that Enid's nobility is innate and not simply acquired through wealth and marriage.[17] The tale does indeed demonstrate these things—Gereint achieves military and political success, while Enid's true nobility manifests itself in her dignified behavior and devotion to Gereint, regardless of her poor clothing, loss of personal dignity, and cruel treatment. Yet in the process of affirming the seemingly self-evident truths of innate gender and social class, the tale inadvertently reveals that gender and status are in fact constructed through social performance. They are the products of nurture rather than nature, the one phenomenon so threatening to the other in a medieval environment based on naturalized hierarchies that they are personified in *Le Roman de Silence* as competing voices in an argument that Nature has to win.

The concept of the 'performativity' of gender has been most famously theorized by Judith Butler, whose work has argued that the 'naturalness' of both sex and gender is undermined by the performative acts required to produce them. Both, she argues, are products of particular discourses that work to stabilize gender 'in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain.'[18] Gender attributes are therefore not expressive of a pre-existing already-gendered individual, but actually constitute the gendering of that individual through a process of social performance:

> As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established…Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.[19]

This model of the manufacturing of gender through performance—in speech, gesture and other 'corporeal signs' such as clothing—is a useful way of analyzing the gender roles played by both Gereint and Enid in the Welsh romance. During the journey of tests, both perform a series of repeated acts, stylized through narrative description, which work to consolidate their gender roles. But we can extend this model to include class identity, since this is also produced through social performance rather than in any way pre-existing the individual. The assumed truth that both status and gender are natural, inscribed at birth, is central to the romance and yet constantly in a state of deconstruction.

GEREINT AND MASCULINITY

One of the most overt, and therefore perhaps 'intended', themes of the tale is that of Gereint's coming of age. While fourteen was the official age at which young men were deemed to be legal adults, their transition to the status of adult warrior or ruler was marked by a number of established rites of passage such as military experience, marriage, and governance of an estate or realm.[20] The tale shows how Gereint gradually works through a number of these rites of passage and acquires the self-discipline to control his own emotions and impetuousness. This in turn proves that Gereint was the right choice of heir to the kingdom of Cornwall: not only was he the son of Erbin, but he was the best candidate for the position of *edling*, the designated successor to the king.[21]

For Welsh audiences, Gereint's promotion to leadership while still a young man is a precarious matter. The first section of the story describes a series of coming-of-age rituals for the hero—a quest, single combat, marriage, and finally promotion to lordship of his own realm. Following his move to Cornwall, we see the young prince learning the finer points of border control from his more senior advisers and allies:

> Ac yna y dywawd Ondyaw uab duc Bwrgwin vrth Ereint, 'Kerda,' heb ef, 'eithauoed dy gyfoeth yn gyntaf ac edrych yn llwyrgraf deruyneu dy gyuoeth, ac or gorthryma gouut arnat, manac ar dy gydymdeithon.' 'Dyw a dalho it,' heb ef, 'a minheu a wnaf hynny.' Ac yna y kyrchawd Gereint eithauoed y gyuoeth, a chyuarwydyt hyspys gyt ac ef o oreugwyr y gyuoeth, a'r amcan pellaf a dangossed idaw a gedwis ynteu ganthaw. (ll. 673–80)
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> [And then Ondiaw son of the Duke of Burgundy said to Gereint, 'First travel,' he said, 'along the furthest boundaries of your kingdom and take a close and thorough look at the borders of your realm, and if troubles oppress you, send word to your friends.' 'May God repay you,' he replied, 'I will do that indeed.' And then Gereint made for the furthest limits of his kingdom, and he had clear guidance from the best men of the realm, and the furthest point that was shown to him he kept in his mind.]

At this point in the tale, Gereint seems to have reached a point of maturity, marked by domestic and political stability. But his coming-of-age is in fact over-determined, suggesting an uneasiness about his social identity as a ruler, an uneasiness that is centered around the issue of gender. Concurrently with the rites of passage, Gereint's supposedly natural masculinity is surreptitiously undermined and dismantled.

Gereint first appears in the tale as a maintained knight at Arthur's court, unarmed and girlish, who misses the hunt because he did not know when it started and therefore follows behind with the women—with Gwenhwyfar and her maid:

> Ac ydrych a orugant draekeuyn, ac vynt a welynt uarchawc ar ebawluarch helyglei athrugar y ueint, a maccwyf gwineu ieuanc eskeirnoyth teyrneid arnaw, a chledyf eurdwrn ar y glun, a pheis a swrcot o bali ymdanaw, a dwy eskid issel o gordwal am y drayd, a llen o borfor glas ar warthaf hynny, ac aual eur vrth pob cwrr idi. A cherdet yn uchelualch drybelidfraeth gyssonuyr a wnai y march, ac ymordiwes a Gwenhwyuar a oruc. (ll. 90–98)
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> [And they looked back and saw a rider on a willow-grey colt of immense size, a young brown-haired squire on it, bare-legged and princely, with a gold-hilted sword at his thigh, a tunic and surcoat of silk on him, and two short cordwain boots on his feet, and a mantle of deep purple, with a golden apple at each of its corners, over the top. And the horse took a short and steady pace, tall and proud, lively and swift, and he overtook Gwenhwyfar.]

The function of this incident of the missed hunt is not merely a plot device, but importantly signifies a concern with Gereint's appearance and manner. In this description, he is shown to be noble but not a warrior, effeminate rather than aggressive. However, we are immediately reassured when he goes on to defeat 'Marchawc y Llamysten', [the Knight of the Sparrowhawk], as his rite of passage into knighthood, while his return to Cornwall marks his entry into lordship.

Nevertheless, some aspects of his behavior as king are still troubling. For one thing, he regularly performs in tournaments and other show pieces, both at Arthur's court and in his own kingdom. Having secured his borders and his allies, he resumes the lifestyle he enjoyed at Arthur's court, making his reputation as the winner of tournaments, not as the governor of his land or leader of a great army. Furthermore, in another significant departure from the French Erec, who eagerly departs from Arthur's court to become a king in his own right, Gereint is very reluctant to leave Arthur and take up his role as ruler of Cornwall.[22] A posse of councillors arrives who have to drag him away from his decadent lifestyle, centred around tournaments and military display, insisting that he return to Cornwall to govern his kingdom sensibly:

> 'A menegi y may idaw bod yn well itaw treulaw blodeu y ieuengtit a'e dewred yn kynhal y deruyneu e hun noc yn torneimeint diffrwyth, kyd caffo clot yndunt.' (ll. 569–72)
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> ['And he [Erbin] directs him [Gereint] that it would be better for him to spend the flower of his youth and valour maintaining his own borders than in fruitless tournaments, even though he may win fame from them.']

As a final indictment, Gereint becomes an uxorious husband, victim of an excessive love that keeps him immured within the confines of the castle. The supposed incompatibility between romantic love and military aggression, frequently deployed with minatory effect in chivalric literature, continued to be a standard topos well past the medieval period. In Shakespeare's *Romeo*

and Juliet, written in the late sixteenth century, Romeo, having failed to act as peace-maker between Mercutio and Tybalt, cries:

> O sweet Juliet,
> Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,
> And in my temper soften'd valour's steel!
> (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, scene i)

Male fears that relationships with women undermined a man's virility were central to medieval ideology, and are regularly revived at times of war or international sporting events when men must be roused to extreme physical effort.[23] In the medieval context, the life of the court, which included the company of women, was often portrayed as a direct threat to the militarized culture of knighthood.

An outpouring of clerical complaints about effeminacy coincided with the rise of courtly culture in the twelfth century, and was particularly directed at those knights who hung about at court instead of fighting in crusader armies. Ad Putter says that: 'In the Middle Ages, the most likely candidates [to be accused of effeminacy] are Byzantines, uxorious husbands and... knights at court.'[24] Gereint is certainly guilty of belonging to two out of these three groups, and the contempt with which the Cornish councillors refer to his habit of spending time at tournaments, along with his preference for the court—whether Arthur's or his own—over the battlefield implies a deficiency in his performance of noble leadership. To Welsh audiences, generally unimpressed by French versions of chivalry, Gereint's behavior in all respects is a matter for concern.

These doubts about Gereint's masculinity are reinforced by the theme of jealousy that now intrudes into the portrait of marital bliss. Enid's mournful contemplation of Gereint's naked arms and chest as he lies asleep might be construed as signifying something less than total satisfaction with his sexual performance. It is intriguing that throughout the tale, both before and after her marriage, Enid is referred to as *morwyn*, 'maiden': in other words, a virgin. *Gwreic*, the usual Welsh word for a married or sexually active woman, is never applied to Enid, as if her marriage only truly begins once the journey of tests is over—that is, once their social identities have been conclusively established.[25] Certainly, Gereint himself is quick to leap to the conclusion that a dissatisfied Enid is in love with another man, casting his own masculinity into crisis.

A further assault on Gereint's sexual identity is represented by his lengthy seclusion with Enid inside the confines of the castle. Castle interiors were frequently marked as a woman's space,[26] while William of Malmesbury complained about 'effeminate' courtiers who followed the court of William II, neglecting military life to stay inside the castle walls like women:

> Mollitie corporis certare cum foeminis, gressum frangere gestu soluto et latere nudo incedere, adolescentium specimen erat. Enerves, emolliti, quod nati fuerant inviti manebant; expugnatores alienae pudicitiae, prodigi suae.[27]
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> [To compete with women in softness of the body, to mince their step, to walk with loosened action and naked flank, this was the model of young men. Enervated, effeminate, they unwillingly remained what they had been born, violators of the chastity of others, wasteful of their own.]

As Barbara Hanawalt has argued, women, particularly noblewomen, were aligned only with domestic and enclosed spaces and were excluded from the public sphere, including the life of the battlefield, which belonged solely to men.[28] By staying inside the walls of the court, instead of engaging with the public arenas to which his masculinity entitled him, Gereint is acting like a woman and living in a woman's space.

The issue of gendered space is directly relevant to the concept of jealousy as the term was commonly used in medieval Europe. The word connoted not merely sexual jealousy, though this was often included, but more significantly possessiveness, in the literal sense of treating a wife as a possession. A 'jealous' husband was one who kept his wife confined to the female spaces of the home, making sure she was watched over either by himself or by a trusted servant. The Old French word *jalosie* and its Middle English equivalent *jelousie* meant not only 'love, devotion' but also, more sinisterly, 'anger, indignation, watchfulness, suspiciousness.'

This kind of jealousy is invariably represented in literary texts as the mark of a foolish and low-born husband. Of the Merchant and his wife in 'The Merchant's Tale,' from the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer says:

> Which jaloussye, it was so outrageous
> That neither in halle, n'yn noon oother hous,
> Ne in noon oother place, neverthemo,
> He nolde suffre hire for to ryde or go,
> But if that he had hond on hire alway.[29]

Dafydd ap Gwilym similarly mocks the figure of Yr Eiddig, the jealous husband, in the poem which Thomas Parry titled 'Trech a Gais nog a Geidw', 'Stronger the one who seeks than the one who keeps watch':

> Cadw y mae Eiddig hydwyll
> Ei hoywddyn bach hyddawn bwyll.
> Traws y gŵyl, treisig olwg:
> Trech a gais, trwy awch a gwg,
> Nog a geidw rhag direidwas
> Ei ddyn gwyn ar ael glyn glas.[30]

> [Treacherous Eiddig guards his lively little woman of gifted discretion. Oppressively he watches, oppressive his look; stronger he who seeks through keenness and determination than he who guards his fair woman from a playful lad on the brow of a green valley.]

But perhaps the most relevant comment on jealousy comes from Chrétien de Troyes, in his romance of *Yvain*. When Arthur and his men arrive in the land of the fountain, they try to persuade Yvain to leave his wife and his land and return to the Arthurian world of knightly adventure. Gawain says to him:

> 'Comant! Seroiz vos or de çax,'
> ce disoit mes sire Gauvains,
> 'qui por leur fames valent mains?...
> ...Ronpez le frein et le chevoistre,
> s'irons tornoier moi et vos,
> que l'en ne vos apiaut jalos.'[31]

> ['What! Will you be one of those,' said my lord Gawain to him, 'who is worth less because of their lady?...Break the reins and the halter, let us go to the tournament, you and me, so that no-one may call you jealous.']

There is no question here of sexual jealousy—the term specifically refers to the possessiveness of the husband who remains permanently attached to his wife, and therefore confined to feminine spaces. The label is clearly meant to be pejorative in terms of both gender and social status: it is both unmasculine and unknightly.

In other words, Gereint's jealousy undermines his social identity: both his gender and his status. Though the word itself is not used in the French romance of *Erec*, it must have been obvious to Chrétien and his audience that Erec is another sad case of a *jalos*, a jealous husband sticking close to his wife so that no one else may get too near her. There is no need to spell out an additional motive of sexual jealousy—Erec's possessiveness is enough to undermine his knightly reputation. The theme of sexual jealousy in the Welsh version is merely a more explicit realization of the syndrome which draws attention to the issue of gender, itself a more salient topic in the Welsh than in the French version. In French romance, knightly performance at tournaments is sufficient guarantee of masculinity, in defiance of church contempt for such play-acting. The Welsh romance, having explicitly rejected tournaments as appropriate behavior for a ruling lord, obliges Gereint to prove his masculinity in more convincing ways. His jealousy further unmans him—it not only keeps him in a woman's space but it also undermines his sexuality and social status.

As soon as Gereint leaves the feminized court and enters the public and masculine world of the forest and the town, his 'natural' masculinity seems to reassert itself. He defeats gangs of knights single-handed, he displays

generosity to his social inferiors (by bestowing horses on the townsmen who assist him), he protects the defenseless woman whose lord has been killed by three giants, and finally, in breaking the spell cast over the land of Earl Ywein, he demonstrates his ability to achieve political peace and unity. But this performance of masculinity is exactly that: a performance, repeated over and over again. It does not come 'naturally.' In the process of being beaten up and severely wounded by various thugs, Gereint's girlish appearance is transformed into that of a battle-scarred veteran. It is as if masculinity has to be literally beaten *into* him, while all signs of femininity, including his affective emotions towards Enid, must be rigorously beaten *out* of him.

Appearance and nature, then, having diverged alarmingly in the first section of the story, are now comfortably realigned. Gereint is indeed the man—noble and masculine—that his birth made him. Reconciled with Enid, he takes her up on his horse as a symbol of their renewed sexual union, reaffirming his sexuality and her nobility. But this process of realignment actually contradicts the tale's 'common-sense' ideology of 'natural' gender. Gereint's masculinity is not singular and absolute, but takes a number of variant forms, depending partly on where he happens to be, whether in court or forest, and how he behaves. It is constructed through social performance.

By taking the journey of tests, Gereint proves his masculinity, but only through the successful performance of behavior marked as masculine. Moreover, in enacting a specifically noble form of masculinity—single combats, knightly accoutrements, acts of rescue—he reasserts his noble status, part of his social identity which was also under threat because of his *jalousie* towards his wife. Only churls and fools keep their wives at home; that Gereint is neither is demonstrated by his performance of noble masculinity, his distance from his wife, both physical and emotional, and his increased reputation beyond the borders of his own lands.

ENID AND STATUS

While Gereint's masculinity is tested on the journey, the authenticity of Enid's social status is also on the line. In attempting to demonstrate that her nobility is innate, the tale is unable to avoid problematizing the issue of social identity in a courtly context. The daughter of an impoverished nobleman, Enid is rescued from her life of poverty and moved dramatically up the social scale, thanks to her marriage to Gereint and her patronage at Arthur's court. Her elevation is symbolized by the outward trappings of material wealth: her fine clothes and courtly lifestyle, which, along with her beauty, stand as metonyms for her nobility of birth. The presentation of the stag's head symbolizes the court's acceptance of her as the perfect noblewoman, beautiful but silent.[32] Yet there remains an anxiety about Enid's status. Like Gereint's gender, Enid's class is over-determined by a whole series of material events: marriage, fine

clothes, the stag's head. The tale now has to work even harder to prove that her nobility is innate and not merely the side effect of wealth.

In the first section of the tale, Enid's identity is defined purely by her outward appearance, not by her words or deeds. As for other medieval women at court, there are limits placed on Enid's movements—on where she could go and with whom, on what she should wear and to whom she could speak. Because of the gendered spaces they occupied, watched over by various agents of the patriarchy, medieval women, especially noblewomen, were marginalized and objectified. It is no surprise, then, that in the first section of the tale, Enid speaks so little. There is no space, apart from the bedchamber, in which Enid can speak for herself. In the second section, however, the situation is reversed, and Enid achieves something closer to self-definition through her words and deeds, rather than through her appearance. Freed from the identity imposed on her by the courtly context, Enid gains some of the freedoms of the male world. Just as Gereint became feminized in the gendered spaces of the court and castle, so Enid becomes more masculinized in the open world of forest and town, an exchange that exposes the constructedness of gender roles.[33]

Leaving the domesticated feminized court in which she was normalized as silent, passive and dependent, Enid goes out into the masculine world of the public arena, facing dangers and challenges, where she begins to perform gender and class according to a different script. She speaks, she disobeys orders, she takes the initiative, she acts on her own behalf while protecting the one she loves. Like the busy and proactive figure of Luned in the tale of *Owein* ('The Lady of the Fountain'), another ambiguously located character, Enid performs as a servant, looking after the horses and doing other menial jobs. The privileged form of femininity is class-specific and court-centred, and women who are active outside the court, like Luned and like the Enid of the journey, perform femininity in entirely different, and unauthorized, ways. By ceasing to wear the clothes and to perform the social behaviors of the court, Enid constructs a more ambiguous social position for herself, less conventionally feminine and noble, yet one over which she has more control. The tale shows us that for both Gereint and Enid, rank and gender are produced in performance, challenging the assumed truth of the tale that they precede appearance and behavior.

Between the departure from the castle and the beginning of the journey there is a liminal section in which two things happen to Enid. First she is told to wear her oldest clothes, and second she is told to be silent. I have already identified these events as moments of ideological stress that interrogate the assumed truths of the tale. In the French version, Enide is actually instructed to wear her finest clothes, an interesting difference which points to other preoccupations in that text, particularly the accommodation of sexual desire to marriage.[34] The Welsh Enid is returned to her pre-marital state of poverty,

manifested through her shabby clothes, suggesting a central anxiety (as in the Griselda story) with the social status of the bride whose nobility depends less on her own birth than on her husband's. Since the French Enide is commanded to wear her finest clothes, the issue is not so much her social status, which is taken for granted, as her desirability. Dorothea Kullmann argues that the notion of sexual desire purely for pleasure, as exemplified by Erec's marriage in the first part of the story, was strongly discouraged by the church, and that Chrétien is following the orthodox line in showing Erec moving towards a more mature understanding of marriage as a relationship based on spiritual communion as well as physical desire (appropriately channelled towards the production of children).[35] In any case, Erec is less concerned with punishing Enide than with restoring his own political status, and the semiotic of Enide's rich clothes signifies the retention of her courtly status, and her attractiveness, as Erec's wife. Erec then has to demonstrate that he can act independently of his wife, undistracted by her even while he is in her company.

The drab clothes worn by Enid in the Welsh text, however, signify a specifically Welsh insistence on the definition of nobility as strictly a matter of birth, not of wealth. While the lesser nobilities of England and France were using displays of conspicuous consumption to manipulate their place in the social hierarchy, Welsh custom and law insisted that birth alone was the determiner of rank.[36] We need to be shown, then, that Enid's rank is genuine, despite her humble origins; it goes deeper than mere clothing or material possessions. As the daughter of a noble father, however impoverished, Enid has noble rank but, until her marriage to Gereint, it is manifested only through demeanor and beauty, not through material possessions. Its innateness is demonstrated through her behavior, her acceptance of Gereint's lordship (however unpleasant), her devotion to his welfare above her own, and her chastity. The tale is in fact asking us to accept a logical impossibility—that rank is innate, a product of nature, yet is to be found in social performance, the product of nurture. The implication is that social behavior is determined by nature, that one is a consequence of the other, so that Enid's true (innate) nobility shines through her poor clothing which fails to conceal her 'natural' rank; yet the tale demonstrates at the same time that Enid's behavior is not merely instinctive but is adapted to circumstance and must therefore be socially produced.

Enid's humble clothes also suggest a punishment for her part in Gereint's feminization. A.T. Hatto has argued that poor-quality clothing was a conventional and humiliating marker of a woman's adultery or unchaste behavior, and that this is the significance of Enid's dress. Since Gereint suspects his wife of infidelity, it might be a logical extension of the plot to make her wear clothing suggestive of her crime. Hatto cites a number of examples of

the folktale motif of the torn and ragged clothes which reveal the adulterous wife, often by means of a magic dress that the suspected woman must put on: 'a woman's errors are revealed by the shrinking, sagging, slipping, breaking, tearing or other failures of the dress to sit well on any but one of blameless reputation.'[37] The point here, of course, is that the magic dress will only work on a pubescent body without any curves or bulges. All sexually mature women will therefore be condemned by the dress.

If Enid's poor clothing is at some level a gendered means of signifying moral failure, it also suggests in a much more universal way the actual loss of social and economic prestige that was both constructed and symbolized by outward appearance. Expensive clothes, given to a woman, remained the property of lord or husband. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has argued that, in fourteenth-century Italy, the gift of clothes from a husband to his new bride functioned as a kind of counter-gift to balance the dowry brought by the woman to the marriage.[38] Gifts of clothes and jewelry at the time of the marriage were therefore 'indispensable symbolic agents in the integration of the wife into another household and another lineage.'[39] The dressing of Enid at Arthur's court clearly functions as a similar rite of passage, a means of integrating Enid into the Arthurian world.

Though a husband could make full use of his wife's dowry, however, the wedding clothes were regarded as temporary gifts and could be repossessed at any time. Like Boccaccio's heroine Griselda who, in the last book of the *Decameron*, is sent back to her father clad only in her undergarments, Chaucer's Griselda leaves behind her bridal wardrobe, asking only for a shift to prevent her walking naked through the village.[40] Gereint's withdrawal of Enid's post-nuptial wardrobe is therefore a significant statement of the withdrawal of his protection and an implied slight on the inadequacy of her dowry. When Enid sets out on her horse wearing the only clothes that actually belonged to her prior to her marriage, she is effectively in disguise, appearing to the public world as a woman of inferior social status. Yet she is also appearing as the woman she was before she married, reclaiming an identity that she lost while in Arthur's court. Again, the words of Chaucer's Griselda apply to Enid's situation:

> 'For as I lefte at hoom al my clothyng,
> Whan I first cam to yow, right so,' quod she,
> 'Lefte I my wyl and al my libertee,
> And took youre clothyng; wherfore I yow preye,
> Dooth youre plesaunce; I wol youre lust obeye.'
> ('The Clerk's Tale,' IV (E) 654–58)

Without the fine clothes given to her on her marriage, Enid's status is obscured. None of the men Enid encounters on the journey treat her as her 'true' social identity—that of a married noblewoman of royal status—requires;

only the laborer who brings them food offers her the respect of an equal. In his treatment of Enid, 'yr iarll dwnn', 'the dark brown earl', reflects the ambiguity she herself projects. He asks Gereint's permission to woo Enid because she appears not to be formally attached to Gereint, but merely his property. Then he comments on the lack of an entourage, without which she cannot be conclusively identified as noble: '"Ny cheffy," heb ynteu, "na gweisson ne morynyon a'th wasanaytho"' ['You do not have,' he said, 'either servants or maids to wait on you'].[41] Finally he attempts to seduce her, as if her social position justifies such an approach, and the repeated motif of seduction provides an implicit rebuke to Enid for her independent behavior. If women take charge of their own identities, wear their own clothes, they are 'fair game' for predatory men.

Enid's clothing, as well as her social performance, therefore functions to disguise her 'true' social identity, that is, the identity defined for her by the norms of courtly society. There is a parallel here with the literary motif in which knights could conceal their identities and fight as an unknown.[42] The function of the motif of disguise in medieval literature is to affirm the naturalness of the social identity beneath the outward appearance. Whether dressed in his own armour or someone else's, Lancelot always fights like the noble knight he truly is. Though dressed in poor clothing, Enid's innate nobility is meant to shine forth regardless. But the motif of disguise is itself a site of ideological tension, because the disguise sometimes works: nobility is not always self-evidently natural but is, after all, signified by outward appearance. Knights without their special uniform of armor or without a horse suffer an immediate and humiliating loss of status, like Lancelot as the Knight of the Cart, or Sir Launfal sacked from Arthur's payroll and scorned by the mayor. In the twelfth-century *chanson de geste*, *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, Guillaume of Orange and his knights successfully disguise themselves as bourgeoisie to enter the city of Nîmes.[43] Events like this reveal the ideological strain of assuming that status is a natural quality; if it were so, why should Lancelot and Launfal suffer a loss of status when the outward trappings of knighthood are removed, and why are Guillaume and his men, or Enid herself, not recognized at once as the nobles that they are?

Enid's poor clothing, her enforced participation in the male spaces of forest and urban lodgings, and her consequent loss of social status, all confirm that it is her social identity, rather than her chastity and loyalty, which is being tested. Her position in the upper echelons of the ruling class has been achieved through marriage to Gereint, himself a prince, through the patronage of Arthur and Gwenhwyfar, the outward symbols of fine clothes and accessories, and a public reputation secured through gift-giving. What if all these outward symbols were taken away? Would Enid still be a 'lady'? The story wants to assure us that she would. Her nobility, already confirmed by her birth as

the daughter of the 'old earl,' is asserted to be innate, unchangeable, not dependent on the outward trappings of wealth, but 'always already' residing within her. Her social performance throughout the tale is meant to appear seamless and consistent, the automatic and inevitable expression of her true nobility which overrides context or ephemeral factors such as clothing. Yet, like Gereint, her social performance actually changes dramatically between the first and second parts of the story, as she exchanges one role for another. The construction of coherent identity, particularly a coherent gender identity, is the prime aim of socialization, yet subjectivity is, after all, never seamless or singular.[44]

The other thing that happens to Enid is that she is commanded by Gereint to keep silent. Silence was a powerful weapon in the medieval patriarchal control of women. Girls were trained to sit and sew in silence and generally not to speak unless spoken to, and not to make eye contact with strangers, particularly men.[45] Modesty and moderation of speech were virtues in women, while verbosity was a sign of presumption, ill-breeding, or immorality. In the Welsh story of *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyued*, the First Branch of the *Mabinogi*, Arawn's wife says nothing for the year that Pwyll takes her husband's place, and is only persuaded to offer an opinion when Arawn directly questions her.[46] The garrulous Wife of Bath, on the other hand, exposes her vulgarity and licentiousness through the obvious enjoyment with which she pours out the intimate details of her life story. But there is an implicit paradox in the narrative of *Gereint*. In the court, where there is no embargo on speech, Enid is silent. On the journey, with her speech formally forbidden, Enid says more than she does in the rest of the tale. In the male world outside the court, she actively resists the courtly definition of femininity, based on restrictions of clothing and behavior, and redefines herself through her own actions.

LE ROMAN DE SILENCE

The motif of disguise and the commandment to silence, as a specifically gendered aspect of behavior, have interesting parallels in the thirteenth-century French romance called by its modern title of *Le Roman de Silence*, the 'Romance of Silence.' In this story, the main protagonist is called Silence, who has a gender problem. Born as a girl, she is brought up in disguise as a boy in order to secure the family inheritance, and as a man she/he succeeds in becoming both a knight and a poet of excellent reputation. Silence is unmasked only by accident. Thinking to set her an impossible task, one of Silence's enemies orders her to find Merlin, living wild in the forest, knowing that Merlin can only be found by a woman. When Silence succeeds in the task, the logical fallacy can only be resolved by exposing—literally—the true sex of Silence. She is made to remove her male clothing and is proved without doubt to be female, a sexualized humiliation that is her initiation into womanhood.

There are many intriguing issues raised in this romance, not the least the debate between nature and nurture, realized through the allegorical figures of 'Nature' and 'Nourreture.'[47] Nature claims the final victory, asserting that Silence is and always has been a woman, but, as Simon Gaunt and Peggy McCracken have pointed out, this common-sense position is problematized in the romance by Silence's very successful performance as a man.[48] Her biological sex does not in fact predetermine her social performance, nor is it related to her social identity. As Simon Gaunt says: 'Silence's success as a knight serves to articulate precisely what the poet ostensibly seeks to repress, that is, that women may indeed have the ability to take on the cultural role of men.'[49]

This problematic operates also in the Welsh tale. Like Silence, Enid, adopting the disguise of self-definition, functions in the male space very successfully as a squire or servant regardless of her biological sex or her status at birth. She is not treated as a married noblewoman by any of the men she encounters on the journey, because her own performance of gender and status is highly ambiguous. The inappropriate behavior of most of the male characters towards Enid is evidence of the effectiveness of her disguise, achieved not just by her clothing but also by her changed social performance. Like Silence, Enid is the subject of a logical impossibility: she is a noblewoman by birth, yet she finds herself in a context in which noblewomen do not operate, that is, the world of forest and town, without an entourage, exposed to public view. Her response is to function successfully as a person who does belong in that environment, that is, partly as a man and partly as a servant.

There is another issue here which is also relevant to the story of Enid, and that is the link between gender and speech signalled by the name Silence. In the French romance, the name is chosen by the girl's parents because it could apply to either a male or a female. The poem explains that the masculine form in Latin, Silentius, could easily be changed to Silentia if the deception were ever discovered, but in fact the French form, Silence, is used throughout the poem, apparently genderless but of course carrying the masculine grammatical gender in French.[50] As a man, Silence is not silent at all. He speaks, he emotes, he analyzes his strange situation, he composes and sings poetry as a *trouvère*. And yet when Silence is revealed to be a woman, is identified, claimed and married by the king, the alpha-male of the story, Silence is silenced. King Ebains reiterates the gendering of silence as one of the natural characteristics of women:

> 'Sens de feme gist en taisir.
> Si m'aït Dex, so com jo pens,
> Uns muials puet conter lor sens,
> Car femes n'ont sens que mais un,
> C'est taisirs.' (ll. 6399–6403)

['A woman's sense lies in being silent. So help me God, as I think it, a mute could speak of their sense, since women have no sense but one, which is to be silent.']

Ebains' words seem to prove conclusively that a woman's silence is entirely natural. Yet the whole poem has been about a woman who is not silent at all. Her speech was only allowed because she was performing as a man. In the same way, Enid is passive and silent in her social role as noblewoman, and the only words she utters, her lament about Gereint, precipitate a crisis.[51] But out in the male world, performing outside the confines of the courtly order, Enid is able to speak effectively, to offer advice, to make plans and to take control. Such a dramatic change exposes the ideology of natural gender and innate nobility. In the masculine world of the wilderness, Enid's speech constructs a masculine subjectivity—autonomous, rational, pragmatic—which accompanies the self-ownership of her sexuality. Her gender has diverged from her biological sex.

A third issue raised in the *Roman de Silence* which is relevant to Enid is the opposition between nature and nurture and its significance for social class. The ideology of essentialism—the belief in an innate set of qualities which defined each individual and which were inevitable and immutable—authorized not only strictly-defined gender roles but also a rigid social hierarchy. Silence was not merely born a woman, she was born a noblewoman and, the poem argues, it is her noble qualities, transcending her sex, which ensure her success as a knight.

The same ideology of essentialism shapes the presentation of Enid. When Gereint first meets her she is living in impoverished surroundings, wearing threadbare clothes, and yet she is immediately recognized by him, and later by the entire Arthurian court, as one of them, a member of the nobility. Enid's social status is therefore constantly reinforced as something as innate and natural as her gender, an ideology tested by Enid's actual social performance, which locates her social identity much more ambiguously.

As in the story of Silence, Enid's performance during the journey succeeds in opening up a gap between nature and nurture with regard to her social identity. The story attempts to show that Enid, divested of the outward appearance of nobility, is nevertheless still a noblewoman because that status is innate and was conferred by her birth. Her rank shines through her shabby appearance and servile role. But by locating Enid in a context in which noblewomen cannot logically be situated, in the public and masculine world of forest and urban lodgings, the story is actually showing us that Enid's identity is achieved through social convention and performance. In the male-gendered space of the wilderness, Enid is reinvented as a social subject whose performance, especially her speech, is brought into being by the social context.

While the story invites us to interpret Enid's behavior as humble and devoted, and therefore innately noble, it actually shows her entering a masculine space, identifying herself as a servant, and liberating herself from the rules of the court. It is her speech that distinguishes the Enid of the journey from both the unmarried Enid living at her father's house, and the Enid of the royal court. With her refusal to be silent, Enid's speech contructs a masculine subjectivity: to have the power of speech is to have control of one's identity.[52] Away from the court, in the world of men, Enid as a speaking subject can now decide if she will give herself willingly or not at all, a choice not offered to her in her father's house or in the Arthurian court. Enid's repeated assertions of love for Gereint articulate the fact that she has now positively chosen him, of her own free will, whereas earlier she had simply been given to him by the patriarchal figures who controlled her. When *yr iarll dwnn* offers her his earldom, she refuses, saying:

> 'Na uynaf, y rof a Dyw,' heb hi; 'a'r gwr racco yd ymgredeis yn gyntaf eiroet, ac nyd anwadalaf y vrthaw.' (ll. 975–77)
>
> ['I do not want it, between me and God,' she said; 'and that man yonder is the first one to whom I ever committed myself, and I will not waver from him.']

As soon as Gereint and Enid move back into the orbit of Arthur's court, when Gereint is persuaded to stay and have his wounds healed, Enid becomes silent and passive again. When their journey resumes, so does her speech. Enid's final and irrevocable return to the role of noblewoman at the end of the tale is the result of a process of socialization quite as ruthless as that imposed on Gereint: her 'natural' status comes at the price of her freedom to speak and act in the public world. The more the story tries to demonstrate that gender and social rank are the products of nature, the more it relies on social performance, on the social construction of identity, to teach its moral lessons.

SILENCING THE FEMININE

The purpose of the journey of tests, then, seems to have been achieved by the end of the tale. Gereint's masculinity and noble status are reconstructed and shown to be his true identity. Enid's social status is shown to transcend mere outward display of clothing and to reside within her, unaltered and uncorrupted, as a product of her birth. Just as Gereint's sexual identity is dismantled in the first half of the story in order that it can be reassembled and reaffirmed in the second half, so Enid's social status, constructed for her in the first half, is dismantled during the journey in order to prove that her nobility is not simply a matter of appearance but is an entirely natural quality that she inevitably possesses.

But, like the *Roman de Silence*, the Welsh tale—perhaps 'inadvertently'—manages to contradict the common-sense view that both gender and social

status pre-exist identity. Moments of interpretive difficulty—Gereint's jealousy and harshness, Enid's oldest dress, the dilemma of how to evaluate Enid's disobedience—reveal the ideological strain of the supposedly common-sense position, never explictly interrogated, that gender and status are innate and pre-determined. The journey of tests, like the life lived by Silence, in fact consistently exposes the operations of nurture, that is, of learned behavior and social performance, even while asserting the primacy of nature. Gereint's gender identity, supposedly as natural and unchanging as his biological sex, is represented as unstable for most of the first half of the story, and has to be re-aligned with his maculine sex through the social performance of behavior that is marked as masculine within a specific cultural context (medieval, aristocratic). In other words, his gender identity, like his rank, is constructed rather than endowed by nature.

Gereint is re-masculinized in ways that have outlasted the medieval, mainly through a brutal process of physical aggression which leaves him severely injured. The boyish good looks and neat turn-out of the young Gereint in the first half of the tale are replaced by the hard exterior, terse manner and battle-scarred body of the military veteran. Appearance and nature finally coincide—Gereint becomes what he is supposed to be, but only through a ruthless process of socialization which succeeds in suppressing the affective emotions that marked his earlier intimacy with Enid. In overcoming the jealousy—and also the intimacy—that demeaned him and taking on the physical toughness required of a leader, Gereint is finally acknowledged as the legitimate ruler of Cornwall.

As for Enid, the 'masculine' subjectivity that allowed her to function efficiently in the masculine spaces of the world outside the court is entirely suppressed on her re-absorption into the Arthurian order. Enid's journey —like that of modern women into the masculinized workforce—is not entirely liberating. In escaping from the cloister of *jalousie*, she enters the battlefield of male competition and aggression, and the minefield of masculine discourse. While her noble status, problematized in the first part of the story, is satisfactorily affirmed through her loyalty to Gereint, its 'naturalness' is inadvertently exposed as a social fiction and shown to be an effect, not of birth, but of performance. Like the *Roman de Silence*, the tale of Gereint and Enid finds gaps where none are supposed to exist, between sex and gender, between birth and rank.

The ideological tension produced by these gaps provokes inconsistencies which can only be resolved, as they are in the *Roman de Silence*, by silencing the feminine, whose agency reveals the power of social performance. Following their reconciliation towards the end of the tale, Gereint's 'feminine' aspects, his impetuousness and affective emotions, are now firmly suppressed as unmasculine. The re-silenced Enid is never allowed to speak of her adventures

in the male domain or her explorations of alternative gender and status roles. In that silence, the essentialist myths of innate nobility and coherent identity are quietly restored.

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NOTES

1 Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xiii.

2 For this article, I am using the standard edition of *Ystorya Gereint uab Erbin* by Robert L. Thomson (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1997). The most recent translation into English is by Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The edition of *Le Roman de Silence* used in this article is the one by Lewis Thorpe, *Le Roman de Silence. A Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Heffer and Sons, 1972). For a more recent edition with facing English tranlsation, see Sarah Roche-Mahdi, *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, rev. edn., 1999). All translations into modern English in this article are my own.

3 Brynley F. Roberts, 'Tales and Romances,' in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, vol. I, ed. A.O.H. Jarman and G R. Hughes (Swansea: Christopher Davies, 1976), p. 229 [pp. 203–243]. The testing of Griselda in relation to her social class is discussed by Helen Fulton, 'The Performance of Social Class: Domestic Violence in the Griselda Story,' *AUMLA* 106 (2006): 25–42. For the existence of the Griselda story before the fourteenth century, see Dudley D. Griffith, *The Origin of the Griselda Story* (Seattle: University of Washington Publications in Language and Literature 8, no. 1, 1931); W.A. Cate, 'The Problem of the Origins of the Griselda Story,' *Studies in Philology* 29 (1932): 389–405. For similar tale-types, see A. Arne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale* (Helsinki, 1928), p. 425, 887.

4 See Thomas Wright, ed., *The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry* (London: Early English Text Society, 1868); M.Y. Offord, ed., *The Book of the Knight of the Tower, translated by William Caxton* (London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1971); Georgine E. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier, eds, *Le Ménagier de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Eileen Power, trans., *The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris): A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by a Citizen of Paris, c. 1393* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006). For critical studies, see Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1983); Madeline H. Caviness, 'Patron

or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a *Vade Mecum* for her Marriage Bed,' in *Studying Medieval Women*, ed. Nancy F. Partner (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1993), pp. 31–60.

5 Neil Thomas has argued that the German version of *Erec* provides a rare example of the education of a heroine rather than the hero. See '*Gereint* and *Erec*: A Welsh Heroic Text and its Continental Successors,' *Trivium* 22 (1987): 37–48. On the 'education of Enide' theory, see also Z.P. Zaddy, 'Pourquoi Erec se décide-t-il à partir en voyage avec Enide?' *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 7 (1964): 179–85.

6 Roger Middleton, 'Chwedl Geraint ab Erbin,' in *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. Rachel Bromwich et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 151 [pp. 147–57].

7 The twelfth-century French version by Chrétien de Troyes probably preceded the Welsh version. The text has been edited by Mario Roques, *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes I: Erec et Enide* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1968). For a translation into modern English, see W.W. Comfort, trans., *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances* (London and New York: Dent, 1975).

8 P. Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. G. Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). According to Derrida, 'the self-identity of the signified conceals itself unceasingly and is always on the move,' in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 49.

9 Robert L.A. Clark argues that there are 'two clusters of meanings [in *Silence*], one around sex and gender, the other around issues of class and character.' See 'Queering Gender and Naturalizing Class in the *Roman de Silence*,' *Arthuriana* 12.1 (2002): 56 [50–63].

10 For accounts of Erec's motivation in the French romance, see M.B. Ogle, 'The Sloth of Erec,' *Romanic Review* 9 (1918): 1–20; M. Roques, review of *La Femme et l'Amour au XIIe siècle d'après les Poèmes de Chrétien de Troyes*, by M. Borodine, *Romania* 39 (1910): 377–83; W.A. Nitze, 'Erec's Treatment of Enide,' *Romanic Review* 10 (1919): 26–37; Nitze, 'The Romance of Erec, son of Lac,' *Modern Philology* 11 (1913-14): 445–89; Norris J. Lacy, 'Narrative Point of View and the Problem of Erec's Motivation,' *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 18 (1971): 355–62.

11 See for example Rudolf Zenker, *Zur Mabinogionfrage, Eine Antikritik* (Halle a. Saale, 1912), pp. 71–74. An alarming number of critical accounts of the French *Erec et Enide* blame Enide for her own punishment because she was foolish enough to believe the court gossip. See Donald Maddox, *Structure and Sacring: The Systematic Kingdom in Chrétien's Erec et Enide* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1978), pp. 63–65; Douglas Kelly, 'La forme et le sens de la quête dans l'*Erec et Enide* de Chrétien de Troyes,' *Romania* 92 (1971): 326–58; Emmanuel J. Mickel, 'A Reconsideration of Chrétien's *Erec*,' *Romanische Forschungen* 84 (1972): 18–44; Joan Tasker Grimbert, 'Misrepresentation and Misconception in Chrétien de Troyes. Nonverbal and Verbal Semiotics in *Erec et Enide* and *Perceval*,' in *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature*, ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989), p. 67 [pp. 50–79].

12 R.S. Loomis, 'A Common Source for *Erec* and *Gereint*,' *Medium Aevum* 27 (1958): 178 [175–8]. This view was also supported by Gaston Paris in his review of *Erec und Enide*, by Wendelin Foerster, in *Romania* 20 (1891): 164 [148–66].

13 For the German version, see Albert Leitzmann, ed, *Erec, von Hartmann von Aue* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1972); Thomas L. Keller, trans., *Hartmann von Aue: Erec* (New York: Garland, 1987).

14 A.T. Hatto, 'Enid's Best Dress. A Contribution to the Understanding of Chrétien's and Hartmann's *Erec* and the Welsh *Gereint*,' *Euphorion* 54 (1960): 439 [437–41].

15 Brynley F. Roberts, 'Sylwadau ar "Ramant" *Gereint ac Enid*,' *Ysgrifau Beirniadol* 28 (1992): 36 [29–42].

16 Neil Thomas, '*Gereint* and *Erec*,' 47.

17 I am assuming a bipartite structure for the tale, with the story of the marriage occupying the first section and the journey and reconciliation occupying the second section. Other readings produce different structural formations for the tale. Brynley Roberts, for example, defines a three-part structure comprising the marriage, courtly life, and the journey which contains the real theme of the tale, namely Gereint's attempt to prove himself ('Sylwadau ar "Ramant" *Gereint ac Enid*,' 30). E. Mickel proposed a three-part division into pre-marriage, post-marriage, and the 'joy of the court' episode ('A Reconsideration of Chrétien's *Erec*,' 19).

18 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 135.

19 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 140, original italics.

20 Under medieval Welsh law, boys left the legal protection of their fathers and entered into the service of a lord at the age of fourteen. See A.R. Wiliam, ed., *Llyfr Iorwerth* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1960), sections 98 and 99; Dafydd Jenkins, ed. and trans., *The Law of Hywel Dda* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1986), pp. 130–31. This can be construed as a legal age of manhood, though social acceptance of adulthood depended on conventional 'milestones' such as military service and marriage. Gereint's rites of passage towards independent kingship are also very similar to those institutionalized by social practice in England. See W.M. Ormrod, 'Coming to Kingship: Boy Kings and the Passage to Power in Fourteenth-Century England,' in *Rites of Passage: Cultures of Transition in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Nicola F. McDonald and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), pp. 31–49.

21 The Anglo-Saxon concept of *aetheling*, the designated heir to a kingship, also occurred in Welsh law, which borrowed the Old English term into Welsh as *edling*. See Jenkins, ed. and trans., *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p. 222; Robin Chapman Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling* in the Laws of Court,' in *The Welsh King and His Court*, ed. T.M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 29–62.

22 This is one of the major social differences between Chrétien's romances and their Welsh counterparts: in the former, the knights cannot wait to become independent of Arthur by winning their own land, while in the latter the noble heroes willingly

remain under Arthur's patronage. See Helen Fulton, 'Individual and Society in *Owein/Yvain* and *Gereint/Erec*,' in *The Individual in Celtic Literatures*, ed. Joseph Falaky Nagy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 15–50.

23 The idea of sexual abstinence before excessive physcial exertion was proposed by Plato in relation to the Olympic games (*Laws*, Book 8) and was linked to broader religious teachings about chastity in the Middle Ages. See Mary B. Cunningham, '"Shutting the Gates of the Soul": Spiritual Treatises on Resisting the Passions,' in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 23–32; Derek Neal, 'Masculine Identity in Late Medieval English Society and Culture,' in *Writing Medieval History,* ed. Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 171–188; Jacqueline Murray, 'Hiding Behind the Universal Man: Male Sexuality in the Middle Ages,' in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 123–152. Jo Ann McNamara has commented that some men in the Middle Ages 'saw abstinence as a means to drop out of the whole power system' ('The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050–1150,' in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 12 [pp. 3–29], and this has some relevance to Gereint's situation.

24 Ad Putter, 'Arthurian Literature and the Rhetoric of Effeminacy,' in *Arthurian Romance and Gender*, ed. Friedrich Wolfzettel (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1995), p. 34 [pp. 34–49].

25 The writer of the tale uses the terms very specifically. He distinguishes between *morwyn* and *gwreic* (for example in l. 254 and ll. 423–4) and also refers to one character as *morwynwreic* (l. 1234) which Thomson explains as 'one whose marriage has not yet been consummated' or as an indication that 'the speaker has no previous knowledge of the status of the young woman' (*Ystorya Gereint*, 130–1).

26 See Molly Martin, 'Castles and the Architecture of Gender in Malory's *The Knight of the Cart*', *Arthuriana* 22.2 (2012): 37–51.

27 William Stubbs, ed., *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi, De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, vol. II (London: Rolls Series, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889), Book IV, section 314 (p. 370).

28 Barbara Hanawalt, 'At the Margins of Women's Space in Medieval Europe,' in *'Of Good and Ill Repute': Gender and Social Control in Medieval England*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 70–87, especially pp. 80-87. See also Michael A. Calabrese, 'Controlling Space and Secrets in the *Lais* of Marie de France,' in *Place, Space and Landscape in Medieval Narrative*, ed. Laura L. Howes (Knoxville, Tenn: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), pp. 79–106; Josephine A. Koster, '*Privitee, Habitus* and Proximity: Conduct and Domestic Space in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*,' *Essays in Medieval Studies* 24 (2007): 79–91; Karen L. Fresco, 'Gendered Household Spaces in Christine de Pizan's *Livre des Trois Vertus*,' in *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe c. 850–c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth and the Body*, eds Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic and Sarah Rees Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 187–97.

29 Larry D. Benson ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 'Merchant's Tale,' E. 2087–91.

30 Dafydd Johnston et al, eds, *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), no. 112, ll. 3–8.

31 Mario Roques, ed., *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: IV, Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)* (Paris: H. Champion, 1971), vv. 2486–88 and 2502–04.

32 Roger Middleton finds it 'inconsistent' that Enid is not granted the stag's head until some time after her marriage, but this ceremony clearly marks Enid's acceptance as part of the Arthurian nobility. 'Chwedl *Geraint ab Erbin*,' 151–2.

33 Martin argues, in relation to Guenevere's role in Malory's 'The Knight of the Cart,' that '[this] reconstruction of space and gender flummoxes attempts at assessing masculinity and femininity as strict binary opposites' ('Castles and the Architecture of Gender,' 44), a comment that implies the constructedness of gender. The social construction of gender is, of course, at the heart of Judith Butler's concept of performativity. For a classic set of readings on the sociology of gender, see Judith Lorber and Susan A. Farrell, eds, *The Social Construction of Gender* (London: Sage, 1991).

34 Sarah Sturm-Maddox and Donald Maddox have done a detailed study of the use of clothing in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*, finding a complex interrelation between the characters' clothing and their social positioning. See 'Description in Medieval Narrative: Vestimentary Coherence in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*,' *Medioevo Romanzo* 9 (1984): 51–64. See also Jacques Le Goff, 'Vestimentary and Alimentary Codes in *Erec et Enide*,' in *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1992), pp. 132–50.

35 Dorothea Kullmann, 'Hommes amoureux et femmes raisonnables. *Erec et Enide* et la doctrine ecclésiastique du mariage,' in Wolfzettel, ed., *Arthurian Romance and Gender*, pp. 119–29.

36 In Welsh law, the status of *bonheddig*, 'person of noble stock,' was a legal as well as a social status acquired at birth by a child whose mother and father were both of the same status. See Jenkins, ed. and trans., *The Law of Hywel Dda*, pp. 110, 243, 318.

37 Hatto, 'Enid's Best Dress,' 438.

38 Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'The Griselda Complex: Dowry and Marriage Gifts in the Quattrocento,' in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 213–46.

39 Klapisch-Zuber, 'The Griselda Complex,' p. 224. See further E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

40 Antonio Enzo Quaglio, ed., *Giovanni Boccaccio, Decameron* (Milan: Garzanti, 1974, 2 vols.), Book X, vol. 2, pp. 934–935; Benson, *Riverside Chaucer*, 'Clerk's Tale,' IV (E) 862–68.

41 *Ystorya Gereint*, ll. 971–2.

42 Morgan Dickson's analysis of disguise and identity in twelfth-century romance is relevant here. See 'Verbal and Visual Disguise: Society and Identity in Some Twelfth-Century Texts,' in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 41–54.

43 Duncan McMillan, ed., *Le Charroi de Nîmes. Chanson de Geste du XIIe Siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1972, rev. edn.).

44 As Judith Butler argues, 'The construction of coherence conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian contexts in which gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender' (*Gender Trouble*, pp. 135–6).

45 See Alice A. Hentsch, ed., *De La Littérature Didactique du Moyen Age s'adressant specialement aux Femmes* (London: Slatkine, 1975).

46 R.L. Thomson, ed., *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957), 6 (lines 147–160); Davies (trans.), *The Mabinogion*, 7.

47 The opposition between nature and nurture, and the conviction that nature is always more powerful than any social forces such as upbringing or education, is a common idea in medieval literature. The idea that gender might be a social construct is never explicitly entertained. See Simon Gaunt, 'The Significance of Silence,' *Paragraph* 13 (1990): 203 [202–16].

48 Gaunt, 'The Significance of Silence'; Peggy McCracken, '"The Boy who was a Girl": Reading Gender in the *Roman de Silence*,' *Romanic Review* 85 (1994): 517–36. For other discussions of the romance see R. Howard Bloch, 'Silence and Holes: the *Roman de Silence* and the Art of the Trouvère,' *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 81–99; Peter L. Allen, 'The Ambiguity of Silence. Gender, Writing and *Le Roman de Silence*,' in *Sign, Sentence, Discourse*, ed. Wasserman and Roney, pp. 98–112; Kate M. Cooper, 'Elle and L: Sexualised Textuality in the *Roman de Silence*,' *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): 341–60. A special issue of *Arthuriana* (vol. 12.1) on the theme of *Le Roman de Silence* appeared in 2002.

49 Gaunt, 'The Significance of Silence,' 203.

50 The existence of nominal gender in the French language has formed a significant part of gender theory by French writers, particularly Luce Irigaray who argued that the dominance of the masculine gender (which acts as a common plural in French) is one of the linguistic strategies by which women are denied subjectivity. See for example Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. by Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 71–77. In the case of the hero/heroine Silence, the option of either a male or a female form in Latin has been removed by the emergence of a single noun in French which is masculine in gender.

51 Peggy McCracken has pointed out, in relation to the French version, that Enide's verbal consent to her marriage, normally required by the church, is silenced in the poem, and that women's words are constructed as disruptive of the social order, observations which also apply to the Welsh tale. See McCracken, 'Silence and

the Courtly Wife. Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide*,' in *The Arthurian Yearbook III*, ed. Keith Busby (New York and London: Garland, 1993), pp. 107–26.

52 E. Jane Burns constructs a good argument for the French Enide rewriting the masculine chivalric 'truths' of the romance by 'voicing stories of [Erec's] potential failure, his carelessness or ignorance,' a subversion that links her speech to her sexuality. 'Rewriting Men's Stories: Enide's Disruptive Mouths,' in *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996), p. 32 [pp. 19–40].