

THESIS

TIRANT LO BLANC(H): MASCULINITIES,
PHALLOSOCIAL DESIRE, AND TRIANGULAR CONSTELLATIONS

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Fall 2011

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ABSTRACT

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The introduction of this thesis provides a revised survey that examines the analysis of *Tirant* scholars to date, including evaluations of its sources and influences, theories concerning its circulation, its autobiographical aspects, and its genre, among other approaches to literary criticism. It draws attention to points of contention and highlights and rectifies those that have been overlooked or that have remained undisputed. “Chapter One: Queer Heterosexualities in the *Tirant*: Straight until Proven ‘Other’” addresses the issue of masculinities in the clergy, the chivalry, and the monarchy by mapping models of masculinity—conventional and competing—within a phallosocial context. And “Chapter Two: Bizarre Love Triangles in the *Tirant*: Consummation of Phallosocial Desire” traces phallosocial desire by analyzing the processes that lead to a symbolic consummation of same-sex relations by means of erotic triangles within a (mandatory) heterosexuality, where women become the (required) vessel by which phallosocial desire is reified and brought to a culmination within the established patriarchal paradigm of compulsory heterosexuality.

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INTRODUCTION

“Bless my soul—said the curate, in a loud voice—, for here is *Tirant Lo Blanc*! Give it here, mate, that I make as if I have found a wealth of joy and a mine of pastimes in it. Here is Lord Kirieleison de Muntalbà, courageous knight, and his brother Tomàs de Muntalbà, and the Knight Fontseca, with the battle that the valiant Tirant made with the mastiff, and the witticisms of the damsel Plaerdemavida, with the loves and deceptions of the Viuda Reposada, and the Mistress Empress, smitten with Hipòlit, her squire. Verily I say unto you, my lord mate, that for its style this is the best book in the world: here the knights eat and sleep and die in their beds and draft wills before their deaths, with other things that all the other books of this genre lack. With all that, I say unto you that he who wrote it deserves, for he did not commit all the trade follies, to be sent to the galleys for the rest of the days of his life. Take it home and read it; and you shall see that it is truly all that I have told you of it that it is.”¹

These words proclaim an apparently stellar review of Martorell’s—and de Galba’s—*Tirant lo Blanc* by the curate, Pero Pérez, of Cervantes’s novel, *The Ingenious Nobleman Lord Quixote of La Mancha*. When commenting on the *Tirant*, many have looked to these words as a starting point; perhaps—because of the renown that Cervantes’s novel has enjoyed, which is contrary to the fate that befell the *Tirant*—referring to the endorsement serves as an attempt to restore it to its rightful place among the masterpieces of world literature. Yet, this passage is one of the many tongue-in-cheek episodes that appear throughout the *Quixote*. And it is ironic that it is the curate, a representative of the Church, who during the maximum apogee of the inquisition—precisely when the Church

¹ (Where readily published translations are found wanting due to nuances that were overlooked or no translation is available, I will provide my own translation. In cases where a re-translation does not offer further elucidation to the passage, I will resort to published translations.) —¡Válame Dios—dijo el cura, dando una gran voz—, que aquí está Tirante el Blanco! Dádmele acá, compadre, que hago cuenta he hallado en él un tesoro de contento y una mina de pasatiempos. Aquí está don Quirieleisón de Montalbán, valeroso caballero, y su hermano Tomás de Montalbán, y el caballero Fonseca, con la batalla que el valiente de Tirante hizo con el alano, y las agudezas de la doncella Placerdemivida, con los amores y embustes de la viuda Reposada, y la señora Emperatriz, enamorada de Hipólito, su escudero. Digoos verdad, señor compadre, que por su estilo es éste el mejor libro del mundo: aquí comen los caballeros y duermen y mueren en sus camas y hacen testamento antes de su muerte, con otras cosas de que todos los demás libros de este género carecen. Con todo eso, os digo que merecía el que le compuso, pues no hizo tantas necedades de industria, que le echaran a galeras por todos los días de su vida. Llevadle a casa y leedle, y veréis que es verdad cuanto de él os he dicho. (Cervantes, 65-66, translation mine)

had banned chivalric novels ²—is looking to save this book from the destructive fate that Don Quixote’s niece, with the assistance of the curate and the barber, had set out in order to free him from the malady of delusion. This passage also brings into question the reliability and credibility of the *Quixote*’s narrator and his endorsement, be he Cervantes or some alter ego. Nonetheless, according to Montserrat Piera, “[t]he Catalan chivalry novel *Tirant lo Blanc*, written by Joanot Martorell between 1460 and 1464 and published in Valencia in 1490, might not have become known among hispanomedievalists if it were not for Miguel de Cervantes” (46) as she too comments on the excerpt included as the epigraph. The endorsement by a figure like that of Cervantes becomes increasingly significant as the few who have been exposed to the grandeur of the *Tirant* grasp at straws seeking to gain restitution for the work because it is indeed a great work. But there’s also a sense of impotence because anyone outside of that elite circle would question why a work that was so important is not the subject of greater canonical scholarship. Even still, Cervantes’s mention of the work can be seen as a twofold curse: it may be understood as merely a fictional concatenation by the farcical characters in Cervantes’s mock chivalric romance; or it will be read with the wanton and ironic facetiousness that Cervantes may have arguably intended.

Many times before considering this work for investigation, I had chanced upon the title *Tirant lo Blanc*; yet in many of the anthologies of Peninsular literature where the

² Henry Kamen. “The Impact on Science and Literature.” *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. “As for Spanish books [...], some are books of romance and chivalry, and ‘since they are without imagination or learning and it is a waste of time to read them, it is better to prohibit them, except for the first four books of Amadis’” (114); “Censorship encouraged a practice which later became common: the burning of books. Book burning was, of course, a traditional device used by Christians against their enemies. The emperor Constantine used it against Arian works. In 1248 the clergy in Paris burned fourteen cartloads of Jewish books. The medieval Inquisition followed suit, and in the sixteenth century it was a common practice in Italy and France” (112).

work was mentioned, it was merely listed as one of significant importance to the late medieval period. In none of those cases was the work, or even vignettes of the work, included, as is sometimes done in texts for surveys of literature. Usually, its listing was among a catalog of works that seemed to include it as a deuterocanonical piece of sorts, peripheral but never central. It was this inaccessibility that baited my intellectual curiosity to know more of this obscure work. For that reason, like many past critics, I would like to make due diligence and address some of the challenges the work faced. But I would also like to discuss some of the influences and sources and how these contributed to a very complex work—one that I'd like to think the modern scholar would deem worthy of further exploration.

And beyond the work that has been done thus far, I would like to explore the *Tirant* through a queer lens and chart masculinity—conventional and competing—and phallosociality through the arrangements and processes that eventuate in a “consummation,” within a(n obligatory) heteronormative context, where women become the vessel in which this phallosocial desire is (un)bound. I make use of the word consummation in this work, in the context of marriage; however, within a heteronormative ethos even in juxtaposition with phallosocial desire/“male bonding,” in terms of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, this consummation can only be a symbolic one and its manifestation is a triangular one.

With the advent of queer theory and the politics that engendered the gay movement, many scholars have looked to all facets of life with a revisionist approach in order to re(dis)cover all manner of articles that may be deemed queer and thereby secure representation and a voice for a marginalized culture. In the same manner, because the

most readily available scholarship on the *Tirant* is limited to what I would call traditional or conservative, I would like to offer an “other” reading.

Circulation and Translations of the *Tirant*

As it happens, the *Tirant* was little known and little read in its time and subsequent generations; and some might argue that even today it is an arcane piece. I believe it is a marginalized text,³ which has not enjoyed the circulation it ought as a masterpiece of fifteenth century Iberian literature. Perhaps it was linguistic access because, although it is a Spanish work, what we frequently deem as Spanish is technically Castilian. This work was originally written in Catalan (or Valencian)⁴; and it was published just two years prior to the unification of Spain under the Catholic Kings, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon—a union that resulted in the establishment of Castilian as the language of Spain and its colonies. But according to Mario Vargas Llosa—one of the leading scholars of the *Tirant*—language should not be an obstacle since works like *El Cantar de Mio Çid*, *Beowulf*, *Chanson de Roland*, and *Peredur son of Efwrawg* “are less decipherable for the average reader of our day and still those heroes are more alive than Tirant” (10). Another factor that should be considered in evaluating the

³ Marginalization is a recurrent theme in this monograph—considering that the first true English translation was not even acknowledged and the “mainstream” translation took editorial liberties with it. The 1511 Castilian translation also exerted its own censorship based on the values that came to form the Spanish identity under the crown of Castille and Aragon.

⁴ The argument of whether to call the language—which is spoken in Andorra, Catalonia, Balearic Islands, the autonomous community of Valencia, parts of France and Italy—Valencian or Catalan draws up issues of ancestral pride. At the risk of oversimplifying the dichotomy, the community of Valencia was once known as the Kingdom of Valencia, whereas the Catalonia of the same period was a principality. Therefore, it is a matter of provenance; the language came from Valencia to Catalonia, and not the other way around. Today, Catalonia is a prosperous autonomous community of Spain; and, therefore, the name of the language has become associated with the more prosperous geographical space where it is spoken. Both communities have their own academy and dictionary: Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua, *Diccionari ortogràfic i de pronunciació del valencià* and the Institut d’Estudis Catalans, *Diccionari de la llengua catalana*. It is a complex issue and one that transcends the focus of this work.

limited readership of the work is that of the regulating (or oppressive) power of the Church, since it was that institution that condemned and banned chivalric novels.⁵

David Rosenthal, one of the translators of the work into English, stated that

[w]hen *Tirant* was published in 1490, the Catalan language and its literature were about to enter a three hundred and fifty year decline during which the outside world would take very little notice of them. *Tirant* shared in this general oblivion [...]. Had the outcome of the Spanish Civil War been different, this process might have accelerated [...]. Instead, Catalan culture was brutally suppressed for twenty years [...], thus making the literature almost inaccessible to interested foreigners. This translation, then, is the first modern version of *Tirant lo Blanc* to appear in any non-Hispanic language. (ix-x)

From this passage, it is obvious that the *Tirant's* was an uphill battle. A key point of this passage is the word modern. Prior to Rosenthal's English translation, he (Rosenthal) also notes that the *Tirant* "has been translated into Italian (1538), French (1737?), and twice into Castilian (1511 and 1969). Only the Castilian translations are currently in print" (625). Other works, similar to the *Tirant*, have been translated into more languages than the *Tirant* and have enjoyed a greater circulation. Even the *Quixote*, which mentions and endorses the *Tirant*, has procured a worldwide audience; and that, lamentably, is not the case of the *Tirant*.

With the aim of giving the *Tirant* and its scholars their due place, I would like to draw attention to contentious issues concerning the acclaimed "first translation" of the *Tirant*.

⁵ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*. Juan de Mariana "recommended that the Spanish Index should include the Tridentine rule banning 'absolutely those books that narrate or teach lascivious and obscene things' (his advice was not followed). Mariana also urged that 'in particular one should ban such books both in Latin and in Castilian, to wit *Celestina*, *Diana de Montemayor*, and books of chivalry even if it were only to force people to read good books and genuine histories'. His full list of unworthy literature also included select works by Virgil, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius and other classical authors" (115).

In 1984, a translation into English of the ‘best book in the world’—as Cervantes’ curate called the 15th century Catalano-Valencian novel of chivalry *Tirant lo Blanc*—was published by Schocken Books of New York. The translation, by David H. Rosenthal, was an immediate success. Handsomely bound, generously funded, and praised by scholars like Martí de Riquer as a ‘heroic project,’ Rosenthal’s version went through three additional printings within the first year, and even so is now out of print. (Solà-Solé 1)

Certainly, translating the work that caught the attention of Cervantes would afford the *Tirant* greater circulation and scholars better access to what Solà-Solé deemed its most attractive features: irony, psychology, and copious amounts of eroticism. The novel is set in England, the author claims that his is a translation from English.⁶ Nevertheless, the point that Solà-Solé (and I too) would like to make is that Rosenthal’s translation is deemed the first translation simply because he and his reviewers staked that claim; and the authoritative endorsements that appear on the book jacket made it all the more credible. In reality, however, as Solà-Solé exposes, ten years prior, the novel had been translated by C. Raymond La Fontaine who was a candidate for a PhD in English Literature at Auburn University. “His dissertation, *Tirant lo Blanc: An Introduction and Translation*, directed by Auburn Hargis Professor and Medievalist Thomas L. Writ [...] took La Fontaine two years to complete” (2). The completed translation resulted in a manuscript of nearly 1,500 pages. The dissertation was defended in the fall of 1974; and, as is the standard practice, the dissertation was microfilmed and archived at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. And it has always been there for researchers to access it. On this matter, Solà-Solé brings up a valuable point:

Despite this accessibility in a standard resource, the true first English translation of *Tirant lo Blanc* [sic] remained unnoticed. Thus Rosenthal,

⁶ This may or may not be true; or one would have to evaluate the author’s interpretation of the meaning of translation. It is quite evident, as one reads, that there are sources that Martorell clearly takes generously from in order to create his own fiction.

well acquainted with the body of English translations from Catalan, makes no mention of La Fontaine in his own translation and (as we have seen) takes full credit for breaking a ‘non-Hispanic’ silence of centuries. (2)

Martí de Riquer an academe of renown in Spanish philology and specialist on *Tirant* scholarship endorsed Rosenthal’s translation, legitimating in the academic world its status as the “‘first’ and ‘unique’ English translation of *Tirant lo Blanc*” (2).

Rosenthal, in his “Translator’s Foreword,” states that he has “eliminated as many redundancies as possible, both to make the story more readable and in the belief that Martorell might have done the same, had he lived to complete his project” (xxv). This agency exerted upon a medieval text is curious. If a medieval or early modern work is written in a language that does not require translation, then in the modern era, for the purpose of publication, the original is preserved as closely as possible for scholars to analyze; and any alteration would have been noted. However, if the work is to be “translated,” I do not believe it is reasonable to assume that while we are vested in recovering this work we can make the modifications we unilaterally deem necessary and disregard the possibility that our scope may be too nearsighted. Furthermore, I would argue that Rosenthal’s is a literary adaption rather than a translation.

With respect to research and *Tirant* studies, a text published as recently as 1999 by the title of *Tirant lo Blanc: New Approaches* written by recent scholars of the *Tirant* unanimously cite from the work of Rosenthal and the original Valencian text. Perhaps this particular issue would be an excellent study of how marketing as a (normative mechanism itself) serves to legitimate historical accounts—notwithstanding the fact that its accounts stem from information that is technically false or flawed. Nonetheless, what was most notable to me, after having read Rosenthal’s English translation (1984), Martí

de Riquer's Catalan edition (1943), and J. F. Vidal Jové's Castilian translation (1969), was that I had to find another English translation. When I compared, I noticed that some of the chapters had been significantly abbreviated. Along with Rosenthal's streamlining went some of the humor and details; and the honest spirit of the work appeared to have been lost or opaqued. So in searching, much like Solà-Solé, I came across La Fontaine's translation and after reading only a few pages, I was convinced that this work reflected the true spirit of the original. The subtleties were still there; and the words and concepts that were there in the Catalan and Castilian had made their way into the English register.

Even so, what is important today is that the work is known and is more frequently read and analyzed than it has been in the past—even if the circumstances that surrounded its emergence were collectively issues of bad timing. For the purpose of this monograph and beyond the false claims—intentional or inadvertent—made by Rosenthal, what we have are two English translation options to select from and to explore. Having read both translations, I would endorse the La Fontaine translation over Rosenthal's: If the original work is not accessible to a reader due to issues of language, then the next best thing, I would think, is a literal translation—even if it “would probably strike some readers as excessively literal” (Solà-Solé 3). This way the reader can judge the work completely through a lens that refracts and distorts the original the least amount possible.

Furthermore, La Fontaine's translation lends itself more readily for a revisionist reading because it includes all of the material contained in the original and leaving it readily exposed for Anglophonic scholars to explore its recondite recesses. For that reason, this paper will cite in great part from La Fontaine's translation as the primary source;

however, citations from other translations and/or versions of the *Tirant* may be included, where they may serve to further elucidate issues of contention.

Genre

Much scholarly effort has gone into trying to dissect the *Tirant* to gain greater insight as to what its true genre is. And if something were easy to categorize, its classification would not be a point of discussion; so, naturally, there has been some dispute about the genre of the work. According to Arthur Terry,

[m]ore than 500 years after its publication, *Tirant lo Blanc* remains deeply enigmatical: A major work of art, certainly, but one which defies classification and whose ambiguities—deliberate or unintentional—are far from being resolved. Riquer’s distinction between ‘books of chivalry’ (the earlier romances) and ‘chivalresque novel’ (the *Tirant*) is useful in that it places the emphasis on imaginative creation; yet any attempt to assimilate it to the modern novel should be resisted: whatever else it is, the *Tirant* is a late medieval work, to which notions of unity and authorial intention seem hardly relevant” (vii).

And still, at the risk of oversimplifying this complex piece, I would say that many descriptions are adequate. But I find that chivalric romance, for the most part, is a suitable classification, which according to Chris Baldick, is

the principal kind of romance found in medieval Europe from the 12th century onwards, describing (usually in verse) the adventures of legendary knights, and celebrating an idealized code of civilized behaviour that combines loyalty, honour, and courtly love. The emphasis on heterosexual love and courtly manners distinguishes it from the *chanson de geste* and other kinds of epic, in which masculine military heroism predominates. The most famous examples are the Arthurian romances recounting the adventures of Lancelot, Galahad, Gawain, and the other Round Table knights. These include the *Lancelot* (late 12th century) of Chrétien de Troyes, the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th century), and Malory’s prose romance *Le Morte Darthur* (1485). (35)

Certainly, the *Tirant* contains all of these characteristics—he is a legendary knight who adheres, most rigidly, to an idealized code. Yet its epic style and focus on military heroism also make it akin to the *chanson de geste*, which is

a kind of shorter epic poem in Old French, composed between the late 11th century and the early 14th century, celebrating the historical and legendary exploits of Charlemagne (late 8th century) and other Frankish nobles in holy wars against the Saracens or in internal rebellions. The *chansons de geste* were sung by *jongleurs* in strophes of varying length known as *laisses*, usually composed of 10-syllable lines linked by assonance (or by rhyme in later examples). About 80 of these poems survive, of which the most celebrated is the *Chanson de Roland* (late 11th century). Some similar *Cantares de gesta* appeared in Spain, notably the *Cantar de Mio Çid*, a Castilian epic of the 12th or 13th century. (33)

The *Tirant* is not a short poem; on the contrary, it is quite a lengthy work of prose. It is more in line with being a novel or romance; however, because the holy wars against the Saracens comprise large elements of the work, it is more akin to the *chanson de geste*. Yet, one of the fundamental elements of this genre, structure, is not met by the *Tirant*. So, if we consider both these explanations, we will find that the *Tirant* is a hybrid, at best, of both. This hybridization adds another layer of queerness to the text and to the theme that will give this thesis its continuum.

Because this piece is loaded with different elements, there are other factors to consider respecting genre. And it is for that reason that many other scholars have opined on the same issue of genre and delved further into the intricacies of classifying this work.

Nearly a half century ago Dámaso Alonso made an eloquent case for *Tirant lo Blanc* as a modern novel (Alonso 1961). For Alonso, modern novel means realistic novel; he praises *Tirant* for its realism, insisting that ‘Martorell sees minutely and clearly the particular’ (208) and that ‘we find everywhere the expected, most natural detail, often not essential to the verisimilitude of the story’ (222). (qtd. in Hart 83)

Dámaso Alonso's point on the realism/modernism of the *Tirant* is quite interesting and striking if juxtaposed with that of its contemporary, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*,⁷ where Merlin, a magical being, a wizard, immediately introduces magical elements making King Uther Pendragon assume the form of the Duke of Tintagil in order to make Lady Ingraine, the duke's wife, his; and "[t]he plan succeeded: Ingraine was completely deceived by the king's impersonation of the duke, and gave herself to him, and conceived Arthur" (2-3). In the *Tirant* there is no magic nor moments of wizardry. Its narration is straight forward, open and honest—even explicit, sexually. People get wounded; and if these wounds are bad enough they die. For a great portion of the novel, Tirant pines away for his love of Carmesina. Had the element of magic existed, perhaps a wizard-like character might have concocted some potion to make her his sooner. Even Cervantes in his indirect "endorsement" notes that the characters "eat and sleep and die in their beds and draft wills before their deaths," (66) which are all very real and quotidian details.

But the fact that they were contemporary works does not mean that these were necessarily related, in terms of genre; however, I believe that their relationship is more fundamental. In fact, I believe that the *Tirant* is also a (post-)Arthurian romance. Tirant, as an explanation concerning his name, states: "They call me Tirant lo Blanc, as my father was lord of the March of Tirania which faces England across the sea, and my mother was daughter of the Duke of Brittany and named Blanca" (Martorell 78). First, let us acknowledge that Tirant is a Breton because of his mother and because he also

⁷ Robert Graves. "Introduction." Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte d'Arthur: King Arthur and the Legends of the Round Table, The Classic Rendition by Keith Baines with an Introduction by Robert Graves and a New Afterword by Christopher Cannon*. Trans. Keith Baines [from William Caxton's Middle English to Modern English]. New York: Signet Classics, 2010. Malory's novel was "published on July 31, 1485" (xi) by William Caxton.

states that thirty of them “who were of noble blood and skilled in arms left Brittany” (78). His father is perhaps also a Breton, if we consider the geographic indications of his father’s provenance from a land that “faces England across the sea” (78). Furthermore, he is related to King Arthur via Uther Pendragon, Arthur’s Father, as can be deduced from the following passage:

The reason they were called Roca Salada was that during the time that Brittany was conquered there were two brothers; one was a captain of the conquering forces and he was related to the King of England, Uther Pendragon, who was the father of King Arthur. [...] And as this was the first castle that they had captured in combat, [...] they discarded their proper name and took up the name of this conquered site; and the older brother was made Duke of Brittany. (464)

The Duke of Brittany is the aforementioned father of Tirant’s mother, Blanca. Moreover, the whole of section VII, which consists of chapters 189-202, deals specifically with “the great Arthur, King of England” (435) and his sister “Morgan le Fay” (435). So, if we consider the allusions to Arthur and Tirant’s self-proclaimed relationship to him and Tirant’s own Breton origin, it becomes more evident that what Martorell was trying to create was an extension of the Matter of Britain—“the legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, which form the subject-matter for a number of medieval romances—usually known as Arthurian romances” (Baldick 30).

The question remains whether it is even feasible to classify the *Tirant* or whether it is simply unlikely to place it within one category given that the conventional classifications are too stringent and would only result in this work being rendered a marginal work that resists classification. This too is a queer matter. Barbara Fuchs, who in her treatise (*Romance*) refers to the *Tirant* as “the Catalan Arthurian romance” (86), proffers that her text “charts the multiple, protean transformations of romance throughout

literary history. Instead of settling on a single definition in the hope of capturing romance in its original” (2), her survey “demonstrates how different conceptions of the term emerge dynamically, in opposition to other types of literary production” (2). This is certainly a pragmatic approach and one that would allow for bringing the *Tirant* out from the continuous conservative discussions that are rooted and only interested in the conventional analysis of a work. For the sake of my analysis, I will refer to the work as a chivalric romance in order to place the *Tirant* in context with other comparable works; however, it is worth restating that the genre of the work itself, like many aspects that we will explore, is conflicting and does not adhere to pure categories—rendering the genre of the work a queer one, as well.

Influences and Sources

Among the many possible influences⁸ of the *Tirant* are Cicero, The Bible, Ovid, Virgil, Dante, Boccaccio, Ramon Llull, Ausiàs March, Chrétien de Troyes, *The Romance of the Rose*, *Tristan and Yseut*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Chanson de Roland*, the Breton lais, and Honoré Bouvet, among others. For some of these, we can take to Martorell’s prologue as proof that these are indeed his influences because he states that “it is fitting and useful to set down in writing the feats of strong and virtuous men who serve us as mirrors of virtue and examples of good doctrine; so the orator Cicero states” (39). This statement reveals Martorell’s vision of his sources and his vision of the *Tirant*: he wished it to be an exemplum. In several passages, the *Tirant* includes substantive

⁸ Martorell on Cicero p. 316 ; on the Bible, pp. 39 and 86 among others where the allusion is contextual and not by Martorell’s explicit allusion; on Ovid pp. 39, 346, 415, 622, and 789; on Virgil pp. 39, 406, 415, 622, and 662; on Dante p. 39; on Boccaccio p. 622 Martorell, p. 622—The allusion to “Tròiol i de Griseida” or “Troilus and Criseyde” would lead one to think of Chaucer’s work; however, one should know that Chaucer’s work stems from Boccaccio’s work *Il Filostrato* which deals with the love of Troiolo and Criseida; and I believe this is what Martorell may have been alluding to; on *Tristan and Yseut* pp. 239, 417, 426, and 525; and on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* pp. 86 and 646

catalogs that serve as proof of his sources and influences. In the prologue he also mentions

the inspiring deeds of the holy fathers, of Joshua and Kings, Job and Tobias, and the strong Judas Maccabaeus. The illustrious poet Homer has described the battles of the Greeks, Trojans and Amazons. Livy wrote of Romans: Scipio, Hannibal, Pompey, Augustus, Octavius, Mark Antony, and many others. And we can read the battles of Alexander and Darius, of the adventures of Lancelot and other knights, the fabulous verses of Virgil, Ovide, Dante and other poets, of the holy miracles and deeds of the apostles, martyrs and other saints, and of the penance of St. John the Baptist, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Paul, St. Anthony, St. Onuphrius, and St. Mary of Egypt. Thus countless stories have been put into writing to keep them from being forgotten by mankind.’⁹ (39)

It is a reasonable assumption that these sources have shaped the psyche of the author, as evidenced by his narrative voice. His work shares the notions that his influences seemed to have of the world, sex, and chivalry.¹⁰ The historical influences are a bit more difficult to discern because they require that the reader be aware of a larger corpus of acts that transpired at different points in early modern history and, perhaps, antiquity. At times, names can be hints about the source, at others the deeds; the deeds, however, require that the reader be evermore familiar with these sources. If not, the reader may just see these as a fictional work without any historical influences. Thanks to the fine work of early scholars of the *Tirant*, like Dámaso Alonso, Martí de Riquer, Mario Vargas Llosa, and even the more recent scholarship of Jesús Villamanzo, we can hypothesize (and assert at times) with reasonable certainty that the historical influences are drawn

⁹ Note the progression of these allusions: The provenance of the first third of them is from the Old Testament; the second third is taken from classical antiquity; and the last third contains personages from the New Testament or after the birth and/or after the establishment of Christendom.

¹⁰ It is noteworthy, within the scope of issues related to this paper, to highlight that there are women mentioned among these illustrious men. And they are admired for their masculine attributes. In fact, there is a passage soon after the aforementioned excerpt that states the following: “As one may read, honor cannot be acquired without **manly deeds of valor**; nor can happiness be attained except through courage. Brave knights preferred to die in battle rather than flee shamefully. The holy Judith boldly dared to kill Holofernes in order to deliver the city from his Tyranny” (Martorell 39, emphasis mine). In this passage the woman “boldly” killing a man is clearly a subversion of masculine conventions.

from the odyssey of Roger de Flor with his Catalan company, as chronicled by Ramón Muntaner in his *Crònica*¹¹ and true-life accounts. For example, during Tirant's early formation, William of Warwick tells him that

there have been many bold and virtuous knights in the world; we read in the accounts of the holy fathers of the great virtue of Joshua, and of Judas Maccabaeus, of the Biblical kings and of those invincible knights Scipio and Hannibal and Pompey, Octavius and Mark Antony, and of many other knights whom it would take too long to mention" (Martorell 86).¹²

In this particular catalog, the knights mentioned are from antiquity and the classical period. Following this passage, Tirant asks if there have "been knights of such worth" (86) "since the coming of Christ" (86); and to this William of Warwick, as the hermit, responds:

Yes, [...] the first was Joseph of Arimathea, who took Christ down from the cross and put him in the tomb; and many other valiant knights descended from the line of Joseph of Arimathea, and these were Lancelot du Lac, Gawain, Boors, Percival, and above all, Galahad, who, by virtue of his purity and Christian knighthood was worthy to achieve the Holy Grail. (86)

And this is just looking at some of the sources that are more easily recognized by the average reader. It is clear, once one reads the *Tirant* and about the *Tirant*, that the author drew from a vast array of sources.

Mario Vargas Llosa, another leading scholar of the *Tirant*, in addressing "*Hurtos, plagios, invenciones*" (22) [thefts, plagiarisms, inventions] in his introduction to J.F.

Vidal Jové's 1969 Castilian version of the *Tirant*, states that

Martorell utilizó todos los materiales que le ofrecía su tiempo: la vasta realidad fue su cantera al mismo tiempo que su paradigma. Aprovechó hechos históricos, experiencias personales y, desde luego, ajenas, saqueó

¹¹ Vargas Llosa, p. 11

¹² Note that many of these figures had already been mentioned in the catalog included in the prologue on p. 39. Perhaps it is because Martorell had a higher esteem for these figures or because these figures brought the work a greater sense of prestige and legitimacy.

vidas y muertes pasadas y contemporáneas. También saqueó libros: los críticos han localizado un rosario de plagios que comienzan en la dedicatoria de *Tirant lo Blanc* (copiada de la de Enrique de Villena en *Los doze trabajos de Hércules*) y terminan en las páginas finales de la novela (donde el segundo epitafio de Tirant y Carmesina reproduce el de dos personajes del valenciano Johan Roiç de Corella). En una novela, la procedencia de los materiales de creación importa menos que el uso que haga de ellos el autor; todo depende del provecho que les saque, pues en la creación literaria el fin justifica siempre los medios. El novelista crea a partir de *algo*; el novelista total, ese voraz, crea a partir de *todo*. Los plagios de Martorell interesan en la medida en que constituyen indicios de su ambición totalizadora, de su voluntad de servirse sin exclusiones y sin escrúpulos de toda la realidad como instrumento de trabajo, y en la medida en que muestran sus poderes omnímodos de creador, pues al no aparecer nunca como advenedizos, al estar tan perfectamente asimilados a su mundo verbal, esos hurtos literarios resultan tan necesarios a su ficción como los hurtos que perpetró en la historia, la geografía y los demás dominios de lo real y como sus propias invenciones. Es decir, interesan en la medida en que esos plagios confirman su genio. (22)

[Martorell used all the materials that his time afforded him: the vast reality was his pool as well as his paradigm. He made use of historical acts, personal experiences and, certainly, others' [experiences], he pillaged lives and deaths past and contemporary. He also pillaged books: the critics have located a rosary of plagiarisms that begin in the dedicatory [letter]¹³ of *Tirant lo Blanc* (copied from that of Enrique de Villena in *Los doze trabajos de Hércules* [The Twelve Labours of Hercules or the Dodekathlon])¹⁴ and end in the final pages of the novel (where the second epitaph of Tirant and Carmesina reproduces that of two characters of the Valencian Johan Roiç de Corella [Johan Roís de Corella]). In a novel, the provenance of the creation materials matters less than the use that the author makes of them; everything depends upon the use that he makes of them, for in the literary creation the end always justifies the means. The novelist creates from *something*; the total novelist, that voracious [individual], creates from *everything*. The plagiarisms of Martorell are of interest as they constitute indications of his totalizing ambition, of his will to help himself without exclusions and without scruples of all of reality as an implement of his trade, and in the manner in which they illustrate his absolute power as a creator, for in never appearing as an upstart, in being so perfectly assimilated to their verbal world, those literary thefts result as necessary as his fictions as thefts that are perpetrated in history, geography and other dominions of that which is real and as his own inventions. That is, they are of interest where those plagiarisms confirm his genius.]

¹³ Martorell, p. 39—Dedicatory Letter to Prince Ferdinand

¹⁴ Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, eds. "Heroes and Heroines of Myth: The Twelve Labors and Other Stories." *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights*. 3rd Edition. London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2001. 278-279.

In the context of Vargas Llosa's analysis and my analysis, thus far, "voracious" is an apt description of the knowledge that Martorell commanded and used as his source, as his palate. We have only begun to scratch the surface of this gentleman's sophistication. Nonetheless, even if it is impossible or unlikely to make an exhaustive cataloging of all the influences contained in Martorell's novel, no discussion on his influences would be complete without a gloss of his biography—since in the *Tirant* there are instances that bear a strong semblance to incidents that transpired in his personal life.

I am referring to an epistolary tradition that was ever-present in Martorell's life. His letters are also one of the main type of document preserved. This tradition, as an additional influence, is one that I would like to entertain next within the context of his life because it is a significant aspect of his biography and because I suspect he deemed it of utmost importance—so much that (unsurprisingly) this manner of dialog finds its way into the *Tirant*. This is also an aspect of the work that gives it a greater sense of realism, conveying a record of the practices of the time.

About Martorell

«AD HUMILES QUIDEM ET EXAUDITIONE DIGNAS NOBILIS VIRI JOHANNIS DE MARTORELL, ARMIGER, EX URBE VALENCIA ORIUNDI»—Henry VI of Lancaster¹⁵

First, I would like to point out that there is conflicting information concerning Joanot Martorell's birth place and date of birth. According to all the earliest of scholars, and even recent scholars, Joanot Martorell was born between 1405 and 1420 and was the

¹⁵ Jesús Villalmanzo. *Joanot Martorell: biografía ilustrada y diplomático*. Valencia: Ajuntament de Valencia, 1995. p. 130. "Humble indeed and worthy of being heard Lord Joanot Martorell of Valencia, Esquire."

second son of Francesc Martorell.¹⁶ In fact the main source of conflict stems from Martí de Riquer in 1964 who asserts that Joanot Martorell was born in Gandía around 1413.¹⁷ And being that de Riquer is hailed as the critic par excellence on all things *Tirant*, this was accepted as an irrefutable fact.¹⁸ Further to this matter, de Riquer and Vargas Llosa, in a collaborative text concerning the battle epistles of Joanot Martorell, published in 1972 state that little is known about the life of the author of the *Tirant*.¹⁹ They also state that most of what is known is limited to disputations and the writings concerning the consequential terms of the duels. However, since the days of early scholarship and even since 1972, new, more definitive, historical analysis has surfaced.

Particularly important, in 1990, the city of Valencia was the center of much celebration on the occasion of the five-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the *Tirant*.²⁰ In 1995, with funding from the city council of Valencia, a new and comprehensive biography was published. This latest biography brings new light to Martorell's life and affirms that “[d]efinitivamente se puede afirmar que Joanot nació en la ciudad de Valencia. Además su alumbramiento lo podemos situar casi con toda exactitude en el año 1410” (Villalmanzo 127) [it may definitively be affirmed that Joanot

¹⁶ Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba. “Cuadro cronológico.” *Tirant lo Blanc*. 2 vols. Trans. J. F. Vidal Jové. Madrid: El Libro de Bolsillo, Alianza Editorial, 1969. “1414—Fecha probable del nacimiento de Joanot Martorell, su segundo hijo y autor del *Tirant*” (518 v. 2). [1414—Likely date of the birth of Joanot Martorell, his [Francesc Martorell's] second son and autor of the *Tirant*.]; Jové, the 1969 Castilian version of the *Tirant*, states that “Joan Martorell (Joanot no es más que un diminutivo familiar y cariñoso) nació en Valencia hacia los años veinte del siglo xv” (43). [Joan Martorell (Joanot is nothing more than a familiar and affectionate diminutive) was born in Valencia¹⁶ toward the '20s of the 15th century.]

¹⁷ Villalmanzo, p. 127.

¹⁸ This acceptance of theory versus fact is much like what happened with the first translation of the *Tirant*: de Riquer stated it; and it was accepted as legitimate.

¹⁹ Martí de Riquer and Mario Vargas Llosa. *El combate imaginario: las cartas de batalla de Joanot Martorell*. Barcelona: Barral Editores, S.A., 1971.

²⁰ Rita Barberá Nolla [Mayor of the city of Valencia]. “Introduction.” *Joanot Martorell: biografía ilustrada y diplomatario*. By Jesús Villalmanzo. Valencia: Ajuntament de Valencia, 1995. p. 7.

was born in the city of Valencia. Furthermore we can place his birth with almost all preciseness in the year 1410]. In fact, contrary to biographers of old, Villalmanzo's biography, a voluminous text of nearly six hundred pages, covers approximately two centuries of the lives of the author and his ancestors—within a historical context—in both Gandía and Valencia, their life in the court of Aragon, and other personal details.

Villalmanzo's biography surveys a collection of nearly one thousand documents, a third of which are new and exclusive to the biographical project. It goes beyond the ordinary analysis of the usual letters of combat. And after reading the vast trajectory of Martorell's life, it is not unreasonable to see that what Martorell did was to make use of real history and everything that was at his disposal in his creation of the fictional and ideal world of the *Tirant*.

The challenges to duel, commonplace in discussions among scholars of Martorell and the *Tirant*, may have been lost, however, had Martorell's been an oral tradition. Yet thanks to Martorell's very formal procedural nature, we have some very real samples of his values and ideals preserved in his letters. The letters, like our letters today, appear to have been a conventional instrument of the period and are fitting for the station of the author. He used this as the vehicle to deliver challenges and to contest issues that transpired in his quotidian life. And just as we create from that which is familiar, so did Martorell. Oscar Wilde, in his essay "The Decay of Lying," states that "Life imitates art far more than art imitates Life." This is an interesting principle and one that may be applicable to Martorell. In reading and analyzing the *Tirant*, one thing should be resoundingly clear: Martorell read and was very familiar with a plethora of chivalric texts and classical works. Therefore, one could reasonably conclude that his psyche and

values were shaped by the heroes he read of in those works. His life, as Wilde states, very well could have taken from the literary art he had ingested; and, thereby, his work—the *Tirant*—was endowed with and inspired by the essence of the works he voraciously absorbed. In fact,

de las quince quince [sic] ‘cartas de batalla’ que se conocen de Martorell, la silueta de un hombre de acción, malhumorado y belicoso: «El temperamento luchador y pendenciero de la familia como el de tantos otros caballeros valencianos de la época, es también una característica de Joanot Martorell». Si se toman esas cartas al pie de la letra la conclusión es inobjetable y no hay duda que el propio Martorell la suscribiría encantado. (de Riquer and Vargas Llosa 9)

[of the fifteen ‘letters of battle’ that are known of Martorell’s, the silhouette of a man of action, ill tempered and bellicose: ‘The strifeful and quarrelsome temperament of the family like that of so many other Valencian knights of the time, is also a characteristic of Joanot Martorell.’ If those letters are taken to the letter, the conclusion is unobjectionable and there is no doubt that Martorell himself would have gladly signed them.]

If one reads the letters, both in the *Tirant* and his own, there is a certain gusto with which these are drafted. It is the form of the actions, the “ritual que adorna la matanza” [the ritual that adorns the kill] (9). This is just one of many forms through which Martorell’s ritualistic nature is manifested.

There is a ceremonious/procedural aspect in the *Tirant* that is clear in all facets of the novel. The episodes of social entertainment are didactic examples vested with all the accoutrements that embodied the code of this realm: Martorell shows how adroit he was with the proper and expected protocol that he covers in extensive detail—particularly in Chapters 39-97, which cover “The Court of a Year and a Day.” The correspondence is one of these procedures. He subscribed to the whole corpus of chivalric code as a nobleman who held honor and propriety in the highest esteem. For the purpose of getting

justice and closure, he looked to England, the court of Henry VI of Lancaster ²¹, to be the judge of many of his challenges. Perhaps because this sort of action was no longer entertained in Spain, a letter challenging Monpalau to a duel results in just another idle attempt after Maria of Castile— Queen consort of Aragon through her husband Alfonso the Magnanimous, Alfonso V of Aragon²²—intercepts the letter. A curious matter about Martorell’s epistolary challenges is that they seldom, if ever, saw a true duel.²³ Perhaps it was because the Roman Catholic Church was critical of this consuetude, even before the Council of Trent forbade it. ²⁴

The first epistolary episode—one of many in the *Tirant*—takes place in the duel between Tirant and, a French knight, Senyor de les Vilesermes. The episode stems from a dispute concerning a brooch that was taken from Agnes of Berry. Senyor de les Vilesermes tries to “snatch the brooch; but Tirant was ready; he reached for a knife that

²¹ Mario Vargas Llosa, Mario. “Carta de batalla por *Tirant lo Blanc*.” *Tirant lo Blanc*. By Joanot Martorell and Marti Joan de Galba. 2 vols. Trans. J. F. Vidal Jové. Madrid: El Libro de Bolsillo, Alianza Editorial. 1969.”La última carta de Martorell (que es la novena) lleva la fecha de 22 de marzo de 1438, está firmada en Londres y señala como juez, nada menos, que a Enrique VI de Lancaster, rey de Inglaterra y de Francia” (45). [The last letter from Martorell (which is the ninth) bears the date 22 March 1438, it is signed in London and designates as judge, none other than Henry VI of Lancaster, king of England and of France.]

²² Vargas Llosa, “Carta de batalla por *Tirant lo Blanc*.”—“Por orden de María de Castilla, esposa de Alfonso el Magnánimo, la carta de Martorell es intervenida y el procurador [Francesc] Oliver encarcelado. Se acusa a Martorell de haber salido del reino sin la autorización necesaria” (45). [By order of Maria of Castile, spouse of Alfonso the Magnanimous, Martorell’s letter is intercepted and his lawyer [Francesc] Oliver is incarcerated. Martorell is accused of having left the kingdom without the necessary authorization.] The kingdom, in this case is not Spain; rather, it is Aragon of which Valencia is a petty kingdom.

²³ It seems that there is something to be said about Martorell. Perhaps his challenges to duel were anachronistic. Perhaps this is what Cervantes found humorous. The prologue does note lament for the bygone years; and in someone so consumed with form it is not so farfetched to consider the possibility that he was one of the few adhering so stringently to these conventions.

²⁴ Victor Cathrein. "Duel." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 5. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. 23 Jul. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05184b.htm>>. “In addition to the judicial, non-judicial combats also occurred, in which men arbitrarily settled private grudges or sought to revenge themselves. The tournaments, especially, were often used to satisfy revenge; on account of this misuse the Church early issued ordinances against the excesses committed at tournaments, although these were not always obeyed. The more the judicial combat fell into disuse, the more the old instinct of the Germanic and Gallic peoples, by which each man sought to gain his rights with weapon in hand, showed itself in personal contests and at tournaments. From the middle of the fifteenth century duelling over questions of honour increased so greatly, especially in the Romanic countries, that the Council of Trent was obliged to enact the severest penalties against it.”

he carried, and all the others did the same; and a fight broke out among them, and before they could be separated twelve of the knights and gentlemen had been killed” (Martorell 114). Three days later, Senyor de les Vilesermes sent Tirant a letter that stated:

To you. Tirant lo Blanc, who were the cause of the loss of martial blood: If your spirit is bold enough to risk the peril of armed combat, as knights are accustomed to doing, choose whatever means is safest for you, armed or unarmed, on foot or on horse, dressed or undressed, and I shall agree most willingly, provided that your sword and mine can clash together in a fight to the finish. Written by my hand and stamped with the secret seal of my arms.
Senyor de les Vilesermes. (114)

This leads Tirant to seek the advice of a “king-of-arms” who, as one reads this episode, appears to be an authority figure in the protocol of chivalric conventions. Tirant then confides in this king-of-arms, whose name is Jerusalem, and asks him to keep in secret that which he is about to tell him and that he advise him “loyally and well, as you are obliged to do by the code of knight-hood” (114). Tirant goes on to explain that his hesitation to act upon the offer of the French knight is not due to lack of will; rather, it stems from him having “only now turned twenty years old” (114) and as he is “young and inexperienced in the ways of knighthood” (114) he asks that Jerusalem advise him.

Thanks to the work that de Riquer and, now, Villalmanzo, have done, we have access to the letters that Martorell issued challenging many of his peers to duels and the reasons behind these letters. The first letter²⁵ included in de Riquer’s introduction is a letter demanding that his cousin, Joan de Monpalau, make good on his promise to his (Martorell’s) sister, Damiata. Because the letter was issued to defend the honor of his sister, I wish to include a good portion of it to illustrate his ideals and his rhetorical style, which is reflected in his heroic creation, the *Tirant*.

²⁵ de Riquer, Introducciò, pp. 26-27.

LLETRA DE REQUESTA DE BATALLA A ULTRANÇA TRAMESA PER LO
MAGNÍFIC EN JOANOT MARTORELL AL MAGNÍFIC EN JOAN DE MONPALAU
[...]tota hora que vós veníeu a la casa de mon pare, e ara mia, confiant que
hi veníeu com a paren e amic, totes les portes vos eren obertes sens que
nengú de nosaltres no es guardava gense de vós, ni es poguera pensar que
vós pensàsseu ni fésseu nenguna vergonya ni maldat vers nosaltres ni a la
nostra casa. E poc temps ha passat que, vós anant e venint a la nostra casa
a tota vostra requesta, proferís e ab sacrament juràs de pendre ma germana
Damiata per muller, e desposar-la dins fort breu temps, la qual cosa fins
ací no haveu feta, abans en lo mig temps, practicant vós en la nostra casa
sots color de la prometença ab sacrament per vós fet de pendre ma
germana per muller, e confiant la dita ma germana de l'amistat e
parentesc, e del sacrament per vós fet de pendre-la per muller, e que vós
ab lleal e verdader prepòsit havíeu fet lo dit sacrament, haveu decebuda la
dita ma germana, dellealment e malvada, com a robador de la honor de la
dita ma germana e mia, confiant que vós no féreu tan gran desllealtat ni
maldat, haveu deshonestament tacada i deshonorada incessant la dita ma
germana, no guardant a Déu ni a vostra honor, ni a la fe que us era donada
en la casa de mon pare e mia.

[...] (qtd. in de Riquer 26-27)

[LETTER REQUESTING A BATTLE AT TO THE DEATH ISSUED BY THE
MAGNIFICENT JOANOT MARTORELL TO THE MAGNIFICENT JOAN DE
MONPALAU

[...] at every hour that you came to the house of my father, and now mine,
you did it as family and friend, all the doors were made open unto you
without having any of us keep anything from you, nor would we have ever
thought that you would have plotted to commit any shameful or malicious
act towards us nor to our house. And little time has passed since you,
came and went as you pleased in our house, professed and sacredly swore
to take my sister Damiata as your wife and marry her in the briefest of
time, something which as of yet you have failed to do; on the contrary, in
the meantime, while coming to our house, under the pretext of the promise
with sacrament made by you to take my sister for a wife, and as she
entrusted her joy in the friendship and familial relation, and of the
sacrament made by you to take her as a wife, and that you with loyalty and
true purpose have made such a sacrament, have beguiled the joy of my
sister, in a most disloyal and vile manner like a thief of honor of my
sister's happiness and mine; trusting that you were not so greatly disloyal
nor evil, you have dishonestly endlessly besmirched and dishonored the
joy of my sister, not keeping true to God nor to your honor, nor to the faith
that was granted you in the house of my father and mine.]

In this segment of a very lengthy letter of denunciation, one thing is very clear: there is a high value placed upon honor and one's word, at least for Martorell. Also, it is almost as

if by stripping his cousin—who failed to make good on the vows of what is obviously a secret marriage²⁶—of the virtue entrusted in him, Martorell reveals that which *he* envisioned as honorable and proper. In the *Tirant*, two couples enter into secret marriage:²⁷ Estefania with Diafebus and Carmesina with Tirant. However, in the *Tirant*, the heroes make good on their promises. In that manner, then, the *Tirant* serves to illustrate the ideals that Martorell subscribed to and those that he deemed laudable. The timbre of this letter, though, bears a strong semblance to the letters exchanged between Tirant and Senyor de Vilesermes.²⁸ The letters exchanged in the *Tirant* are a phallosocial instrument and are the conduit by which accusations and challenges, among other protocolary exchanges, are delivered.

²⁶ de Riquer and Vargas Llosa. *El combate imaginario*. pp.34-35—Both these scholars address, at length, the matter of secret marriages and how these were deemed valid up until the Council of Trent. They address the words or vows that were exchanged by the man and the woman, respectively: «Ego te recipio in meam» [“I receive you in me”]; «Et ego in meum» [“And I in me”]. They also address the issues concerning disputations stemming from the lack of witnesses for this form of marriage and how these resulted in duels. De Riquer and Vargas Llosa assert that secret marriage is a frequent theme in chivalric texts because they give a clandestine sense to a practice that was deemed valid and accepted by the Church.

²⁷ Martorell, pp. 376-382; pp. 421-423; p. 458; p. 477, The secret nuptials become the subject when “Plaerdemavida observed [...] her highness applying perfume she quickly surmised that a private meeting was at hand: noiseless nuptials, as it were” (377). In the case of Estefania and Diafebus, there is a consummation; however, in the case of Tirant and Carmesina, there is no consummation. In fact, there is a vow to respect her virginity and “not go a single step further than [...] allowed” (379) “[f]or once virginity is lost it cannot be recovered” (379). Proof that there was consummation between Estefanía and Diafebus is in Plaerdemavida’s examination stating that she did “lose some blood last night” (378). Estefania herself states that all that she did “was done to satisfy the will of my husband” (381). There is also a moment of doubt in Estefania; she believes Diafebus has broken his vow and writes and calls him a “disloyal knight, the breaker of his word” (421). Yet his reply is not that of a man who has broken his vows; rather, it is one of veneration. He responds with the following words: “Madam, I am wholly unworthy to provide the reward which your infinite beauty and goodness deserve, however cruel your words, for you should be not only loved but adored, like a saint” (423). Their public ceremony takes place later: “[a]fter these espousals were celebrated in great triumph, with dancing and exquisite collations, the wedding was set by the Emperor for the following day, so as not to detain the departure of Tirant” (458). The vows exchanged between Tirant and Carmesina come up later, as well: ““A person who makes a promise has an obligation,” he said. ‘That promise was not notarized,’ she replied” (477). In the words of Plaerdemavida we have a full definition of what a secret marriage is: “No, sir, a love debt does not need to be witnessed, or, even less, notarized. Woe to us if these always had to be put in writing! All the paper in the world would not be enough! Do you know how these promises are made? In the dark, without witnesses, for one can never mistake the destination.” (477), which leads one only to conclude that they too exchanged secret nuptials.

²⁸ Martorell, pp. 112-125.

About Martorell's and the *Tirant's Valencia* ²⁹

De Riquer's work, within reasonable speculation and hypothesis, provides some of the socio-political environment that surrounded the work, including some of the most salient historical issues concerning the "petty kingdom" of Valencia, the Italian Renaissance, that may have affected the world and, consequently, the work of Martorell. To give one an idea of the grandeur of Valencia, he cites a lengthy passage from Francesc Eixemens's *Regiment de la cosa pública* (1383) stating that "[d]ien los que gran temps l'han posseïda, que si paradís és en la terra, que en regne de València és" [it is said by those who have possessed her for a long time, that if there were a paradise on earth, that it is in the Kingdom of Valencia.] (qtd. in de Riquer 12). Eixemens states that its weather and environment are more fair than that of France, England, and Germany ³⁰. It is interesting that the comparison made, by a voice of the 14th century, is to empires or united kingdoms of the time. This serves likely to illustrate how Valencians perceived themselves and their "kingdom." In fact, he states that in the four seasons, Valencia's sky is "mas clar e bell" [more clear and beautiful] (12). This is then followed by a catalog of what was produced in Valencia, which claims that

d'aquí havets vin blanc e vermell, noble, bo e bell, que s'escampa per diverses parts del món; après hi hac panses blanques e negres, figues, molt oli, ametlles, préssecs, pomes, peres, taronges, llimons, llimes, atzebrons, aranges, cireres de diverses sorts, guíndoles, albercocs, magranes, ginjols, nous, avellanes, sarmenyas, lledons, garrofes, prunes, nesples, codonys, albèrxiques, ab molts d'altres... questa terra beneïta és digna de gran llaor, que dins un any mateix datà més esplets, un apré d'altre... la terra, per

²⁹ Prior to the unification of Spain under the Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, there were many petty kingdoms that comprised the whole Iberian Peninsula, among these was the Kingdom of Valencia.

³⁰ de Riquer, *Introducció*, p. 12.

especial gràcia, és així alegre e placent que sol l'esguard enamor los hòmens que hi vénen d'altres terres, que no se'n poden eixir sinó ab desplaer... produeix comunament fort la gent aguda e apta d'enteniment, e fort coratjosa e ardent, entenent a honor e cortesia, e no en avarícia...produeix los hòmens ardots, abrivats e fort aptes a armes. (12)
 [here you have white and red wine, good and beautiful, that has spread to different parts of the world; it had been learned that there were black and white raisins, figs, much oil, almonds, peaches, apples, pears, oranges, lemons, limes, hawthorn berries, grapefruits, cherries of various types, black berries, apricots, pomegranates, jujubes, walnuts, hazelnuts, *sarmenyas*, hackberries, locust beans, plums, Chinese plums, quinces, *albèrxiques*, with many others... that this blessed land is worthy of great praise, that within a year over the same harvest date there was greater harvest, year after year... the land, due to its special grace, is in this manner cheerful and pleasant that just by gazing upon it men who come from other lands fall in love with it and cannot leave displeased with it... sharp and apt-for-understanding people are a common occurrence here, strong of courage and passionate, learned in honor and courtesy, and not in avarice...it produces men who are bold, strong and skilled, apt for arms.]

So Valencia was essentially a land of plenty, where courageous men of honor were commonplace and a national product, at that, as abundant as their produce. De Riquer goes into greater detail about the political environment, mentioning many noble men of renown to the medieval Iberian Peninsula, but also “Jaume I” [James I of Aragon] from whose reign

hi fa néixer altres manifestacions de la bel·licositat de raça i de casta que donen certa aprença de realitat al fet d'ésser cavaller i que deixen marge a les manifestacions de la cavalleria. La noblesa es troba dividida en bàndols polítics i, ultra això, tot sovint sorgeixen discrepàncies i agres diferències entre els seus membres. La propietat d'unes terres, l'incompliment d'una paraula matrimonial o una simple disputa enemista famílies amb famílies o cavallers amb cavallers. La solució normal d'aquests conflictes topa de vegades amb un greu obstacle : la justícia es troba a mans de notaris, advocats o juristes que no pertanyen a la noblesa, i els nobles, per això mateix, no troben prou digne sotmetre llurs diferències i avenir-se a la solució de qui no és de llur categoria. (13)
 [there were born other manifestations of the bellicosity of race and caste that give certain sense to the reality of the act of being knighted and that give way to demonstrations of chivalry. The nobility is divided into political factions, these often bitter differences and disagreements arise among its members. The proprietorship of some lands, the failure to fulfill

ones word of matrimony or a simple dispute of enmity families with families or knight with knight. The usual solution to these conflicts at times meets with a serious obstacle: justice is in the hands of notaries, lawyers, and jurists who do not belong to the nobility, and the nobles, for that matter, do not find it worthy enough to submit their differences and futures to the solution of those not of their class.]

In the *Tirant*, the rules of combat really seem to illustrate this particular preoccupation.

In fact, it seems quite evident that Martorell was aware of these circumstances; so whenever there is battle between the protagonist and anyone else, it should remain clear beyond a doubt that there was honor and transparency³¹ in all actions. These sorts of concerns seem commonplace within the context of all that is deemed honorable and chivalrous.³²

Major Characters of the *Tirant*

In this segment, I would like to provide the reader with the most salient information concerning the main characters, which will play a significant role in the arguments raised by this thesis. Some of this information may also address influences; however, the further examination of influences speaks directly to the issue of the characters and their development within the novel and within the framework of masculinity and phallosociality.

³¹ Transparency, one would think, is a very new concept; and, yet, during the 14th and 15th centuries, these Valencians were already aware of this issue.

³² Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, eds.—“The heroic code calls for high ideals—respect among equals, courtesy, and adherence to the rules, on the field and off” (329). “The ideal model of heroic combat is the single combat between two heroes who respect each other’s reputation, skill, and family, who fight face-to-face according to the rules of warfare; whose encounter, like a game, is monitored by a referee; who keep the armor but respect the corpse if they win; and who part as friends if they fight a draw” (329).

Tirant lo Blanc(h), the Knight-Errant

Tirant lo Blanc is the eponymous protagonist of the novel by Joanot Martorell.³³ He is a knight-errant and “pillar of chivalry” (Martorell 792): he is valiant, strong and skilled in arms, and confronts situations of high risk and peril. He wins in battles, in addition to his strength and martial skills, due to his strategic prowess—a trait that is significant in the teachings of Lull and of Warwick’s instruction, in the novel. All of these traits serve to support notions of knightly masculinity. He is educated and refined, which serves to illustrate another model of his masculinity—an aristocratic model. He is always willing to defend honor. Yet where love is concerned, he is quite timid and vulnerable; in fact, it seems that love is a malady that he suffers from (like many troubadours) and that has consequences on his life.³⁴ With respect to knight-errantry, Cervantes’s very own knight-errant, Don Quixote, defines at length a knight-errant in the following excerpt:

—¿No han vuestras Mercedes leído—respondió don Quijote—los anales e historias de Inglaterra, donde se tratan las famosas fazañas del rey Arturo, que comúnmente en nuestro romance castellano llamamos «el rey Artús», de quien es tradición antigua y común en todo aquel reino de la Gran Bretaña que este rey no murió, sino que por arte de encantamento se convirtió en cuervo, y que andando los tiempos ha de volver a reinar y a cobrar su reino y cetro, a cuya causa no se probará que desde aquel tiempo a éste haya ningún inglés muerto cuervo alguno? Pues en tiempo de este buen rey fue instituida aquella famosa orden de caballería de los caballeros de la Tabla Redonda, y pasaron, sin faltar un punto, los amores que allí se cuentan de don Lanzarote del Lago con la reina Ginebra, siendo medianera de ellos y sabidora aquella tan honrada dueña de Quintañoña, de donde nació aquel tan sabido romance, y tan decantado en nuestra España, de

³³ Martí de Galba is also included as a second author. There have been some disputes concerning his contribution to the work. This is beyond the scope of this paper.

³⁴ This is a conflicting aspect of his masculinity. In fact, this enfeebled state because of love will be examined in Chapter 3 within the context of the erotic triangles.

Nunca fuera caballero
de damas tan bien servido
como fuera Lanzarote
cuando de Bretaña vino,

con aquel progreso tan dulce y tan suave de sus amorosos y fuertes fechos. Pues desde entonces de mano en mano fue aquella orden de caballería extendiéndose y dilatándose por muchas y diversas partes del mundo, y en ella fueron famosos y conocidos por sus fechos el valiente Amadís de Gaula, con todos sus hijos y nietos, hasta la quinta generación, y el valeroso Felixmarte de Hircania, y el nunca como se debe alabado Tirante el Blanco, y casi que en nuestros días vimos y comunicamos y oímos al invencible y valeroso caballero don Belianís de Grecia. Esto, pues, señores, es ser caballero andante, y la que he dicho, yo, aunque pecador, he hecho profesión, y lo mismo que profesaron los caballeros referidos profesó yo” (Cervantes 111-112, translation mine).

[—Have your graces not read—responded Don Quixote—the annals and histories of England, where the great feats of King Arthur are dealt with, which in our Castilian romance we commonly call “el rey Artús,” of whom it is an ancient tradition and common in the whole of that kingdom of Great Britain that this king did not die; rather, that by means of enchantment, he became a raven and that with the passing of time he shall reign again and recover his kingdom and scepter, to which cause it shall remain unproven that from that moment to this hath not a one English raven died? For in the time of this good king was that famous order of chivalry implemented of the knights of the Round Table, and they went through, without missing a point, the assignations that are there told of Lancelot du Lac with Queen Guinevere, being the go-between of them and [an] informed [one] that most honorable duenna of Quintañoña, from where that well known romance was born, and so [often] aired in our Spain, of

Never there were a knight
of ladies so well served
as were Lancelot
whence from Brittany he came,

with that so sweet and soft progression of his amorous and strong deeds. For since thence from hand-to-hand was that order of chivalry extended and spread through many and diverse parts of the world, and it were [made] famous and known by his deeds the valiant Amadis of Gaul, with all of his sons and grandsons, up to the fifth generation, and the valorous Felixmart of Hyrcania, and the never-as-he-ought-to-be praised Tirant lo Blanc, and almost in our days we saw and communicated and heard the invincible knight Lord Belianis of Greece. This, then, gentlemen, is [what it is] to be a knight-errant, and that which I have said, although a sinner, to have made a profession of, and the same that the referenced knights professed, I profess.]

In essence, he is a wanderer in search of adventure, much like Tirant in the Warwick section with the title “Arbre de Batalles” or *Tree of Battles*.

Because Tirant appears to be a manifestation of a pure ideal and because Ramón Lull,³⁵ one of the influences that we will evaluate below, is a figure of great renown and source for many chivalric conventions, the connection is no accident. Let us look to one of Lull’s more prescriptive works, *Le libre del orde de cauayleria* or *The Book of the Order of Chivlary*, translated by William Caxton. Chapter I of *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, “The Knight Hermit and the Squire,” contains the episode in reference:

‘Fair friend, what is your intention, and where are you going? Why have you come here?’ ‘Sir,” said he, ‘the news has spread into far countries that a very wise and noble king has called for a general court; he intends to have himself made a Knight and afterwards he will dub other new Knights. Therefore, I am going to this court to be dubbed a Knight. But, while I was asleep, because of the labor from the great journey that I have made, my horse departed from the right path and he has brought me into this place.’ (Adams 4-5)

And if that’s not sufficient proof that Lull is one of the very sources from which Martorell draws, later in the aforementioned section, Tirant mentions that he “also heard that the English king wants to become a knight, and that afterwards he will knight any other nobleman wishing to be received into the order of chivalry” (Martorell 78). The only difference here is that Martorell inverts the sequence and expands Lull’s framework into a narrative.

Even earlier in this section, Martorell begins in a very Llullian formula describing what the seven parts of the book will cover:

³⁵ For general information on Ramón Lull, see: William Turner. “Raymond Lully.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 2 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12670c.htm>>.

The first part will describe the beginning of chivalry; the second the estate and office of knighthood; the third, the best which should be made of the gentleman or worthy who wants to be made a knight; the fourth, the manner in which he should be knighted; the fifth, the meaning of knightly arms; the sixth, the duties and customs pertaining to a knight; and the seventh and last, the honor which a knight should be given. (Martorell 41)

Other Lullian texts have this same sort of structure as well; however, because including an exhaustive analysis of the parallel structure, of Martorell's and Lull's works, is outside the scope of this paper, I will simply include the structure of the *Book of the Order of Chivalry* in order to illustrate the point of Lull as a source—particularly for his knight-errant:

This Book Contains Eight Chapters

Chapter I tells how a Knight, who was also a hermit, described to a squire the rule and Order of Chivalry.

Chapter II tells about the beginning of chivalry.

Chapter III concerns the duty of chivalry.

Chapter IV treats the examination that ought to be given a squire when he wishes to enter the Order of Chivalry.

Chapter V describes the manner in which a squire ought to receive chivalry.

Chapter VI discusses, in proper order, the meaning of all the arms belonging to a Knight.

Chapter VII recounts the customs that pertain to a Knight.

Chapter VIII discusses the honor that ought to be given to a Knight.

(Adams x)

The Lullian aspects of the *Tirant* serve as a prescriptive model for knights to adhere to, and would-be knights and boys to follow in their trajectory toward becoming knights/men. Certainly, throughout the Warwick episode, there are other Lullian examples making the Warwick excerpts a treatise of chivalry taken directly from another fellow Catalanophone.

William of Warwick, the Hermit-Knight

William of Warwick in the *Tirant* plays the role of the hermit; but his function as hermit is plural, much like the work itself. He plays the role of the “hermit protector” and the “hermit penitent”; he also plays the dual role of the “secular and the religious” (Seigneuret 577). In the case of William of Warwick, the hermit is mostly religious because he possesses all of the traits prescribed for religious hermits, which will be addressed in Chapter 1 in the section concerning the clergy. His role in the novel is to be the quintessential example of the full chivalric cycle, including the spiritual life. It is through him that the young Tirant learns of the order of chivalry and the requirements for being deemed a good knight. A queer aspect of this character, which I will argue, is that his masculinity problematizes categorization because his is a masculinity that straddles the line of chivalry and clergy; and, as such, is a hybrid.

Carmesina, Tirant’s Beloved

Carmesina bears the semblance of a trophy bride. She is the object of Tirant’s affection and the reason for his restlessness. In true troubadour fashion, Tirant falls in love with her and fears continuously that his love is unrequited. She is also emblematic of the value of female virtue in the form of chastity. She is easily influenced by others; she is portrayed as fickle. Tirant’s initial marriage to Carmesina is secret. She has doubts about Tirant’s worthiness as a man because she sees him as her inferior; and he too is “vividly aware that he aimed higher than he should” (Martorell 240). In fact, there is foreboding that theirs is a star-crossed coupling because when Tirant first becomes smitten with Carmesina she “had been partly unfastened, revealing two breasts like apples of paradise and seemingly crystal” (239); and soon after this passage there is a

reference to tapestries that “depicted many famous lovers [...]. One could see Floris and Blancheflour, Pyramus and Thisbe, Aeneas and Dido, Tristram and Isolde, Lancelot and Queen Guinevere, and many others” (239). She is of higher birth than he is; and she seems unattainable to him. (Tirant’s inferior status, being of lower rank than that of the princess, is similar to that of a 17th-century work by the Spanish playwright, Lope de Vega: *El Perro del Hortelano* [“The Dog in the Manger”].³⁶) In chapter 436 of the novel, Tirant “rapes” Carmesina. She tells him:

The combats of love are not waged with force but with guileful flatteries and sweet deceits. Sir, stop this insistence, this cruelty! Don’t confuse this situation with doing battle with infidels or try to conquer one who has already been conquered by your love! You are on top of a helpless damsel! [...] How can you enjoy what you take by force? Oh! Can love allow you to hurt the person you love? [...] Oh, take care that the arms of love do not cut or tear, that the shaft of love does not wound! Have pity on this forsaken damsel! Oh, cruel, false knight!

[...]

But for all these piteous words of the princess, you should not suppose that Tirant refrained from his labor. Within a short time he triumphed in the delightful battle, and the princess, having surrendered her arms, lay as if in a swoon. (747-748)

In Medieval conventions, the woman was expected to enter sexual intercourse against her will; if she did so willingly, she may be perceived as a whore for according to Ovid³⁷ in *The Art of Love* “shame points a finger/ [a]t girls who make the first move” (51). In fact, Ovid also advocated that “[s]ome force is permissible—women are often pleased/ [b]y force, and like what they’re giving to be seized./ The girl whose citadel is stormed/ [b]y sheer audacity feels warmed” (47). With all of Martorell’s allusions to Ovid and the Queen of Fez’s approval of the sexual relations engaged between Carmesina and Tirant,

³⁶ Diana, the Countess of Belflor, entices Teodoro, her secretary, and she becomes the unattainable object of his affection.

³⁷ David Malouf. “Introduction.” *Ovid: The Art of Love*. Trans. James Michie. New York: The Modern Library, 2002. “The great classical poet Ovid was born Publius Ovidius Naso in Sulmo (modern Sulmona), Italy, on March 20, 43 B.C.” (v).

the Ovidian model seems closer to that of Martorell's and consequently Carmesina's own view of sexuality and sexual conventions. Her name means red, which is a color that is often associated with lust and lasciviousness; ironically, however, her character is the one most determined to preserve her chastity.

Diafebus, Tirant's Cousin and Confidant

Diafebus is a loyal friend and cousin of Tirant's. In fact, early in the novel, he is the narrator of Tirant's great feats. He is essential for the illustration of Tirant's modesty but also to testify of Tirant's impervious chivalry. He engages in the exchange of secret vows with Estefania, the daughter of the Duke of Macedonia. Because he makes good on his promise of matrimony, he is a righteous young man.³⁸

Estefania, Carmesina's Cousin and Confidant

Estefania is Carmesina's maid-in-waiting, cousin, and confidant. (Just to clarify, because in the *Tirant* familiar status is confusing, at times: She is the "daughter of the Duke of Macedonia"³⁹ [Martorell 243]; and, therefore, she is Carmesina's cousin.) Her character seems to parallel that of Diafebus's: She is to Carmesina what Diafebus is to Tirant. And, as such, she is the logical partner for Diafebus. She provides Carmesina with friendly counsel. She is diametrically opposed to the character of the Widow Reposada [the Reposed Widow] because she is sincere in her advice. The name

³⁸ This renders Diafebus as the antithesis of Martorell's cousin, who exchanges secret vows with the author's sister, Damiata, and reneges his promises and shames Martorell's sister and family.

³⁹ La Fontaine, p. 395, Note 4—"Several characters bear the title Duke of Macedonia in the course of the novel. The father of the deamsel at the foot of the bed (Estefania, the Emperor's niece) is not the treacherous duke who becomes Tirant's enemy. Estefania's father is 'the illustrious prince Robert, Duke of Macedonia' (ch. 147) described initially as the Emperor's first cousin (ch. 148) and later as his brother (ch. 221). After Robert's death, the mother of Estefania marries the Count of Albi, who becomes the new Duke of Macedonia (ch. 148). It is this second duke, Estefania's stepfather, who is envious of Tirant. Eventually there will be a third Duke of Macedonia: Diafebus.

Estefania means the crowned one; and in some Catalano-Italian cultures, the “Crowned One” is an epithet for the Virgin Mary; yet in comparison to her cousin, Carmesina, she is the most eager to lose her virginity.

The Emperor of Constantinople

He is the lord of the Empire of Constantinople. Tirant comes to his aid at the behest of the King of Sicily because Constantinople has been invaded by two Saracen renegades, “the sultan [...] in the company of the Grand Turk” (Martorell 233). He also offers to abdicate his throne for Tirant, but Tirant refuses it; instead, he accepts to be successor and takes the title of Caesar. He gives his daughter Carmesina’s hand in matrimony to Tirant; however, Tirant dies before the (public) wedding. When he speaks of Tirant’s death, it has the semblance of emasculation: ““Today we have lost our scepter”” (788). He dies shortly after Tirant dies. His death is followed by Carmesina’s death. This triangle between the Emperor, Tirant, and Carmesina will be one of the arguments raised in the context of phallosocial desire and its consummation in Chapter 2.

Plaerdemavida, the Go-Between

She is a friend and advisor to Princess Carmesina and a maid in waiting to the princess. Her role in the novel is that of a go-between. She is intelligent and sincere. She assists Tirant in order to make his relationship with Carmesina a possibility. Her role as a go-between is marked by some detailed homoerotic exchanges between her and Carmesina. As in many medieval works and renaissance works, the go-between is a particularly essential character at orchestrating or bringing to fruition a relationship. She is also the character through whom the reader is made aware of what happened the night

of the secret marriage between Estefania and Diafebus and Carmesina and Tirant. Like Estefania, she provides the princes with seemingly sincere advice. And if we consider her station as a damsel who seems to be very sexually aware, her character seems to parallel her polar opposite, the Widow Reposada.

Widow Reposada [Reposed], the Pseudo Go-Between and Wet Nurse of Carmesina

She is the quintessential scheming villainess, a sociopath. Her “reposed” status, one of easy virtue, becomes clearer as the plot unravels. She provides bad and selfish counsel to Carmesina to drive her away from Tirant because she is smitten with him. She stages an encounter to deceive Tirant into believing that Carmesina is engaging in a tryst with “Lauseta [...] the black gardener” (Martorell 570-71) whose throat, consequently, Tirant could not keep from cutting with his sword. Plaerdemavida clears up everything and the Widow Reposada ends up committing suicide with “some orpiment which she kept in order to make a depilatory salve, poured it in a cup of water and drank it” (725). Carmesina laments her death “because of the deep love which she had for this lady who had been her wet nurse” (726).

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

The work of early scholars of the *Tirant* serves as a springboard, by meticulously tracing the novel's sources and influences, which paves the way for new analysis. Still, much of the analysis to date on the *Tirant* has been limited to examining (*ad nauseum*) its sources and influences, theories for its failed circulation, its autobiographical aspects, and its genre, among other conservative approaches to literary criticism. Perhaps this method of examining a work so rich is due to its scholarship being only in its infancy. My intention in revising/surveying, however, some of the early scholarship of the *Tirant* in my "Introduction," is to draw attention to points of contention and to highlight those that have been overlooked or that have remained undisputed and that have not been submitted to (rigorous) scrutiny. Even still, beyond the current scholarship, I would like to step away from the sort of confining literary criticism that relies too heavily on the groundwork of precursors for fear of deviating from the time-honored policy and habitual tendency of required rendering of academic tribute. I would like to examine the *Tirant* from a queer vantage point and map models of masculinity—conventional and competing—and phallosociality by analyzing the processes that lead to a "consummation"—albeit a symbolic one—within a (mandatory) heterosexuality, where women become the (required) instrument, the glue, by which phallosocial desire is reified and brought to a culmination within the established patriarchal paradigm of compulsory heterosexuality. My use of the word consummation is meant to imply a conjugal bond. Yet, within a heteronormative or more precisely a phallosocial¹ ethos, this peripheral

¹ Like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "homosocial desire," this is a neologism that stems from her notion of the "social bonds between person of the same sex" (*Between Men* 1); however, because the type of homosociality that will be engaged here is purely a phallocentric one, male-male and because the phallus

espousal can only be brought into focus by analyzing the symbolic bond and its manifestation in the form of an erotic triangle. With the introduction of queer theory and the politics that motivated the gay movement, many scholars have looked to all aspects of life with a revisionist approach in order to (re)claim all that may be envisaged as queer and thereby establish a safe-conduct and a representative voice for a marginalized population. In the same manner, because the most widespread research on the *Tirant* is restricted to traditional approaches, I would like to proffer an “other” reading. In the current state of affairs, the *Tirant* is a marginalized text, which has not been made as readily available as I believe it should as a masterwork of fifteenth century Iberian and world literature. And it is with this impetus that I wish to bring the *Tirant* into the annals of English literature—a world where its Arthurian nature makes it readily apt for. In this work I will look to transcend the work—albeit important—that pioneers of the *Tirant* have done by examining masculinities, phallosocial desire, and the triangular constellations that facilitate a consummation of same-sex relations within a heteronormative context.

is a prerequisite for this pattern of exchange, I thought it was fitting that the language should reflect the requisites for this social space. Obviously, the word is formed from the pairing of phallus and social.

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Chapter 1

Queer Heterosexualities¹ in the *Tirant*: Straight until Proven “Other”

“The male stereotype makes masculinity not just a factor of biology but something that must be proved and re-proved, a continual quest for an ever-receding Holy Grail.”—Marc Feigen Fasteau

In exploring masculinity and the trajectory towards manhood within a heteronormative context, as represented in the *Tirant*, my aim is to highlight how its different models serve to reify conventional *and* conflicting masculinities giving way to “other” masculinities that may be conflicting with conventional patriarchal models of masculinity but do not disrupt the phallosocial continuum or compromise the coveted heteronormative status. Although there are other models available, the most salient models that allow for examining a progression toward masculinity are those of the cleric (hermit), the would-be knight and the knight-errant, and the monarch. In examining texts of remote periods, however, there is always a risk of exerting anachronistic analysis upon a work and introducing a “modern bias.” Certainly, the past can be revised with new tools, but that lens ought not to be opaqued by a modern bias; by the same token, we should not be afraid to transgress beyond the established conventions for fear of introducing our own perspective. Rather, it is there where our intuition and sensitivity, modern as it were, will allow us to decipher and evaluate “other” possibilities, even when experts have prescriptively admonished us against it—as long as the text or its contemporaries make this possible. And it is precisely with that aim that I will introduce works like *The Canterbury Tales*, “The Story of the Grail (Perceval),” and *Sir Gawain*

¹ Clyde Smith. “How I Became a Queer Heterosexual: For ‘Beyond Boundaries,’ An International Conference on Sexuality, University of Amsterdam, July 29-Aug 1, 1997.” *Cultural Research: Clyde Smith, PhD—Cultural Research, Disruptive Innovation*. Web. 2 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.culturalresearch.org/qhet.html>>.

and the Green Knight—to substantiate my claims by way of analogy and comparison.

Therefore, my aim is to examine paradigms of masculinity as they are represented in the *Tirant* and how these concur, compete and conflict with the dominant notions of the time—focusing on three models: the clergy; the chivalry; and the monarchy.

CLERGY

In *Tirant lo Blanc*, the character who represents the paradigm of masculinity for the clergy is “that brave and illustrious knight, the father of chivalry, Earl William of Warwick, [who] in his blessed final days” (Martorell 41) “resolved to retire from arms” (42) and later “entered a holy hermitage of Our Lady, not far from the city of Warwick” (45). What we have here is more than a cleric and more than a knight; we have a cleric who was also an exemplary knight. So this model, within the context of masculinity, will be more dynamic and problematic because his character will borrow traits from two forms of masculinity, which will render him a hybrid that does not fit perfectly into established categories.

Because both models are contained within a character that is fundamental to the didactic establishment of a masculine ethos—spiritual and secular—within the *Tirant*, it is necessary to examine both forms of masculinity—clerical and chivalric. Because his chivalry, as an experienced knight, will contrast with that of the would-be knight/knight-errant and may even raise interrogatives of generational concern, his chivalry will be addressed subsequent to that of his clerical station but also within the section pertaining to chivalry. In order to examine how closely Martorell adheres to norms concerning his hermit, it is timely to define what a hermit is:

The hermit, or eremite (Gr. *erēmos*, “desolate,” “solitary”), is a religious character with an ancient and honorable history. [...H]ermits pursued the

vocation of the solitary life as a career. Neither monks nor friars, they were free agents who chose to renounce the distractions of social communities and dwell apart. (Seigneuret 573)

There is no question that Martorell, in creating the character of the hermit, adheres to all the “conventions” that befit the hermit’s spiritual station. However, even as a member of the Church, his station “is but is not” one of a clerical figure. That is, the definition clearly states that they are “[n]either monks nor friars” and yet “[h]e wore the habit of [...] St. Francis” (Martorell 45) and is referred to as “Reverend father” (48). This can only mean that his function, even as a conventional character of chivalric romance, is the product of hybridity, which conflicts with the homogeneous aspect of that which is deemed normative. Nonetheless, to further illustrate this character’s duality let us look to another definition that separates the character’s functions, secular and religious:

In the secular romance of chivalry, the hermit partakes of both the secular and the religious. As a secular character [...], he is (1) the dispenser of hospitality to strangers; (2) the healer of wounded knights; and (3) the burier of the dead. As a religious character, he is (1) the ideal father confessor for the knights errant; (2) the most approved of counselors and interpreters of dreams and visions; (3) the most potent and revered defender of the weak; and (4) the perfect penitent in the eyes of all classes for every form of wickedness. (577).

Again, I would not question the fact that Martorell made certain that his character met all the character traits that befit his station. In fact, for every one of the character traits listed above, there are numerous examples in the *Tirant* that confirm Warwick’s strict adherence to and Martorell’s observance of these character norms. Even so, these norms serve to place the character within the parameters of a normative context and will help to verify adherence to prescriptive conventions, as well as expose transgressions, i.e., to

define what the character ought to be and to uncover that which he is not.² It is this endeavor for staticity or strict adherence to convention that makes Martorell's characters interesting for queer analysis: one can map the character's traits and actions against a rubric and render it a normative or marginal figure. It is important to note that as theoretically fictional characters, their creator has greater agency over their development and the qualities with which he chooses to endow them; and because creations will always bear the semblance and preoccupations of their creators, characters can be very telling of a creator's concerns and the impetus that fed the character's conception and his/her singular qualities. And if these conventions, in this case masculine conventions, are not met (e.g., if the character cannot fit within the dominant literary culture's demarcations), then this brings into question the character's normative status and disrupts the hegemonic understanding of masculinity.

Now because my aim is to analyze this model's masculinity, it is fitting to introduce Ruth Mazo Karras's contention concerning the overlapping situation of the cleric—secular and spiritual—and the knight. She contends that the “association of masculinity with sexual activity and indeed heterosexual aggressiveness is far from alien to the medieval world” (*Thomas* 53). However, her point is to draw attention to the cases where sexual prowess is not an element available for the preservation of a masculine identity. Yet she points out that one “could adduce a number of instances from medieval literature in which men who do not have lovers are taunted as not real men” (*Thomas* 53-

² This is something very queer about definitions. Once they are established, they create a margin for that which is deemed “indefinite”—the more rigid and “precise” the definition, the greater the likelihood for transgression. And the truth of the matter is that there is often times greater transgression than adherence due to the rigidity of a definition's boundaries, which results in a subversion of the normalizing mechanism—in this case the definition. This then results in continuous need for re-definition, just as we have seen with the word “queer” and its application. Therefore, lexicography is an ever morphing matrix that must attempt to contain the whole gamut of signifiers and their respective signifiers.

54). Her point, moreover, is that the sexually exploitative man is not the only model of masculinity in medieval Europe. Beyond conventional/physical military combat, she states that “[m]ilitary metaphors were used for Christianity; all Christians were to some extent *milites Christi*, soldiers or knights of Christ” (54). In the case of Warwick, as the novel’s hermit, the epithet “*milites Christi*” may be an applicable one because it referred to “monks, who led a life as regimented as a soldier’s and who could be seen as battling continuously for faith” (54). Or it may not be a suitable sobriquet because he was not a monk, as we established above. Yet again, if we take into consideration his retreat from a worldly life of comfort and plenty to world of austerity and Christian spirituality, the title of *milites Christi* might be an obtusely fitting one. (This of course is all contingent upon how rigidly or how obtusely one defines.)

In order to harness conflicting notions of clerical masculinity and to expose my own contentions of these, I will analyze Karras’s contentions. She asserts that a “number of scholars who have [...] written about the clergy and masculinity have suggested that the medieval clergy were not, [...] masculine—that by virtue of their renunciation of sexual activity they became ‘emasculate’ or a ‘third gender’” (*Thomas* 52). Subsequently, she states that not all the clergy kept their vows of chastity/celebrity, which is striking because it reintroduces an element of sexuality that is a fundamental convention of secular masculinity and contrary to conventional understandings of clerical sexual functions. Of course, this is not her position either. She suggests that “the clergy, both regular and secular, who did remain celibate and chaste did not thereby abdicate their masculinity” (53). (Here, the notion of a secular clergy reiterates the conflicting aspirations of the hermit’s office—that of being and not being.) And it is after this

statement that she admonishes that “[t]o argue that any person who does not live up to the culture’s dominant ideals for his or her gender [...] would mean that [...] any man who allowed himself to be led was something other than [...] a man” (53). Although I tend to agree with Karras’s gender arguments, this contention is particularly problematic. This otherness that Karras notes, within her prescriptive argument, is curious because from the vantage point of queer theory the fact that a man does not fit into the dominant culture’s standards for their gender does *indeed* render him as something “other” than a man. This is one of the aspects that make the models of masculinity in the *Tirant* particularly fitting for “queering”: many of the models of masculinity in the *Tirant* do not fit into dominant notions of masculinity, even in the case of non-secular masculinities.

In another text, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, Karras admonishes further against the labeling of models as more masculine or more feminine based on a twenty-first century vantage point. This is a point that I would normally find sensible. However, she states, in a manner that seems quite totalizing:

If medieval men behaved in ways that today we tend to code as feminine—the refinement that some texts expected of knights, for example—it means not that they were feminized, but that medieval conceptions of masculine and feminine differed from modern ones. The culture in which these men lived considered them the epitome of manhood, and their sexuality was not in doubt. (152)

This is a strong point of contention if we consider the episode of the Duke of Bedford before Warwick, the hermit. I can concede that one should not introduce modern bias in a revisionist approach of the past; however, Karras’s contention seems too absolute.

Furthermore, I believe there is certainly a conflicting model of masculinity in the character of the hermit. And it is particularly conflicting with Karras’s claims that clergy did not abdicate their masculinity. While I do not believe that the clergy abdicated their

masculinity, I do believe that when placed before other models of masculinity, their office of man was seen as one that had eroded or that was dubious at best. This is one of my contentions concerning the following passage:

The Duke of Lancaster and the Earl of Salisbury were chosen to receive the ambassadors. With them went four thousand men, **each one wearing a garland of flowers on his head**; and they received the ambassadors a good mile out of the city.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Bedford turned to the hermit and said to him, ‘Tell me, Father hermit, since we are to have such a grand ceremony, just how should the ambassadors find the king—clothed or **naked**, armed or unarmed?’ (Martorell 54-55)

This passage brings into question conflicting notions of masculinity by juxtaposing two models of masculinity and pitting them against one another. What is intriguing about this passage is the question of the Duke of Bedford, particularly within the context of the thousands of men wearing flowers in their hair. Certainly, most scholars would stay away from moving too quickly to judge past practices with modern codifications of masculinity or femininity. And if one chooses to go this route, one should do so with cautious deliberation—being careful not to overreach. However, according to Karras, “[w]e need to judge behavior as masculine or feminine based on what people in the Middle Ages said about it” (*From Boys* 152). I agree with this point. And since this is matter of protocol and etiquette, I would contend that because Part II of the *Tirant* contains conventions concerning accoutrements according to one’s station within a ceremonial context, it is probably best to look there for a suitable interpretation: I would like to highlight that at the King of England’s wedding among the people involved in the procession, the last to enter are “all the prostitutes and kept women [...]; and each one wore on her head a **garland of flowers** or myrtle, **that she might be recognized for what she was**” (Martorell 94). And by corollary, if we juxtapose this passage with that

of the question that comes immediately after, concerning the king being clothed or naked, one could conclude that the Duke of Bedford not only saw this as unbecoming accoutrements for their virile station, but that this was a transgression against gender conventions. It is also important to clarify that this is preceded by preparations for battle against the Moors, which included. And at the risk of overreaching, I would contend that the issue of conflicting gender roles, with respect to accoutrements, could be solved by clarifying the sentiments of Christians against the Moors—they of the “Mohammedan sect” (50)—in the Iberian Peninsula of the fifteenth century: According to Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz had it not been for the *Reconquista* (which as it happens is the historical environment in which the *Tirant* is set—even if the narrator claims this is taking place in England), the struggle to re-conquer, recover or reestablish Christianity over the Iberian Peninsula “homosexuality, which was so widely practiced in Moorish Spain, would have triumphed” (qtd. in Hutcheson 99). Still, let us see what the characters in the *Tirant* disclose on the matter of clerical masculinity. The question issued by the Duke of Bedford results in a brief altercation:

‘That would be a fair question,’ replied the hermit, ‘if indeed there were no malice mixed with your words; but **I see what your meaning is** and it is more inclined to ill than good. **Since I am old, and a hermit, you want to insult me in front of the council and my lord king.** Change your way of talking, or I will put a bridle on your mouth that will make you halt with every step you take.’ (Martorell 55, emphasis mine)

The hermit’s own assessment of the Duke of Bedford’s comments sheds no light on what the true offense is—especially if we are to believe that there is nothing inordinate about the accoutrements of the men. Nevertheless, it is clear that an offense has been made. He even claims to see the meaning of his words, but he articulates nothing. It is obvious, though, that the question is offensive to him. I would speculate that the offense concerns

masculinity, especially if we consider that offenses against honor/masculinity require acts of violence—for restitution. Furthermore, if we consider that after telling him that he could see his intention, Warwick brings up the fact that his own old age and his status as a hermit are the motives for which the Duke of Bedford is insulting him in front of the king. The subsequent threat by the hermit to bridle the duke is interesting because bridles are mouthpieces used in the equestrian world in order to direct a horse as it is mounted. So, the hermit is asserting his superior masculinity to that of the duke's in a secular manner. (But if one has to assert one's masculinity, does that not imply, then, that it is not self-evident?) This sort of action, where aggression is the vehicle for validating or earning masculinity, is a recursive one throughout the Warwick section. And if this threat is the response to the duke's offense, it would make sense to say that Warwick's masculinity has been called into question. Warwick's threat infuriates the duke:

“Hearing this, the duke came to his feet and pulled out his sword. ‘If it were not that you are so old and dressed in the habit of St. Francis,’ [...] ‘with this sword, my avenger for insolence, I would slice your **skirts** to the middle of the waist’” (55, emphasis mine). As this is a translation, before judging any further, it is prudent to include the passage in the original, Valencian: “—Si no perquè s'out tan vell e portau l'hàbit de Sant Francesc, ab aquesta espasa, la qual és venjadora de paraules injurioses, jo us acurçaria les **faldes** fins a la mitat de la cinta” (de Riquer 35, emphasis mine). Just as in the translation, the word “skirts” appears in the original referring to the hermit's habit, a cassock of sorts, which does have the semblance of a dress. The threat to slice up his skirts to mid-waist could be read in two forms: he either intended to expose the hermit's virility to everyone by cutting his garments to the waist; or, if he were to use the sword to slice upwards, the

cutting to the waist could be seen as a physical castration—if we were to consider that the cut would target his virility, since his threat was to cut “to the waist.”

So, in retrospect, it is conceivable that the Duke of Bedford, a medieval character, perhaps thought that all the ceremony was less than masculine— so much so that he goes as far as offering up the king “naked” to the ambassadors. This of course is speculation, but what is certain is that the hermit was perceived as less than masculine. Further to the matter of his vestments, according to R. N. Swanson “the clergy [...] in the high and later Middle Ages should be seen as ‘emasculine.’ Their tonsure and clerical garb made them quasi transvestites, and their dependence on patronage made them less than masculine” (qtd. in Karras, *From Boys* 161). It seems, however, that Swanson is measuring clerical masculinity against that of secular masculinity, which are incommensurable to one another. In the case of Warwick, she may not be overreaching because both models of masculinity are manifested within his character. With further respect to the Duke of Bedford’s comments concerning the hermit, Karras also concedes that “[a]ristocratic men, who prided themselves on their progeny, [...] might not accept this clerical model as real manhood but [that] conflicting models of masculinity [...] have coexisted in many societies, and medieval Europe is no exception” (*Thomas* 67) . So it is here where Karras’s contentions concerning masculinity and mine come to an agreement: the clergy were not considered masculine by other models of masculinity.

In addition to the accoutrements that some scholars deem have rendered the clergy “emasculine” and even “quasi transvestites,” appearance is another aspect of masculinity that may be evaluated—particularly facial hair, which is a secondary sexual trait. And since the Warwick’s station is that of clergy, it is fitting to introduce a

character from another medieval work who shares his office or is at least a comparable as a member of the Church. I am referring to the pardoner from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In his description of the pardoner, Chaucer states that "[n]o berd ne hadde he, ne never scholde have,/[a]s smothe it was as it ware late i-schave;/ I trowe he were a geldying or a mare" [But no beard had he, nor ever should he have,/ for smooth his face was as it were just shaved;/ I thought him to be a gelding or a mare] (Morris 22).

Chaucer notes that the pardoner's unusually smooth beardlessness has him think that the pardoner is a castrated horse, a neuter, or an adult female horse. The masculinity of the pardoner, an adult male, according to Chaucer's narrative, is virtually non-existent; and his masculinity is tied to his facial hair, which was non-existent. The lack of hair, then, would signify that he was not conventionally masculine. In the *Tirant*, Warwick wore "a white beard that reached to his waist" (Martorell 45). By comparison, the hermit has a greater amount of facial hair than the pardoner does. And if facial hair is to be understood as symbol of masculinity, then Warwick is doubtlessly masculine. The extreme length and white color, however, serve to illustrate his elderly status. And if one considers this as simple situation of age, then as such, it also renders him old and enfeebled. If he is seen as old and feeble, then his virility and strength, authenticators of masculinity, can be interpreted as having eroded or are at least ebbing. However, if we consider the beard in the context of his wearing a dress-like garment, then perhaps the mention of the long beard could arguably be intended to revalidate his status as a man and (over)compensate for his emasculated status. This notion of facial hair being linked to masculinity will be re-examined in the context of the would-be knight/knight-errant in order to analyze a progression toward manhood.

Considering that Warwick, as the hermit, once occupied a secular space, then models of secular masculinity are also relevant. And according to Vern Bullough “what constitutes manhood has varying definitions according to a society or culture or time period, the most simplistic way of defining it is a triad: impregnating women, protecting dependents, and serving as provider to one’s family” (34). If we consider that Warwick left his wife while his only child was still an infant, we might call into question this action of not attending to his family as a shortcoming in the context of a secular masculinity. In view of this description of masculinity, the hermit—in the context of the purely secular—would be seen as the antithesis of masculinity being that he was perhaps too old to impregnate any women; he had no dependents; and he left his wife and child, which made him less than a provider to his family.

With respect to sexual activity, Even Karras, who has championed the masculine station of the clergy as soldiers of Christ, concedes that

it was hard to make the case that the clergy (regular or secular) were like other men in regard to either sexual activity or aggression. The church responded to this **problem** with a deliberate, ongoing, and rather successful effort among the clergy **to create an ideology** in which the standard of masculinity was not sexual activity or aggression but rather strength of will, as evidenced among other things in the avoidance of sexual activity. [S]cholars, [...] have suggested that the church [...] presented a model of masculinity in which the struggle against temptation, particularly sexual temptation, was depicted as a manly battle. (Karras, *Thomas* 53-54)

In this passage, the fact that there is a problem that requires fixing implies that even beyond the claims of a masculine ethos, masculinity was still in danger. The solution is “to create an ideology” that took the sex out of masculinity and posited it within a man’s willpower. But if we consider that the hermit’s age would render him too old to copulate, his chastity within the hermetic confines of an isolated life may deem him hardly

masculine since “[a] chastity that did not involve struggle and God’s intervention was not heroic” (*Thomas* 57). And if we consider that the prowess of clerical masculinity was contingent upon a virility to struggle against, his old age might imply that untried virtue was no virtue at all. Although, it bears restating that the hermit once functioned in the secular world; therefore, his character is particularly problematic because he straddles the line between conventional secular medieval masculinities and clerical medieval masculinities. The fact that the hermit is elderly renders him an enfeebled character, and that is how he is initially perceived in the exchange with the Duke of Bedford. On the matter of masculinity, Bullough states that “maleness was somewhat fragile, and it was important for a man to keep demonstrating his maleness by action and thought, especially by sexual action” (41). However, according to Karras, “[t]hose who renounced secular masculinity renounced both sexual and military activity; but the military resurfaced metaphorically to explain the erasure of the sexual” (*Thomas* 67). But in Warwick, the hermit, we do not see samples of his struggle as a “soldier for Christ” within the spiritual realm. In fact, because his station is a clerical one and chastity or sexual abstinence is an aspect of this lifestyle, then clerical masculinity would require him to show his spiritual prowess, demonstrating his strength of will, by refraining from temptation, which includes giving into rage and ire. Yet in his altercation with the Duke of Bedford, he issues a threat, instead of turning the other cheek. Furthermore, what we see in Martorell’s Warwick is a return to arms. But to his credit, it must be acknowledged that one of the traits of hermits is that they did “respond to the needs of others when called upon to do so or when magnanimity prompted such activity” (Seigneuret 573), which would take him away from a religious ethos to that of a secular one.

If we consider all that has been put forth concerning the clergy, but in particular concerning William of Warwick as the hermit in the *Tirant*, we should conclude not that William of Warwick was not a man; rather, we should consider that within the context of clerical masculinity he was “other” than a man: a queer hermit. My use of the term queer is not to be understood in the sense of the binary between homosexual v. heterosexual but rather in the sense of marginality v. normativity. David M. Halperin’s definition is one that is in line with the modern broader usage and understanding of the term in the realm of queer theory because it is not (necessarily) confined to sexuality: “Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*. It is an identity without an essence. ‘Queer,’ then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative” (62).³ This binary positionality in contrast with the normative is a concept we will revisit with the aim of destabilizing (hetero)normative or phallognormative conventions as we move through the different models of masculinities contained in the *Tirant* toward a queer analysis.

CHIVALRY

The chivalric model of masculinity of William of Warwick is significantly problematic because his character’s hyper-idealization—one that is ostensibly shaped by ideals from different times, different geographies, and different masculine cultures—makes his an inextricable hybridization that makes a normative dissection of his traits implausible. Even so, because the character of Warwick is an ideal model of masculinity,

³ Halperin does go on to explain how the term is not restricted to the LGBTQIA... [this is an ever-growing initialism] community but rather remains open to anyone who feels marginalized due to their “sexual practices” (62). But because my aim is to use the sense of the word in a more ample meaning, beyond its sexual implications, the second part of his definition was omitted.

his role in the novel serves as to propel and secure the continuum of phallosociality⁴ and chivalric normativity. His segment of the novel delineates various progressions towards manhood and is, therefore, useful for charting phallosocial desire within a heteronormative context and within different models of masculinity across the different ages of man. Nonetheless, because Warwick's character borrows from different models of masculinity at different moments in the novel, his chivalric actions will be addressed, in brief, within the context as they surface rather than analyzing his chivalric character separately, as has been done with his clerical character. As this subchapter is entitled *Chivalry*, I will bring a selection of relevant chivalric models of masculinity into dialogue with one another with the aim of mapping masculinities as they arise in the context of chivalry.

The Young Knight-Warwick

For the purpose of mapping the masculinities of the young knights, I will rely on testimonials, if you will, found in the primary text; however, I will also reference two other medieval works that are part of the Arthurian cycle and the Matter of Britain:⁵ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and "The Story of the Grail (Perceval)."

The novel and specifically the Warwick segment begins in true heroic/epic form: It begins *in medias res* "dealing with the certain noble deeds of William of Warwick in his blessed final days" (41), which is specially fitting for a legendary hero of his stature. In addition to revealing the text's normative structure and it reveals conventions that are

⁴ There are moments at which he catalogs "knights" and among these there are women, which introduces elements of heterosociality; i.e., he introduces female figures as examples of manly virtue.

⁵ The tales of William of Warwick are more specifically the Matter of England; and since Martorell claims in his "Dedicatory Letter to Prince Ferdinand" (37) that the *Tirant* "was written in the English tongue" (37) it is likely that he had read a copy of *Guy of Warwick* while he was in England as a guest in the court of Henry VI of Lancaster.

suitable for its analysis by way of allusion. Because Martorell's Warwick takes in large part from the Lullian rhetorical model, the foundation of this story bears a striking semblance with that of *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*. The fact that Martorell chose to pattern his novel after Lull's denotes a phallosocial subtext. This imitation, by Martorell, reifies a phallosocial desire to be associated with personages of renown like Lull and Warwick. And in emulating their rhetorical art or retelling their story, establishes a phallosocial textual relationship with them. That said, the *Tirant* then goes on to narrate the life of William of Warwick in an abbreviated chronology. Of his youth, there is very little information. Still, it is necessary to evaluate his youth as a model of masculinity that will allow us to evaluate other masculinities, comparatively. According to the narrator, "[i]n his **manly** youth this knight had often tested his strength in the exercise of arms, pursuing wars on land as on sea, and carrying the day in many jousts" (42, emphasis mine). One of the words that is most germane to our analysis is the qualifying adjective "manly"—especially as it is juxtaposed before youth, which would bring into question the possibility of an "other" youth. But because I am working from a translation, it is imperative to go to the original Valencian text to verify the presence of this qualifier in the original: "Aquest era un cavaller fortíssim que en sa **viril** joventut havia experimentada molt la sua noble persona en l'exercici de les armes, seguint guerres així en mar com en terra, e havia portades moltes batalles a fi" (de Riquer 11, emphasis mine). As shown in the passage above, the qualifier appears in the Valencian text as well, in the form of "viril," which can easily be associated with its English cognate, virile—a synonym of the word "manly" that La Fontaine used in his translation of the *Tirant*.

“Manly youth” or “masculine youth” could be seen as a merely augmentative qualifier—the sort of qualifiers that are commonplace in the narration of epics; however, because qualifying statements are intended to legitimate or emphasize the veracity of that which modify and assert, the information that follows the qualifier could be deemed dubious—because an irrefutable truth would not require a qualifier. The need to bolster the masculinity of a youth with an adjective qualifier such as “manly” is a preemptive/hypercorrective measure that is indicative of the ever-present anxiety and added vulnerability for (a very likely) erosion of masculinity; it is a manifestation that denotes a deep-seated but conscious internal conflict. Karras contends that the issue of the ages of man follows a “common four-age tradition that considered *adolescenza* the first age, going up to age twenty-five and characterized by submissiveness, agreeableness, shame, and bodily beauty” (*From Boys* 13). Mark D. Jordan in his hagiography of St. Pelagius maps the transformation of the boy saint and martyr—who refused the sexual advances of a caliph—from that of an effeminate child/beautiful youth to a masculine soldier, freeing him from the risk of violation.⁶ This supports Karras’s contention of submissiveness and bodily beauty in youth and serves to establish a connection between childhood and effeminacy, and adolescence and vulnerability to violation or sexual submission. Thus, if we consider that the “youth” is vulnerable to violation, it is almost necessary to safeguard his representation by adding the qualifier.

Beyond the qualifier, whether one believes what it reaffirms to be truth or not, the

⁶ Mark D. Jordan. “Saint Pelagius, Ephebe and Martyr.” *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*. Eds. Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutcheson. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. pp. 23-47.—Jordan maps the evolution of the iconographic representation of St. Pelagius’s from a youth whose representations in writings evolved from a passive even effeminate child to that of a bearded “adult hero, a comrade in arms, a soldier. No hint of effeminacy remains—nor of the attraction of youthful bodies. Pelagius is still to be desired but now as a model of military power. His body has been changed from that of a defenseless boy to that of an armored man. Pelagius is no longer at risk of being raped” (40).

narrator shares that the young Warwick had “tested his strength in the exercise of arms [...] He had been in seven actual battles with kings or sons of kings, and with armies of at least ten thousand combatants [...]. In all of these he achieved glorious victory” (Martorell 42). So, what we have here is that Warwick achieved epic masculinity, by exerting his martial prowess upon other men, irrespective of number or rank. This seems fairly standard for aristocratic models of masculinity. Yet this also has the timbre of preemptive hyperbole to render him an irrefutably masculine epic hero.

The Young Knight

The model of the young knight in Warwick’s son is strikingly different from that of Tirant’s and Warwick’s models of masculinity as represented in the *Tirant* because Warwick’s son’s is one of a pre-pubescent masculinity, involving a progression toward adolescence. In the novel, William of Warwick’s son—who he left when he was an infant in order to pursue his spiritual retreat—is reintroduced at age eleven when England is in danger of Moorish invasion.⁷ As a result of his, Warwick’s, vow to rid the kingdom of these Moors, “[i]t was cried publicly that all those who were older than eleven and younger than seventy were obligated, under penalty of death, to follow the king” (Martorell 62-63). However, “[w]hen the virtuous countess heard that the king had put out this announcement, [...] she was very distressed, knowing that her son was included in this group; and she went hurriedly on foot to see the king” (63). Her purpose in going to the see the king hermit was to ask that he “overlook” (63) her son.⁸ Her supplication

⁷ At this point William of Warwick has undergone two transformations: he has been the knight-hermit and is now the knight-king who came to the aid of the king of England. The particulars surrounding these masculinities will be discussed within the context of the corresponding sections.

⁸ For the sake of clarity, it should be known that it is also William of Warwick’s son; however, the mother is unaware that the Hermit is William of Warwick because to her knowledge, “the Earl William of Warwick had perished as he was returning from the holy sepulcher of Jerusalem” (Martorell 45).

leads to a rebuking where Warwick delivers the masculine conventions for the young men's "attainment" of honor:

it is known that men should practice the skillful use of arms, and learn the tactics of war and the gentle manner of this blessed order of knights. It is an obligation, and a good custom, for men of honor to begin the use of arms in early youth; for at that age they can learn the skills of individual combat, or of actual wars, much better than later. The boy is now at the best age possible to see and feel the great honors that knights attain through such virtuous deeds, and I want to keep him in my own company. (63)

The attainment of honor has the semblance of code for the attainment of masculinity. After all, honor is one of the attributes of chivalric masculinity. With respect to this attainment of masculinity, Camille Paglia asserts that a "woman simply is, but a man must become. Masculinity is risky and elusive. It is achieved by a revolt from a woman, and it is confirmed only by other men" (579). This is a recurrent pattern we will see in the *Tirant*. Warwick's rebuke is followed by further lamentation and idle attempts by the countess to have her son be spared from battle. After more exchange between Warwick and the countess, the son enters to assert his revolt:

'Madam,' he said, 'I beg your mercy, not to cry or exhaust yourself for my sake. I kiss your hands from the extreme love that I have known in your ladyship. But you should consider that I am already old enough to go out from under the wings of my mother; I am ready to bear arms, to enter in battles, to show whose son I am, and just who my father was. (Martorell 65)

In this passage, the son declares his readiness to engage in martial combat and also articulates a phallosocial continuum in asserting being his father's son. Because of the risk of erosion of masculinity present, had the son acquiesced to his mother's wishes, he

would have been perceived as other than masculine; and being that he is the son of Warwick and that Warwick himself—the epitome of virility and the ideal of all things masculine—is the one requesting her son’s participation, it is unlikely that this “emasculatation” by an overbearing mother would have been allowed. Paglia is not alone in her contention:

Various scholars have claimed some components of masculine identity as essential or universal [... and] that unlike feminine identity, which happens automatically to a girl, masculine identity always has to be acquired. It requires the crossing of a critical threshold, such as a specific initiation ritual that marks a boy as becoming a man. A man must test and win his masculinity in a combat. (Karras, *From Boys* 4)

If we consider that women’s sexual identity is inherent and that men’s sexual identity must be attained, then by its mere existence women’s sexuality exerts a continuous subversion upon patriarchal paradigms and is disruptive to masculine hegemonic normativity. And because within a heteronormative phallogentric ethos women’s sexual identity and that of children’s is thought to exist in a liminal space (one that girls have no need to move out of in order to attain an “other” sexual identity), boys, upon reaching a certain age, as in the case of Warwick’s son, must then strive for the attainment of masculinity by performance. If we consider that women and children inherently assume their sexual identities, then that would imply that the inherently normative identity is one of androgyny—which invalidates the normative domination of the conventional heteronormative and phallogentric model. Then, as in the vast majority of chivalric literatures, the inherent aspect of non-masculine sexual identities requires normative masculinity to continuously revolt against encroachment and struggle to perform an “other” identity in order to reify and demarcate its difference. In our example, that revolt against a woman is exerted against the mother. And because we are talking about an

“otherness” concerning masculine identities, then by corollary the heteronormative patriarchal paradigm is a queer one that does not adhere to the very conventions it touts. Perhaps because of this evident and ever-present threat that other sexual identities pose on masculinity and the continuum of a phallographic ethos, martial prowess and masculine-identifying qualifiers are requisite “mail” to safe-guard and ward off androgynous encroachment—rather than masculine recession.

Let us re-examine the requisite rite of passage or the “critical threshold,” which would lead to that transformational ritual that takes a boy to be a man; and that specific moment occurs just as

[t]he king pursued these Moors, killing and beheading as many as he could; but he was tired from the effects of his wounds and delayed a moment. Now the Christians had caught a gigantic Moor, and the king, having knighted the countess’s son, wanted the boy to kill that Moor. With great spirit, the youth hacked him repeatedly with his sword until he killed him. When the king saw that the Moor was dead, he picked up the lad by the hair and threw him on top of the Moor, rubbing him vigorously against the infidel, so that his eyes and face were all smeared with blood. He had the boy put his hands in the wounds, and thus he suckled him on the Moor’s blood.⁹ (Martorell 69)

And if it were possible to think this moment as being anything but *the* moment, immediately after this passage, comes the following statement: “Later this same youth became a most valiant and virtuous knight; so worthy was he in his day that one could not find in much of the world another knight of such great renown” (69). It is as if this very ritualistic moment is an awakening, unfurling, unveiling—the vehicle by which the boy is transposed from the liminal space of childhood to that of an “other” space, like manhood. A conventional interpretation, i.e. one rooted in normative patriarchal paradigms, would assert exactly that—that this very moment represents his successful

⁹ Martorell, p. 104—Warwick’s son, the Grand Constable, retells this story.

ascension into knighthood/manhood. I would agree. However, the subversive order of the events should also be noted: the boy is knighted prior to killing the Moor. The conventional passage would have had the boy earn his right to be knighted after having shown martial prowess and not the other way around. The other matter that is incongruent to the dominant chivalric ethos is that the Moor had been captured for the boy; he did not kill him in combat. The conventional progression is illustrated in Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*. Perceval, also a prepubescent boy, shows his martial prowess by slaying the Red Knight: "With all the accuracy he could summon he let fly his javelin at the knight's eye: before he could react, the javelin had pierced the knight through the eye and brain, and had emerged from the back of his neck amid a gush of blood and brains" (de Troyes 395). I would also proffer that the male-on-male rubbing—the boy "against the moor"—and the bloodshed is essentially a symbolic and ritualistic deflowering of sorts—the boy has lost his metaphorical maidenhead. And if we consider this as a deflowering or the crossing of a threshold, then we can safely conclude that Warwick's son has become something "other" than a boy and left the "liminal space"; after all, "it was in feats of arms that young boys received their first knightly training [...]. Violence was the fundamental measure of a man because it was a way of exerting dominance over men of one's own social stratum as well as over women and other social inferiors" (Karras, *From Boys* 21). Furthermore, the fact that in this excerpt he (Warwick's son) kills a "gigantic moor" and does so with extreme violence might deem him all the more masculine.¹⁰ What I mean is that by corollary, the greater the violence

¹⁰ For this pattern of a revolt against a woman, the mother, and exertion of violence upon a larger adversary resulting in the attainment of masculinity see also: Chrétien de Troyes. "The Story of the Grail (Perceval)." *Arthurian Romances: Translated with an Introduction and Notes by William W. Kibler*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

exerted and the greater the adversary, the greater attainment of honor—the chivalric ensign of masculinity. But given the vulnerability of masculinity, overt displays of martial prowess might also serve a twofold benefit—to reify an irrefutable masculine identity, while attaining the validation of other men. However, these overt public displays of violence also serve to expose the sort of preemptive measures required in order to shield a thing as frail as masculinity.

Now, within the context of an aristocratic masculinity, if revolting was part of becoming more masculine, then would accepting or regressing after having achieved masculinity by means of victory in combat not imply an abdication of masculine status, an erosion of masculinity or regression to an “other” status? In part two of the *Tirant*, there is a second revolt by Warwick’s son.¹¹ The young man—who after the hermit king defeated the Moors had been named “Grand Constable of all England” (Martorell 76) by the reinstated King of England, as a sign of gratitude to his father (and as a manifestation of phallosocial desire,¹² who thought that he had already proved his mettle—approached Tirant to borrow his horse and armor “because neither the king nor his mother the countess wanted him to fight with arms, whether on foot or on horseback, for fear of the great danger involved” (104). As it turns out, the young constable fought and was successful in defeating his adversary: “he caught his foe on the visor of his helmet, and a large piece of his lance exited on the other side” (104). Learning this, the king sent for the boy and reprimanded him because of his “love for the boy” (104). The young constable is instructed that he “not dare to fight again without his [the king’s] permission

¹¹ It bears repeating that in Part I it states that “[l]ater this same youth became a most valiant and virtuous knight; so worthy was he in his day that one could not find in much of the world another knight of such great renown” (69).

¹² Sedgwick, p.4—“men promoting the interests of men”

or order” (104). For a young man—who believes he has crossed the threshold of masculine initiation and who has gained the admiration/validation of his peers, all of whom felt that “of all the battles fought by knights at this honored place, there was not a prettier or more striking one than the lad’s first encounter” (104),—this is an emasculating directive. The young man is aware that this order would bring shame upon him, in the eyes of his peers, and that this was a threat to his newly-attained masculinity. He becomes angry and then asks: “is it true that I have been knighted only to be considered the basest knight of all, inasmuch as you fear of my death prevents my participation in feats of arms?” (104). He tries to remind the king that because he is a knight he “must do knightly deeds, just as all other good knights do” (104). This reminder by someone of inferior rank and younger age is significantly subversive and brings into question the king’s masculinity as an adult male figure and practitioner of chivalric honor. This is proof positive that the young man, at the young age of “no more than fourteen or fifteen” (103), is clearly aware that he is operating within a masculine ethos. It also denotes that he knew what was required of him in order to continue being deemed as “good.” Goodness, in this case, may be interpreted as masculine. In fact, he is so aware of the implications of his order to refrain from battle that he defiantly orders the king: “if your highness does not want me to encounter the perils of arms, order me to be dressed like a woman and sent into the company of our queen’s damsels, just like that invincible knight Achilles, who went among the daughters of King Priam of Troy” (104).

¹³ Within the context of masculinity, this may be interpreted as an example of cowering, hiding behind one’s mother’s skirts, running, etc.

¹³ La Fontaine, “Notes to Part Two: 5,” p. 171—“According to a Greek legend, Achilles’ mother had him disguise himself as a maiden in order to keep him from the Trojan War, where she feared he would be

Because the young man understood that his masculinity was in peril of being lost, he could only reassert his masculinity by challenging the king's order. The king's comments could be seen as questioning the young man's prowess when he states: "As fortune has made you a victor, you should be content with the prize of battle.' And the king would not hear anything else the boy had to say" (Martorell 105). The fact that fortune made him the winner of the combat implies that the boy did not win because of his skill or strength; rather, it was merely fortune that was on his side. He then returns to his mother, a woman, to "ask her lord, the king, to let him fight with arms" (105). The arms here begin to take on a metaphorical sense, that of a phallus. The boy is seeking to regain that which was stripped from him, literally and metaphorically. His mother's request was refused by the king. Tirant tries to appease him; and rather than speak of chance or fortune, he validates his kill by stating that "as he had already killed one knight, the best one of the twenty-six champions, he should be satisfied with this much honor" (105). This is followed by a private request from the mother of the boy to whom Tirant promised to "never again [...] do anything which might jeopardize her son, but instead to do him as much honor as" (106) he possibly could. It should, however, be noted that the reinstated king's approach is diametrically different to that of Warwick's, the boy's own father. This would then render the king as not a true devotee of chivalry, since they both loved the boy but only one adheres to knightly conventions; and, as such, the king's masculinity could be questioned.

It is not surprising that because the first sections serve as didactic examples of the requisites of participation within a chivalric ethos, so much of what is fundamental to prove or establish masculinity is contained within these passages. After a good

killed as predicted."

foundation on the rules of engagement and expectations of knights are established, the characters are ready to enter into battles that will win themselves greater honor. Still, what seeps through, regardless of all the (futile) preemptive efforts, is that youth as a model of masculinity requires an even greater and continuous proving of martial prowess due to its proximity, in age, to the liminal space and liminal sexual identity that societal norms have instructed them to fear—for fear of being deemed something “other” than a manly youth.

The Would-Be Knight & Knight-Errant: Tirant

Tirant’s progression, from being the young would-be knight/knight-errant who seeks the counsel of William of Warwick as he makes his way towards knighthood and his subsequent winning of greater honor and attainment of greater masculinity follows a similar trajectory to that of the young knights; i.e., as he attains greater masculinity, he appears to move further away from a liminal sexual identity. Although—in comparison to the pre-pubescent models—his model of masculinity, that of an adult, will not feature a revolt from a woman. *His* model will feature the indoctrination that is befitting of his station—the preservation of masculine status and attainment of greater honor by the exertion of greater violence, peer validation, challenges to duel and crusading, and courtship, among others.

In conventional knight-errant form,¹⁴ Tirant “a nobleman of venerable lineage, a native of Brittany, was traveling to the marriage festivities” (Martorell 77) of the King of England when “he lagged behind the others and fell asleep on his horse” (77). The horse leaves the road and takes him to the dwelling place of the hermit, William of Warwick.

¹⁴ Lull, pp. 3-4—This episode is almost identical to the passage that comes from the *Book of the Order of Chivalry*.

The hermit is reading a book ¹⁵ when Tirant and he become acquainted. Tirant explains that they call him Tirant lo Blanc as his “father was lord of the March of Tirania which faces England across the sea” (78) and that his “mother was the daughter of the Duke of Brittany and named Blanca” (78). A queer aspect about his name is that it is a hybrid of male and female. Even more subversive to patriarchal conventions is that his surname is a derivative of his mother’s name rather than his father’s. A naming convention in patriarchal paradigms, particularly those of the medieval and early modern aristocracies, was to give the heir/son the name of the father.

The phallosocial element that contextualizes the chivalric ethos in this episode is introduced when the hermit hears that Tirant, along with others “who were of noble blood and skilled in arms left Brittany, intending to be knighted” (Martorell 78) by the king of England. Yet Tirant admittedly knows little about knighthood and the order of chivalry. He seeks to gain Warwick’s guidance by asking him: “Lord and father of knighthood [...], tell me then by your mercy—you who so long have observed the order of knighthood—how can a **man** best observe that code which Our Lord has placed in such high dignity and esteem?” (79, emphasis mine). In this passage, we should take notice of the word “man.” If manhood was something to be attained and if the conventional model for aristocratic masculinity was knighthood then two questions must be raised: Has Tirant achieved manly status by the crossing of a threshold where violence was exerted upon an adversary? And, if so, is he then a knight? His question concerning knighthood earns him a reprimand from Warwick, as the hermit:

‘How is this?’ cried the hermit, ‘you do not know the rules of chivalric behavior? How can you ask to be knighted until you know these things?’

¹⁵ In the novel the title is shown to be “*Arbre de Batalles, or The Tree of Battles*” (Martorell 77); however, this is clearly taken from Lull. La Fontaine notes this as well.

No knight can uphold the order if he does not know its methods and all that pertains to it; **a knight who does not know the ways of knighthood is no knight**, and it is a disorderly knight indeed who knights another man and yet does not know how to show him the customs of knighthood.’¹⁶
(79, emphasis mine)

If he is a knight, then by the hermit’s assertion his ascension into knighthood and status have been illegitimated. In fact, because in asking his question concerning knighthood, Tirant has admitted ignorance of the chivalric code; and, as such, according to the hermit’s statement, his knighthood is invalid. Furthermore, he that knighted him is also implicated, which makes me wonder whether there were illegitimate knights roaming about. Note here, the words “disorderly knight.” Karras in her book, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*, builds an argument concerning women who were charged as “common whore and bawd and gossip and disturber of the peace” (139) and contends that this was simply an “emphatic way of saying, ‘[h]ere is a woman out of control’” (139) but also states that there must have been some purpose for assigning these labels to certain women, “since not everyone accused of being a prostitute or a bawd was also accused of being a scold” (139-140). She concludes that whoredom was part of a group of “feminine disorderliness” (140). And if disorderliness is deemed as a feminine attribute, then by association this would imply that the hermit was not only questioning the manhood of any man who acted in a disorderly manner but even calling him a woman—even if he was not calling him a whore. Later within this didactic exchange between the hermit and Tirant, he discloses that he has “long served [knighthood] without knowing its true nobility, or the honor and magnificence which

¹⁶ See also: Ramón Lull. *The Book of the Order of Chivalry: From the 1926 Early English Text Society publication of William Caxton’s **The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry** (in late Middle English) as translated from a French version of Ramón Lull’s **Le Libre del Orde de Cauayleria***. Trans. Robert Adams. Huntsville [Texas]: Sam Houston State University Press, 1991.

comes to those who serve it loyally” (Martorell 80). Therefore, if he is not a knight and he is not a squire, then by definition or lack thereof, Tirant has entered into a new liminal space. And, as such, he is most certainly not a knight, not simply because he has claimed that he is looking to be knighted but also because the hermit has divested him of any likelihood for validation at that point. Given what has been exposed concerning the hermit as an ecclesiastical model of masculinity, it is ironic that a character that is deemed “other” than masculine be the one to deliver the conventions of normative chivalry, which is the epitome of medieval masculinity. Certainly, the role of the hermit in chivalric romances is a convention and one who in several medieval romances delivers the norms of the order of chivalry; however, it is no less paradoxical that a character whose role is a mostly spiritual one is the one to deliver the secular conventions—even if this practice is a medieval convention. In this passage, not only is the hermit the vehicle for the delivery of conventions of normative chivalry, but he polices knightly intention and actions, and thereby becomes the model of masculinity for a would-be knight; and, as such, he perpetuates the continuum of phallosocial desire. But the conventions will also be inscribed with the inherent traits of “otherness” that are particular to the hermit as a model of masculinity.

As we evaluated in the subchapter denominated “Clergy,” the semblance of the hermit to that of a friar was such that he was revered and referred to as “father” because he wore the habit of St. Francis; and when Tirant sees him for the first time he notes that “his appearance, in all, was that of a most holy man” (Martorell 78). There are several other reverences extended that lead the reader to believe that Tirant supposes he is speaking to a member of the Church. Oddly enough, this figure—who to Tirant’s

understanding—is some sort of clergy, who happens to know too much to be *just* a hermit. And as such, Tirant asks: “Holy father, I beg your mercy to tell me whether you are a knight” (79). (Does Tirant have “knightdar”?)¹⁷ Warwick discloses that “it has well been fifty years since I was made a knight in Africa, during a great battle with Moors” (79). Tirant’s question raises an interesting issue concerning performance or passing for something one is not.¹⁸ In fact, this juxtaposition is quite interesting, because we have two men who have just confessed to not being that which they were embodying: Tirant is a knight who in reality, according to Warwick’s strict conventions, was not; and Warwick is not actually a friar or a monk. In fact, earlier in the novel, Warwick tried to hide the fact that he was a knight by having his “squire [...] spread the word” (45) that he had died. And now, we have two unveilings: The hermit has just “come out of the closet” as a former knight; and Tirant has “come out” as a non-knight. Later, Warwick begins the indoctrination of Tirant stating that “just as chivalry provides a knight with all of his needs, so a knight should do all in his power to do honor to the chivalric order” (79). This notion of performing actions in connection with one’s office with the aim of attaining honor bears the semblance of theatricality, which may be read as acting against one’s nature with the aim of meeting the requirements of his station—the binary: public image v. private image. And, therefore, the performance aspect of meeting the

¹⁷ A comical neologism based on the modern concept “gaydar.” I am offering this neologism, which is constructed by the fusion of the words “knight” and “radar” to illustrate how even in clerical guise, Tirant is able to detect that the hermit is a “closeted” knight. Perhaps the modern adage of “it takes one to know one” is fitting.

¹⁸ Martorell, p. 52—There is a passage where the hermit dresses in Moorish attire as part of a strategy to defend England from a Moorish invasion. If one were to frame this episode within the context of passing for something other than what one was and within the context of the apocalyptic nature of the Moors in 15th century Iberia, one could speculate that the character of Warwick as portrayed in the *Tirant* was a “converso”—a Jew or, in this case, a Moor who converted to Kristendom. This is also the period of *pureza de sangre*, which is the period in Iberia where anti-Semitism was at its zenith; and it led to manifestations of overcompensations of all manner with the aim of legitimating one’s non-Semitic provenance.

expectations of one's station would mean that a knight is not a knight; he is merely acting as one.

Chivalry is the ideal space for the propagation of phallosociality and phallosocial desire because it is a phallogocentric space. The world of knights is a man's world where many bonds are formed. Although, I would argue that phallosocial didacticism in the *Tirant* is breached: Martorell's prologue provides a catalog of "strong and virtuous men who serve us as mirrors of virtue and examples of good doctrine" (39); and among these are: "the inspiring deeds of the holy fathers" (39); "the battles of the Greeks, Trojans and **Amazons**" (39, emphasis mine); "battles of Alexander and Darius" (39); and "the holy miracles and deeds of the apostles, martyrs and other saints, and of the penance of St. John the Baptist, **St. Mary Magdalene**, [...] and **St. Mary of Egypt**" (39, emphasis mine). Note that these are not all men. Now one might question whether this is an oversight on Martorell's part or whether because these were all virtuous people they were worthy of inclusion. However, in the subsequent paragraph he states, authoritatively, that "[v]irtuous men, particularly those who have not refused to **risk their lives for their state** in order to gain permanent glory, are deserving of honor and fame and continual remembrance" (39, emphasis mine). This passage serves to redirect a phallosocial ethos. However, subsequent statements are again disruptive: "honor cannot be acquired without manly deeds of valor" (39); and "holy **Judith boldly** dared to kill Holofernes in order to deliver the city from his tyranny" (39, emphasis mine). Note that Judith, a woman, risks her life for the state, a characteristic that Martorell pairs with manly virtue. This seems to introduce a conflict and disruption of a phallosocial ethos. In fact, his seems a heterosocial paradigm that is incongruent with his phallogocentric conventions precisely

because of the introduction of women into this discourse. Now, the women he chooses to include are those whose behavior would be coded with that which is not deemed conventionally feminine, which would raise one interrogative: Martorell's notion of gender and sexuality. Karras contends that "[s]truggling against and overcoming a foe – even when that foe was one's own desires – was a manly activity" (*Sexuality* 42). She also asserts that women who harnessed their "sexual desires could be called viragos, manly women" (42), which was not to be deprecatory; on the contrary, this was to be interpreted as having obtained masculine agency by surmounting the bounds of femininity. This vision could certainly serve to explain Martorell's inclusion of these women within a "male catalog." This could also give way to another question: what of all the works he read influenced and shaped his perspective of gender and sexuality? It bears stating that the works of these figures had been "set down in writing" (Martorell 40); and, as literature, in addition to providing "entertainment, [...] it also affected the ideals, interests, mentalities, and aspirations, if not the actual behavior of the knightly class in the Middle Ages" (Karras, *From Boys* 26-27). Karras also contends that literature served to "reconcile several sets of competing ideals: romantic love, gentility, [and] knightly prowess" (26). And, as such, its readers drew from it; and "in the later Middle Ages [it] internalized the aristocratic ethic, [...] as parts of the definition of the ideal man. Young men also learned appropriate chivalric behavior through listening to conversation and personal recollections as well as literary and historical narratives" (26-27). So, again, the question would be which of the countless sources that Martorell drew from could have inscribed this heterosocial incongruity upon his "aristocratic ethic," which may be interpreted as having a disruptive ripple effect upon the phallosocial

normativity and patriarchal paradigms by delivering instruction that instills and thereby perpetuates an “other convention” as surrogates to a purely phallosocial model.

Moving forward, another knightly and didactic aspect of the *Tirant* is that of the social conventions involving manners and propriety of monarchs, nobles, and aristocrats, which served to dictate the roles and behaviors of men and others; and it too was an element of masculinity. According to Karras, “[l]ate medieval aristocratic behavior placed great emphasis on manners and decorum for men” (*From Boys* 44). This preoccupation is substantiated by the surfeit details featured throughout the *Tirant* but in particular in “Part Two: The Court of a Year and a Day [Chapters 39-97]” (Martorell 91-172), which is in essence a treatise of chivalric administrative protocol and social etiquette. The wedding of the king of England serves to illustrate the ceremonial social norms. The guests who attended included people from the entire societal stratum: clergy, aristocrats, and commons (including prostitutes). Within this section, the most salient events that serve to illustrate behavior within a social setting are: the marriage processions, which establish the societal hierarchy; statements of procedure; the conventions for aristocratic combat, and Tirant’s initial encounters, which involve a woman, Agnes of Berry, and an epistolary tradition, and the knighting of Tirant.¹⁹

Tirant’s initial encounters serve to frame conventional paradigms of masculinity for a youth. And as such, within the context of a chivalric masculinity, Tirant could be considered less than masculine, not quite a man because at this point he has not demonstrated his manly prowess in combat. In fact, this stage of the novel serves to illustrate his progression toward masculinity, aristocratic masculinity. One of Tirant’s

¹⁹ Tirant was knighted by the King of England. However, as I will cover in the section concerning the Monarchy as another model of aristocratic masculinity, there are certain oddities surrounding the King’s entitlement to create knights, which will again bring Tirant’s legitimacy as a knight into question.

earliest battles, against Senyor de Vilesermes, serves to adduce both the protocol of combat and Tirant's inexperience. Tirant approaches a king-of-arms, a sort of referee of the times who was familiar with the conventions of chivalric process. His name is Jerusalem. Tirant presents his inquiry, concerning Senyor de Vilesermes's challenge to duel, in the following manner:

‘I would consider it a great honor to be able to comply with the desire of this virtuous knight, Senyor de les Vielsermes. But as **I have only now turned twenty** years old, and as I am young and inexperienced in the ways of knighthood, I ask that you advise me [...].’ (Martorell 114, emphasis mine)

Notice in this passage that Tirant is twenty-years old and still deemed young and inexperienced. If we juxtapose this against the prepubescent encounter of Perceval, we could adduce that Tirant is late in his years for his initial combats. Furthermore, if we were to juxtapose this episode with that of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where the Green Knight mocks Arthur's challenge and states: “Nay, to fight, in good faith, is far from my thought;/ There are about on these benches but beardless children” (10). The “beardless children” serves to convey, just as in Perceval, youth; but we should also note that in both cases, the youths, most like younger than twenty-years old, are already engaging or are ready to engage in martial combat. Tirant, on the other hand, has only begun. Because Tirant fears that his masculinity is in peril, he clarifies:

‘Do not think, though, that what I am telling you is caused by timidity or lack of courage; the fact is I do not want to give offense to the king, who has done me so much honor; for he has instituted in his kingdom moral laws which govern the honorable practice of knighthood, and I do not want to be blamed by the good knights for any misbehavior whatsoever in my handling this challenge.’ (Martorell 114-115)

The preoccupation here, as in other instances, is a constant awareness and fear of the potential for the erosion of masculinity. This anxiety serves to articulate how vulnerable

and fragile masculinity really is. Another point of contention with respect to the aristocratic masculinity of Tirant's is that even if he had not exchanged in combat, an aristocratic upbringing must have at least afforded him some knowledge with the propriety of these engagements. In fact, it seems quite late and dubious that one who has such high esteem for chivalry, something that his "his soul has desired so much" (79), is essentially a *tabula rasa*. As we have seen before, literature served to form the medieval aristocracy's mind with respect to conventions.²⁰ Nonetheless, within the framework of Karras's contentions, concerning the ages of man,²¹ Tirant would still fit in the first age; and as such, he remains vulnerable because it is the formative stage; and is striving to become a man. He is being initiated as a knight; and initiation is all about making the would-be knight prove himself as a man. The king-of-arms advised Tirant that he could

meet this knight in combat without fear of any blame or censure from the king, judges, or knights, for as he is the challenger and you are the defender, he is the instigator of harm and you can always be excused in your behavior. I shall take all the responsibility. If anyone wants to say something about you, **I will save your honor** before all the good knights [...]; so act as a good knight and always show to everyone your manly courage." (Martorell 115, emphasis mine)

What is most striking about this passage is that in addition to proving his manhood, his honor and masculinity are in peril. The discourse becomes one of defense, which articulates the vulnerability of Tirant and his honor but also that of his manhood. In this passage, much like when championing the honor of women, Tirant's honor is vulnerable and in need of a champion. This would place him in the situation of being something "other" than man.

²⁰ Karras, *From Boys*, pp. 26-27

²¹ Karras, *From Boys*, p. 13

On the matter of the hierarchy within the framework of the procession, their place within the procession does not seem to adhere to the medieval estate system where the clergy came before the aristocracy and the aristocracy before the common. On the contrary, there is also transgression in this sense: “after the tradesmen came many kinds of entertainers. Then came the clergy: archbishops, bishops, abbots, canons, and priests” (Martorell 94). If order in this procession is to be interpreted as the hierarchy, then the tradesmen, who were part of the common estate coming before the clergy is a subversion of the conventional estate system. In fact, the novel affirms, albeit incorrectly, that “each estate arrived in order” (95). After the clergy, came the “king and all of those men who wanted to be knighted. These men were all dressed in white satin or silver brocade, signifying virginity, for they were unmarried but betrothed” (94). The fact that the monarch appears after the clergy seems subversive. In most models medieval estate models, the monarch was not part of the system—even if, as a practitioner of honor, the king was associated with the knights, as in Arthurian romances. In addition, this notion of virginity in men is worthy of further exploration. We have seen conventions concerning abstinence in the clergy being symbolic to a manly struggle against temptations; however, in knights, this may reveal a conflict. According to Karras, “[s]omeone who had not taken a vow but simply had not yet gotten married was more likely to be called a youth, or (if female) a virgin, since it was assumed that women’s sexual activity began with marriage. The term ‘virgin’ was rarely used of men” (*Sexuality* 29). If we accept Karras’s assertion, then there must certainly be something queer about the sexualities of the knights and that of the king’s.²²

²² This is the king who abdicates his throne because he cannot do manly battle against a Moorish knight who challenges him to a duel. This is also the king that the Duke of Bedford, his uncle, asked whether he

The quintessential phallosocial space for exclusive chivalric phallosocial desire is that of the knightly orders. In the *Tirant*, the reader is introduced to the Order of the Garter. Like fraternities today, orders of knighthood were a phallosocial space for the promotion of the interests of men. Diafebus is narrating at this point; and he, Tirant, a group of knights and the hermit, Warwick. Diafebus has been sharing about the many encounters where Tirant “entered the lists at full risk eleven times, and eleven times he emerged triumphant” (Martorell 162). This narration illustrates the internalization of phallonormativity because Tirant has proved his martial prowess and thereby gained honor and reified his masculinity among his peers. We are reminded of the theme of youth being near the liminal space when the hermit states that he is pleased with how “the code of knighthood has been honored, in particular by the famed knight Tirant lo Blanc, who, **though still very young**, has already accomplished so many gallant and virtuous deeds of honor” (162, emphasis mine). This is the third phase of what Paglia refers to as the confirmation by other men. In contrast, though, the hermit also states: “I would truly consider myself the most blessed Christian in the world if I had a son as virtuous, as accomplished in good deed, and as knowledgeable in matters pertaining to the order of knighthood, as Tirant is” (162). The hermit-knight has legitimated Tirant’s status for having met the requirements of chivalric masculinity according to the conventions of phallonormativity. However, what also surfaces in this passage is a potential discontent on behalf of the hermit with his son. If we consider the exchange where his son was not allowed to engage in further battles, then this renders the boy emasculated. And perhaps this is what the hermit is insinuating. These relations, though, are framed within the

should greet the ambassadors naked or clothed. Youth in connection with beauty and the fact that he has not proved martial prowess bring his sexual identity into question.

context of sharing with the hermit about the “new order and brotherhood which the King of England has founded” (162). In the narration, we are made aware of the background surrounding the creation of the Order of the Garter, which is one that will take us into the examination of the model of masculinity as manifested in the monarchy.

MONARCHY

This episode concerning the Order of the Garter ²³ will serve to highlight phallosocial desire and potential transgression beyond conventional gender roles, but also to establish the connection between chivalry and monarchy. Diafebus shares with the hermit and the rest of the men that are present the story of how the Order came to be: A woman named Madresilva drops a garter. When she turns to get it, a knight had gotten to it before her. “The king, seeing the garter in the hands of this knight, immediately demanded it and told him to place it on his left leg, over the hose, just below the knee” (Martorell 164). (Notice that this is a man placing a female’s article of clothing on another man.) He wore it for four months; “and when he would dress himself most splendidly, he was more willing than ever to show off his garter before everyone” (164). This seems to bear transgressive significance because this is a woman’s garment and might even connote cross-dressing tendencies. In fact, the description of the garter was “just like many fashionable ladies of honor wear on their legs to tie their stockings” (165). This bears some semblance to a later episode, where Tirant asks Carmesina for her blouse, in the following manner: “Madam, I do not ask anything of your highness except that you grace me with that blouse you are wearing” (276). Later, “he put the

²³ “The Order of the Garter is the most senior and the oldest British Order of Chivalry and was founded by Edward III in 1348.” “Order of the Garter.” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*. 2 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/Honours/OrderoftheGarter/OrderoftheGarter.aspx>>.

blouse on over his armor” (276) and just as there is a motto in the episode of the garter,²⁴ there is a motto, or, rather, mottos on the blouse.²⁵ Because Martorell takes authorial agency over the *true* story of the Order of the Garter, subversive readings to this (and other episodes) do not seem so out of line. I would argue ²⁶ that because the Order of the Garter is the “most senior and oldest British Order of Chivalry”²⁷ which was founded by Edward III of England,²⁸ who was known for his martial prowess as an “able soldier,”²⁹ who was (only) “14 when he was crowned King and assumed government in his own right”³⁰ and also the son of Edward the II³¹ of England of whom it was rumored that he was a homosexual³² (or sodomite, to put it in medieval context), that this episode is a perversion of this Order. That said, Martorell seems to have fused the histories of the Edwards. Allow me to clarify: Edward III of England established the Order of the Garter, while his father is the one of whom rumors existed. In the novel, however, the king who ends up establishing the Order had “a single attendant who was one of the king’s **favorites**” (164, emphasis mine); and it is he who “[o]ne day [...] was alone with the king [...] said to him, ‘Sir, if your highness only know what I know, and heard the

²⁴ “*Puni soit qui mal y pense*” (Martorell 164)

²⁵ “*He who feels content is not eager to move, and He who sits on the lain has nowhere to fall*” (Martorell 276).

²⁶ If the entire novel were read very closely, one could make a valid argument for the *Tirant* being a complete perversion of everything that England deemed most honorable.

²⁷ “Order of the Garter.” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*.

²⁸ “Edward III (r.1327-1377).” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*. 2 Oct. 2011.

<<http://www.royal.gov.uk/HistoryoftheMonarchy/KingsandQueensofEngland/ThePlantagenets/EdwardIII.aspx>>.

²⁹ “Edward III (r.1327-1377).” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*.

³⁰ “Edward III (r.1327-1377).” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*.

³¹ “Edward II (r. 1307-1327).” *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*. 2 Oct. 2011.

<<http://www.royal.gov.uk/HistoryoftheMonarchy/KingsandQueensofEngland/ThePlantagenets/EdwardII.aspx>>.

³² *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England: with the Tragical Fall of Proud Mortimer* by Christopher Marlowe lays the groundwork for this interpretation of this rumor. In Marlowe’s play, Piers Gaveston is the name of the king’s **favorite** attendant. Also see: Claire Sponsler. “The King’s Boyfriend: Froissart’s Political Theater of 1326.” *Queering the Middle Ages*. Eds. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. pp. 143-167.

murmuring of all the foreign visitors at court, and of your own subjects, and of the queen and all the ladies of honor!” (164, emphasis mine). There is fascinating momentum in this narration as if something absolutely vile is about to be disclosed:

‘Everyone is astonished that you are making such a commotion over this insignificant and ordinary damsel who is of low condition and held in very small esteem. For so long a time now your highness has worn her token on your person, and in plain sight, for all the world to see. This show would be excessive if she were a queen or empress. And why, sir! Can your highness not find in this kingdom damsels of nobler lineage and greater beauty, who are distinguished in grace, discretion, and many other virtues? The hands of a king, after all, can reach where they will.’
‘So the queen is displeased with this. And the foreign visitors and my own subjects are astonished!’ the king replied. And he said these words in French: *Puni soit qui mal y pense!*³³ And he said further, ‘I vow to God that over this very matter I will found an order of knighthood; an order and brotherhood that will be remembered for as long as the world lasts.’³⁴
(164)

The fact that the disclosure—which given the historical subtext³⁵, implicit homoerotic connotations, and the anachronistic historical narration (or “perversion” of history)—leads to the establishment of a “brotherhood” is not only subversive, but inverse.³⁶ That is, a knightly order—an institution bound to the irrefutable standard of all things related to honor, masculinity, and chivalry—is founded upon a homosexual subtext that is intended to “punish” (taken from *puni*) anyone who dares speak ill of what they see

³³ According to a note by La Fontaine, the motto ought to read: “*Honi soit qui mal y pense*” (172); he states that “*Puni* is either a printer’s error in the first edition or a lapse in Martorell’s French” (172). I would contend that this discards the notion of authorial intent. The subversive mood of much of the novel, makes *puni* a possibility. This would change the motto from “Shame be upon him who thinks ill” to “Punished is he who thinks ill,” which bears more the semblance of a threat: Woe to he who thinks ill.

³⁴ This passage parallels the arguments raised against Piers Gaveston in Christopher Marlowe; i.e., the issue with King Edward II was not his homosexuality. It was the fact that he chose someone below his station.

³⁵ For more on Piers Gaveston See: J.S. Hamilton. “Piers Gaveston and the Royal Treasure.” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*. Vol. 23, No. 2, (Summer, 1991), pp. 201-207, 2 October 2011. <<http://www.jstor.org/4050602>>. J.S. Hamilton has apparently written extensively on the issues of allegations of King Edward II’s and Piers Gaveston’s homosexual relationship. An interesting note is that one of the characters who was a contemporary of these men and who raised issues against Gaveston, was a William of Warwick.

³⁶ A neologism I am creating based on the words “subversive” and “invert” with the intention of drawing a relationship between the subversive and homosexual aspects of this excerpt.

would underscore the irrefutable necessity and the role of this manner of preemptive measures in order to divert anything that may question one's honor and masculinity.³⁷

Also, the allusions to Edward II and III of England add an interesting layer to the notion of the lengths that one is willing to go in defense of honor and masculinity. That is, perhaps because Edward III was the son of a “rumored” sodomite, he had to do everything in his power to avert any concerns about his masculinity.

The framework of the “brotherhood” serves to establish a phallosocial space for “mail bonding”³⁸ and a possible homoerotic context, which will allow us to draw anachronistic connections between the life of Edward III and the character of Tirant lo Blanc because according to historical accounts, Edward III was known for his martial prowess, which is what Tirant lo Blanc is known for too. In fact, in Tirant, his violence—given its gratuitousness—, it would seem, is a matter of overcompensation. Would anyone dare speak ill of Tirant and his blouse? I would say this is unlikely. He would probably defend his honor by killing them, because offenses to honor could only be righted with violence. Another aspect/benefit to the Order was that the “masculine bonding in which knights engaged led to anxieties that could be resolved by claiming that all that went on among the men was in the service of women and caused by a desire for the latter” (Karras, *From Boys* 51). Furthermore, as “Tirant was the first knight to be elected” (165) to join the brotherhood “as he was the best” (165), it brings into question what sort of brotherhood this was and what exactly it was that Tirant “was the best” at. Martorell provides the reader with a catalog of “twenty-six knights”³⁹ (165), who were

³⁷ This also brings into question some of the matters concerning Tirant’s hesitation to consummate his love for Carmesina, covered in Chapter 2.

³⁸ Karras, *From Boys*, pp. 20-66

³⁹ See La Fontaine’s note 17, p. 172—He notes that the list only includes 24 knights.

all sworn into the order. One of whom is William of Warwick's son, "John of Warwick the grand constable" (164); and of whom you only make the connection by the title "grand constable." In hindsight, and if we allow the connection of a homoerotic context, the membership of the grand constable in this "brotherhood," might shed some light on Warwick's lament.⁴⁰ (Perhaps, within the homoerotic context, this is Martorell's list of young nobles of dubious sexualities.) According to Karras, "[k]nighthood created close bonds among men. [...] The orders of knighthood sponsored by the various kings were supposed to create these sorts of bonds of brotherhood" (*From Boys* 61). In the *Tirant*, we see how intimate the bond becomes. One of the vows involved in the "to keep secret all things disclosed to you here and not to reveal them directly or indirectly, by word of mouth or in writing" (Martorell 166). So, if bonds are created between knights that allow for secrets to be divulged without fear of reprisals, this phallosocial space becomes far more conducive for operating as a mechanism for the promotion of men's interests—irrespective of their particular sexual proclivities. Most of the men included in the catalog are only mentioned by title, which also has an element of secrecy. And along the lines of secrecy, if we follow the line of a closeted homoerotic argument, then the fact that "**twenty ladies of honor**" (169, emphasis mine) are "admitted to the Order of the Garter" (169) serves to validate a heteronormative and homophobic paradigm while preserving phallosociality and the veneer of a patriarchal paradigm because the women are tasked with significant responsibilities, which are empowering, for example:

[...] if she learns that some of these knights are besieged in town, castle, or city, and are suffering shortages of food or other necessary supplies, she will do everything in her power to send such provisions to them.
[...] if any knight is taken prisoner, she will do everything in her power to obtain his release, contributing to this end up to half of her dowry. And

⁴⁰ Martorell, p. 162

she must wear the garter tied around the upper part of her arm over her sleeves.⁴¹ (169)

The image of the women here is one of empowerment because they are set out as defenders of these men. As such, the woman's function is dual: She will defend by looking to the knight's safety; and she will defend his honor by giving the semblance of a heterosexual and heteronormative setting. Yet according to Karras,

[i]t was not a desire for men that might make a knight less than knightly—that issue did not arise—but simply lack of desire for women. [...] This theme is less prominent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when those who are not interested in women are implied to be socially lower rather than \sexually different. For a man, to have a heterosexual relationship was to gain status in relation to other men by dominating a woman; whatever same-sex relationships he may have formed were not part of this game. (*From Boys* 51)

Then following this rationale, by introducing the women and creating a heterosocial space, these knights are creating the situation to give the appearance of desire for women in order to secure their knightly status, while safeguarding their masculinity.

Another accoutrement of chivalric orders is introduced in the section concerning the Order of the Garter; and it too serves the purpose of manifesting and strengthening of phallosocial bonds. I am referring to the livery collar of esses:

The cooks, when they were skinning a great **stag** who was almost all **white** from age,⁴² found a gold collar around his neck; [...] The inscription implored whatever king found the collar to use it as his device. [...] The collar was completely inscribed with curved S's, because no other single letter in the alphabet has greater authority and perfection, or can signify nobler things than [sic] this letter S. 'It signifies, first, holiness, learning, wisdom, lordship, **and many other things that begin with the letter S.**⁴³ (Martorell 169-170, emphasis mine)

⁴¹ This may be a reference to aiguillettes, which also have their origins in Medieval cultures; Warwick's wife, the countess executes some of these functions when the English battles the Moors in Part I, which pertains to Warwick as the hermit-knight and hermit-king.

⁴² Martorell, p. 169—According to the story the stag had lived for 492 years.

⁴³ La Fontaine notes the qualities in Valencian: "santedat, saviesa, sapiència, senyoria e moltes alters coses" (172 n. 19)

The king had many of these made and gave them to all the knights. (Among the other things that start with the letter “S” are sex and secrets.) The collar then, becomes a physical manifestation of a bond, much like the exchange of jewelry between couples who enter into matrimonial contracts. There are vows exchanged, and then physical manifestations of that bond are exchanged. In hindsight, one could also argue that the “twenty ladies of honor”⁴⁴ who were also admitted into the phallosocial Order of the Garter, thereby making it a heterosocial space, were to play the role of the betrothed of the virgin knights ⁴⁵ who appear along with the king in his wedding procession, particularly because Martorell’s romance does not seem to follow a straight (no pun intended) narration; i.e., elements that serve to make sense of other passages are introduced anachronistically. And, in that context, it would make sense that these men were “unmarried but betrothed” (94), which is reiterative of the safeguarding mechanisms that we have seen throughout for the sake of preserving a masculine and heteronormative appearance. Furthermore, there might also be a symbolic connection between the white stag with the livery collar of esses and “unmarried but betrothed” virgins who were dressed in white and who happened to accompany the king.

The King of England

The role of the monarch is always a problematic one within a chivalric ethos. Much like heads of state today, they require protection, which may allow for a reading of an enfeebled character. Now, this cannot be said of all monarchs. (Certainly, it cannot be said of Edward III.) It can, however, be said of the King of England as represented in the *Tirant*. Because the monarch functions within an aristocratic/chivalric model of

⁴⁴ Martorell, p. 169

⁴⁵ Martorell, p. 94

masculinity, the monarch is bound to the same conventions established by heteronormative patriarchal paradigms; and his transgression can have significant implications upon the perception of his masculinity. And because so many of the conventions concerning chivalric masculinities have already been covered, I will address only the most relevant matters that concern the King of England and the particular implications of his masculinity within the framework of heteronormativity. I will also avail myself of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in order to bolster my claims.

We are first introduced to monarchs in the *Tirant* in Martorell's "Dedicatory Letter to Prince Ferdinand of Portugal" where phallosocial desire expressed in the following manner:

With affection and continual desire to serve your redouptable lordship I have not labored over niceties of arrangement or interpretation, in order that, by your virtue, your majesty can share this work among your servants and others. They can extract the pertinent morsel and thereby take courage and not fear harsh deeds of arms, but rather resolve honorably to uphold the common good as knighthood intended. (Martorell 38)

With these words, Martorell conveys a strong sentiment of phallosocial desire and wishes his work, *Tirant lo Blanc*, to be the exemplum that the "heir expectant to the throne" (38) follow in order to obtain virtue and honor. The honorable tone of this letter is seasoned with elements of violence in the words "harsh deeds of arms"; and it serves to contextualize the "intended" role of knights, and, thereby, monarchs.

The first monarch introduced in the *Tirant* is the Moorish King of Canary. This immediately sets the stage for combat and violence—all values of chivalry. The king is described as a "virile and restless youth beset by noble aspirations, now ambitious as ever for glorious victory" (45). This is certainly in line with what we have seen in context of the chivalric model. Also, even if this is the adversary, he is still introduced in honorable

and masculine form. This establishes the parameters for a fair engagement. Honor would not be gained if the adversary were weak. With his endeavor for gaining victory, he “assembled a large fleet of ships and galleys, and set sail for England with a huge force of men; and all because some English corsairs had raided a site belonging to him” (46). Notice that the tone of the offense seems small. Nevertheless, this awakens in him “rage” (46) and “wounded pride” (46). The diction used in describing the Moorish king is undeniably valiant. The language used to describe the “[p]eaceful King of England” (46) seems to convey a sense of softness. The encounter led to many deaths; and the “Christians lost far more men” (46); then, the “King of England, in defeat, retreated” (46). Retreat is not only the withdrawal from combat, it also bears an element of fear built in; and according to the dedicatory letter, monarchs should not fear the perils of combat. In that sense, the retreat of the English king denotes an other than honorable/masculine action. This begins a series of unfortunate encounters for the king of England at the hands of the Moorish king.

As I have said previously, Martorell’s narration has anachronistic elements where events that transpire in later portions of the book explain the motivations behind actions that came earlier. In fact, after a series of failures in combat, the king of England “on his way to the mountains of Wales, he passed by the city of Warwick” (46); and the countess, William of Warwick’s wife “learned that the king came fleeing in great distress, and she ordered supplies and prepared for that night all that he needed. As a lady of wonderful prudence, she pondered how to strengthen her city against a quick defeat” (46). If we look back to the episode concerning the Order of the Garter, the countess of Warwick is acting in full accord with what a female member of the Order of the Garter would have

done. We are not privy to this information, but again the anachronisms that have been noted in the *Tirant* make this sort of reading possible. What is also very subversive about this king is the fact that it is a woman that comes to his aid. Her function is completely subversive and although it appears to conflict with the continuum of a patriarchal paradigm, it does not impede phallosociality. In fact, it would seem that the Order is the mechanism for safeguarding and perpetuating a phallosocial normativity; and while it has a patriarchal veneer, the reality, if we consider the role of the women, is that it is purely a matriarchal heterosocial paradigm that is not disruptive of phallosociality.

As the attacks ensue and the Moors increase their invasion, the “dismayed King of England, [...] went up inside a tower and watched helplessly as the great mass of Moors burned and destroyed towns and castles” (Martorell 47). This passage depicts a very soft king and his retreat into the tower brings to mind imagery of damsels in ivory towers. It bears restating that “the culture in which these men lived considered them the epitome of manhood, and their sexuality was not in doubt” (Karras, *From Boys* 152). To be fair, perhaps Karras is operating on a strictly historical plane and these absolutes did not apply to literature—especially a work that starts to have a strong semblance of satire. And perhaps no one who read the *Tirant* was using it as a model of masculinity and exemplum; rather, it seems to be a treatise of what not to do—if one delves beyond Martorell’s chivalric convention veneer.

As we move through the events that befell the king of England, a narrative begins to unfold that places him in a direction that is contrary to attaining masculinity. After seeing the destruction that the Moors had made the “king thought he would die of sorrow; [...] he began to sigh deeply, huge tears spilling down his face as he unleashed the most

agonized cries a man can make” (47). There is no question, at least to the reader, that the king is becoming something “other” than a man. The following passage, again, bears a striking air of a damsel in distress:

‘If indeed it can please God that I be not only in utter misery, but in disgrace as well, then let death come, for it is the final remedy to all my calamities. If heaven’s law did not prevent it, I would take my own life. Oh, unhappy king that I am, my misfortunes move everyone to pity, but how few advocates can be found to plead my cause! **Sovereign King of Glory!** If my passions and confused mind do not allow me to describe my wrongs clearly, **Lord**, I ask that you over look these defects of my ignorance [...] and I appeal to you, most sacred and merciful **Mother of Lord Jesus**, to render help and comfort from your infinite mercy; and to deliver me from these unbearable straits, so that the holy name of your glorious Son can be exalted in my kingdom.’ (Martorell 47-48, emphasis mine)

In this very long plea, the prayer appears to be directed toward a masculine deity and does not change throughout; what I mean is that there is no indication that his plea is to a female figure. Furthermore, this episode again features a man, seeking the assistance of a woman. I believe that in conventional Catholic prayer, the repentant prays to one figure or the other but not to both figures in one plea—certainly, there are mentions of Jesus in prayers that are elevated to God or to Mary, but their reference is always in the third person. Here, the king is speaking in the second person to Mary and to God. In fact, at some points, one could argue that the genders become entangled and confused. And because we have seen many unorthodox constructs (particularly the formation of Tirant’s name stemming from a fusion of male and female), I would think this is at the very least odd.

The following episode brings about a wide array of conflicts to conventional understandings of masculinity. The king falls asleep in great distress and has a vision of a Madonna figure. She tells him not to “lose faith” (Martorell 48) and that he “may be

confident that the Son and the Mother” (48) will assist him in this time of need. The following are her instructions: “Take the first man you see wearing a long beard, and who asks you for alms in the name of God, and **kiss him on the mouth** ⁴⁶ as a sign of peace. Ask him graciously to leave his Franciscan habit, and make him captain of all your men” (48, emphasis mine). The king does as he is instructed by the Virgin. So when he was approached by the hermit, who asked him for alms, “[t]he king, remembering his dream, helped the hermit to rise and **kissed him on the mouth**. Then he took him by the hand and led him to a **room**” (48, emphasis mine). One could argue that kissing on the mouth between people of the same sex—in this case men—was also a convention of medieval times and not unusual. Karras asserts that “medieval people realized that the erotic and the spiritual could be very closely related indeed. Rather than non-sexual symbols in dreams symbolizing sexual activity, medieval people could understand sexual activity in dreams as symbolizing religious meanings” (*Sexuality* 57). She is talking about fornication, though. Nevertheless, there is a pairing here of what may be interpreted as erotic and, doubtlessly, the religious. Karras goes on to discuss how Bernard of Clairvaux wrote sermons on the subject of Song of Songs “in which he imagined kissing Christ on the mouth and something even more holy, ‘that most intimate kiss of all, a mystery of supreme generosity and ineffable sweetness’” (57) and maintains that “he suggested that novice monks cannot understand the true spiritual meaning until they are prepared for ‘nuptial union with the divine partner’” (57). Both these cases, at minimum, illustrate instances of phallosocial desire. But if we look at the structure of the passage from the *Tirant* and pair it against the passage below, also taken from the *Tirant*,

⁴⁶ Same-sex kisses on the lips between men, see: Martorell, p. 48; p. 48; p. 109; p. 196; p.236; p. 375; p. 611; p.685; p. 750; p. 759; 762; p.765; p.775; p. 777

it might help to draw a hypothesis. The following passage comes from a heterosexual encounter between two people who were sexually interested in one another, Hippolytus and the Empress of Constantinople: “she **kissed** him repeatedly **on the mouth**, and, ardently taking him **by the hand**, said that they should go into the **chamber**” (Martorell 516, emphasis mine). Note that in both these instances, the kissing on the lips is followed by a going to a room. The other issue in the kiss exchange between the hermit and the king is that the hermit is technically a secular figure; therefore, Karras’s contention may not necessarily be possible. This then raises additional conflicts concerning the king’s sexuality. Also, if one considers that it is Warwick that comes to his aid, this may be seen as having some deep homoerotic connotations. There are further exchanges between the king and the hermit concerning the Madonna figure in his dream. The king then implores the hermit in the following manner (concerning becoming the captain of his men): “if you should do me this honor I give you my oath as king that I will follow your orders without revising a single article” (50). This request has an air of what Karras contends is a trait of the first age⁴⁷—submission.

As the Moors continue to exert violence upon the English Christians and deaths augment, the king’s chivalric values will be tried. “Abraham, king and lord of Great Canary” (Martorell 53) proposed that in order to “avoid [...] carnage” (53) they should instead “enter the lists, king against king” (53). Conditions are issued; however, what is significant is the king’s actions before this challenge. Issues are raised that may implicate the gender of the king as well as his men.⁴⁸ On the advice of the hermit, the king told the Moorish king’s ambassadors, “I accept the challenge, and under the

⁴⁷ Karras, *From Boys* p. 13

⁴⁸ Martorell, p.55—I discuss in the context of the accoutrements of the knights with garlands of flowers on their heads.

conditions which your king demands” (55). The hermit then tells the king that he has done well in accepting the challenge of the Moorish king “for a good and virtuous king should not fear the perils of death, and [...] that, to a king, honorable death is a fate better than life with disgrace” (56). This is an ironic statement concerning the king’s honor/masculinity, especially in the context of what follows. The king’s acceptance results in an uproar concerning the king’s physical constitution and the fact that “it would be improper for our king to engage in this combat. He is too young, and of weak constitution; and **even though he had the courage of virtuous knight**, it would not be fitting or just for him to enter into individual combat with so strong a man as the Moorish king” (56-57, emphasis mine). There are many contradictions here that are not in harmony with the code that these knights claim to uphold. And because in speaking in this manner, the king’s masculinity is in peril, there is safeguarding discourse added; nevertheless, the conclusion is that he is unfit. The king of England of the *Tirant* is not alone in playing the enfeebled role. On the contrary, he is quite similar to Arthur in that sense. In fact, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, when the Green Knight has set out his challenge, “[n]o more moved nor dismayed for his mighty blows/[t]han any bold man on bench had brought him a drink/of wine,”⁴⁹ Sir Gawain a very young man, for the issue of his beardlessness comes up, offers to accept the challenge for Arthur, even if his (Arthur’s) valor tempts him to accept. He speaks further about the higher worth of Arthur to strengthen his rhetoric but also to keep the king from being in peril of emasculation or something “other.”

⁴⁹ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Trans. Marie Borroff. Eds. Marie Borroff and Laura L. Howes. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010. p. 11-12

So in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, just as in the *Tirant*, the king is admired for his courage, but is nevertheless spared from engaging in battle. Regardless of what the motives for sparing him from battle are, he is spared and championed. This in conventional chivalry is what is said to be done for women. One could argue that Gawain and Warwick sought to be modest in their request because vainglory was not a trait of chivalry. Another parallel that could be drawn between the hermit and Gawain is that Gawain claims to be the weakest and the hermit, because of his age is weak too. Therefore, it brings further conflict to the masculinity of the monarch because they are allowing someone weaker than they to fight their battles. Also, because the king's masculinity was at stake (and because of its frailty) the knight who chose to accept to fight had to be cautious not to compromise or bring into question the monarch's manhood.

When the king of England is not validated by his peers to engage in battle against the Moorish king, he announces that he will select someone to assume his place against the Moor and states: "for him I shall renounce my crown, my reign and my royal scepter" (Martorell 57). And in his more formal announcement, he addresses his enfeebled condition before his subjects:

as it has not pleased divine providence to endow me with bodily health and strength, and, as all of you have hastened to assure me, I am not sufficiently capable of engaging in individual combat, I desire to return your great love and good will in the following manner. I hereby renounce my place, my scepter and my royal crown, and strip myself of all ruling powers; and I give them up willingly, without constraint or condition to this man here among you, my beloved father hermit. (58)

The fact that he strips himself of his royal accoutrements would make the King a regular man; but the fact that he is doing this in order to avoid conflict (or aggression) brings his

masculinity into question. The abdication of his scepter brings to mind phallic imagery that serves to convey a sense of emasculation.

Once the king abdicated his throne, there are series of passages that contain qualifying adjectives that aim to strengthen the emasculated king: “the former king began to speak with a virile spirit” (67) “[t]his manly speech pleased the hermit king” (67). One of the passages is particularly ironic, given that the king abdicates precisely out of fear: “we shall go joyously against our enemies; for to a knight, a good death is worth more than a bad and painful life” (67). Again, given that the king abdicated his throne, his masculinity and honor are at stake, so these lines serve to repair the damage exerted upon his masculinity.

After Warwick restores peace, he abdicates and restores the crown to the former King of England, which reasserts the phallosocial bonds that exist between these men but most certainly seems to be problematic to conventional notions of patriarchal masculinity. The king does not live up to the chivalric standards he claims to honor. His masculinity has been damaged but phallosociality remains, unbroken. Nevertheless, he is restored to monarch status. Later, it is exposed that “the English king wants to become a knight” (78), which might raise a counter argument to preserve the king from shame: he was not a knight when he accepted the challenge nor when he abdicated; so, one could argue that honor was not “technically” at risk. There is also a question raised concerning the issue of the King of England’s ability to dub knights; and the response was that “he had been defeated in all of his battles with the Moors until the arrival of that famous knight and winner of battles, the Earl William of Warwick” (78). The technical issue, though, is that this battle was not won by the king, it was won by Warwick; so,

technically the king is still not fit to knight anyone. Nevertheless, he knights Tirant. This means that Tirant's knighthood is based on and unfounded authority; and, as such, it brings into question the whole aristocratic/chivalric institution. The patriarchal paradigm that creates an inextricable bond between conventional models of honor and masculinity have been breached; and that breach has given way to an "other" form of masculinity with which all subsequent actions all have been inscribed; however, it does not disrupt the phallosocial continuum.⁵⁰

The bond between honor and masculinity, within a chivalric/heroic ethos, seems one that is indissoluble—the attainment of one is contingent upon the preservation of the other. And by that rationale, honor and masculinity will remain in ever-present peril and in perpetual need of championing. And if that is the case, then that would explain why cultures that place such great stock in honor, like chivalric cultures, must inherently be ready to risk everything in order to provide the continuous protection and championing that honor requires. This would also bring into question whether martial prowess is a continuum of chivalric traits such as honor and masculinity; or if it is a defense mechanism that is the byproduct of a continuous and systematic exertion of normalizing violence—a hegemonic bullying of sorts—that is exerted upon a docile body until it develops, internalizes and exerts surveillance upon itself and upon others in order to secure its existence and consequent continuum within a normative culture where transgression and behavior unbecoming of their station is censored and consequently repressed by others first, and then by their own volition. Repression, however, does not mean extermination; it just means that there is an "other" venue for expressing that which

⁵⁰ Sedgwick, p. 4 "In fact, for the Greeks, the continuum between 'men loving men' and 'men promoting the interests of men' appears to have been quite seamless.

is repressed so that it can co-exist alongside heteronormativity. The characters in the *Tirant* seem to have happily found a way for the existence of “other” sexualities.

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Chapter 2

Bizarre Love Triangles in the *Tirant*: Consummation of Phallosocial¹ Desire

“If I speak to thee in friendship’s name,
Thou think’st I speak too coldly;
If I mention love’s devoted flame,
Thou say’st I speak too boldly.”
—Thomas More²

The (erotic) love triangles that emerge in the *Tirant* are a manifestation of the phallosocial desire that fosters the promotion and perpetuation of men’s interests through same-sex pairings within a heteronormative context. These same-sex pairings are made possible by arrangements and processes that eventuate in a “consummation,” within a(n obligatory) heteronormative context, where women become the vessel in which this phallosocial desire is (un)bound. I make use of the word consummation in this work, in the context of marriage; however, within a heteronormative ethos even in juxtaposition with phallosocial desire/“male bonding,” this consummation can only be a symbolic one; and its manifestation is a triangular one. Although there are a variety of constellations within the *Tirant*, for the purposes of my argument, I will focus on the male-male-female model.

The first triangle is formed by Tirant, Senyor de les Vilesermes, and Agnes of Berry. In this triangle, the bond between Tirant and Vilesermes is one of (passionate) rivalry. Tirant, as a rite to prove masculinity, must gain the approval of his rival and his comrades; and in this duel, Agnes of Berry—the woman who wore the brooch that was

¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. pp. 112-125. Sedgwick uses the term homosocial; for my work, I prefer phallosocial because my argument is focused on a phallocentric paradigm

² Bartlett, John, comp. *Familiar Quotations*, 10th Ed. Rev. by Nathan Haskell Dole. Boston: Little, Brown, 1919; Bartleby.com, 2000. 2 Oct. 2011 <www.bartleby.com/100/>.

“so tied to her bodice that a person could not untie it without touching her breasts with his hands” (Martorell 113)—becomes a mere foil in the episode. The fact that his is a struggle for a woman—or, to be precise, a sexual trophy that is representative of a woman (Agnes)—is only a technical matter that Sedgwick would call “obligatory heterosexuality” (3). René Girard contends that the bond that exists between rivals who partake of the erotic triangle are significantly stronger than the vinculum that exists between what in our argument will be the heterosexual pair.³ This argument is supported by the significant portion of the narration that is dedicated to the confrontation between Tirant and Vilesermes. Tirant gets advice on the proper way to proceed in the duel, the rules of the engagement and the protocol surrounding the affair, among other particulars. There are numerous letters exchanged, concerning the terms that must be met and the implements of battles and the accoutrements that the rivals are to bear for the engagement in extensive detail. The amount of time and energy invested in the affair makes one wonder whether Agnes is still in the picture. What might add to the notion of desire is how they were to enter the battle, by Vilesermes’s choice:

‘I choose that the duel be fought on foot, in shirts of French cloth; and that we have heart-shaped paper shields, and wear a garland of flowers⁴ on our heads, and nothing else. The offensive weapons are to be Genoese knives, double edged and with very sharp points, and two and a half palms long by the measure of Montpellier. In this manner we shall have to fight at full risk.’ (Martorell 117)

The scant protection in this passage highlights the risk that these rivals are about to engage in and also raises a question concerning medieval notions of masculine attire. I would also argue that the double sets of items and the heart-shaped symbols reify the

³ Sedgwick, p. 21

⁴ In Chapter II establish the connection with the garlands of flower to the station of the prostitutes that appear in the procession of the King of England’s wedding.

phallosocial desire. The fact that they are engaging in this combat is already indicative of desire in that it is something they must want. One could argue that failure to engage would put masculinity at peril; and, perhaps, it would. Certainly, these men have concerns over the potential for erosion of masculinity; and perhaps the element of “full risk” serves to safeguard against masculine atrophy. Nevertheless, what is most at risk if they fail to act accordingly is the relationship that they have with the men who subscribe to these chivalric conventions. Phallosocial desire is precisely the reason why these men are seeking the validation of other men and are willing to go to any extent to attain and preserve it, even put their lives in danger. It bears restating, though, that the woman, who is a mere foil, is the reason for which they are involved in this love triangle. In this case, the consummation would be manifested in the battle. If we take the knives to be phallic symbols, the stabbing of one another could also be read as a form of penetration; nevertheless, it is the battlefield that is their “lover’s nest.”

The next triangle to analyze is the one formed by Tirant; Philip—the youngest of “the five sons of the King of France” (Martorell 181)—; and Ricomana, the daughter of the king of Sicily. Ricomana is first introduced to Philip when “[t]he ship stopped at the port of Palermo, where the king and queen of Sicily were, along with their two sons and a single daughter of indescribable beauty” (184). After much conversation, “Philip fell deeply in love with her, and she with him. But Philip was so bashful when he was in her presence that he hardly dared to speak, and when she would pose some witty argument he did not know how to answer” (185). And yet even as Ricomana loved Philip, she questions his manhood in the context of his manners and education:

‘Oh, Tirant!’ said the infanta, ‘you speak well, but if he is crude by nature, then what comfort can it be to a damsel to have a man whom everyone

laughs at and can checkmate so easily? If you value me, don't tell me such things, because for my part I want a man of good understanding above all else; I could endure a lack of estate or lineage better than a coarse or petty nature.' (185)

This passage contains one of many doubts articulated by Ricomana, concerning Philip.

But for each doubt, Tirant has been there to respond and appease her doubts. One of the doubts that is manifested, is that of Philip's manners. According to Karras, "[I]ate medieval aristocratic behavior placed great emphasis on manners and decorum for men as well as women" (Karras, *From Boys* 44). In the Ricomana and Philip segment, manners and decorum are the focus of the exchange; they become a metaphor of Philip's masculinity. The corollary between these is that poor manners mean an unfit suitor, while good manners render him suitable.

And since his masculinity and his suitability to court Ricomana are at risk, Tirant, in proper phallosocial manner must come to his aid. In fact, in the passage immediately before, Ricomana directly questions his suitability. To that concern, Tirant states: "if I were a lady and I found someone so gentle and knew him to be an able man and of ancient lineage, I would forsake all the others and love only one such as he" (Martorell 185). This passage not only serves to illustrate that Tirant is doing what he can to promote "the interests of men" (Sedgwick 4)—in this case, his male friend; but it also serves to show that Tirant might have a homoerotic interest in him. After Ricomana expresses her doubt, Tirant attempts—yet again—to reassure her of his suitability. What is also manifesting in these exchanges between Ricomana and Tirant is that they are the rivals for Philip's love. Their relationship bears some semblance to that of Vilesermes and Tirant's. Philip's role, in this case, is a passive one. The active agents in this engagement are Ricomana and Tirant. Perhaps the heterosocial desire that is manifested

in this triangle has the inevitable result of highlighting a potential homoeroticism. He concedes that “there is merit” (Martorell 185) in what she says but that her depiction “does not resemble Philip in the least” (185). Tirant goes on to say that Philip “is a young man of few years, and yet old in wisdom; he is generous, more spirited than all the rest, and in all things affable and gracious” (185). And he goes on to speak of how Philip does nothing but speak of her. He admonishes her: “Beware, my lady, of all those men who are bold and audacious in their wooing; such love as they proffer is worthless: it comes quickly and goes even faster. Men like this are truly called pirates, for they plunder everybody” (185-186). Tirant’s claims seem to conflict with Karras’s contentions that aggressive behavior was associated with sodomy and that “gentle, feminine manners” (*From Boys* 44) were deemed “appropriate aristocratic behavior” (44). And Ricomana is not convinced with Tirant’s claims. She tells him that because of his “great friendship with Philip, it’s fitting” (Martorell 186) to portray him in such good light. In fact, she states: “Experience warns me that he whom I contemplate is crude and petty, both of which maladies are incurable” (186). If by analogy refinement is representative of good masculine, then behavior and “crude and petty” is something other than masculine. Within the context of its incurability, would this imply that Philip is sodomite?

Tirant’s will to promote Phillip’s interest concerning Ricomana’s dowry surfaces as another example of men promoting the interest of men. The narrator shares that “Tirant wanted to see [Philip] married to the infanta, with the same dowry that the king had promised her” (Martorell 189). What we see here, in the context of the erotic triangle, is the woman and her dowry, become the capital commodity of exchange

between men who are “in like” of one another. And because we are dealing with a woman who is part of the court, it is fitting to say that the court was a space “where women were important [...] as commodities” (Karras, *From Boys* 109), which were exchanged by men. This, of course, is within a patriarchal paradigm, which according to Heidi Hartmann features the “relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (qtd. in Sedgwick 3). What we see in Tirant and his intentions is domination. (An interesting aspect of Ricomana’s name is that it means maniacal for riches; and, yet, it would seem that the one that obsesses with her monetary worth is Tirant.) There is a seemingly subversive aspect to patriarchy as it is portrayed in the *Tirant*, particularly in this triangle. The King of Sicily, understanding well “the benefits of a union with the house of France” (Martorell 189) stated:

‘I cannot do anything in this affair without the willingness of my daughter as it must be suitable to her. But if she is willing, then I agree to this marriage and I will give as dowry all that I offered before. I will most willingly speak with the queen and my daughter, and, receiving their consent, the marriage will be celebrated before we depart.’ (189).

So, there is the appearance of Ricomana having agency, even if it is in appearance alone.

(This appearance of feminine agency is a recursive theme; and still, the women are not

free agents precisely because patriarchy is in place.) The king tells his daughter:

‘[...] I wish to see you given in marriage, that you may be happy and comforted, and that I may see this joy of yours in my lifetime. Now if this king’s son who is here desires to join us in brotherhood with the highest king in Christendom, then I am certain that with the counsel and help of Tirant, and with Philip’s good will, the matter can come to a happy conclusion.’ (189)

The most salient aspect of homosocial desire in this excerpt is the creation of

“brotherhood.” If we look back to the episode of the Order of the Garter, brotherhood is

the space wherein homoeroticism is a possibility that intensifies the bonds between men.

If we consider that many of Tirant's exploits occur or are related to Byzantium, then

perhaps the particular proclivities of the church of Byzantium might be in play:

“Byzantine society also knew of a rite of *adelphopoia* [also adelphopoiesis], which some scholars have taken as brotherhood and others as a same-sex union akin to marriage”

(Karras, *Sexuality* 135). In this case, Philip would not be marrying the King of Sicily;

however, there would be a marriage; and, in this case, Ricomana is the vessel in which

this homosocial desire would be consummated. After all, Ricomana is her father's

property; and a contract would be between the men—a phallosocial contract. And, the

fact that Tirant is negotiating the terms, makes this a triangular phallosocial contract.

Because Ricomana realizes she really does not have much choice, if Philip is seen

as a suitable mate, she must examine whether he is worthy and accept his suit; or she

must find a way to make it known that he is unfit and create the circumstances by which

her father may renege on his promise—because a man's word in the context of honor is

tied to his manhood. So, she “arranged these entire ceremonies with only one thing in

mind. She wanted to test Philip to see how he behaved himself at the table” (Martorell

190). Because Philip is in continuous danger of making a fool of himself (dishonoring

himself and seeming a loutish lover, which again would be unbecoming of his “princely”

station and would render him something other than an upright man), Tirant is determined

to stay near him. Every time Tirant is asked to step away, he finds a way to stay near

Philip. On one occasion, he refuses the invitation of the Duke of Messina—the brother of

the King of Sicily—to join him at the dinner table. He told the king that “in a feast such

as this it is only fitting that I serve the son of the king” (190). This response enrages

Ricomana and she says: “It isn’t necessary, Tirant, to be always **in Philip’s lap**, because in the house of my father the king there are sufficient knights to serve him, and you need not be there” (190, emphasis mine). (Interestingly, Tirant’s being in Philip’s lap seems to connote homoeroticism. If we consider Philip’s station as a (lesser) prince and Tirant’s as a knight, a dichotomy of master and servant would not be farfetched. And, if that were the case, then Tirant—in the mind of Ricomana and by his constant servile actions—is assuming the passive role in this episode of phallosociality.) This is not the only instance in which Ricomana speaks with contempt of this relationship between Tirant and Philip. In fact, in a passage after Philip’s “great error and the discreet repair which Tirant had achieved” (192), Ricomana “began to talk with a damsel in whom she confided greatly” (192); and she complained in the following manner: ““What a misfortune for me that this Tirant should be such an enemy to my wishes that I cannot talk alone with Philip for a single hour! Why, if he were Philip’s son or brother or natural lord, he would not follow him as closely as he does” (192). (What is queer about this episode is that there is no clear name for the relationship that exists between Tirant and Philip. It also brings into question what Tirant has to gain by acting in this manner. What is his impetus in acting always to preserve Philip from being debased?) And still, at every misstep that Philip takes, Tirant is there, as Ricomana notes, to “continue trying to mend the mistakes of others with [...] great discretion” (192). Later, she is still not satisfied in thinking that Philip is worthy, but when she “learned that the king her father had consented to the marriage with Philip, she said to herself, ‘If I find that he is coarse or miserly, he will never be my husband. From now on I shall have no other interest except to learn the

truth of this matter” (211). One of her tests is similar to that of Hans Christian

Andersen’s fairytale *The Princess and the Pea* where royal identity must be verified.

The king had ordered that a singularly adorned canopied bed, entirely fashioned of brocade, be made in order to give to his daughter on her wedding day. Another bed with white linens had also been placed in the same room, so that measurements could be used in making the new one. When the rich brocade bed was finished, the two beds remained side by side. The cover of the finely adorned bed was of the same brocade as the rest of it, and the bed was fitted with the same sheets intended for the infant’s wedding night; and what with its splendidly embroidered pillows, it seemed a unique bed indeed. The other bed was merely all white, and there was great difference between the two of them. (220)

The princess’s brother asks Philip to spend the night, after dancing “till a late hour of the night” (220). Philip tries to kindly decline the offer, but Ricomana insists that ““ [...] since my brother the prince desires that you stay, this shall be your lodging for the night” (220). Here again, though, Tirant counsels him—advising him to stay and offers to stay with him to serve him. In this case, Tirant is not able to insist. She makes it clear to him that “in this house [...] there are sufficient means with which to serve him” (220). So, Philip is left to his own devices.

The test of Philip’s manners and thereby his proper masculinity surfaces at bed time: Philip is taken by two pages to the room with the two beds. And, just as Ricomana has suspected, “Philip saw the splendor of the brocade bed, he decided that it would be better to sleep on the other one” (220). Unlike *The Princess and the Pea*, it is not his fine upbringing, but chance (and a lucky needle) that lead him to “shun” the lesser bed. He plans to sleep in the plain bed; but, while mending his stocking, he loses a needle in it; and because he has unmade the bed looking for the needle, he finds it more suitable to opt for the “richly adorned brocade bed” (221). Ironically, it is at this moment that Ricomana begins to see Philip as worthy.

The infanta, who had observed this whole interlude, said to her damsels, ‘Will you look at the cunning of these foreigners, and of Philip in particular! I had wanted to test him, as I had done other times before, with this matter of the two beds; I thought that Philip, if he were truly coarse or ignoble, would not have the nerve to lie down on such a bed as this one, and instead would choose a less substantial one. But he has been of another mind altogether. He unmade the poorer bed and threw the bedclothes on the bedclothes on the floor, and this he doubtless did to show that he is the son of a king and that the fine bed alone befits him insofar as he is of a most noble, excellent and ancient lineage. Now I see that that virtuous Tirant, like a loyal knight, has always told me truly; that all that he spoke in my ear was for my good and my honor. (221)

(Curiously, if Tirant is being deceitful, even in promoting the interests of a fellow man, is he not then also committing a deed that is unbecoming of a knight?) After witnessing these acts, even if they be false, she experiences a change of heart with respect to Philip. She has come to “recognize the singular perfections which Philip possesses” (221-221). She also concedes that from here on she “shall be happy to comply with all that his majesty, the king my father, wishes me to do” (222). It is at this moment that she becomes the vehicle for consummating phallosocial desire—by accepting to be the female agent, in this male-male-female erotic triangle, in which these men will inscribe their “like” for one another.

Soon after, the “consummation” between Tirant, Philip, and Ricomana (and thereby the King of Sicily and the King of France) takes place at a moment when what has the semblance of a rape transpires. Tirant orchestrates the encounter. Ricomana, submits. She says, “I trust greatly in your nobility and virtue, and I place this whole matter in your hands. I shall be satisfied with all that you do. If you want it to be done this moment, I shall also agree gladly to that” (222). It is not entirely clear what Ricomana might be referring to, but marriage might be one of things on her mind. Nevertheless, Tirant, as the good teacher and with Philip’s interest in mind, “begged the

infanta to send her maids-in-waiting away, as he wanted to say some other things to her in front of Philip. The infanta sent the damsels out to dress their hair, and they were astonished that she complied so easily to his request” (222). Tirant asks for her to grant Philip a token of her affection, a kiss. She protests seeing where this is going. She reprimands Tirant by saying that she has trusted him just to see him deliver her “into the hands of one whom I can’t tell if he is friend or enemy” (223). Tirant speaks more in the manner of courtship; and then “Tirant held her hands while Philip tried to do what he could. The infanta screamed out and her damsels rushed in and peace was restored among them; and the two men passed as good and loyal servants” (223). When Tirant pleads Philip’s case, at Ricomana’s protests, he states that having her undressed or in her “nightshirt” (223) “would be the greatest boon he could possibly have in this world” (223). Here again, there is a notion of her being a commodity. Because Ovid was one of Martorell’s influences, I believe it is necessary to examine this scene through an Ovidian lens. The “rape” seems to be a necessary device so that the young lady did not lose virtue. According to Ovid “shame points a finger/At girls who make the first move, but agreed/ Also, it’s nice to follow a strong lead” (51). Further to the matter of rape, Ovid believes that “[s]ome force is permissible—women are often pleased/By force, and like what they’re giving to be seized./The girl whose citadel is stormed/By sheer audacity feels warmed” (47). Ovid’s is a very fitting vantage point for analysis of the *Tirant*; after all, his is one of Martorell’s most frequently referenced and alluded sources. At the end of the episode between Tirant, Philip, and Ricomana the narrator makes us aware that “the infanta was wooed and entertained in such a way that **she was very happy** with Tirant and even more so with Philip, whose noble deeds she would never forget”

(Martorell 223). Perhaps “noble deeds” was code for sexual acts. Again, this seems to follow Ovidian conventions and seals the deal(s): Philip and Ricomana “were betrothed. [And] the marriage took place on the following Sunday” (223), thereby bringing the Kings of Sicily and of France together.

In the erotic triangle formed by Tirant, Philip, and Ricomana, Philip and Ricomana seem to function on the same plane because they are both nobles of ostensibly equal status. It should be noted that “in a society where men and women differ in their access to power, there will be important gender differences, as well, in the structure and constitution of sexuality” (Sedgwick 2). And still, even if Ricomana is a woman, she is a princess, whereas Philip is the fifth-born son of a King. So, even if Ricomana’s status would be lower for being a woman, Philip’s hierarchical inferiority, within the context of a hegemonic masculinity, renders him equal (and at some points almost inferior) to Ricomana. Philip’s relationship with respect to Tirant is that of an apprentice; in his case “attracting or acquiring women was an important part of becoming a man” (Karras, *From Boys* 164); and much like Warwick aided his son in the slaying of the Moor, Tirant aided Philip in the conquest of Ricomana. And if we see Philip as Ricomana’s inferior, we can also see Tirant and Ricoman as rivals—similarly to the relationship between Vilesermes and that of Tirant.

The next triangle to evaluate is that of Tirant, Carmesina, and the Emperor of Constantinople; however, we should note that Tirant’s relationship with Carmesina also forms secondary triangles: Plaerdemavida, Carmesina, and Tirant (female-female-male triangle); Diafebus, Tirant, and Estefania (male-male-female triangle); and Carmesina, the Widow Reposada, and Tirant (female-female-male triangle), among other less

significant constellations. Tirant, at the behest of the King of Sicily, goes to Constantinople to aid the Emperor who has written to the King of Sicily “relating his troubles and sorrows” (Martorell 233). The letter states: “*we now notify your highness that the sultan, that renegade Moor, has invaded our empire with a great army, and in the company of the Grand Turk. They have taken most of our empire and there is little we can do, for I cannot bear arms because of my advanced age*” (233). After further pleas, Tirant’s response to the King of Sicily’s request has the strong and resounding timbre of phallosocial desire:

‘The **desire** that I have of **servicing your excellency is far from small**, for **love is the strongest obligation** in the world. To me, the entreaties of your highness are no less than commandments, as **you have won my will to your service**. If your majesty orders me to go and serve that good Emperor who rules over Greece, I will do so out of my strong love for your highness. [...]’ (234, emphasis mine)

Essentially, he is telling the king “your wish is my command,” which establishes a context of master and servant. Here we have a male-male-male triangle; and Tirant’s subordinate status between the two monarchs appears to be the glue in a phallosocial relationship. This, however, is problematic because it is the enfeebled state of the Emperor that requires Tirant’s aid. It is out of the love that Tirant has for the King of Sicily (and the desire to promote the King’s interests, phallosocially speaking) that he accepts to aid the Emperor of Constantinople. Still, this is an act of submission because he is indeed submitting to the King of Sicily’s will.

When Tirant arrives in Constantinople, there is an odd encounter in a “pavilion that was all black” (Martorell 238) that sets the stage for the star-crossed episodes to come and to render Tirant as a subordinate in the game of love. This is his first encounter

with Carmesina, Estefania, and the Widow Reposada. The encounter between Tirant and Carmesina that leads to their enamoration occurs

[a]s the Emperor spoke these and other words Tirant listened with his ears, but his eyes attended only to the beauty of Carmesina. Because of the closed windows it had been very warm in that room and Carmesina had been partly unfastened, revealing two breasts like apples of paradise and seemingly of crystal, which, granting entry to Tirant's vision, never again showed him a door by which to leave. (239)

One of the interesting aspects of this initial encounter between Tirant and Carmesina is that Tirant is feeling lovesick and the imagery of this episode “depicted many famous lovers, [...] One could see Floris and Blancheflour, Pyramus and Thisbe, Aeneas and Dido, Tristram and Isolde, Lancelot and Queen Guinevere” (Martorell 239)—all of which are star-crossed lovers who are participants of erotic triangles. This is possibly a foreboding of Tirant's condition to come: from this point forward, Tirant is a star-crossed and lovesick suitor. This also places Tirant within a phallosocial context of famous lovers.

The lovesickness that Tirant is feeling, with respect to Carmesina, might render the knight her inferior (even as a male) even further, not only because he is of lower birth than she,⁵ but because his unconventionally masculine pining renders him enfeebled—for “[i]n some instances, the assumption of the male of behaviors regarded as feminine could be regarded as an illness” (Bullough 38). In fact, he realizes that his malady's cure is in her hands, which serves to depict her as an empowered woman. And in this

⁵ Martorell, p. 263 The Widow Reposada points out Tirant's inferior status: “Madam, tell me, is it just or honest of your highness to make such ado over a servant of your father's, a man he took into his home almost out of pity and who arrived wearing borrowed garments of silk and gold, after he and his motley band were cast out by that renowned King of Sicily?”; p. 240 Diafebus speaks to Tirant of how “it has only been your good fortune that has allowed you to set your sights on so exalted a goal. [...] But Tirant ate very little of the food, whereas he drank a vast quantity of tears, being vividly aware that he aimed higher than he should.” In the *Tirant* as translated by David H. Rosenthal, the line appears more clearly: “Tirant ate little food and swallowed man tears, being keenly aware that he loved one above his station” (Martorell as translated by Rosenthal 191).

realization, in addition to articulating his helplessness, he also reiterates his inferior status in relation to hers:

“Do you realize that in all of my armed combats no one has ever bested me, and yet a single glimpse of this damsel has conquered me and thrown me to the ground, leaving me utterly defenseless? To what physician can I turn to heal this hurt which she has made? Who can give me life or death, or restore me to true health, if not her? With what courage, and in what tongue will I have to speak, to persuade and move her to pity? She is superior to me in all things: in riches, in lineage, and in lordship. And if love, which balances the scales and makes unequals equals in desires, does not incline her high and generous heart, I am lost, for it seems to me that all other avenues to restoring my health are blocked.” (Martorell 248)

The comparison is also striking, in this passage: The woman is portrayed as more powerful than all the knights with whom he has done battle. So if Tirant is not only beneath Carmesina in class, but also deemed “other” than masculine due to his malady, then he is certainly her inferior; and, therefore, may be deemed an unsuitable partner. Or she must be deemed an adversary (of love); and, therefore, she must be conquered.

And since she is now seen as an adversary, Diafebus gives him advice accordingly:

‘Just as you are courageous enough to fight with another knight, no matter how valiant he may be, be courageous with this damsel when you are alone with her. She is not bearing offensive arms. Reveal all your love for her with passion and vigor; she will think the better of you if you declare yourself strongly. Those who beg with faint heart are often turned away.’ (Martorell 255-256)

This motivational talk is basically Diafebus’s speech urging Tirant to act in accordance with his station as a man. Even then, Tirant does not succeed. There are further conflicting issues in his courtship that concern his masculinity. And, by corollary, Carmesina continues to disdain Tirant.

If the role of men is to be superior, here, Tirant is clearly assuming the inferior role. Tirant tells Carmesina, submissively, “[l]ady of supreme perfection, I beg your excellency to tell me your thoughts, for it seems to me many days have passed since I met with such disapproval from your highness” (Martorell 266). In fact, the princess, tells him that his actions warrant “only infamy and great punishment; such behavior reveals that your habits are not those of a virtuous man” (266). This statement brings into question what actions she deems those of a virtuous man. One would beg to differ from her opinion of him because he appears to be acting with utmost respect. Nonetheless, Carmesina’s subsequent rebuke could be highlighting conflicting masculinities: his role as an honorable man; and his station as a man. In her reproach she reminds him of his inferior status by stating the following:

you the Capità Major attempted to make love to so high-ranking and worthy a person as the daughter of the Emperor, the very successor to the imperial crown, even though her father dearly loved and trusted you, and placed his only daughter and all of his goods in your care and safekeeping! You have not maintained honor and reverence for me as you should, but instead, like a dishonest judge, you have been unjust, guilty of bad faith and dishonorable love. Oh, Capità, you have committed a grave offense against the majesty of his lord the Emperor, my father, and against me! If I were to tell this to my father, **you would lose your honor**, fame, worldly glory, all the fealty of our noble people and your lordship over them. **If you really had so much virtue**, when you saw me inclined to be wayward in some manner, **you should have reprimanded me** in place of my father because of the great faith and trust which he placed in you. It would be right and fitting if I were to go and throw myself at my father’s feet, and there, in front of all the high noblemen and knights, make just complaint with loud and sorrowful lamentation over the injury which you have done me; for you have attempted to woo me just as if I were some ordinary woman of little worth. Then everyone will know that your tongue speaks what your heart does not feel, and that will be my spoils of victory, even though gallants and courtiers may disagree and say I have not been entirely triumphant; for I would have said so to my father and mother in the presence of many others. I will be able to say with complete truth that you have reversed the cloak of your honor, not having maintained proper

respect for the imperial crown. That will be evident to everyone, because of the gravity of your offense. (266-267, emphasis mine)

The subversive nature that abounds in this very long speech has the strong and subtle timbre that Tirant did not act forcefully, as he ought to have. This excerpt seems to highlight two transgressions: Tirant had fallen in love with someone above his rank; and Tirant is acting unlike a man. What is not clear, though, is what model of masculinity he was expected to emulate. Is he to exert his manly prowess and seize the princess and make her his? (Ovid would have advocated this action.) Or is he supposed to realize that she is unattainable and move on? Nevertheless, it is important to note that things are going favorably for Tirant, until the Widow Reposada tells Carmesina:

I see you walking on treacherous rocks, one foot far in front of you and the other hopelessly behind. I see your hands too full of pity, your eyes too ready to consent. Madam, tell me, is it just or honest of your highness to make much ado over a servant of your father's, a man he took into his home almost out of pity and who arrived wearing borrowed garments of silk and gold, after he and his motley band were cast out by that renowned King of Sicily? Do you want to lose your virtue for a man such as this? (Martorell 263)

It is worth clarifying the impetus behind each character's actions: the Widow has ulterior motives for trying to dissuade Carmesina from pairing with Tirant: She is smitten with Tirant. Estefania, on the other hand, wants Tirant for Carmesina and seems to want the princess's happiness. Even if the Widow Reposada has her own motives for acting, these two women (Estefania and the Widow) represent the dual conflict that is encompassed within Carmesina—damsel and woman/monarch.

The fluctuation of Carmesina, between damsel and woman/monarch, is a queer one in the context of gender. It “illustrates [...] the ‘plasticity of gender in the field of sovereignty’” (Weissberger 208) because as a damsel she portrays the young lady who is

smitten with a young man and longs to be his—which seems in line with medieval notions of femininity; whereas her actions, as the future Empress in her own right, feature a woman who must act according to what is best for the Empire—even if this means to think and act in what medievals might deem a masculine way. We have seen this “plasticity” of gender in Warwick saga where the King of England is not necessarily deemed an effeminate for needing Warwick to come to his aid or when Tirant comes to the aid of the King of Sicily or the Emperor of Constantinople. The regnant is seen only as a figure that acts according to the best interest of the realm. However, in the case of the male figures, because a good male monarch is also supposed to adhere to knightly conventions, these actions may be read as a double standard and may allow for “other” readings of monarchical masculinities. This may render the male’s actions as dubious, being that they are dual actions—wavering.

In Carmesina, virtue seems to take the context of capital—a thing to be exchanged, obtained, or granted to the most suitable man—he that has proven his worth as man. So if one considers the capital context of the maidenhead or virginity of Carmesina, Tirant’s masculinity (as the capital to claim or obtain Carmesina and her maidenhead) portrays his capital worth significantly low and by that analogy renders him less than fit as a man. In this episode Estefania engages in “a private meeting [...] noiseless nuptials” (Martorell 377), and loses her virginity to Diafebus. In that sense, Diafebus may then be seen as either a fit suitor or one that is fit enough for the worth of Estefania. (Erotically, this scene is practically an orgy if one considers that five people were involved in the whole exchange that transpires in one chamber.) Plaerdemavida, a character that also provides Carmesina with advice, is witness to these exchanges. She

notes that Estefania lost “some blood last night” (378) referring to her maidenhead. The blood also bears the significance of a seal being both broken and sealing a contract—the silent nuptials. And being that Tirant was present at these nuptial, one could argue that this plural-sexual encounter was the symbolic consummation of Diafebus with Tirant.

Plaerdemavida also restates the exchange between Tirant and Carmesina where

Tirant said, ‘Because of this extreme and disorderly anguish which you suffer seeking to defend yourself against those who offend you, you will be rebuked by all true lovers. Even so, you needn’t fear that I will go back on my word, though I had faith that you would grant me my wish without concern for the possible perils. Since your highness does not please to do so, and has wanted to leave me out of breath, I will be happy to abide by all that your majesty commands.’ (379)

To this Carmesina responds: “‘Hush, Tirant, don’t take offense,’ [...]. ‘All of my nobility is subordinated to your love’” (379). She asked him not to come closer than she allows him, for if he did he would “‘cause me no small injury and grief. I will suffer so that for all the rest of my life I shall complain against you. For once virginity is lost it cannot be recovered’” (379). If his love subordinates her nobility, then clearly his love can be seen as a debasing love. And if her nobility is bound to her virginity, then losing her virginity by corollary would also erode her nobility, thereby rendering her ignoble.

To further exemplify, the notion of virginity being surrendered to a worthy suitor is articulated in the following anecdote:

Elisabetta Badoer, from a noble family in mid-fifteenth-century Venice, [who] became involved with Pirano Contarini, illegitimate son of a leading family. He claimed that she had had sex with him and indeed secretly married him; her father, concerned that this story would spoil her chances of contracting a better marriage, had her examined by women who testified that she was still a virgin. In the legal case between the father and the putative lover or husband, the woman’s own wishes were not primarily at issue. (Karras, *Sexuality* 98)

Just as in *Carmesina*, her body is not hers to do with as she wills. She must act according to her station as a princess. She must act in accordance with that which places her father's kingdom in the best light. This serves to exemplify her status as the vessel to seal a deal, once the suitor is deemed worthy.

Tirant's suitability, or lack thereof, seems to be twofold: he is of inferior birth, which has been discussed amply; and he seems to fear women. The next episode introduces a secondary, but significant, triangle, that of Tirant, Plaerdemavida, and Carmesina. Plaerdemavida, like Estefania, favors a relationship between Tirant and Carmesina; however, Plaerdemavida seems to straddle the line between phallosocial desire and heterosocial desire. Plaerdemavida, tells Tirant: "My hopes for your coming happiness oblige me to serve you, even though I know the great risk I run for so grievous a fault; but I know also **how worthy you are of such a prize**" (Martorell 478, emphasis mine). Plaerdemavida can see Tirant's worth; and, were she a man, we could conclude that she is acting with the aim of promoting her fellow man's interests. We will see how her unorthodox femininity seems to line her up with other characteristics of phallosociality. It is the aforementioned words with which she sets out to bring Tirant and Carmesina together. At a dinner party with the Emperor of Constantinople, "the ladies danced with the gallant knights, but seeing that Tirant was not present they stopped dancing" (478). Tirant is in Plaerdemavida's bedchamber.

Plaerdemavida, on the pretext of searching for a delicate washcloth, opened the chest and left it partly open. She put clothes on top of it so that the others would not see Tirant inside. The princess began to undress and Plaerdemavida situated her directly in front of Tirant, so that he could see her very well. When the princess was entirely naked, Plaerdemavida took a lighted candle and held it by her, to please Tirant all the more. He saw her whole body, all that had been spun for him. (478-479)

The encounter becomes increasingly intimate and sexual—between Carmesina and Plaerdemavida. What is interesting about this exchange is that there is no hesitation on the part of Carmesina. In fact, these sexual advances are not even considered ones that may compromise chastity; they are not considered real sex. This notion of sexual sexlessness is perhaps best articulated by Karma Lochrie in her essay, “Presidential Improprieties and Medieval Categories: The Absurdity of Heterosexuality” where she examines the definition of “sexual intercourse” and concludes that “the loss of virginity, for example, is culturally marked by one act alone, that is, intercourse of the heterosexual variety. No amount of oral or anal sex, kissing, touching, or digital manipulation ‘counts’ (88). One could argue that this notion of interpreting sex between women as “invalid sex” is because if women’s sexuality does not pose a threat on the patriarchal paradigm, then by corollary it must not be real. If we follow Augustinian thought ⁶ that because in having sex men were not deemed impure because they were not penetrated, then what constitutes real sex is “penetration”; and if female sexuality is deemed passive, where there is no phallus, then nothing that transpires between the two is deemed “real sex.”

The sexual encounter between women stems from the episode where Plaerdemavida narrates her caresses to Tirant:

‘ [...] And look, Tirant, look here at her belly, her thighs, and her secret! Oh, poor me, if I were a man this is where I would want to finish my last days! Why don’t you come to me when I call you so piteously? The hands of Tirant, no one else, are worthy of touching here where I touch. This is a morsel that anyone would be glad to choke on!’

Tirant saw all this and took the greatest delight in the world in the amusing things that Plaerdemavida was saying; and he was really tempted to come out of the chest.

After they had been joking in this manner a while, the princess entered the bath and told Plaerdemavida to take off her clothes and join her.

‘I will only do it on one condition,’ said Plaerdemavida. [...]

⁶ Karras, *Sexuality* p. 36.

‘That you allow Tirant to spend an hour together with you, in your bed.’
(479)

Because sex between women is not seen as sex, then it does not pose a threat to the patriarchal paradigm. Whereas, open articulation of homoerotic behavior between two male figures, would be subversive to at least one of the two men’s sexualities. And, as such, in the Tirant, masculine homoeroticism exists only in code that must be decoded. Between women, however, there are at least a couple of overtly sexual encounters. It bears restating: because heterosexual exchanges were the only ones deemed as “real,” then there was nothing real about this exchange except for two women having a friendly conversation, even if it was a bit *too* friendly. Plaerdemavida proceeds with caution. She asks Carmesina that “[i]f Tirant comes here some night without any of us knowing it, and he makes his way to your side, what will you say to him?” (479). To this question the princess responds: “[...] I would beg him to leave, and if he wouldn’t, I would keep quit rather than fall into disgrace” (479). Disgrace would stem from people finding out that he was alone with her; so, her virtue would be questioned. And if virtue is questioned, then worth is in peril. Nevertheless, Plaerdemavida, being aware of what is at stake, intimates that she would proceed in the same manner.

The following passage serves to support the argument of Tirant’s questionable virility. After the princess gets to bed, “[w]hen everyone else was asleep, Plaerdemavida got up from bed and wend in her nightdress to the chest where Tirant was hiding. She helped him out and had him undress quietly, without anyone hearing. He was trembling from head to foot” (Martorell 480). This is a most arresting image, especially considering that by this part of the novel, Tirant has been the victor in many battles in different lands. He explains to Plaerdemavida that he shies away from this for his shame

and love for Carmesina. He begs Plaerdemavida: “let us turn back” (480). He restates that it is out of love for her that he does not wish to do that which Plaerdemavida is entreating him to do. Plaerdemavida, reprimands him:

‘[...] Does it seem to you this is a time for lengthy discourse? If you fail me now, I will live but a short and sorrowful life. [...] You may remember that it was with fiery words that you begged me to give you the very thing that now you want to run from. [...] I am fed up with listening to your complaints. It seems to me that words please you more than deeds [...]. Oh, knight of little courage! Are you so afraid of damsel that you can’t go to her? Oh, unfortunate Capità! Are you so weak that you dare tell me such a thing? Get hold of yourself! When the Emperor comes, what excuse will you give him? I will expose you, and God and the world will know that you have spoken ill, and love and fear will mingle in your heart; and remember that you will lose, at that moment, your honor and good name. [...]’ (480-481)

This again, is an episode of Tirant encouraged to act according to his station, as a man. Oddly, it is not clear in Plaerdemavida’s reproach for what offense she intends to expose him. One could speculate, because she wants him to act according to his manly station that it is for not acting as a man would in the given situation. This is especially evident if we associate honor with masculinity, as we have established before.

His discourse takes a greater turn toward that of a dubious masculinity. He claims that his “innocent desire is only to serve lovingly, that lady to whom I now belong, and will belong, for as long as I live” (Martorell 481). The discourse of “ownership” and “possession” in the context of amorous relationships usually depicts passive partners, in most cases women, as the object to be possessed. In this case, it is Tirant assuming the submissive role. And still he tells Plaerdemavida “let us go without further delay” (481). Out of frustration, before his indecision, she tells him “I have schemed as best I can, both in defense of my honor and for your pleasure and advantage [...]. Now I leave you to your own devices” (481). She leaves him alone in the dark room “barefoot and

dressed only in a shirt, for a half hour” (481). He calls to her, helplessly; and out of pity she returns. She explains that “[t]hat is how one punishes unenthusiastic lovers!” (481). She tell him that woman want to be adored constantly and that “[w]hatever man women deem most honest, that is to say, most discreet, trying to reach them night or day through windows, doors or rooftops—that is who will be their favorite” (481). By contrast, Plaerdemavida’s discourse becomes more unfeminine. In fact, in a very candid moment, she speaks of her secret passions for Hippolytus. She claims that she would not mind if he were forceful with her and she “would keep quiet and do everything that he wanted” (482). She articulates her station as a woman, the passive partner; yet, in speaking candidly and almost aggressively (initiating), one might argue that she was acting “other” than what was expected of her as a woman. But her next statement articulates most clearly Tirant’s questionable behavior, as a man: “I would love him all the more, knowing that **he was a man and did not act the way you do**” (482). This gives rise to the following response: “By my faith, damsel, [...] you have **pointed out my sins** for me more than any confessor, however learned in theology he might have been! I beg you to lead me to the bed of my lady at once” (482, emphasis mine). What’s queer about this exchange is that it is her questioning of his manhood that results in his “arousal.” And it is a woman leading him. This would get one to question whether he really desired Carmesina, or whether he was acting under coercion; and it was all just a farce to preserve the appearance of being a man. According to Karras, “medieval society in general held to the double standard by which men’s sexual transgressions were expected and disregarded” (*Sexuality in Medieval Europe* 120). If that is the case and if we also consider that “[t]o argue that any person who does not live up to the culture’s dominant

ideals for his or her gender [...] would mean that [...] any man who allowed himself to be led was something other than [...] a man” (Karras, *Thomas* 53), then at the very least, we have Tirant acting as something “other than a man.” In this case, there is a virgin (or two) in play, but Plaerdemavida, as a promoter of Tirant’s interest, pays no attention to this seemingly minute detail. This brings into question whether Carmesina was a controlled woman or whether she is a free agent. Perhaps the fact that her father was elderly, even if an Emperor, he is deemed less fit to control her.

The triangle between Carmesina, Plaerdemavida, and Tirant becomes fully complete when “Plaerdemavida led him there and had him down next to the princess. [...] She [...] took Tirant’s hand and placed it on the breasts of the princess. He felt them and moved his hand to her belly and even further down.” (Martorell 482). The princess took all this touching quite lightly—almost as if it were a common occurrence. She wakes up and tells Plaerdemavida, ““For heaven’s sake, what a pest you are! See if you can’t let me sleep”” (482). To this Plaerdemavida tells her she’s being cranky and then tells her why she’s touching her: “you have just come out of the bath and your skin is so smooth and supple that I love to touch it” (482). Carmesina gives her permission to touch her wherever she wishes, “but don’t put your hand so low” (482). Plaerdemavida then, advantageously for hers and Tirant’s purposes, tells her: ““Go to sleep and don’t worry, and let me feel this body which belongs to me, for I am here in place of Tirant. Oh, you traitor Tirant, where are you? If you had your hand where I have mind, you would truly be happy!”” (482). Once the Princess is asleep, Tirant is left alone. Later, “the princess started to wake up, and said, half asleep, ‘Misfortune what are you doing now? Can you not let me sleep? Have you gone crazy, trying to do something that is

against your nature?” (483). The fact that she thinks this to be Plaerdemavida “acting against nature”⁷ raises the possibility that there are acts that are deemed more transgressive—even between women—than mere fondling. To her protest, Plaerdemavida instructs her to “keep quiet and don’t try to disgrace yourself. I am afraid the empress will hear this. Keep still, for this is your knight” (483). The princess’s reputation has been compromised; and, therefore, all she ought to do is keep silent. Still, the Widow Reposada heard “[w]hen the princess had let out the first scream, [...] who realized well enough that this commotion must have been caused by Plaerdemavida and that Tirant should be there too. And if he worked his will with the princess, the widow would never get her way with him” (483). So, consummation is interrupted. Tirant leapt out the window and in the process broke his leg. It should be noted that he is fleeing. His flight could be interpreted as a refusal to have intercourse with Carmesina.

The novel goes through more battles and many more amorous encounters as Tirant continues lovesick and enfeebled, to some degree: as a knight, he continues to win battles but has failed as suitor. Further to the matter of lovesickness and its suggestions, according to the gender of the individual besieged by it: “it was likely to afflict noblemen more than commoners because they had more leisure and a much softer life; that is, they were already somewhat on the way to becoming effeminate” (Bullough 38). What we have here is certainly the space of noblemen whose life including all the niceties that the *Tirant*’s narrator speaks of with abundant details that may be interpreted

⁷ Acts against nature here is to be understood in biblical terms. See Romans 1:26-27. In this passage verse 27, which pertains to same-sex pairings between men serves to clarify what is intended in verse 26 when speaking of natural v. unnatural intercourse. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. New Revised Standard Version. Eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

as other than masculine. Perhaps this violence in battle and his exceptional martial prowess ought to be read as over compensatory, in the context of his failed conquest in heterosexual terms. “The cure for the disease according to Constatnine and many of his medieval commentators was simply to have intercourse” (38-39). And because the cure seems simple and attainable, toward the end of the novel, the Queen of Fez is yet another woman to hold the hand of our hero and guide him toward the path of sex with his beloved.

‘[...] Come, sir, worthy of all glory; it is time now for you to receive payment and satisfaction for your honorable toil in the form of delightful repose in the arms of that lady who is the object of your happiness and the reason for your magnificent achievements; for I believe that, if you are willing, I can grant you what you have so long desired. But if you do not do as I wish this time, I swear to you that you will never have to bother with me again, for as soon as I can I shall return to my lands.’ (Martorell 745)

(So if he really does not want to do what he claims he wants to do, she won’t pressure him?) She speaks to him in the context of battle. She tells him “let us see how much you know now, for the proof will tell. You will have to enter the lists, in individual combat, and **I shall not consider you a knight if you do not triumph in this delightful struggle**” (746, emphasis mine). If a knight is also a man, then one could certainly argue that if he lost in this battle she would deem him not a man. So, again, his manhood/knighthood is in peril. The Queen of Fez instructs Tirant in the following manner:

‘Glorious knight, [...] strip yourself down to your shirt and go barefoot to the side of that lady who loves you more than she loves her own life. Ride her hard, the way a knight should, without any mercy at all. Do not give me any arguments or delays, for I swear to you, on my word as a queen, that if you do not do what I have told you, you will never obtain such a favor in again in your life.’ (746)

It is at this point, that finally, the knight “grappled in manly combat” (747); that is, he took Carmesina. Certainly, because her main objective was to preserve her maidenhood as long as possible, she utters many “piteous words” (747). We are advised, however, that we “should not suppose that Tirant refrained from his labor. **Within a short time he triumphed** in the delightful battle, and the princess, having surrendered her arms, lay as if in a swoon” (748, emphasis mine). The Queen of Fez tells Carmesina ““You really know how to appear pitiful! But the arms of a knight do no injury to a damsel. [...] The princess, not sufficiently comforted for the loss of her chastity”” (748) did not reply to the queen. “Tirant returned to the princess’s bed and the two lovers spent all night at that blessed game which only lovers play” (748). This surrender of Carmesina’s should be seen as an indirect consummation between Tirant and the Emperor. The Emperor is a passive character in this exchange. One could also argue that the Queen of Fez as a monarch, is not bound by conventional sexual models and as such could transgress. In transgressing, like Plaerdemavida, she introduces a heterosocial context but acts phallosocially promoting the interests of men.

Furthermore, around the era in which the *Tirant* is being written, a female monarch comes to power in the petty kingdom of Castile, which may have some effect on how the Queen of Fez is portrayed, and how this affects the depiction of Carmesina, and her relationship with Tirant. According to Louise Frandenbug, ““Sovereignty is a site of gender-transgression and crossover, although it does not necessarily follow that sovereignty has revolutionary designs on gender constructs”” (qtd. in Weissberger 208). In addition, according to Weissberger, the reign of Isabel I of Castile, engenders a

“paradoxical phenomenon [...] with its effects on the gender-debate tradition in the reign” (208) of a prevailing female monarch; she contends that

the presence of a powerful female sovereign shapes the conventions of the debate and complicates its production of a seamless gender ideology. [...] The rule of a woman inevitably created anxiety, confusion, and resistance in a patriarchal society grounded in the theological subordination of women to men. [...] Representations of queenship in texts written during her reign—whether directly or indirectly associated with Isabel herself—frequently transgress the borders of the feminine within the traditional binary opposition of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine,’ but they just as frequently police that border. (208)

This transgression and policing is exactly what we see in the Queen of Fez. She is a queen; and, as such, she is a woman; however, her actions are other than conventionally feminine. Yet she brings Tirant’s masculinity into question.

Tirant states that he “had resolved to spend all the remaining days of my sad life working for the prosperity and increase of the crown of the Greek empire; ~~for I was certain that you owned my life~~” (Martorell 268, strikethrough mine).⁸ (Based on the Catalan text, Tirant states that he was certain that one day it [the crown of the Greek empire] would be possessed by her.) Therefore, if he understood her to be the future sovereign, then his reaction could be understood as problematic to a conventional patriarchy where the woman’s role was to be subordinate to the man.

In the matter concerning a symbolic consummation, the marriage of Tirant and Carmesina could be read as being

⁸ Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba. *Tirant lo Blanc*. Ed. Martí de Riquer. Barcelona: Biblioteca Perenne, 1947. (In this passage, I’d like to obviate a fallacy and repair that there is a flaw in the translation.) This is how the text reads: “Aquest será lo darrer any, mes, dia e hora que l’altesa vostra viu me veurà, e aquestes serán les darreres suplicacions que jamás faré a vostra celsitud; aquestes seran les paraules que m’oireu parlar, que almenys en premi dels serveis que tenia en voluntat de fer a la majestat del senyor Emperador, pare vostre, e a tot l’Imperi, car per contemplació de l’excel.lència vostra tenia deliberat de dependre tots los dies de la mia trista vida en prosperar e augmentar la corona de l’Imperi grec, **per jo ésser cert que per vós havia ésser posseïda**” (353, emphasis mine).

one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men. [...] **‘The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men,** and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners. (Sedgwick 25-26, emphasis mine).

In the *Tirant*, Carmesina is the object of exchange between the Emperor of Constantinople and Tirant—and, possibly, the object of exchange between an empire (a group of men, if we accept that this is a patriarchal society) and Tirant, as gratitude for their redemption. In Carmesina’s case, her father, the Emperor, is the representative of such an economic unit. He makes a vow that affirms phallosocial desire but also clearly uses his daughter as the object by which that desire is to be consummated:

We have known of the many services and honors that you have done for us and for the whole empire, for which we are very indebted to your great prowess. We think that even if we gave you all of the empire you would not be sufficiently rewarded for the services that you have granted us. Thus we want to give our whole empire to you and yours now, while we are still alive. Moreover, **we want to give you our daughter** Carmesina for a wife, **if you want her.** (Martorell 765, emphasis mine)

So what is obvious here, as in all the aforementioned triangles, is that the consummation of phallosociality is brought about by a woman. In this case, it is the daughter of the Emperor. She is gifted to Tirant as a form of payment for all that he has done. What is also curious is even if she is prized as a gift, the “if you want her” clause gives the sensation that she may be turned down as something unworthy. Nonetheless, she is the capital that serves to seal the relationship between two men.

The triangular constellations, of the erotic sort, that have been evaluated here are those that I have deemed most salient. These spring from phallosocial desire which works toward fostering and securing the continuity of men’s interests through the

consummation of same-sex pairings within an (obligatory) heteronormative context by the objectification and commoditization of women, mostly. Although there are instances where women appear to have agency, they are always reduced to the mere glue by which men come together. Whether the men involved are rivals or friends, there is no comparison in the driving force (and passion) behind phallosocial desire, as portrayed in the *Tirant*, as opposed to the heterosocial sort.

CONCLUSION

Marginality is the overlying theme of the *Tirant* and of this thesis. Whether we look to the circumstances that denied the work its proper place among the masterpieces of world literature—or to the anecdote concerning its first translation into a modern language; or to the heteronormative readings that denied the work an “other” reading; or to the marginalized “new” biographical information concerning the author—, we will find in all of these instances that this work was waiting to be unveiled and decoded. Now, rather than offering a reading that is disruptive to the normative work that has been done thus far, this reading takes from previous readings and compliments them, and produces something new for mainstream and marginal audiences to read and enjoy for generations to come. We can only speculate what Cervantes saw in this book. I would like to imagine that the old adage is fitting: “genius recognizes genius.” I believe Cervantes saw in Martorell a master of subtle and subversive satire; and, as such, saw his work as a “wealth of joy and a mine of pastimes.”¹

The models of masculinity engaged here are Pan-European; however, because of the frequent marginalization of Spain and its literature—within the context of a “European” canon—, it would be wise to re-evaluate the work not as the English work it claims to be but as a product of the Spanish *Reconquista*. After all, it is feasible that the influence of the movement towards Christendom and its effects upon the notions of gender of the time could have found their way into the literature, inscribing in it what would necessitate an “other” reading. Yes, the work ought to be evaluated as one that is European but also as one that stems from a Moorish occupation. This coexistence of

¹ Miguel Cervantes Saavedra. *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Ed. Francisco Rico. Lima [Peru]: Punto de lectura, 2008. p. 66.

cultures might have given rise to the very sort of hypercorrective measures manifested with respect to masculinity. In addition, an aspect that was lightly touched upon but not brought to its fullest consequences was the notion of “gender performativity.”²

Certainly, there are instances that would allow for a more thorough gender performance reading of the *Tirant*, which might eventuate in an interesting reading of gender performance in *Reconquista Valencia* and, thereby, Spain as a whole.

The reality of my initial approach was to see the work as a conventional work of medieval literature. But as I now understand the work—and as hindsight is always twenty-twenty—, the work is undoubtedly a satire; and it should be analyzed as such. Martorell’s narrators are quite astute; they guide us into the labyrinth that is the *Tirant* with hints of satirical discourse that is hidden in plain sight: satire is hidden in the blatantly obvious narrative where the reader does not question; rather, he surrenders and allows the narrator(s) to (mis)lead him into a totally different reality. Subtleties that were not obvious from the outset become crystal clear in retrospect.

I would proffer that perhaps the totalizing approaches and the heft of some of the scholars, with respect to contentions concerning genre and studies of the *Tirant* at large, resulted in a thought-terminating cliché of sorts that stopped new scholars from feeling the need to look further for other possibilities. Initially, I too halted. Yet I would surmise that in this space, there were options; and “I took the one less traveled by,/[a]nd that has made all the difference.”³ This reading of the *Tirant* is not intended to be a definitive nor an exhaustive one. On the contrary, it is just an(-)“other” reading with new implications for the work. Clearly, in this space, we have only scratched the surface. Still, I would

² Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

³ Robert Frost. *Mountain Interval*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920; Bartleby.com, 1999. 19 Oct 2011. <www.bartleby.com/119/>.

like to believe that this scratch has been a significant one and one that will not go unnoticed.

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