University of Massachusetts - Amherst

From the SelectedWorks of Donald Maddox

January 1991

The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions

Contact Author

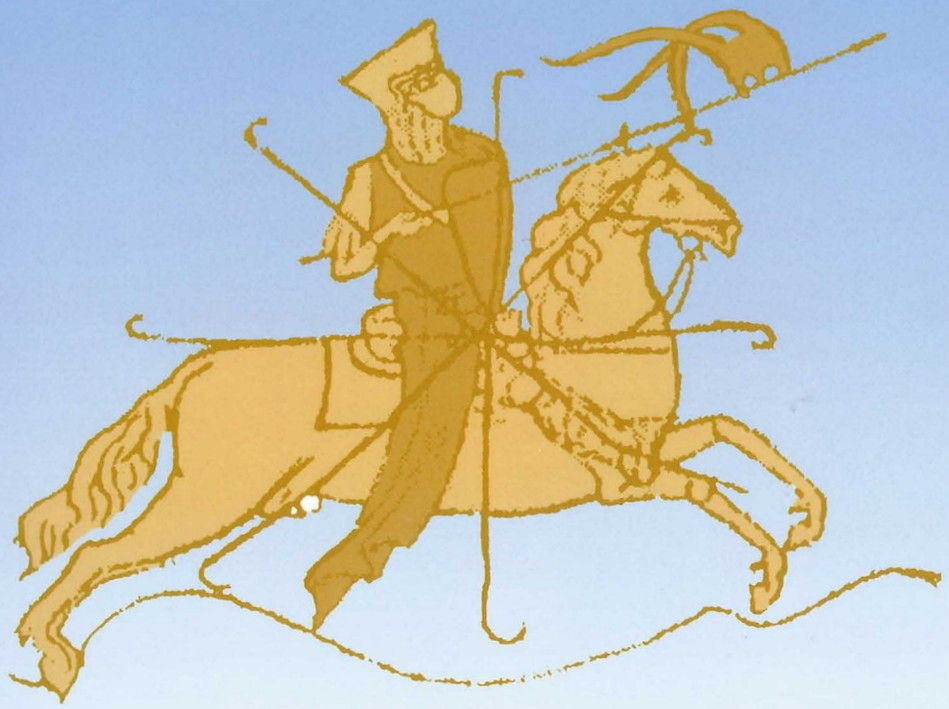
Start Your Own SelectedWorks

Notify Me of New Work

Available at: http://works.bepress.com/donald_maddox/2

The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes

Once and Future Fictions



DONALD MADDOX

Paperback Re-issue

Chrétien de Troyes was one of the most important medieval writers of Arthurian narrative. A key figure in reshaping the "once and future fictions" of Arthurian story, he was instrumental in the late twelfth-century shift from written and oral legendary traditions to a highly sophisticated literary cultivation of the Old French verse romance. While examining individually each of Chrétien's five Arthurian romances, Donald Maddox looks at their coherence as a group, suggesting that their intertextual relations lend a harmony of meaning and design to the ensemble as a whole. Central to his argument is the focus on customs, which provide unity within as well as among the works while conveying an acute sense of the vulnerability and dissolution of feudal institutions in an age of social crisis and transition.

Cover illustration: Detail from *The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt*, edited by Theodore Bowie (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 85. Reproduced with the permission of Indiana University Press.

Cover design: Margaret Downing

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.cambridge.org

ISBN 978-0-521-07057-7

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE 12

General Editor: Professor Alastair Minnis, Professor of Medieval Literature, University of York

Editorial Board
Professor Piero Boitani (Professor of English, Rome)
Professor Patrick Boyde, FBA (Serena Professor of Italian, Cambridge)
Professor John Burrow, FBA (Winterstoke Professor of English, Bristol)
Professor Alan Deyermond, FBA (Professor of Hispanic Studies, London)
Professor Peter Dronke, FBA (Professor of Medieval Latin Literature, Cambridge)
Tony Hunt (St. Peter's College, Oxford)
Dr Nigel Palmer (Lecturer in Medieval German, Oxford)
Professor Winthrop Wetherbee (Professor of English, Cornell)

This series of critical books seeks to cover the whole area of literature written in the major medieval languages – the main European vernaculars, and medieval Latin and Greek – during the period *c.* 1100–*c.* 1500. Its chief aim is to publish and stimulate fresh scholarship and criticism on medieval literature, special emphasis being placed on understanding major works of poetry, prose and drama in relation to the contemporary culture and learning which fostered them.

Titles published

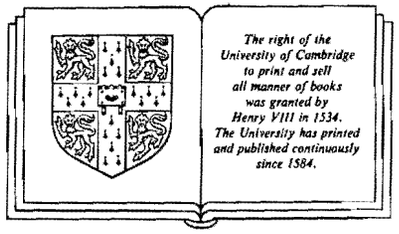
Dante's Inferno: *Difficulty and dead poetry*, by Robin Kirkpatrick
Dante and Difference: Writing in the Commedia, by Jeremy Tambling
Troubadours and Irony, by Simon Gaunt
Piers Plowman *and the New Anticlericalism*, by Wendy Scase
The Cantar de mio Cid: *Poetic creation in its economic and social contexts*, by Joseph Duggan
The Medieval Greek Romance, by Roderick Beaton
Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman, by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton
Dante and the Medieval Other World, by Alison Morgan
The Theatre of Medieval Europe: New research in early drama, edited by Eckehard Simon
The Book of Memory: A study of memory in medieval culture, by Mary J. Carruthers
Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic traditions and vernacular texts by Rita Copeland
The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and future fictions by Donald Maddox

The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes

Once and future fictions

DONALD MADDOX

Professor of French, University of Massachusetts, Amherst



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge
New York Port Chester Melbourne Sydney

Contents

Acknowledgments x

List of abbreviations xi

Introduction 1

1 *Rex quondam*: Arthurian tradition and the anterior order 8

2 Safely through the realm: customs in *Le Chevalier de la charrete* 35

3 *Tenir terre*: customs in *Le Chevalier au lion* 54

4 *Rexque futurus*: the anterior order in *Le Conte du graal* 82

5 Arthurian intertextuality: crisis and custom 119

Conclusion: Literary customs and the socio-historical question 133

Notes 141

Bibliography 167

Index 177