

Chapter 6

Les armes et la chasse

Les armes was the most important element of the trinity of activities – *les armes*, *les amours*, and *la chasse* – that characterized the idealized life of the medieval aristocratic male. However, just as each of the three medieval estates was inextricably linked with, and dependent on, the others, so arms were inseparable from with both courtly love and the chase. The links between courtly love and war games have already been well articulated by scholars: the ability to handle weapons dexterously was a powerful sexual attractant, and tournaments were focal points for heterosexual interaction as well as major centers for the practice and dissemination of courtly culture. The connection between arms and hunting has been less well studied; it is this association that we will consider in the following chapter.

The medieval hunt was a battle between a group of men and one or more representative members of an animal species, a stylized conflict that embodied in miniature the ongoing war between man and the ever-threatening forces of the natural world. If we remove the political dimension from the equation, it quickly becomes apparent that the medievals hunted for many of the same reasons that they engaged in martial activities: to express aggression; to acquire material rewards or to conquer lands; to defend life, goods, honor, or territory; to prove the superiority of a particular faction or cause; to prove their expertise or manhood to men, women, or both. The more necessary the battle, the more unglamorous it tended to be. Men fought the animal enemy using every trick at their disposal in order to protect their livestock, their crops, their fish ponds and warrens, and sometimes themselves and their families. Aristocratic hunts, on the other hand, were never anything more than flashy sallies into enemy territory, purely symbolic conflicts that did little to sway the balance of power

between man and nature. In this chapter, we will consider the multifarious relationships between the medieval hunt and various types of medieval military actions, exercises, and rituals, all of which I will group under the blanket designations of *armes* or war.¹ Armand Strubel and Chantal de Saulnier suggest that the art of hunting provided a “cleaner” alternative to the art of war, which had become deplorably brutal by the fourteenth century.²

I will show that warfare and hunting played comparable, and to a certain extent interchangeable, roles in medieval aristocratic self-perception and self-fashioning. Hunting was considered both an effectual *praeludium bellorum*, a “prelude to war,” as well as a war in its own right. War, on the other hand, was sometimes expressed as a hunt of human enemies. Furthermore, each activity had ramifications for its practitioners which were both private and internal as well as public and external. Most important for our purposes is the fact that both hunting and martial exercises occupied similar, centrally important positions in the aristocracy’s idea of itself, and that the literatures devoted to each served the same functions for their readerships. Arms manuals were written according to the same patterns, and were designed to fulfill the same functions, as were hunting manuals: to facilitate memory, to provide aids to fantasy, to furnish scripts for the acting-out of the aristocratic life, and to provide the pleasure of reading imaginative or imagination-stimulating literature.

The hunt and war. The hunt as war.

The late medieval relationships between *la chasse* and *les armes* were complex and often contradictory. The medievals inherited the Classical convention of

¹ A few critics have noted this relationship, but none have examined it at any length. E. g. John Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk: The Art of Medieval Hunting* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988) 101-102.

² *La poésie de la chasse au Moyen Âge: les livres de chasse du XIV^e siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994) 167-168.

associating the hunt with war using an interrelated and sometimes deeply paradoxical set of practices, metaphors, and assumptions. In medieval England and France, as had been the case in archaic and Classical Greece, hunting was an integral part of male initiation and a preparation for civic and military participation. In Classical literature, both hunting and fighting are considered to be the work of heroes, and the finest warriors are assigned to kill particularly infamous or elusive animals. Furthermore, Classical authors consider hunting to be a type of battle and compare animals to enemy forces, and, on occasion, even liken human enemies to wild animals.³

Similarly, in chivalric literature in general and in chivalric romance in particular, hunting and fighting are often paired or conflated: in fiction if not always in real life, great knights are always great huntsmen, and they have a tendency to become involved in martial (and sometimes marital, premarital, or extramarital) adventures during the chase. Furthermore, warriors of medieval chronicle and romance are regularly compared with wild animals: the especially fierce are like boars (“brim as any boar” is an overwhelmingly common romance tag), the craven like wolves or foxes, the routed army like fleeing hares.

Medieval hunting and medieval warfare were at once similarly directed and mutually exclusive activities: hunting was what men did when they were not fighting other men; they hunted in order to amuse themselves, to keep themselves in good

³ For an overview of the links between hunting and warfare in archaic and Classical Greece, see Chapter 1, “Hunting, Warfare, and Aristocrats” in Judith M. Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001).

The association between hunting and warfare in Classical culture is perhaps most clearly articulated by the Classical hunting manuals themselves. Xenophon, author of the first extant hunting manual (fourth century B. C.), likens game animals to “enemy forces” defending their home territory (*Cynegeticus* XIII, 12-14). Arrian (second century A. D.) identifies the fox as an enemy of man because it eats rabbits (*Cynegeticus* XXXIV, 1); he urges his readers to thank the gods properly after a successful hunt and to give offerings which are “no less than the first fruits upon a victory in war” (*Cynegeticus* XXXVI, 4). Pseudo-Oppian’s *Cynegetica* (second century A. D.) similarly speaks of “the warfare of the chase” (I, p. 11). Both Xenophon’s *Cynegeticus* and Arrian’s *Cynegeticus* are translated in Denison Hull, *Hounds and Hunting in Ancient Greece* (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1964) 107-140, 161-184. Pseudo-Oppian’s *Cynegetica* is found in *Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus*, trans. A. W. Mair (London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1928).

physical condition, and to practice their battle skills. Most medieval hunters, hunting apologists, and military theorists continued to support the Classical claim that hunting was the best way for a fighting man to learn his trade and to stay in shape;⁴ therefore, hunting, like tourneying, was considered to be a *praeludium bellorum*, an activity that prepared its practitioners for war. Through hunting, Gaston claims, a man gains all of the necessary skills and qualities of a good knight; but on the other hand, he warns ominously, the man who does not hunt will never be able to protect his lands in time of need:

Et, s'il avoit besoin ou guerres, il ne saroit que ce seroit, quar il n'a pas acoustumé le travail, et couvenroit que autre feïst ce qu'il deüst fere, quar on dit touz jours: tant vaut seigneur, tant vaut sa gent et sa terre. (LC Prologue: 57-59)⁵

[And, if there is need or war, he would not know what he should do, for he is not accustomed to the work, and it would be necessary for another to do what he should do, for as they always say: however much the lord is worth, so much is the worth of his people and his lands.]

Even John of Salisbury, the cynical author of the *Policraticus*, who, as we will see, has little good to say about hunting, asserts that men who engage in hard physical labor –

⁴ Probably the oldest claim about hunting is that it prepares a man for the hardships of war, an assertion which we find as early as Xenophon's *Cynegeticus*: "So I recommend to the young not to scorn hunting or other education, for from such things they became skilled in the arts of war and other arts by means of which they think, speak, and act well" (*Cynegeticus* I, 18). Julius Caesar attributed the hardiness of the fractious Germanic tribes in general, and of the Suebi in particular, to their zeal in hunting (Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War*, trans. H. J. Edwards (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP; London: William Heinemann, 1986) IV.1/ 180-183, VI.21/ 344-347, VI.28/ 352-355).

⁵ The *Livre de chasse* echoes the fifth book of Julius Pollux's *Onomasticon* (end of 2nd century A. D.): Now hunting is also something with which it is fitting that you be concerned, because this heroic and royal practice makes for a healthy body and a healthy spirit and is an exercise both in peacetime patience and in wartime courage, leads to manliness, and trains one to be strong, swift, skilled in riding, shrewd and industrious if one intends to conquer by strength that which opposes, and by speed that which runs away, and by riding that which draws off, and by wisdom that which is intelligent; and by reflection that which escapes notice, and by time that which is hidden; staying awake at night and laboring by day. (As cited in Hull, *Hounds and Hunting in Ancient Greece* 144.)

carpenters, blacksmiths, and hunters of deer and wild boars – make the best soldiers; on the other hand, he considers fowlers, like singers and gamblers, to be soft men who are constitutionally unsuited for military service.⁶ The claim that hunting was good training for war was still being touted by educational theorists in the sixteenth century.⁷

There was a good deal of truth in this claim. Men on the hunting field wielded the same weapons, relied on the same skills of horsemanship, and cooperated and communicated with their fellows in the same way that they did on the tourneying field or the battleground. Similarly, the skills learned, and the bonds formed, while hunting were often indispensable aids in battle or tournament.⁸ Through hunting, boys learned to ride and to wield weapons; they toughened their bodies and sharpened their minds on the hunting field for the more stringent demands of the battlefield; and, perhaps most important of all, they learned valuable lessons in courtly *noblesce*.⁹

It is no accident, therefore, that much of the specialized cynegetical language which was so important to medieval hunters has a distinctly martial flavor. Beaters, or the places where beaters are stationed, are known as *deffenses* (e. g. LC 9: 38, 38: 14, etc.); the great tusks of a boar are sometimes also known as *la deffensse* (LC 9: 22-

⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (New York and Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge UP, 1990) VI.2/ 181.

⁷ See Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy, 1066-1530* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984) 196.

⁸ Georges Duby notes, “Generally the hunt for the enemy, like that for game, was conducted in small groups of comrades accustomed to flush out, to pursue, to overcome together. They collaborated to surround, to isolate the man they had ‘raised’” (Georges Duby, *William Marshal: The Flower of Chivalry*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1986) 101). Duby here refers to the tactics used in twelfth-century tournaments, which were little different from war except insofar as the death of one’s opponent was considered to be a tragedy rather than a triumph. For a description of such early tournaments, see Larry D. Benson, “The Tournament in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes and *L’Histoire de Guillaume Le Maréchal*,” *Chivalric Literature: Essays on Relations Between Literature and Life in the Later Middle Ages*, Studies in Medieval Culture 14 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1980), esp. 7-12.

⁹ For the role of hunting in the training of medieval English aristocratic boys, see Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry* 191-198.

23).¹⁰ The place where a beast enters into the forest after feeding (and from whence it can be tracked to its lair) is an *embuschement*, a word which has the more usual meaning of *embuscade*, “ambush” (LC 35: 15).¹¹ The usual word to describe a routed enemy, regardless of whether human or animal, was *desconfit* (e. g. LC Prologue: 43; 15: 68; 45: 261; 49: 53, 57). Gaston also freely invents his own martial cynegeticisms, as if eager to underscore the similarities between the hunt and war: he refers to a pack of dogs as a *bataille* (LC Prologue: 41), or “army,” and ironically calls both a boar’s lair (LC 9: 35) and a fox’s earth (LC 11: 10) a *forteresce*.

In keeping with the martial metaphors, Gaston likewise speaks of the hunter’s weaponry as his *armes* (LC 60: 93). It is a doubly appropriate term, as a man would use many of the same weapons on the hunting field as he would on the battlefield or tourneying field. Furthermore, weapons of hunting and fighting were used in similar ways, so that the skills developed in one context were often applicable in the other.¹² Although weaponry varied according to specific context, individual means, and local custom, the offensive tools of the knight in war or war-games usually included the sword, lance, and knife; those of foot soldiers often included the boar-spear, bow, and

¹⁰ Perhaps tellingly, an inhospitable welcome given by a bitch to an attentive male dog is also called a “defense” (LC 15: 71; MG 12: 1340).

¹¹ Edward translates *embuschement* as *couert* (MG 31: 2482), a word with connotations of secrecy and deception and which, at least in one Middle English translation of Vegetius’ *De re militari*, is offered as a synonym for “lying in ambush”: see *Middle English Compendium* [computer file], 1998, U of Michigan, 22 December 2004 <<http://ezproxy.library.cornell.edu:2317/m/med/>>, s. v. *covert* def. 3.

¹² For example, there were four ways that a mounted warrior could use his spear, regardless of whether his enemy was human or animal: he could deliver an underhanded thrust (e. g. LC 54: 9-10) or an overhanded thrust (e. g. LC 54: 4-5); he could throw the spear as a projectile (e. g. LC 52: 17, 53: 7-8); or he could carry it couched, like a jousting lance (e. g. LC 54: 10-11); Gaston, however, denounces the first and last as *nices*, “foolish,” because they expose the hunter to too much danger. For the uses of the spear, see Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984) 23-24. Writers of military manuals, like writers of hunting manuals, picked up on the similarities between the use of weapons on the battlefield and the hunting field. For example, Duarte, King of Portugal, in the sixth chapter of his treatise on tourneying, *The Art of Good Horsemanship*, discusses the methods of jousting with a lance against both human and animal adversaries; see Richard Barber and Juliet Barker, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989) 200.

crossbow.¹³ Similarly, the usual weapon of the hunter was the sword (*espee*); he also carried a knife, though it was usually only used for undoing animal carcasses (LC 45: 3-4). Depending on the circumstances and his rank, a huntsman might also wield other weapons of war: a boar-spear (*espieu*), throwing-spear or lance (*glaive, javelot, lance*), crossbow, or bow and arrow.

Gaston gives the same name – *les armes* – to an animal’s offensive hardware (hooves, horns, teeth, or otherwise) as he does to a hunter’s weapons and tends to describe an animal’s ability to maim or kill in terms of, or in relation to, articles of human weaponry. The noble stag bears the power of an enemy arsenal in its antlers and hooves: it strikes like shot from a crossbow (“comme un coup de garrot,” LC 1: 8) or a stone hurled from a war machine (“as a strook of a spryngol,” MG 3: 428-429) and its antlers cut like a knife [“come d’un coutel”] (LC 4: 27).¹⁴ The wild goat, on the other hand, is a thoroughly plebeian animal and in its final confrontation with the hunter it behaves like a drunken peasant rather than a fellow knight: it will hold a man against a tree and break his bones, and is so stout and insensible that not even a strong man wielding a bar of iron or an axe can break its back (LC 4: 29-30). But the most impressive arms of all belong to the boar, an animal that is protected by thick leather (tellingly, the English term for the shoulder of a boar is *shelde* (MG 6: 802), “shield”) and which kills in a single blow like a knife thrust [“comme on feroit d’un coutel” (LC 9: 5); “as þow it were with a knyfe” (MG 6: 770-771)]. Its mouth is fully equipped with a fearsome set of self-sharpening tools: the bottom teeth are called *gres*

¹³ Michel Pastoureau identifies the lance and sword as the usual offensive weapons of a knight and the knife, mace, pike, club, *espieu* (boar-spear), and sling as the weapons of the foot-soldier: see “La forêt médiévale, un univers symbolique,” *Le Château, la chasse et la forêt*, ed. André Chastel, Rencontres internationales d’archéologie et d’histoire de Commarque 3 (Bordeaux: Editions Sud-Ouest, 1990) 83-98. The Rule of the Templars defines the weapons of the knight more broadly: the lance or spear (*lancea, hasta*) sword, mace, and dagger; see Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984) 67.

¹⁴ Although the fawn of the red deer is still harmless, its behavior is already reminiscent of weaponry: it runs like a shot from a crossbow (LC 1: 36, MG 3: 486).

(“whetstones”) and the upper set *armes* or *limes* (“files”), “de quoy ilz font le mal” [“with which they do evil”] (LC 9: 27-32).¹⁵ Edward seems to be even more convinced of the perilousness of the boar than is Gaston: whereas LC reads merely, “C’est la beste dou monde qui a plus forz armes et qui plus tost tueroit un homme ou une beste” [“It is the beast which has the strongest arms in the world and which will most quickly kill a man or a beast”] (LC 9: 3), Edward’s translation is more ambiguous and consequently more ominous: “It is þe beest of this worlde þat is strangest armed, and *rathest shulde sle a man of any oper best*” (MG 6: 762-764, emphasis mine). “Rathest” can mean “most quickly,” but it can also mean “most readily,” suggesting that perhaps the boar kills man out of preference, and quite enjoys doing it.

The boar was not only the most formidable enemy that the huntsman could face, it was also the most reminiscent of a human opponent. Furthermore, a huntsman battled the boar in much the same way that he would fight a fellow knight. A huntsman who wanted to win glory for himself could meet the boar’s charge on foot, holding an *espieu croisié* in front of him like a pikeman, though Gaston accounts this an act of stupidity, not honor (LC 54: 14-16). The more prudent hunter approached the animal on horseback with either a sword or a boar-spear. Gaston describes the latter confrontation in terms that are strongly reminiscent of single combat between two mounted knights in war or war-games: the huntsman rides toward the animal at a slow pace, holding his weapon in front, while the boar extends its tusks and rushes to meet the charge. Furthermore, although the boar-spear could be used in any of the ways that a warrior might use a lance on the battlefield, Gaston warns that it is foolish to carry it “einsi comme s’ilz vouloient jouter” (LC 54: 10-11). His exhortation *not*

¹⁵ This armory even has a tinge of the satanic, as files (*limes*) were considered to be devilish instruments. For the relative nobility of various weapons, see Pastoureau, “La forêt médiévale.”

to hold one's weapon as if one were tilting, of course, presupposes that the hunter already knows how to joust, or at least that he has seen enough jousts to know how one carries the lance. Jousting with a boar is a contest in which even the finest hunter – that is, Gaston himself – may be unhorsed by his opponent, sometimes with dire consequences.

C'est une orgueilleuse et fiere beste et perilleuse, quar j'en ay veü aucune foiz moult de maulz avenir et l'ay veü ferir homme, des le genoill jusques au piz tout fendre et tuer tout mort en un coup sanz parler a homme, et moy meïsmes a il porté a terre moult de fois, moy et mon coursier, et mort le coursier. (LC 9: 6)

[This is a an overweening [*orgueilleuse*] and proud [*fière*] beast and a perilous one, for I have sometimes seen many evils come from it; I have seen it strike a man and split entirely him from the knee to the breast, and knock him dead in a single blow, so that he never breathed a word; and I myself have been thrown many times to the ground with my horse, and my horse killed.]

In describing this “joust” between man and beast, Gaston lapses into the vocabulary of the chivalric romance: he refers to his mount as a *coursier*, a war-horse or lance-horse, rather than the more usual *cheval*.¹⁶

The general rules that govern battlefield conflict also hold on the hunting-field: the more noble the opponent, the more noble a hunter's *armes* should be, and the more important it is that a huntsman perform his maneuvers properly. “Properly,” in this context, generally means that the hunter should put himself in some amount of physical danger during the confrontation. Thus although the stag held at bay by dogs can be shot or speared, the admirable hunter will kill it with a sword while it is distracted (LC 45: 265, MG 34: 2741). Similarly, although the boar can be killed with

¹⁶ Gaston uses the word *coursier* whenever he wishes to underscore either the danger of an animal enemy or the inherent nobility of hunting as a sport; see e. g. LC 1: 11-12; 9: 6; 27: 18. Edward, who normally uses the uninflected word *hors* to describe the hunter's equine companion, translates the first example as *courser* (MG 3: 436); the other two instances he omits from his translation altogether.

either the boar-spear or the sword, Gaston has more praise for the latter, presumably because there is more danger involved: “Et c’est belle maistrise et belle chose qui bien scet tuer un sangler de l’espee” [“And it is fine mastery and a fine thing, he who knows well how to kill a boar with the sword”] (LC 54: 30-31).

The method of dispatch is less crucial for animals that are less noble. The bear can either be killed from afar with a thrown boar-spear or lance (LC 52: 17) or killed by two men, each armed with a sword (LC 8: 34-36); either way, Gaston recommends that the hunter not put himself in mortal danger by facing the enraged bear one-on-one. The treed cat is knocked down by missiles (LC 58: 9); the otter is speared from above with an iron fork (LC 59: 22-30). Gaston does not specify how the fox and wolf should be killed, presumably because both animals are so ignoble that the hunter’s technique does not much matter. Most animals can be shot with arrows or bolts, trapped, or poisoned, but, as a general rule, the hunter ennobles his quarry and himself by meeting it on the animal’s own terms and putting himself in some danger. Conversely, the hunter degrades his quarry, and sometimes himself, by refusing any danger, particularly if that self-preservation involves trickery. It is for this reason that Gaston recommends a rather extreme punishment for any man who uses nets to catch hares at night: a thief’s or a murderer’s death by hanging (LC 81: 2-3).

The practice of arms – whether on the hunting-field, the tourneying field, or the battlefield – was an inherently dangerous occupation and casualties were not a wholly unexpected outcome of either military or cynegetical engagements. Still, few aristocrats undertook either activity with the expectation that they would be killed in action. Death in battle might be a glorious exit from a fighting life, but it ceased to be admirable if it could have been avoided with some sensible safety precautions. A worthy knight always minimized risks to his physical welfare by striking a careful

balance between courage and caution.¹⁷ Similarly, although a hunter was expected to put himself in some physical peril during the hunt and it was not uncommon for men, dogs, and horses to be killed in action, it was (at least to hear the manual writers tell it) generally only the inept and the foolhardy who were the victims of this kind of “battle.” It was always important not to cross the line from bravery to foolhardiness: the risks to personal safety were always very real during the hunt and the primary object, after all, was to distract the eye with heroic gestures while minimizing any real danger. There is thus always a tinge of the ludicrous and the shameful in the hunt-related human casualties that the manuals describe, as when one archer shoots another accidentally (LC 71: 32-37), a man foolishly takes on a bear by himself (LC 8: 36), or a badly trained mastiff attacks its own master (LC 17: 8). On the other hand, the death of a hunting dog was like the death of a horse during war or tournament, a grievous loss but one to be expected. Thus the hunter is counseled not to let all of his dogs get killed at once (LC 53: 3) and, if he has a choice, to let the uglier and more worthless dogs get killed first (LC 17: 16-17; 52: 11-12).

However, even though battle skills and weapons were similar to those used in hunting, and vice-versa, in many ways war and hunting were fundamentally incompatible with each other. Although a warrior might legitimately hunt in periods of enforced inaction,¹⁸ it was wasteful to spend a man or a horse’s energy (and possibly their lives) on a day’s sport during wartime, even if that sport might have some inherent usefulness of its own. Honoré Bonet, a Benedictine monk trained in

¹⁷ For an example of an admonition against foolhardy behavior on the battlefield see Richard Kaeuper and Elspeth Kennedy, *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context, and Translation* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996) 23: 14-19.

¹⁸ This practice was likely more common in literature than in history, and few would have hunted as extensively and ambitiously as does Chaucer’s Troilus during the siege of Troy:

In tyme of trewe, on haukyng wolde he ride,
Or elles honte boor, beer, or lyoun;
The smale bestes leet he gon biside. (III.1779-1781)

(Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987)).

canon law and the prior of a monastery in Southern France, cautions that soldiers should not be sent to catch fish or hunt venison while on duty;¹⁹ it is not clear, though, whether he is concerned that recreation will be too distracting for the men or whether he is merely pointing out that soldiers have more important things to do than gather food. Gaston himself acknowledges that that sport must suffer when duty calls, but even such enforced privation affords a small measure of *deduit*. If he must be absent for the chase, Gaston notes with obvious satisfaction, then at least the chase will be less pleasurable for his absence:

Et ilz me cognoissent et m'aiment et me croyent, et tant que, si aucune foiz je suis malades ou j'ay guerres ou autres besoignes, que je ne puis aler chascier, ilz ne chasceron ja avec null aigre, ou, si ilz le font, ce sera pou. (LC 49: 75)

[And they understand me and love me and believe me so much that, if sometimes I am sick or go to war or have other duties, so that I cannot go hunting, they will not hunt with any keenness, or, if they do, with only a little.]

Not only were arms and hunting counterparts on many different levels, but fighting between men tended to escalate, and often tip the balance unfavorably of, the struggle between humans and the natural world. A country at war naturally has fewer resources to spend on conflicts against nature, whether that action be defensive (staving off the constant encroachment of the wilderness) or offensive (reclaiming more land, removing undesirable species). The destruction of human works – whether through warfare itself or through the looting and wanton damage that invariably accompany it – always “lets in the jungle,” to use Kipling’s phrase, providing nature with an opportunity to recolonize those spaces that it had earlier been forced to

¹⁹ The Tree of Battles of Honoré Bonet, ed. and trans. G. W. Coopland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1949) IV.ix/ 131.

relinquish. Thus men who lose in battle often lose a second time to the depredations of nature.

War was a way of life for both Gaston and Edward and a fact of life for much of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, yet it is notable that human conflict barely infringes on the world of the hunting manuals. Brief, grisly images of slaughter flicker in the background, but they are very far away and almost obscured by the intervening distance. The only aspect of war that is of real concern to our authors is the effect of armed conflict and social upheaval on sport, particularly those changes that war produces in the temperament of local wildlife. Famine naturally makes predators bolder, but war makes them unnaturally bloodthirsty. Wolves, in particular, learn to follow advancing armies (LC 10: 63-64; MG 7: 1016-17) and to pull down bodies from the gibbets (LC 10: 48-50; MG 7: 986-992); sometimes they even turn into man-eating *louz-garouls*, or werewolves, as a result.

Hunting was not merely a war against animals or a trial run for the war against other men; it was also, at least according to the manual writers, a key weapon in the ongoing war fought by a man against his own baser emotions and impulses. Hunters are more decent and continent than their non-hunting peers, explains Gaston, because a keen hunter is too busy during the day and too tired at night to get into much mischief.

Donc di je que, puis que veneur n'est oyseus, il ne peut avoir males ymaginations, et, s'il n'a males ymaginations, il ne peut fere males euvres, quar l'imagination va devant, et, s'il ne fet males euvres, il faut qu'il s'en aille tout droit en paradis. (LC Prologue: 33-34)

[Therefore I say that, since the hunter is never idle, he cannot have evil imaginings, and if he does not have evil imaginings, he cannot do evil works, for imagination comes first; and if he does not do evil works, he must go straight to Paradise.]

We must remember, of course, that Gaston's protests were, of course, motivated far more by personal considerations than they were by literary or cultural ones. As we have seen, he apparently had his own numerous transgressions at the forefront of his mind while writing *Livre de chasse*, and so the assertion that hunters are incapable of *males euvres*, "evil works," is undoubtedly a pre-emptive strike against those who might accuse him of sin.²⁰ Edward might very well have recognized that Gaston's words were applicable to his own situation: such an avid hunter as himself, he seems to protest, could never have been guilty of the treason of which he was accused.

Although the chase was intimately associated with arms on many levels, not everyone felt that hunting was compatible with the life of a fighting man, or even with chivalry itself. Honoré Bonet warns his readers that a man who has pledged his faith to remain a prisoner may break his word, and thereby irreparably damage his reputation, if he is tempted to escape by the prospect of boar- or stag-hunting.²¹ Geoffroi de Charny agrees with the assertion of his fellow knight, Ramón Llull, that it behooves a knight to hunt. However, Charny warns that men must beware of devoting too much time to the chase lest it distract them from winning renown for themselves,²² and rulers in particular should not allow hunting and hawking to interfere with their duties.²³ Hunting and hawking, it would seem, can easily become dangerous distractions from the practice of chivalry, rather than reinforcements of or pleasant adjuncts to it. John of Salisbury is even more critical of hunting, noting that men are even provoked to wage war against each other in order to defend their hunting rights.

²⁰ In this sense, Gaston's project is necessarily self-defeating. Everyone knew that hunting never kept him from any of the seven deadly sins, and it especially had no impact on his relationship to lechery. Gaston, as has been noted elsewhere, was a notorious Casanova whose venatorial adventures in the bedroom kept easy pace with his venatorial adventures in the field.

²¹ Bonet, *The Tree of Battles*, IV.lvi/ 160.

²² Charny, *The Book of Chivalry* 19: 121-125/ 114-115.

²³ Charny, *The Book of Chivalry* 24: 108-109/ 138, 141; 25: 63-67/142, 145.

Some ... have gone to such extremes of madness as to become enemies of nature, forgetting their own condition and scorning divine judgment by subjecting God's image to exquisite torture in enforcing their claim to wild beasts; for a beast's defense they have not feared to destroy man, which the Only Begotten Son of God has redeemed with his blood.... Stay your hand; touch them [wild animals] not; for under pain of treason you may fall victim to the hunter.²⁴

It is not clear whether he refers to the forest laws themselves,²⁵ or to the violent extralegal dealings that characterized the relationship between landowners and poachers. In any case, his meaning is unmistakable: hunting turns men into beasts.

Finally, hunting was more than an adjunct to, a substitute for, or a metaphor for war: it was also, in some sense, an amelioration of war. War, no less than plague or famine, was considered to be a sign of God's displeasure of man's sinfulness; on the other hand, at least according to the authors of hunting manuals, God smiled on the hunter's activity and blessed his success. Warfare destroyed the land, but the chase replenished it: hunting kept a man capable and virile, able both to defend his land from attack and to ensure, in some magical way, its future fertility.

²⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: The Statesman's Book*, trans. Joseph B. Pike and John Dickinson, ed. Murray F. Markland (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979) I.4/ 6-7.

²⁵ We could even consider the forest laws of medieval England (and, to a lesser extent, those of France) a kind of internecine warfare. The English laws severely curtailed the rights of forest dwellers and landowners. Sometimes, in the case of William the Conqueror and New Forest, lords even burned down forest villages in order to create forests out of cultivated lands. With few exceptions, none except those of aristocratic blood, or those favored by the king or presiding lord, were allowed to hunt in the royal and seigneurial forests, and poachers were severely punished. Men on both sides of the law were wounded and killed in conflicts over these stringent laws. In addition, men who were caught breaking the forest laws often returned to those same forests as outlaws, living off of the land as best as they could and often inflicting damage on forest-dwellers and travelers alike in the process. For the forest laws, see Charles R. Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1979); Raymond K. Grant, *The Royal Forests of England* (Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton, 1991); Maurice Prou, "La forêt en Angleterre et en France" *Journal des Savants* n. s. 13 (1915): 241-253, 310-320, 345-354. See also Maurice Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Toronto and Buffalo, NY: U of Toronto P, 1977).

The hunt and the tournament.

Although the hunt is closely allied in many ways with military engagements and exercises in general, it is most directly comparable to the courtly martial contest, the tournament or *hastilude*.²⁶ Both the hunt and the tournament were *praeludia bellorum*, war games that exercised the same skills that knights used on the battlefield. Both were critical rites of passage for young boys entering manhood. Both were undertaken by men who, whatever their other motivations may have been, wished to publicly display their skills and thereby increase their own honor. Both were repeatedly condemned for their frivolity by the Church – always unsuccessfully, it may be added.²⁷ Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, both the tourney and the hunt were central to the aristocratic view of itself. They were peacetime performances in which men showed off their martial, equestrian, and courtly skills to each other, as well as to spectators of both sexes.

Hastiludes and hunting both contain their violence within certain stylized forms and gestures, and their practitioners are expected to act according to quite similar codes of honor. For the most part, the more dangerous the fighting (whether intra- or interspecies) and the more elaborate the rules of combat, the more skill that was required of the participants and the more prestige they could win if they were successful. As with so many things, the vocabulary and fashions of both were dominated by the French on both sides of the Channel. Even the terms that described

²⁶ I use this admittedly imprecise terms to indicate courtly war games of all sorts. For surveys of the various types of tournament, see Keen, *Chivalry*, chapter 5, “The Rise of the Tournament”; chapter 7, “The Forms of Combat” in Juliet R. V. Barker, *The Tournament in England, 1100-1400* (Suffolk, Eng.; Wolfeboro, NH: Boydell, 1986).

²⁷ For a summary of some of the numerous fulminations and injunctions – lay and ecclesiastical, aristocratic and bourgeois – against tourneying, see Ruth Harvey, *Moriz von Craün and the Chivalric World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) 113-126; chapter 4, “The Tournament and The Church,” in Barker, *The Tournament in England*; Keen, *Chivalry* 94-97.

For some of the charges leveled against lay and ecclesiastical hunters, see John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: The Statesman's Book* I.4 ; Anne Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1993) 118-133. Also see John T. McNeill and Helena M. Garner, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1938) 276, 289, 307, 352, 388.

the successful completion of each sport were almost identical, both derived from the Latin *prehensus*, “that which has been caught or taken”: the *pris* was a verbal “prize” awarded by the judges to the finest tourneyer at the end of each day’s fighting, and the *prise* was the horn music indicating that the quarry (usually the stag) had been killed.

The two sports also shared a similar range of forms. *Hastiludes* tended to be classifiable as one of two general types: those designed largely or primarily for the pleasure of the spectators (*à plaisance*), and those geared toward providing practical military experience for the participants (*à outrance*). Not surprisingly, the dividing line between the two types was often blurred.²⁸ Hunts, like tournaments, were also either primarily participant-oriented or spectator-oriented; however, the physical constraints of the hunting-field, among other factors, made the former far more popular. To use the terminology of the tourneying field (something which our cynegetical authors do not do themselves), hunts for certain animals could be considered *chasces à outrance*, because the military practice they provided was valuable and the danger to the huntsman was very real (though always managed). Similarly, certain *petites chasces*, if properly set up, could be hunts *à plaisance* – pleasant for the human hunters and spectators only, of course.²⁹ As with *hastiludes*, these categories are imprecise at best. Many hunts provided neither military training nor interesting viewing, though of these our authors have little to say. On the other hand, even the most serious hunts, like the deadliest jousts, were orchestrated

²⁸ Even the most elaborate and theatrical *hastiludes* were displays of military skill. Even the deadliest contests (such as those between enemy knights in border areas) could be considered *à plaisance* insofar as they were routinely observed and enjoyed by onlookers.

²⁹ Although it is outside the scope of this discussion, the primary medieval outdoor activity *à plaisance* was hawking. All of the action took place at a reasonable distance, in clear view, and at controlled intervals, and it did not require any physical exertion on the part of the hawkers themselves. Furthermore, due to the nature of the activity, both sexes could participate equally and nonparticipants were always welcome additions to a party. Consequently, it was conducive to such halftime activities as talking and flirting. For the same reasons, it was considered more of a pastime than a sport.

exhibitions of skill and valor designed to impress an audience rather than dispatch a wild animal in the safest and most efficient way possible.

In truth, *praeludia bellorum*, regardless of whether they were martial or cynegetical, *à plaisance* or *à outrance*, never lost their self-consciously performative quality. While competing in tournaments, a knight was judged by his peers, by spectators of both sexes, and, in more formal events, by specially appointed judges. He had to be constantly aware of the effect that his own appearance made on the audience because his conduct and deportment, no less than his physical prowess and martial skill, were always under scrutiny. Accordingly, a chivalrous but unsuccessful knight – a man with an elegant and above-board fighting technique, who exposed himself to danger without flinching but without taking unnecessary risks, who behaved courteously toward any captives taken in mock combat, and who accepted defeat gracefully – such a man might well be judged more worthy than someone who was successful but discourteous or unsportsmanlike.

Despite the fact that he was not subject to formal judgment, the hunter was no less an actor than the tourneying knight, and his acting was under no less scrutiny. On the hunting field, no less than on the tourneying field, a man's behavior, the skill of his performance, and the dignity of his bearing were oftentimes reckoned more important than any success or failure that his efforts might realize. He was expected to perform his duties with skill and grace in front of whomever might be watching: his fellow hunters, non-hunting spectators of either gender, God, and, of course, himself and his own conscience. Because a huntsman was often separated from his fellows, he frequently had to act as his own audience and his own judge, and he was expected to be at least as critical of himself as an outside observer would be. Thus the nameless “good huntsman” of the Prologue of Livre de chasse and Chapter 1 of Master of Game

procures for himself a clean conscience, a long life, and abundant joy in this world and the next, all by performing his duties properly for no one else but himself and God.

If hunters and tourneyers were actors, then the hunt and the *hastilude* could be considered large-scale, tripartite dramatic productions with well-defined beginnings, middles, and ends. Tournaments began with scripted opening ceremonies and the formal presentation of the contenders;³⁰ the hunt began with a similar opening ceremony (the *assemblee*), the climax of which was a formal presentation of the evidence of a worthy animal enemy in the vicinity. At the closing ceremonies of both the tournament and the hunt, the victors received their rewards before everyone retired to a celebratory banquet. Moreover, both types of *praeludia bellorum* encouraged their participants to model themselves after romance heroes and heroines.

Tournaments *à plaisance* were sometimes directly imitative of romance, particularly Arthurian romance, and might involve role-playing (including masks and costuming), props, and even scenery. Likewise, as was explored in the first chapter, the structure and setting of the *chasce a force* deliberately imitated the structure and setting of the typical romance and thereby encouraged its participants to write themselves and their own lives into chivalric literature.

Wherever possible, both types of performance were enacted within a predetermined and well-defined showground. The tournament proper took place over a large area of countryside enclosed by palisades and ditches; it often included villages whose inhabitants had been specially cleared out for the occasion. The joust was more spectator-oriented than the large-scale tournament; it was executed upon a clearly-defined martial “stage” (a confined space strewn with sand), surrounded with a

³⁰ *Hastiludes* were themselves often part of larger and more elaborate performances such as weddings, coronations, diplomatic meetings, and knighting ceremonies. See Barker, The Tournament in England, esp. ch. 5.

wooden palisade, and flanked by *berfrois* (spectator stands); because the action was well-defined and always kept in clear view, it was particularly popular with women.³¹

For obvious reasons, it was more difficult to contain the movements of a hunted animal than it was to limit the area in which men fought each other. As with large-scale tournaments, the area of the *chasce a force*, although not formally designated, typically encompassed villages and fields, and villagers had no choice but to clear out of the way of the games of the aristocracy. However, the very elements that made the *chasce a force* exciting for its participants – the large field, the unpredictable behavior of the animal, and the vagaries of weather, geography, and vegetation – all but ensured that there was no vantage point from which an onlooker could observe the entire spectacle.³² If spectators were to be accommodated, the action had to be physically contained and the audience had to be positioned as advantageously and comfortably as possible. The stag hunt *a force*, in which dogs and their handlers were strategically arranged along the projected flight pattern of the animal, could provide a fine show for spectators, so long as the terrain and weather were clear enough to provide a good view (LC 45: 36-38). Another method, distinctly English, was to erect temporary structures (*chaumbres*, MG 36: 3028-3031) which were sylvan counterparts of the *berfrois*. These “chambers” provided a place from which the royal archers could shoot passing animals, but their primary function was to serve as seats – private theatre boxes, in a sense – from which spectators could watch the action in comfort. These structures sheltered both archers and observers, effectively blurring any clear distinction between the categories of “participant” and “nonparticipant,” “actor” and “spectator.”

³¹ Barker, *The Tournament in England* 147.

³² Although most hunts could not easily accommodate onlookers, knowledgeable auditors could follow the general progress of any *chasce a force* fairly easily, so long as the action was within earshot.

Then, too, there were other, less reputable ways of containing the action of the chase: these were methods that required artifice and a commensurate loss of cynegetical *noblesce*. One way was to use beaters and dogs to run the animals into *haies* (hedges laced with nets); the *chasse a l'haie* concentrated all of the excitement of the chase along a single physical line. Animals could also be hunted within enclosed parks, though this was not much of a challenge, and was considered a woman's sport.³³ Wolves were sometimes pitted against dogs in a kind of rigged gladiatorial contest that the wolf could not win (LC 55: 83-84). For the most part, though, anything that enhanced a hunt's value as a spectator sport necessarily lowered its value as a test of the hunter's skill, and therefore lowered its prestige as an activity worthy of a noble huntsman.

Arms manuals.

In the previous sections, we explored the ways in which arms and hunting occupied similar positions in the aristocratic life and worldview. In this section, we will examine the strong similarities between the didactic literatures devoted to each sport. Arms manuals – a fairly broad category of treatises that describe the duties, obligations, tactics, and tools of soldiers, knights, and leaders of armies or political entities, whether historical or contemporary – were, if anything, even more popular in the late Middle Ages than were hunting manuals. Like the hunting manuals, the arms manuals claimed to provide their readers with useful instruction; and, like the hunting manuals, they did not do anything of the sort. In reality, both types of didactic literature discreetly revealed the mysteries of an exclusive and prestigious profession to uninformed readers while at the same time reminding knowledgeable readers about

³³ See Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk* 7.

the things that they already knew and providing scripts for deeds that they might perform in the future.

For greater convenience in discussion, I will divide the broad category of the *military* or *arms manual* into two admittedly artificial and imprecise subcategories, the *war manual* and the *chivalric manual*. The former deals primarily with broad questions of war and questions that were mostly theoretical in nature: when it is legal and right to wage war, for example, or the rules that combatants should obey when fighting a just war. The latter deals more specifically with the spiritual, social, and military duties and privileges of knights. Neither one, as we will see, has much to say about the practical aspects of arms in general or knighthood in particular.³⁴

³⁴ These distinctions are, for the most part, my own. Editors and critics of these texts have not even been able to agree on a generic name, let alone separate the genre into manageable subsets. Richard Kaeuper labels *Livre de chevalerie*, *Roman des eles*, *Ordene de chevalerie*, and *Libre que es de l'ordre de cavalleria* “vernacular manuals of chivalry” (Charny, *The Book of Chivalry* 23). Other editors are more unwilling to assign generic labels. Keith Busby identifies *Roman des eles* and *Ordene de chevalerie* as “the two earliest poems on the theory of knighthood in Old French” (*Eles and Ordene* v; see n. 37), and A. T. P. Byles calls *Libre que es de l'ordre de cavalleria* “the most compendious mediaeval treatise on the obligations of knighthood” (*The Book of the Ordre de Chyualry* vii; see n. 38). Significantly, neither critic uses the term “manual of chivalry.” In contrast, in the introduction to his edition of *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye* (see n. 36), Byles does not assign any label or descriptor to this subset of didactic literature.

Though some editors seem reluctant to assign the abovementioned texts a generic name, most recognize them as treatises on chivalry of one sort or another. However, there is considerably more confusion and disagreement regarding treatises that treat other military subjects besides chivalry *per se*. In the first place, the titles of what I call “war manuals” may refer to the concept of chivalry (e. g. Christine de Pisan’s *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye* or the anonymous *Knyghthode and Bataile*), even though they tend to treat the theory and practice of chivalry only in passing. Further confusing the matter is the fact that medieval authors tended to recycle material from Classical war manuals, re-presenting the wisdom of the ancients as (oftentimes anachronistic and unhelpful) tips for modern soldiers and knights. By far the most influential Classical manual was the *Epitoma rei militaris*, more commonly known as *De re militari* (ca. 4th-5th c. A. D.) of Flavius Vegetius Renatus. Vegetius was praised by medieval authors as an authority on chivalry and his work was translated into a number of vernacular languages. The most influential French translation of Vegetius was Jean de Meun’s *L’art de chevalerie* (1284). The work was not translated into English until 1408 but became widely influential after that date; for two English versions of Vegetius’ manual, see *Knyghthode and Bataile: A XVth Century Verse Paraphrase of Flavius Vegetius Renatus’ Treatise “De re militari”*, R. Dyboski and Z. M. Arend, eds. E. E. T. S. 201 (London: Oxford UP, 1935) and *The Earliest English Translation of Vegetius’ De re militari*, ed. Geoffrey Lester (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1988). Lester sidesteps the question of chivalry altogether and calls Vegetius’ text “the most influential military manual in use during the Middle Ages” (7).

In this chapter, we will consider two war manuals which had a very widespread readership during the time at which Gaston and Edward were writing: Honoré Bonet's L'arbre des batailles (hereafter Arbre) (ca. 1387)³⁵ and Christine de Pisan's Le livre des faits d'armes (hereafter Faits) (1408-9); the latter was translated into English by William Caxton in 1489 as The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye (hereafter Fayttes).³⁶ Arbre treats four main subjects: the divine origins of war; the wars among the great kingdoms of the past; the characteristics, duties, and rights of a good knight; and various strategic and moral conundra that may arise during war and how they may be solved. Christine considered Bonet to be her muse and spiritual guide and Faits borrows freely from Arbre. It, too, is divided into four sections: the duties and qualities of good leaders and soldiers; "cawteles & subtyltees" of war, along with the basics of maritime warfare; the laws governing warfare; and the laws governing related matters such as truces, safeconducts, and judicial combat.

More vernacular didactic works of chivalry have survived than have manuals of war, and we will here consider four of the most influential. Raoul de Hodenc (or Houdenc)'s Roman des eles (hereafter Eles) (ca. 1210) is an allegory of knightly virtue in which the author explains that a knight's *prouesce* can only rise through means of two wings, *largesce* and *cortoisie*. The anonymous Ordene de chevalerie (hereafter Ordene)³⁷ (ca. 1220) uses a frame story in which Saladin asks his Christian captive, a knight by the name of Hue, to explain to him the way in which a new knight is dubbed; Hue reluctantly agrees and walks Saladin through the ceremony, adding a speech on the knight's obligations *gratis*. Undoubtedly the most influential of all of

³⁵ See n. 19.

³⁶ Christine de Pisan, The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye, trans. William Caxton, ed. A. T. P. Byles, E. E. T. S. 189 (London: Oxford UP, 1932).

³⁷ Both Eles and Ordene can be found in Le roman des eles by Raoul de Hodenc and L'ordene de chevalerie, ed. and trans. Keith Busby, Utrecht Publications in General and Comparative Literature 17 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1983).

the chivalric manuals was Ramón Llull (or Lull)'s extremely popular Libre que es de l'ordre de cavalleria (Le Libre del orde de cauayleria) (1279-1283), translated into French as Livre de l'ordre de chevalerie and into English by William Caxton in 1483-1485 as The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry.³⁸ Llull's manual also begins with a romance-inspired frame story: a young squire, on the way to the king's court where he is to be knighted, meets a man who was a knight and is now a wise hermit. The hermit, surprised by the squire's ignorance regarding the way of life that he is about to adopt, proceeds to instruct him regarding various topics: the duties of a knight, the procedure and symbolism of the dubbing ceremony, the symbolism of knightly weapons, the seven virtues of a knight, and the honor owed to a knight. The final manual that we will consider is Geoffroi de Charny's Livre de chevalerie (1344 - 1352)³⁹, which is indebted to both Ordene and Cavalleria and possibly to Eles as well. Although it was far less influential than Llull's work, Charny's text became the standard treatise on chivalry, at least in Germany.⁴⁰

Critics of the arms manuals, like critics of the hunting manuals, have tended to misinterpret the motivations of the authors and readers of these manuals – when they consider them at all, which is not very often. It would seem that even the most perceptive critics are unwittingly influenced by modern expectations of what “manuals” should look like and the purposes they should serve. Thus Kaeuper, for example, takes pains to prove that Charny's Livre de chevalerie is “an eminently practical treatise,” at least when compared with other “mystico-symbolic” works of chivalry such as Ordene.⁴¹ Although he is correct in pointing out that the Livre de

³⁸ Ramón Llull, The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry, translated and printed by William Caxton from a French version of Ramón Lull's "Le libre del orde de cauayleria", together with Adam Loutfut's Scottish transcript (Harleian ms. 6149), ed. Alfred T. P. Byles, E. E. T. S. 168 (London: Oxford UP, 1926).

³⁹ See n. 17.

⁴⁰ Charny, The Book of Chivalry 63.

⁴¹ Charny, The Book of Chivalry 29.

chevalerie was “written openly to instruct and install chivalric values,”⁴² Kaeuper has to admit that Charny never says anything *really* practical – that is, he does not suggest “specific tactical and strategic responses” for wartime situations – because he knows that such things can only be learned in the field, not through a book.⁴³

The truth is that the military manuals are no more “practical” – at least in the sense of “practical as a how-to book for soldiers or knights” – than are the hunting manuals, nor are they meant to be. Despite all appearances and regardless of fervent authorial claims, didacticism was as foreign a concept to Geoffroi de Charny or Honoré Bonet as it was to Gaston or Edward. Although the military manuals sometimes use various didactic or pedagogical aids such as series of rhetorical questions and their answers, or carefully numbered points (the seven aspects of *largesce* and *cortoisie*, the four moral responsibilities of the knight), they are, for the most part, narrative or exhortative rather than obviously didactic – that is, indicative or subjunctive, rather than imperative, narratives.

The writers of hunting manuals faced the sticky problem of justifying what were, in effect, unnecessary projects. If they wrote for the people whose business it was to deal with the subjects covered by arms manuals (generally speaking, political leaders and the warrior aristocracy), then the manuals were unnecessary, because there was nothing that such informed audiences could learn about their own professions from general-interest books. On the other hand, if they wrote to non-leaders and non-warriors about the duties of leaders and warriors, then the manuals were even more unnecessary. How could they rationalize writing manuals for audiences who would never need the information contained therein, either because they already knew it or because they would never need to use it? Coincidentally or not, they came up with

⁴² Charny, *The Book of Chivalry* 23.

⁴³ Charny, *The Book of Chivalry* 56-57.

many of the same solutions as did the writers of hunting manuals. Some of them took pains to make their manuals accessible and interesting to non-knightly, non-warrior, and/or non-aristocratic audiences. Others revealed the secrets of *chevalerie* to their lay audiences under the thin pretext of moral instruction. Still others wove pleasing audience fictions that either transformed every reader into a warrior or counselor or assured the civilian lay reader that he or she had an important role to play in wartime.

Like all medieval manuals, arms manuals are popular works; their authors wrote primarily to entertain and flatter their audiences, not to instruct or challenge them, and they often wrote for personal profit. Regardless of their proclaimed objectives or intended audiences, arms manuals were always perfectly understandable to, and presumably enjoyable for, anyone who was literate (or who lived in a household in which someone was literate) and who had an interest in military matters – regardless of gender, age, profession, class, or personal experience. They were designed to function as stimuli for memory and fantasy, as well as to provide scripts for role-playing a major aspect of the aristocratic life. Through the process of reading, readers were received, either explicitly or implicitly, into imagined communities of soldiers, knights, or noblemen. They were encouraged to think of themselves as men who had experience on the battlefield or the tourneying field and whose knowledge and skill could affect the outcome of military engagements or the future of kingdoms.

As was discussed in Chapter 1, popular works are always aimed at a nonspecialist audience and written for profit of some sort. It must be admitted that the authors' purposes in writing arms manuals (and therefore the kinds of "profit" that they hoped to obtain) can be obscure. However, if we look closely enough, we see that most of our authors expected to be rewarded or at least recognized for their knowledge, and that all of them utilize techniques that ensure the widest possible audience for their works.

William Caxton, who translated both Christine de Pisan's and Ramón Llull's works into English, was an indisputably popular author. He was motivated by profit in its most basic and concrete sense: he wanted to sell as many books as possible to as many people as possible. Although they do not say as much, it seems likely that the poets (Raoul de Hodenc and the anonymous author of the *Ordene*) hoped to gain tangible rewards, or at least the promise of interested audiences and the potential benefits appertaining thereto, by creating works that dealt exclusively with the popular and very respectable subject of *chevalerie*. In his eagerness to gain his audience's ear, Raoul de Hodenc is even bold enough to proclaim himself more of an expert on knighthood than practitioners of *chevalerie* themselves: minstrels, heralds, and *jongleurs* like himself, he claims, are the best judges of a knight's character, because only they know how open-handed or miserly men are when they are in their own halls (Eles 55-143). Ramón Llull's intentions are the most difficult to fathom. He gave up chivalry at a relatively young age in order to become a missionary, presumably because he thought it better to convert the Saracens than to kill them. Although it may seem curious that such a peaceable fellow should write a treatise on chivalry, at least part of his motivation seems to stem from a desire that others should recognize just how far and wide his knowledge extends

Even the authors who ostensibly wrote for the public good were driven by the desire for personal gain. Honoré Bonet and Christine de Pisan both claim that they wish to encourage France to heal herself of the ills caused by war and misrule. Undoubtedly these claims were sincere, but it is undeniable that both authors also made a tidy profit off of their writings. Bonet was a social and political climber with far more ambition than measurable success. Arbre was only one of several writings that were intended to curry favor with the ruling classes (including the Count of Foix, Gaston Phébus himself); it may have been for this work that Charles VI awarded

Bonet an annual pension of one hundred gold francs in 1392.⁴⁴ Christine made her living by her pen, and it is very likely that the Duke of Burgundy, Jean Sans Peur, commissioned the writing of Faits (probably as a book of instruction for his charge, Louis of Guyenne, the Dauphin of France) and paid her 200 livres for it.⁴⁵ Likewise, although Geoffroi de Charny may have been compelled to write his chivalric manual out of the fear that chivalry (and, by extension, France) was declining, he, too, undoubtedly had hopes for personal gain. Like Gaston, he was considered one of the finest living practitioners of his chosen profession, and it would have been only natural that he increase his own prestige by writing the definitive chivalry sourcebook for the newly formed Company of the Star, itself one of the most prestigious contemporary chivalric orders.

What is certain is that most of these authors left nothing to chance when it came to taking credit for their work. Honoré Bonet, Christine de Pisan, Raoul de Hodenc, Geoffroi de Charny, and William Caxton identify themselves as the authors or translators of their texts; Ramón Llull does not give his name, though he explicitly refers to Cavalleria in another of his works, Doctrina Pueril.⁴⁶

Although the authors of arms manuals wished to attract the largest secondary readerships possible, they generally addressed themselves to small and elite primary readerships, knowing full well that the illusion of exclusiveness would make their works all the more attractive. Thus, in the introduction to Arbre, Bonet addresses himself directly to Charles VI, but within the text he speaks many times to the lay

⁴⁴ See H. Millet and M. Hanly, "Les batailles d'Honorat Bovet: Essai de biographie," Romania 114 (1996): 135-181, esp. 150-158.

⁴⁵ Charity Cannon Willard, "Pilfering Vegetius? Christine de Pizan's Faits d'armes et de chevalerie," Women, the Book and the Worldly: Selected Proceedings of the St. Hilda's Conference, 1993, vol. 2, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer) 35. For a discussion of the impact that Faits had in both France and England, see also Frances Teague, "Christine de Pizan's Book of War," The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries: Visitors to the City, ed. Glenda K. McLeod (Lewiston, NY; Queenston, Ontario; Lampeter, Wales: Edwin Mellen, 1991) 25-41.

⁴⁶ Llull, The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry xiii.

readership he hopes to attract (e. g. Arbre IV.99/ 187-188). Similarly, although Christine de Pisan ostensibly wrote for the instruction of Louis de Guyenne, she claims that she writes for a larger, though still elite audience – “they that been exersyng & experte in tharte of chyualrye” (Fayttes I.i/ 6: 15-16) – in the hopes that “all knyghtes and noble men” who read or hear her book read should be roused to ever greater deeds of chivalry (Fayttes III.i/ 189: 27-33). However, she also admits that she has constructed her book so that it is understandable “to alle men” (Fayttes I.i/ 7:1-2), thus attracting the widest possible audience. Furthermore, though most of her subject matter deals with the sworn profession of the first estate, she is very sympathetic to the needs of the other members of society and counsels her readers to be likewise; a literate bourgeois(e) or craftsman reading her treatise would certainly feel included in her intended readership, nor would a cleric object to her views.⁴⁷

Geoffroi de Charny uses a similar tactic: although he writes his manual for the use of the Company of the Star – that is, precisely those men who were the least likely to need either tutoring or exhortation, even from an acknowledged master – his implied secondary readership is much more inclusive. He carefully does not address his treatise to the men of his prestigious military order in particular, or even to knights in general: rather, he speaks familiarly to an unspecified *nous*, “us” a group apparently composed of military protégés but not excluding other interested parties. Furthermore, he takes pains to speak of the duties and rewards of *all* warriors, from the greatest

⁴⁷ For example, Christine insists that all men have a part to play in a just war and that a leader who is leading his land to war must seek the counsel of “the foure estates of his contree”:

þⁱ is to wite thauncyen nobles experte in armes whiche knowe what the fayt of warre mounteth / Item the clerkes legystes / by cause that in the lawes ben declared alle the caasis of whom ought to sourde iuste warre as many ensamples we haue to this purposos / Item the bourgeises by cause it is of necessite and by cause they parte in the myse and tresour whiche therto by houeth as said is / and that they take hede to the fortificacion of townes cytees and enduyce the mene people to ayde theyr lord / Item somme of the men of Crafte for more to honoure the sayd peple / And that they be the more enclined and the better willed to aide their lord with their goodes / of whiche thing they ought alle to be swetely prayd (Fayttes I.iv/ 16: 6-20)

knights to ordinary soldiers.⁴⁸ Although Charny consistently differentiates between knights and men-at-arms, he appears to consider all of them as colleagues, if not peers; he gives the same advice to both groups (e. g. Livre de chevalerie 35: 166-169) and suggests that they will find the same rewards in the next world (Livre de chevalerie 40: 37-42).

The anonymous author of the Ordene and Raoul de Hodenc utilize a still different reader fiction. They do not pretend that their readers or listeners are knights, or allow them to think that they are “listening in” on high-level discussions of *chevalerie* or statecraft; they openly acknowledge that most, if not all, of their readers are lay civilians. Their excuse for treating such subjects is that they wish to recount the virtues, duties, and honors of knighthood in order that their readers and listeners might more fully appreciate and desire to emulate the warrior class (Eles 5-8, 33-39, Ordene 473-479). It is a transparent fiction, of course: there is no good reason why a civilian lay audience would need to understand the ritual of dubbing to knighthood or the symbolic meaning of the knight’s accoutrements. In fact, Raoul hardly refers to knights or knighthood at all in his poem; rather, he gives what are fairly general-purpose exhortations to a general, though presumably morally elite, audience (“toz cortois” 338, “toz les cortois” 644 [“all courteous people”]): for example, “Et nous savons que poi avient, /En nul país, ne loing ne pres,/ Que nus soit larges et mauvés” [“... and we know that it little becomes anyone in my country, far or near, to be both generous and cowardly”] (Eles 158-160). Such universal advice can be profitably followed by anyone, regardless of his or her position in life. In other words, anyone who takes Raoul’s exhortations to heart can look and act like a knight, even if he or she cannot be one.

⁴⁸ Kaeuper makes a similar interpretation: “His thoughts could potentially go to all those who lived honorably by the profession of arms, whatever their particular social substratum. He thereby assured the possibility of the widest audience for his treatise” (Charny, The Book of Chivalry 34).

Writers of arms manuals also utilize the reverse tactic for attracting readers, a strategy that we have already seen the hunting manual authors use. Rather than try to manufacture reasons why a layman would need to know information about arcane subjects, they invent elite (but historically impossible) reader fictions for their audiences to adopt. The reader persona for the hunting manuals is a skilled and capable huntsman who nevertheless needs tutoring in basic cynegetical matters; the reader persona for certain manuals of chivalry is an eager, aspiring, and naturally *preu* but heretofore untutored student of arms or *chevalerie*. The reader is invited to adopt the position of Saladin from Ordene (who is presented as a fine and noble knight, entirely ignorant of chivalric practice but a quick learner, whose only fault is that he is an infidel), or the young squire from Cavalleria who is en route to his own knighting ceremony yet remains curiously innocent about what knighthood means. The tone of these military manuals is, if not always friendly, then certainly always intimate: Bonet lectures us with the repetitive insistence of an old pedant and Charny's fulsome half-time pep talks soon become wearisome, but we never lose the sense that both authors are trusted advisors, that we are valued protégés, and that what they have to say to us is of utmost importance for our own welfare and for that of the country at large.

Several of the authors use more than one of these reader-acquisition strategies, but only William Caxton is clever enough, or bold enough, to use all of them. At the end of his translation of Christine's Faits, Caxton writes that King Henry VII commissioned him to translate the work into English and print it

to thende that euery gentylman born to armes & all manere men of werre captayns / souldiours / vytayllers & all other shold haue knowlege how they ought to behaue theym in the fayttes of warre & of bataylles ... to thende that it may come to the sight & knowlege of euery gentylman & man of warre / & for certayn in myn oppinyon it is as necessary a boke & as requysite / as ony may be for euery estate hie

& lowe that entende to the fayttes of werre (Fayttes IV.xvii/ 29: 12-16, 24-29)

His work is exclusive insofar as it was commissioned at the request of a royal patron, but it is utterly inclusive in the sense that Caxton embraces all of England as his readership. According to Caxton, the finer points of statecraft and field tactics are essential reading not only for warriors, aristocratic or otherwise, but also for men (and women) who have no direct connection with war, and certainly no influence over its inception, spread, or outcome.

Interestingly enough, Caxton encourages the same broad-based audience to read his translation of Lull's Cavalleria by taking precisely the opposite tack. He pretends to sternly exclude non-knights from his readership in order to make his work seem all the more fascinating and exclusive: "... whiche book is not requysyte to euery comyn man to haue / but to noble gentylnen that by their vertu entende to come & entre in to the noble ordre of chyualry" (The book of the Ordre of chyualry 121: 6-9). Caxton allows his audience to have their cake and eat it, too: on the one hand, he insists that the information contained in Lull's text is highly classified and only suitable for the most elite readers; on the other hand, his business is to make it possible for anyone to buy a mass-produced copy of this top-secret information. Any reader with a sufficient amount of disposable income can take delight in reading and fantasizing about the glories and the private tribulations, the feasts and tournaments, the silks and jewels and golden spurs of the warrior elite. Modern-day publishers of popular literature still use Caxton's marketing techniques, and they are still effective.

Authors of manuals, whether military or cynegetical, manufacture demand for their work by weaving clever audience fictions, but they also manipulate the style and content of their texts in order to accommodate the greatest possible readership. We have seen that romance characters, dream vision backgrounds, and pseudo-historical

narratives are literary techniques extensively used by the hunting manual writers. These literary devices help to make the manuals reminiscent of other, more “literary” genres, thereby rendering the information that they contain both more attractive and more accessible to readers, especially those who are casual or uninformed. Likewise, most of the military manuals that we are considering here utilize familiar literary conceits – allegories (Eles), frame stories lifted from romance (Ordene, Cavalleria), or dream visions (Faits, Fayttes).

Furthermore, both the hunting manuals and the arms manuals contain various implicit narratives. The hunting manuals, as we have seen, hint at the narrative of the young hunter’s development, the narrative of each individual hunt, the narratives of daily and seasonal cycles. The arms manuals, on the other hand, hint at other kinds of stories: the education of a squire, the movement of armies and spies, the progress of battles, the administrative decisions that lead to war. All of the implicit narratives add up to give the reader the impression that great things are afoot in the world of the text, and that he or she is watching them from a privileged standpoint.

Even though they may use “literary” flourishes, these texts are always rhetorically and linguistically simple. Bonet purposely wrote in the vernacular and in plain language in order to attract a lay readership. Christine openly declares her intent to write as plainly as possible so that she may be comprehensible to as many people as possible:

But as it apperteyneth this matere to be more executed by fayt of
 dyligence & witte / than by subtyltees of wordes polished / and also
 considered that they that been excersyng & experte in tharte of
 chyualrye be not comunely clerkys ne instructe in science of langage / I
 entende not to treatre / but to the most playn and entendible langage that
 I shal mowe / to that ende that the doctryne gyuen by many auctors /
 whiche by the helpe of god I purpose to declare in this present boke /
 may be to alle men clere & entendible (Fayttes I.i/ 6:12-7:2)

In the epilogue to the same volume, Caxton reinforces Christine's words in his prayer to the king "to pardone me of this symple & rude translacion where in be no curyous ne gaye termes of rethoryk / but I hope to almighti god that it shal be entendyble & vnderstanden to euery man" (Fayttes V.xvii/ 29:36-39). Caxton understood, of course, that the more men who found his books "entendyble," the more copies he could sell.

Yet another popular tactic for expanding potential readerships (and simultaneously advertising the wisdom and knowledge of the author) is to compile vast amounts of material so that the result is a veritable commonplace book of information. Again, this is a strategy we have seen before. Livre de chasse deals with much more than simply *la chasce* proper: it also includes such eclectic information as the natural history of game animals (complete with tidbits of folk wisdom that Gaston cannot always verify but dutifully reports anyway), the care of dogs, methods for compounding veterinary medicines, proverbs, personal anecdotes, and traditional stories. Similarly, all arms manuals are so diverse in subject matter that it is difficult to say what they are "really" about. They tend to indiscriminately mingle the theoretical with the practical, the historical with the contemporary. They consider topics appropriate for historians (military exploits of past ages), philosophers (the ethics of war), administrative officials (the laws of war), and battlefield commanders (how to undermine the walls of a besieged castle or which weapons to use in naval warfare), as well as individual warriors or knights.

As with the hunting manuals that we have investigated, the arms manuals are divided and sometimes subdivided so that their information is presented in small, easily digested parcels. The longer prose texts (Arbre, Faits, Cavalleria, Livre de chevalerie) are physically and visually divided into sections and sometimes sub-sections. These manuals are thereby made more attractive to the casual reader because almost any section can be read independently of any other; the reader can tackle as

many or as few sections at once as he desires, and he can read them in any order. The shorter verse texts (Eles, Ordene) are not physically divided, but their sometimes difficult subject matter is clearly organized thematically or chronologically (the seven aspects of *largesce* and *cortoisie*, the steps of the dubbing ceremony, the four moral obligations of the knight). The Livre de chevalerie is unusual among military manuals in that it has no clear organizing principle, although Charny does divide his material into sections, each with a more or less coherent theme. This painstaking division of the manuals is intended to make them more useful for reference and casual reading, but it also has another, subtler, effect: the numerous headings and sub-headings (not all of which are really necessary from an organizational point of view), as well as the impressive tables of contents, serve as visual reminders to the audience of just how complicated and vast is the knowledge contained therein, and, by extension, how knowledgeable the authors themselves must be.

Writers of arms manuals could not assume that their secondary audiences had any prior knowledge of their themes. Thus the arms manuals, like the hunting manuals, are usually straightforward. There is little technical jargon, and what little does exist is usually understandable from context. All of these manuals are perfectly intelligible to a modern civilian reader; it seems reasonable to assume that they would have been even more understandable to a medieval reader who was that much closer to the subjects. At the same time, there is something strangely and powerfully attractive in the occasional obscure passage of the military manuals, such as Christine de Pisan's description of how to build certain war machines:

For to make a werrely holde that men calle a barbed catte / and a
 bewfray that shal haue ix fadome of lengthe and two fadome of brede /
 and the said catte six fadome of lengthe and tow of brede / shal be
 ordeyned all squarre wode for the same aboute foure hondred fadom a
 thousand of borde / xxiiij / rolles and a grete quantyte of smalle wode /

The naylles that seruen to the same as here boue is writon Item six mastes eueriche of thre score or foure score fete of lengthe that shal serue to the sayd bewfray and catte after the waye that ought to be ordeyned (Fayttes II.xxix/ 159: 24-34)

She never explains what the “barbed catte” and “bewfray” are, or how they should be constructed with all of this quantity of wood and nails; she says merely that they should be made “after the waye that ought to be ordeyned.” The same vagueness that renders the manual useless for any practical purposes is a decided advantage for the casual reader. We, after all, do not need to build war machines (if we did, we would hopefully not have to rely on a book for our information): we merely enjoy reading about people who *do* have to build them, and fantasizing about how such machines would be used, and to what effect. Nor do we have to either watch the building or see the finished products in order to share in the excitement; regardless of the level of one’s knowledge, there is something undeniably thrilling in reading about the exact specifications for building massive machines of war.

The military manuals are highly effective as works of imagination-stimulating (if not strictly imaginative) literature because they are, above all, evocative. They do not construct rigid identities for their readers; they merely offer them all-purpose imaginative tools with which they can create whatever fantasy they wish. Naturally, the more knowledgeable the intended or imagined audience, the more evocative and less explicit a text can be. In fact, a text might be in danger of limiting its own appeal as a springboard for memory or fantasy if it were *too* explicit.

Although an official might just conceivably use a war manual as a crude guide for policy-making, it seems far more likely that a non-official would read the book in his spare time in order to fantasize about what it would be like to be a political leader. There may not be enough specific information regarding war tactics for a commander

to find the war manuals “practical,”⁴⁹ but they certainly would have made exciting reading for a civilian who wanted to know what it was like to be in combat. Military manuals claimed to lay bare the mysteries of the warrior class – chivalry, war-making, even the sacred ceremony of dubbing to knighthood – to all who could read. By reading these manuals, or so went the fiction, any reader could know as much as the king and his counselors and commanding officers knew.

Though the arms manuals were not functional how-to guides, this was not to say that men who were already versed in military matters could not find value in them. In fact, they provided many of the same benefits for their experienced readers as they did for their inexperienced ones – that is, inspirational reading and ample material for fantasy – in addition to powerful prompts for memory. A medieval warrior might read a manual of war in order to relive the battles that he had already seen and remind himself of the examples of chivalry that he had witnessed or performed himself. His reading would also be conducive to a certain kind of what I might call, if the term has not already been invented, *subjunctifying*: that is, imagining what he *would* do or *could* do the next time around, or what he *would have* or *could have* done in the past if thus-and-such had not prevented him from doing so. Similarly, although a squire would not have turned to military manuals in order to learn how to hold a sword or ride a horse, he might very well read them in order to prepare himself for the heavy responsibilities and the transcendent glories of the order to which he hoped to gain admittance, or to inspire daydreams about potential future successes. A common soldier might also read a manual in order to imagine the life of a knight, or, far less

⁴⁹ There are several reported instances of leaders who used Vegetius’ *De re militari* (or one of its translations) as a how-to manual in wartime. However, even if these stories are true (and it seems likely that they are only apocryphal), Vegetius seems to have been more useful as a source of inspiration than a source of useful information. See Lester, *The Earliest English Translation* 13; Dyboski, *Knyghthode and Bataile* xxv; Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages* 211-212; Malcom Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France, and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1981) 129.

likely but still possible, a knight might read a manual in order to see the battlefield through the eyes of a common soldier.

The texts thus encourage the reader to put him- or herself in the position of king, counselor, knight, or soldier, and sometimes into more than one role in succession. If the reader really did occupy one of these positions, then he was invited to re-live or re-imagine his own experiences, as well as to imagine the experiences of his peers, betters, or inferiors. The opportunities for vicarious role-playing go even further, however, because the manuals not only consider men of different stations in life who have different roles to play in wartime: they also consider men who are possessed of different moral and intellectual qualities. Thus Charny treats at length the deeds, thoughts, and actions of all possible types of men-at-arms, from foot soldiers to kings, certified *preudoms* who behave ideally to those who are *preux* but not *sages* or *sages* but not *preux*, all the way down to the *chatiz corps*, “wretched bodies” (Livre de chevalerie 22) who fear for their own lives. Readers are invited to compare their own characters and actions with those of the whole range of humanity, and human nature dictates that this is a comparison that will be, in most cases, fairly self-flattering.

As we have seen, medieval warfare and hunting were complementary but reciprocal activities, with remarkably similar didactic literatures. The medieval hunt was a war against animals, just as war or war games could be construed as hunts of a human enemy. However, the war against nature, unlike those waged against hostile conspecifics, was subtle and perpetual: it rarely erupted into overt and spectacular violence, but it could never be completely won, either. Therefore, the importance of the conflicts between man and nature was by necessity always symbolic rather than

cumulative and the virtue in hunting, like the virtue in fighting, lay in tireless struggle and noble conduct on the field rather than in the gain of any decisive victory.

Of course, unbeknownst to its human soldiers, the war against nature *was* progressing apace, and decisively in their favor. Man's domination over the natural environment was spreading ever wider. The wild areas were growing smaller and more scattered, and many of the animals against which men fought with such fervor were growing fewer in number every year. Ironically enough, the most devastating damage was done not by aristocratic hunter-warriors but by the commonest soldiers: agricultural workers, charcoal-burners, and woodcutters.