RICE UNIVERSITY

THE CREDIBILITY OF EREC'S VERLIGEN IN
HARTMANN VON AUE'S EREC

by

Henry A. Stromquist

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ABSTRACT

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Henry A. Stromquist

Literally translated the MHG term verligen means "to lie too long." It is defined as the neglect of one's duties and responsibilities in favor of devoting the day to languishing in bed. Its consequences are the loss of honor and esteem.

Some noted students of Hartmann's works have suggested that the effect of the verligen motif in Hartmann von Aue's Erec suffers because with only two victories to his credit the hero could not be a renowned knight. This observation, together with the definition of the term verligen, implies that Erec would have to be a knight of sufficient status to have the verligen constitute a fall from a previously attained level of excellence. Contrary to popular belief that Erec is a gallant and successful knight, it is shown in this thesis that, prior to the verligen, his characterization as a knight is not convincing. As a result the verligen loses credibility.
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The underlying theme of Hartmann von Aue's two Arthurian romances *Erec* and *Iwein* is that a knight must be capable of reconciling *Ehre* and *Minne*, *Ritterdienst* and *Frauendienst* in order to reach perfection. In *Erec* this theme is intimately tied to the concept of the hero's *verligen*, which gives unity to the two parts of the romance. Traditionally, students of Hartmann's works have regarded Erec as a knight of excellence, who at the hand of Ider loses his *Ehre*, subsequently regains it, only to fall victim to his own *unmâze* (the *verligen*), the recovery from which constitutes the major portion of the text in the form of the *aventiure-Fahrt*. It will be shown in the following study, however, that this is not the case.

1 Cf. Gustav Ehrismann, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters (Munich, 1954), part 2.2.1, 168ff., 181; and Helmut de Boor, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur (Munich, 1966), II, 70, 81.

2 This concept appears to have had the meaning: to sink into, or to become lost in, inactivity and laziness as a result of lying too long; to become slack in one's duties and responsibilities; and to be corrupted by lying too long. The allusion to sexual *unmâze* is always clearly given. For textual references outside of Hartmann's *Erec* see: Matthias Lexer, Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch (Leipzig, 1878), III, 164.


4 Cf. de Boor, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur, II, 70.
The regaining of Erec's honor does not seem to represent growth from "Dumpfheit zur Klarheit" as in the case of Parzival, although over the entire work Hartmann's Erec clearly evolves as a character. Thus, the Erec we perceive prior to the verligen is not the Erec who, in the second part, returns as "vollkommener Ritter" from the aventiure-Fahrt. In the period prior to the verligen Hartmann chose to present Erec's background, behavior and courtly standing in a manner markedly different from the hero's portrayal in Chrétien's Erec and in the Mabinogion Gereint. Although the effect of this independent course is considerable in setting Hartmann's work apart from those of his predecessors, it has received little or no consideration and has yet to be fully analyzed.

It has been suggested that in comparison to Chrétien's Erec, where the hero is already a renowned knight prior to the battle for the sparowhawk, the effectiveness of Hartmann's verligen motif is diminished. Since some of the qualities

5Cf. Carol K. Bang, "Emotions and Attitudes in Chrétien de Troyes' Erec et Enide and Hartmann von Aue's Erec der Wunderaere," PMLA, LVII (1942), 325.


7The dependency of Hartmann on Chrétien's Erec has been clearly established. Cf. de Boor, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur, II, 69. For a detailed discussion of the genealogy of Hartmann's Erec see: H. Spenaay, Hartmann von Aue: Studien zu einer Biographie (Halle, 1933), I, 63-125.

8Cf. Spenaay, Hartmann von Aue, I, 77.
and virtues which contribute to a hero's fame are the precise qualities relinquished in the process of the verligen. Sparnaay's observation has broad implications. It follows that the act of verligen would lose its credibility if, from the outset, Erec were not characterized as sufficiently renowned to have it constitute a fall from a previous level of excellence; that is, from a meaningful life in harmony with God and his fellow men to a state of disintegration and knightly negligence. Therefore, in order for the act of verligen to evoke the same effect as the corresponding act in Chrétien's Erec and in Gereint, the hero's life before his downfall would have to be beyond reproach. He would have to possess those positive qualities which through unmâze have the potential of being destroyed. In Hartmann's Erec, however, this does not seem to be the case.

It will be shown in this paper that Hartmann's Erec did not possess the necessary knightly prerequisites to lend credibility to the theme of verligen. Indeed, he was less than an unknown knight: young, inexperienced and unknightly in behavior.

In order to substantiate this claim, I will first examine Hartmann's missing introduction.9 Secondly, it will

9Some scholars have suggested that the small missing portion at the beginning of Hartmann's text may have included references to Erec's knighthood and previous fighting experience. (Cf. Hendricus Sparnaay, "Zu Erec-Gereint," ZfrPh, LXV [1925], 52-69; reprinted in Der arthurische Roman, ed. Kurt Wais, Darmstadt, 1970, p. 225.) This, however, is not the case, as shown in Chapter I. The evidence presented there eliminates the necessity of making allowances for what may have been contained in the missing portion of Hartmann's text.
be shown that Erec is inexperienced and could not, therefore, be famous or accomplished; thirdly, that his status at court is not representative of a flawless knight; fourthly, that he is guilty of an unkindly display of egotism; fifthly, that Erec is uncertain of his own abilities and his place in courtly society; and finally, that at the time of his **verligen** he had not been at court long enough to acquire the stature and ability of his predecessors.
I. HARTMANN'S MISSING INTRODUCTION

The introductory verses to Hartmann's work have unfortunately been lost and, therefore, cannot be consulted for background information concerning Erec's experiences and actions as a knight, nor about his personality and general behavior prior to meeting the queen, the point at which Hartmann's fragmented text begins. We can, however, speculate as to the possible content of the lost verses by examining the introduction of other Erec versions.

Chrétien opens his poem with a short philosophical prologue on the importance of applying one's intelligence and knowledge to their fullest potential, followed by the declaration: "d'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes."¹⁰ He begins his narration by relating the ritual of the white stag and Arthur's desire to hunt it while holding court at Cardigan. There were many excellent knights at Arthur's court, one of whom was Erec. Chrétien characterizes him as a great knight, fair, well attired and one who received great praise from all. The hunt begins and, as Erec rides out to join Arthur, he meets the queen whom he accompanies in her search for the hunting party.

Much the same is related in the opening passages of *Gereint* except for more detail on the white stag and the holding of Arthur's court. However, there is a basic difference. Chrétien first describes Erec in a passage prior to his meeting the queen, as opposed to Gereint's introduction to the reader at the instant of joining the queen's party in the field. The fact that Erec's first description occurs prior to meeting the queen may appear insignificant, yet it is vital in determining if Hartmann had intended us to know more about Erec than the contents of today's fragmented text reveal.

Hartmann's missing text probably contained information very similar to that provided by Chrétien and by the author of *Gereint*, except for the mention of Erec. A portion of what may have been included can be deduced from the available text. After the sparrowhawk contest, Arthur and the hunt of the white stag are referred to as if mentioned on a previous occasion: "do der hirz was gejaget/als iu è ist gesaget." An examination of the preceding text, however, reveals no mention of this event. This discrepancy suggests that the stag hunt must have been related in the missing introduction.

A second statement in the available text offers conclusive proof that Hartmann's lost introduction contained

---

no mention of previous knightly deeds:

\begin{quote}
daz im alsö jungh
sö schöne was gelungen
und im sin ērstiu ritterschaft
mit lobelicher heiles kraft
iedoch alsö gar ergie:
wæn er begundes vor nie.
\end{quote}

(1264-9)

Sparnaay suggests that "vielleicht hat die verlorene Einleitung eine Bemerkung über frühere Rittertaten erhalten, wie Chrétien erwarten läßt."\(^\text{12}\) If we accept this argument we would also have to concede that Hartmann contradicted himself, for had he intended to furnish information of "frühere Rittertaten" rather than clarifying the fact that Erec had no previous experience, he probably would not have chosen to call the combat with Ider, Erec's first (cf. lines 1264-9).

Of the missing introduction, it can also be said with virtual certainty that it included the inevitable prologue that precedes the narrative material of Hartmann's other works. These prologues generally include some philosophizing, a statement of intent and identification of Hartmann as the author. Their length varies from 28 lines in Der arme Heinrich to 176 lines in Gregorius. If the prologue to Erec had been close in length to either work, and if we are to accept Wapnewski's approximation of the total length\(^\text{13}\) as correct, few lines would remain after


\(^\text{13}\)Peter Wapnewski, Hartmann von Aue (Stuttgart, 1962), p. 39. Wapnewski estimates that the original contained
the prologue and stag hunt for relating any background information about Erec. This becomes even more apparent when we recognize that the episodes found in Chrétien are related by Hartmann in considerably greater length. Chrétien describes the fight with Ider in 136 lines, Enite's horse in 40 lines, and names 51 knights at Arthur's Round Table. In comparison, Hartmann requires 208 lines, 480 lines and approximately 140 knights, respectively, to express his thoughts. "Es ist ihm ein Hang eigen zu genau Beschreibung, zu korrekter Ausmalung, zuweilen zu Pedanterie. Er verweilt, zählt auf, zeigt gerne was er weiß..."14 It appears, therefore, reasonable to assume that the stag hunt,15 but more especially the glories of Erec's knightly deeds, if they were included, would have been explained in great detail, necessitating a lengthy introduction. Whether the missing portion contained anything in addition to the above-mentioned points cannot be determined with certainty; one can only assume that it showed additional similarities to Chrétien's Erec and to Gereint. The above shows, however, that background information on Erec's Rittertaten was not included.

approximately 10,350 lines. Subtracting the 10,195 lines which have come down to us, would make the missing portion approximately 158 lines.

14 Wapnewski, Hartmann von Aue, p. 42.
15 The stag hunt is of importance because it is the vehicle through which Enite is later recognized as the fairest at court. For this reason alone it warrants mention somewhere in the text.
Finally, it can be shown that Hartmann not only omitted information pertaining to Erec's knightly deeds but neglected to mention Erec at all. Hartmann's fragmentary text begins with the statement:

\begin{verbatim}
bi ir und bi ir wiben.
diz was Erec fil de roi Lac,
der vrümekeit und saelden phlac,
durch den diu rede erhaben ist.  (1-4)
\end{verbatim}

Having at that instant joined the queen's party, Erec is in this passage introduced to Hartmann's audience for the first time, similar to his introduction in Gereint. If any additional information on Erec were offered, it would follow this introduction. In short, all that which Hartmann intended his audience to know of Erec is presented in the existing text and, therefore, the missing portion could not significantly alter the characterization of the hero.
II. EREC'S INEXPERIENCE

Erec's Fame

As sons of kings, the heroes of the three works in question are equal by birth. However, the authors' presentation of their accomplishments indicates that they are not as equal as one might at first assume. While searching for Arthur's hunting party, Queen Guenièvre and her maiden(s) are joined by Erec whom Chrétien characterizes as:

uns chevaliers, Erec a non;
de la Table Rondë estoit,
an la cort molt grant los avoit;
de tant com il i ot esté,
n'i ot chevalier si loë,
et fu tant biax qu'an nule terre
n'estovoit plus bel de lui querre.
Molt estoit biax et preuz et genz
et n'avoit pas .XXV. anz;
onques nus hom de son aage
ne fu de si grant veselage; (82-92)

(...a knight named Erec who belonged to the Round Table, and had great fame at the court. Of all the knights that ever were there, never one received such praise; and he was so fair that nowhere in the world need one seek a fairer knight than he. He was very fair, brave, and courteous, though not yet twenty-five years old. Never was there a man of his age of greater knighthood.)

To leave no doubt as to the accomplished and highly esteemed knight we have before us, Chrétien has the queen bestow still further praises upon him:

Et la reine l'an mercie:
"Biax amis, vostre compaignie
aim je molt, ce saichiez de voir:
je ne puis pas meillor avoir." (111-4)

(And the Queen thanks him: "Fair friend, I like your company well, in truth; for better I could not have.")
It seems clear that Chrétien unequivocally intended to establish his hero as an accomplished knight, experienced in battle with an equivalent reputation and widespread fame: "'Bien avomes oi/de vos parler an cest pais'" (670-1). ("'We have indeed heard of you in this country.'")

Examining the beginning of Gereint, a "knights of princely mean," we find similar praise for the hero in the queen's statement: "'And thou art the very best companion for me...of a young man, to have my companionship, in the whole dominion...'" (p. 232). To be designated the queen's "very best companion" indicates that Gereint, similar to Chrétien's Erec, enjoyed fame at court and was an outstanding individual.

In contrast, Hartmann does not lavish his hero with such praises. Instead, he deems it necessary, as we have seen (cf. quotation p. 6), to inform us that Erec's battle against Ider, the knight of the sparrowhawk, was his first encounter. This is evidenced at the beginning of the novel where Erec appears without weapons: "der ritter hete im genomen den lip,/wan Erec was blôz als ein wip" (102-3). "Dieser Vergleich stellt Erec als unerfahrenen Jüngling als ein wip."


17 It must be conceded that the praise offered by Gereint's author is considerably more limited at this stage of the novel than that which Chrétien bestows on his hero. As we shall see, when the entire period prior to the verligen is taken into consideration, Gereint compares favorably in stature with Chrétien's Erec and, therefore, possesses the prerequisites for verligen (cf. p. 49 below).
Such denial of any previous knightly experience finds no parallel in either Chrétien's *Erec* or in *Gereint*.

Sparnaay mentions on two separate occasions\(^1\) that the texts of Hartmann's *Erec* and of *Gereint* agree in naming the battle for the sparrowhawk as the heroes' first encounter. However, there is no evidence in *Gereint* to support Sparnaay's contention for which he offers no text reference. Nor is there any evidence for his claim that the "Mabinogion führt den Helden als einen noch unbekannten jungen Mann ein...,"\(^2\) as the queen's attitude toward and recognition of *Gereint* clearly shows: "'God prosper thee, Gereint... and I knew thee when first I saw thee now...'" (p. 232).

Even if we assumed that Sparnaay's statement could be proven, it would not have the same impact on the characterization of *Gereint* as it does in Hartmann's narrative, where in the beginning stages only two pieces of positive information are offered. During his fight against Ider, *Erec* is described as having *degenes ellen* (768)\(^3\) and earlier, in the queen's

---

\(^1\) Eva-Maria Carne, *Die Frauengestalten bei Hartmann von Aue* (Marburg, 1970), p. 31.


\(^3\) Lexer translates *ellen* as: "mut, mannheit," *Handwörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1872), I, 539. His *Mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch* (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 37, offers a revised and more complete translation: "kampfeifer, mut, tapferkeit." One can possess all of these qualities without previous experience especially under the motivation which spurs *Erec* on to win.
company, as one "der vrümekeit und seldent phlac" (3).22 This leads Sparnaay to deduce that, "die Situation wird daher ziemlich sonderbar: bloß ein Abenteuer hat Erec bestanden...ein sehr berühmter Held kann er also noch nicht sein."23

Erec's Youthfulness

Another indication of Erec's inexperience and, therefore, a further undermining of the credibility of his knightly acclaim is the fact that both the queen and Ider, and Hartmann in his parenthetical remarks, repeatedly refer to him as if he were a youth who had yet to attain the stature and independence of manhood. After our initial introduction to Erec as der junge man (18), we encounter, in the period prior to the tournament at Prürin, no fewer than twelve references to him as the junge man (930, 2285, 2324), junco (145, 1264, 2331), der juncherre (150), junge-linc (708, 757, 1138), kintlich (711) and kint (765). These remarks would hardly be used to describe a battle-seasoned knight, and their frequency suggests that Hartmann considered Erec's youth to be a major issue. He was not content to characterize his hero as a knight who was only

22 These two passages have especially contributed to the false notion that Erec is an exemplary knight at the beginning of the romance and, therefore, does not evolve as a character. Cf. Hans-Christoph v. Nayhauss-Cormons-Holub, Die Bedeutung und Funktion der Kampfszenen für den Abenteuerweg der Helden im "Erec" und "Twein" Hartmanns v. Aue (diss. Freiburg i. Br., 1967), p. 42. Hereafter Nayhauss-Cormons-Holub will be referred to as "Holub."

coincidentally young, but rather used the allusions to youth to show that, as a result of the encounter with Ider's dwarf, Erec was forced to leave the protection of Arthur's court and to deal with the realities of the outside world.

"Dem Jungling fällt, unvermittelt, ohne daß er sie gesucht hätte, eine Aventiure zu, die ihn aus seiner ahnungslosen Ruhe...herausreißt ins Leben in die Zeitlichkeit und ihn vor Aufgaben stellt, die den Einsatz aller Kräfte erfördern."

Hartmann uses the references to youth in situations of, or conversations concerning, past or approaching combat as if to draw the reader's attention to the fact that Erec is at a decisive disadvantage, implying that allowances should be made for him. The reluctance of the queen and Ider to believe in Erec's abilities supports this argument. Both recognized the improbability of his success in the battle for the sparrowhawk (see p. 15ff. below). However, the expertise with which he wins his first battle demonstrates that he is more accomplished than was supposed. This discrepancy suggests that Erec has learned well in his preparations for knighthood and that he may now, at least physically, be ready to assume such responsibilities:

\[
\text{Erecke dem jungelinge} \\
\text{gezam vil wol sin ritterschaft:} \\
\text{sin ellen gap im grôze kraft.} \\
\]

\[(757-9)\]

\(^{24}\)Gereint's youth, on the other hand, has no specific implication; he is referred to as "young" on several occasions, but never with such frequency as to compare with Hartmann's hero.

Attitudes of the Queen and Ider

An examination of the queens' responses toward the heroes' requests to pursue Ider reveals a difference in portrayal between Hartmann and the other two authors.

Hartmann's queen, Ginover, is reluctant to allow Erec to leave her company and the protection of the court. Normally his request would be quickly granted to facilitate avenging the offence committed against the queen, her maiden and Erec himself, thereby regaining their honor. What in Chrétien's poem appears to be the queen's routine but strong concern for a favorite vassal:

\[
\text{Et la reine autresimant a Deu, qui de mal le desfande, plus de \text{V} foiz le comande. (272-4) }
\]

(And the Queen in like manner more than five hundred times commends him to God, that He may defend him from harm.)

is characterized with somewhat less concern in Gereint:

"Go then" said she, "but go not too close to him until thou art provided with good armour. And great anxiety shall I feel for thee" said she, "till I have tidings of thee" (p. 233).

In contrast, the queen displays a near motherly concern in Hartmann's work:

\[
\text{gedingen unde sorgen hán ich umbe den jungelinc, wie nú stên siniu dinc. ich emohite in nie erwenden. got welle in uns senden. (1137-41) }
\]

She then requests the unlikely by asking him not to go:

\[
\text{der küneginne was vil leit daz er alsô junger reit ñf só grôze vreise: si bat in lân die reise. (144-7) }
\]
Although concerned, Chrétien's queen and the queen in Gereint have far less cause for anxiety about their knights' well-being than does Hartmann's queen, as they are fully aware of their respective heroes' capabilities. The portrayals of the two knights, particularly of Chrétien's Erec as being approximately 25 years old, indicate that the term jungelinc is inappropriate. In comparison, Hartmann's queen, conscious of Erec's inexperience and unknightsed standing, shows such concern that she is willing to forego the expected procedure for avenging the dwarf's transgression.

More unusual and to the point is Ider's reaction to the young man who has dared to challenge his right to the sparrowhawk, for he cannot conceive that his challenger could possibly be his equal as a knight. Erec's youthfulness, together with the fact that his rusted and outdated armor covered only half of his body, undoubtedly gave him the appearance of being clumsy and harmless. As a result, Ider brushes the challenge aside as a childish whim and attempts to dissuade Erec from his foolishness before harm befalls him:

```
er sprach: "jungelinc, ob iu wære
der lip zihte mære,
sø liezet ir enzit
iuwern kintlichen strit,
wân ir in nú schiere wirs lât,
sø ez an den lip gåt."  (708-13)
```

Ider thereby suggests that Erec could not have conceived the challenge alone and that his foolishness is the result of someone's ill advice:
"sweder man oder wip
iu dise rede gerâten hât,
der minnet ob iu missegât." (721-3)

Consistent in his intentions to portray his hero as well experienced, Chrétien characterizes Erec as eager to fight:

"...au mien esciant;
ce sont menaces de neant,
que tot par mesure vos dot." (855-7)

("...for me these are idle threats; for little enough do I fear you."")

Therefore, when Erec introduces himself and lays claim to the sparrowhawk:

Erec hardiemant li dit:
"Uns chevaliers sui d'autre terre.
Cest esprevier sui venuz querre,
et bien est droiz, cui qu'il soit let,
que ceste dameisele l'et." (842-6)

(Erec boldly answers him: "A knight I am from another land. This hawk I have come to obtain; for it is right, I say it in spite of all, that this damsel of mine should have it.")

he is not subjected to the humiliation of having Ider interpret his challenge as a childish whim, nor are efforts made to dissuade him from fighting. Instead, Ider recognizes him as a knight and equal and offers his own challenge:

"Conbatre t'an covient a moi,/se tu ne le me claimmes quite" (852-3). ("Thou must fight with me, if thou does not resign it to me.")

As the preliminaries give way to combat, the ability of Chrétien's Erec and the subsequent defeat of...
Ider come as no surprise. Only in Hartmann's text is Ider made aware that he considerably underestimated his opponent:

er wânde ein kint bestanden hân.
zesamene liezen si strichen.
dô bevant er wârlichen
daz Erec degenes ellen truoc.  

Hartmann thereby demonstrates Erec's physical readiness for knighthood (see above p. 14) for which, until now, he has been training.27

The Rusty Armor

In regard to Erec's knighthood at the time of his fight for the sparrowhawk, it is of interest to mention the armor he borrows as described by his prospective father-in-law:

"Leanz est li haubers tresliz,
qui antre .V. fu esliz,
et les chauces beles et chieres,
boenes et fresches et legieres;
li hiaumes i rest boens et biax
et li escuz fres et noviax."  

("In the house I have a triple-woven hauberk, which was selected from among five hundred. And I have some fine valuable greaves, polished, handsome, and light in weight. The helmet is bright and handsome, and the shield fresh and new.")

Gereint, on the other hand, appears on the field in "heavy rusted mean outlandish armour" (p. 237). In contrast to both, Hartmann mentions Erec's armor on two occasions as:

vil schoenez isengewant,
beidiu behende unde guot.  

..........................  

ze enge noch ze swære.
dô was ez behende unde guot.  

27 See also the discussion on authenticity, p. 41 below.
but on a third occasion as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sin schild was alt swære lanc und breit,} \\
\text{siniu sper unbehende und grôz,} \\
\text{halp er und daz ros blôz,}
\end{align*}
\]

(747-9)

It is unlikely that Erec's arms would have changed so rapidly from their original description to their use the following morning, nor does it seem probable that Hartmann would include such contradictory information. Holub suggests that "dem Rachedurstigen war das 'Isengewant' (591) 'behende unde guot' (618) erschienen" but that "in der Genenüberstellung mit Ider zeigt...der Dichter die Wirklichkeit von Erecs Aufzug, die dem Helden selbst nicht bewußt sein mag..."\(^{28}\) This solution is highly inadequate, for the armor was not "behende unde guot" as a result of Erec's imagination, but was so described by Corolus. The discrepancy is best contributed to the Textüberlieferung. A scribe, not understanding Hartmann's motive, may have changed the wording in the first two instances to coincide with his idea of how a knight should be characterized, but neglected to do so on the third occasion where it plays an integral part in the prelude to the battle and is, therefore, more difficult to change.

Since beauty in clothing, as well as in physical appearance, represents, for the aesthetically conscious courtly society, the outer manifestation of a person's inner qualities and standing,\(^ {29}\) the above interpretation would be

\(^{28}\)Holub, Die Bedeutung und Funktion der Kampfszenen, p.46.

\(^{29}\)"Die höfische Dichtung kennt nur den schönen Menschen; Hässlichkeit ist ihr der dämonische Kontrast zu dem, was
consistent with Chrétien's and Hartmann's portrayals of the accomplished knight and the inexperienced youth. Hartmann thus underscores the intent of his characterization with Erec's awkward and unknighthly appearance, offering a sharp contrast to Ider:

unde wäfenten sich sâ, der ritter [Ider] als im wol tohte, Erec als er mohte. (729-31)

Ider's portrayal represents the author's concept of a knight:

siniu sper wären geverwet wol. er was gezimieret: sin ros was gezieret mit richer kovertiure (diu was frecke tiure). sin wâpenroc alsam was, samit grüene als ein gras, mit richen borten umbestalt. als uns diu âventiure zalt, só was sin harnasch lobelich, er selbe einem guoten ritter gelich. (735-45)

The phrase "bien resanble vaillant vassal" (770) ("bearing of a valiant vassal") used by Chrétien to describe Erec is also found in Hartmann's text, but there as a description of Ider (cf. 745).

A discussion of Gereint's rusty armor is here deliberately omitted for I do not believe it to have any symbolic significance. As mentioned earlier (cf. fn. 17), the value of drawing comparisons between Hartmann's Erec and Gereint lies in the fact that if the entire period prior to the verligen is considered, Gereint's verligen is as convincing as that of Chrétien's Erec, regardless of whether or not individual episodes agree or disagree.
Finally, the armor's importance is indicated by the attitude of the spectators who, upon seeing Chrétien's Erec, reflect favorably upon his ability and standing:

"...mes molt li siet li hiaumes bruns,
et cil haubers, et cil escuz,
et cil branz d'acier esmoluz;
molt est adroiz sor ce cheval,
bien resanble vaillant vassal;
molt est bien fez et bien tailliez
de braz, de janbes et de piez." (766-72)

("But his gleaming helmet becomes him well, and the hauberk, and shield, and his sharp steel sword. He sits well upon his steed and has the bearing of a valiant vassal, well-shapen in arm, in limb and foot.")

In Hartmann's poem, however, the audience is immediately aware of Erec's slight chance of success and, in turn, is moved to pity:

under al dem liute
"got gebe dir heil hiute"
sprach ein gemeiner munt. (752-4)

It is apparent at this point that there is considerable evidence to substantiate the claim of Erec's inexperience. This lack of experience is reflected in the attitudes of the queen and Ider toward Erec, in the rusty armor he wears, and also in his characterization as a youth rather than an accomplished knight.
III. EREC'S STANDING AT COURT

Exemplary knighthood and its associated virtues are rewarded with recognition by the knight's peers and with standing in courtly society. An examination of Erec's position at court presents, therefore, a second opportunity to find support for my contention that Erec is not a knight.

It is of importance that Erec was not with Arthur and his knights hunting the white stag, since nonparticipation in such a major event immediately suggests that his social standing renders him ineligible. When asked of this by the queen, Gereint offers the excuse: "For my part I slept so that I knew not when he went" (p. 232). In Chrétien's Erec we find Guenievre following the hunting party so closely that one may well consider her to be a part of it. She is briefly detained by Erec who accompanies her to within the sound of the hunting horns:

"Dame, fet il, a vos seroie,
s'il vos pleisoit, an ceste voie;
je ne ving ça por autre afer
fors por vos conpaignie fere."  (107-10)

("My lady, if it please you, I should gladly accompany you along this road, having come for no other purpose than to bear you company.")

Hartmann offers no explanation for Erec's absence from the hunt. This has led to much speculation as to Erec's status at court. Thus, Meng states that "Erec nimmt an der Jagd nicht teil, sondern begleitet die Königin und
einige Hoffräulein auf einem Spazierritt. Wahrscheinlich läßt sich das Fernbleiben vom Jagdabenteuer damit erklären, daß er noch kein vollwertiges Mitglied der Tafelrunde ist..." Holub supports this argument: "daß Erec unbe-waffnet, eigentlich kein Ritter, sondern 'blöz als ein wip' (103) ist, erhellt seine Stellung am Artushof... Dadurch, daß Erec die seinem Stande gemäßen Waffen fehlen, gehört er dem Stand nicht vollständig an. Der Held ist am Hofe des Königs Artus, um sich zum Ritter auszubilden. Er ist ein Schildknecht." Not until line 4347, well after the ver-ligen, is Erec for the first time addressed as ritter.

The queen's attitude toward Erec's request to pursue Ider (see above p. 15) supports the arguments of Meng and Holub. If Erec does not pursue Ider the responsibility of regaining the lost honor would have to be delegated to someone else, since the injustice committed must be avenged. However, if Erec is a knight at Arthur's Round Table and abides by the queen's request, it would be difficult for him to face his peers without being branded a coward. If he chooses to remain and is not labeled a coward, it can

31 Meng, Vom Sinn des ritterlichen Abenteuers, p. 23.

32 Holub, Die Bedeutung und Funktion der Kampfszenen, p. 42. "Der kneht war 'de facto' aber nicht 'de iure' ritter, er führte schon das ritterliche schwert, ritt das ritterliche ross, aber er hatte kein recht dazu und wurde vom ritter nur geduldet." Felix Niedner, Das deutsche Turnier im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert (Berlin, 1881), p. 18, as quoted by Holub, p. 43.

33 In Gereint the insult against Gwenhwyfar, Gereint and the maiden is also regarded as an insult against Arthur. Cf. Gereint, p. 234.
only mean that pursuit is not expected of him and that the queen, aware of his inexperience, fears for his life. It is unlikely that the queen's desire to hold her favorite knights at court would, under the present circumstances, be strong enough to ignore a knight's request to do his duty under the laws of chivalry. Since remaining is obviously regarded as an honorable possibility, implied by the queen's request, Erec's honor could not be at stake. Ives' observation, "es ist möglich, daß Erec zuerst seine Position am Artushof der Verwandtschaft mit Artus verdankt (zB9944, 1776)" is, therefore, very plausible.34

Turning to what the authors tell us of the Round Table, we find that Chrétien leaves no room for speculation.35 In his introduction (see lines 83f.) he tells us that of the knights at Arthur's court, Erec was considered second in excellence only to Gawain (ahead of Lancelot):

Devant toz les boens chevaliers
doit estre Gauvains li premiers,  
li seconz Erec, li filz Lac,  
et li tierz Lancelot del Lac,  

(1671-4)

(Before all the excellent knights, Gawain ought to be named first, and second Erec the son of Lac, and third Lancelot of the Lake.)

He is also valued by Arthur as his second most important knight:


35 Arthur's Round Table is not mentioned in Gereint, nor is there evidence that he would not have been a member had it existed. The Round Table was not a Celtic tradition, for "neither the Irish nor the Welsh sat at their meals
car n'avoyt baron en sa cort
plus vaillant, plus hardi, plus preu,
faors Gauvain, son tres chier neveu:
a celui ne se prenoit nus;
apres celui prisoit il plus
Erec et plus le tenoit chier
que nes un autre chevalier.     (2230-6)

(For in the whole court there was no better or more
gallant knight, save only his dear nephew Gawain;
with him no one could be compared. But next after
him, he prized Erec most, and held him more dear than
any other knight.)

Wapnewski's claim that Erec is a knight of the Round
Table must be viewed with caution.\textsuperscript{36} Although Hartmann,
just as Chrétien, indicates that Erec is a member by depicting
him in the company of Arthur and his knights (see
lines 1611ff.), a detailed examination of the text reveals
that we cannot take his statement at face value. From a
chronological perspective it is of questionable validity.\textsuperscript{37}
His supposed membership must date from the period prior to
his first adventure, since Hartmann makes no mention that
Erec became a member after his return. To elevate an

about a large banqueting table, either rectangular or circular in shape." Roger Sherman Loomis, Arthurian Tradition

\textsuperscript{36}Wapnewski, Hartmann von Aue, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{37}This contradiction is not the result of a moment of
carelessness in Hartmann's creative process, but rather a
concession to the demand for authenticity. Hartmann was
compelled to include major elements from Chrétiens text
which often conflicted with the original ideas he wanted
to express. (For more detail see below, p. 41.) "Hartmann
hat sich auch an gewissen Stellen seiner Darstellung frei-
gemacht von Chrétiens Text, der nach Ausweis der großen
Zahl von fortlaufenden Kontaktstellen sonst die Grundlage
seines ganzen Werkes gewesen ist." Ernst Scheuneman,
Artushof und Abenteuer. Zeichnung höfischen Daseins in
Hartmanns Erec (Breslau, 1937), p. 10.
inexperienced youth to membership and then designate him as second only to Gawain demeans the reputation and elite-ness of the Round Table and is, therefore, unlikely. Hartmann, apparently, had two choices: similar to the author of Gereint, he could have omitted mention of the Round Table, or he could have placed it elsewhere in his work. Although the description does not befit his hero as it does Chrétien's, Hartmann's desire to improve upon and surpass his sources, as well as to demonstrate his knowledge, was too great a temptation to ignore. To move the description elsewhere would be to destroy the impact both of Erec's glorious return to court and of seeing him in the presence of the king and queen surrounded by knights (cf. Chrétien, lines 1658ff.), which no doubt impressed the impoverished Enite on her first journey away from home. If Erec's acceptance to the Round Table were moved elsewhere, his wedding would have been uneventful and Hartmann would have had to forego the lengthy description of the wedding guests (see lines 1902f.). In our discussion of the tournament at Prûrin (see below, p. 45), we will show that at its commencement Erec's behavior does not suggest membership and that, until then, his knighthood can be seriously questioned. Therefore, in terms of credibility, his Round Table membership should have been postponed. It is out of

Cf. Hartmann's descriptions of the battle for the sparrowhawk, 755ff.; the tournament at Prûrin, 2378ff.; and Enite's horse, 7286ff.
place where it now appears, unless membership is granted to all, from the most celebrated to the untried and unknighed.
IV. UNKNIGHTLY BEHAVIOR: EGOTISM

An examination of Erec's behavior reveals a third level on which his unknighthed status may be exposed. His youth and limited background manifest themselves in his egotistical actions and his blind quest for vengeance. He is incapable of dealing with new situations in a world in which he has no experience. In the confrontation with Ider's dwarf and in the resulting events, Hartmann offers a unique insight into Erec's personality, which contrasts sharply with what we perceive in the other two texts.

Confrontation with Ider's Dwarf

An objective examination of the confrontation scene discloses no significant dissimilarities between the three works under discussion. The subtle differences in characterization become apparent only through a comparative analysis of the heroes' reactions to the whippings incurred by them and by Guinevere's maiden.39

Throughout the incident Gereint remains conscious of his knightly responsibilities. After seeing how dastardly ("most curlishly") the dwarf has treated the

39 The queen sees a knight whom she does not know and sends her maiden to ask his name. The maiden is stopped by the knight's dwarf, denied the desired information and finally punished for her persistence.
maiden, he personally volunteers "to find out who the knight is" (p. 233). Again the dwarf refuses to furnish the desired information. As Gereint attempts to bypass him, in order to speak with the knight personally, he receives the same punishment: "The dwarf overtook him and struck him in the same place as he had struck the maiden, till the blood stained the mantle that was on Gereint" (p. 233). Momentarily, he considers slaying the dwarf but realizes that without armor he would be no match for the armed knight who would surely defend his vassal. He, therefore, returns to Gwenhwyfar and asks permission to pursue the knight to a place where he may arm himself.

There is no mention that Gereint's motivation for pursuing Ider is one of personal vengeance. On the contrary, when he later returns to court we learn that he unselfishly undertook the journey to avenge the queen. As the queen thanks him ("for having amends made so handsomely" [p. 244]), Gereint reveals the incentive behind his actions: "'Lady' said he 'it was my desire to have amends made thee according to thy wish'" (p. 244).

Chrétien's more detailed treatise offers only slight changes in content. The less severe treatment of the maiden, for example, evokes no response from Erec. Only when the dwarf struck her with a whip that was in his hand, across her face and eyes, till the blood streamed forth" (p. 233).

Chrétiens reports that although the dwarf attempted to strike the maiden in the face, she protected herself and was as a result only hit "sor la main nue" (184).
queen bids him to bring the knight to her, does he react:

"Hé! Erec, biax amis, fet ele,
molt me poise de ma pucele
que si a bleciee cil nains;
molt est li chevaliers vilains,
quant il sofri que tex fature
feri si bele criature.
Biax amis Erec, alez i
au chevalier, et dites li.
que il veigne a moi, nel lest mie:
conuistre vuel lui et s'amie."  (195-204)

("Ah, Erec, fair friend," she says, "I am in great sorrow for my damsel whom the dwarf has wounded. The knight must be discourteous, indeed, to allow such a monster to strike so beautiful a creature. Erec, fair friend, do you go to the knight and bid him come to me without delay. I wish to know him and his lady.")

Unlike the maiden before him, Erec receives the full thrust of the dwarf's blows:

de la corgiee grant cole
li a par mi le col donee.
Le col et la face ot vergie
Erec del cop de la corgiee;
de chief an chief perent les roies
que li ont feites les corroies. (219-224)

(He gave him a great blow with his lash right on the neck, so that Erec's neck and face are scarred with the blow of the scourge; from top to bottom appear the lines which the thongs have raised on him.)

Just as Gereint, he, too, considers it prudent to refrain from slaying the dwarf. His reaction to the blow, however, demonstrates a mildly selfish attitude. He returns to Guenièvre bemoaning his injuries:

"Dame, fet il, or est plus let;
si m'a li nains cuiverz blecié
que tot le vis m'a depecié;..."  (234-6)

("My lady," he says, "now matters stand worse; for the rascally dwarf has so wounded me that he has badly cut my face.")
The maiden's injury and the insult to the queen have temporarily passed from his mind. His only thought is to avenge the disgrace that has befallen him:

"Itant bien prometre vos vœux que, se ge puis, je vengerai ma honte, ou je la crestrai;...

("But this much I will promise you; that if I can, I shall avenge my disgrace, or increase it."

Hartmann's hero reveals character traits borrowed from both Gereint and Chrétien's Erec. Similar to Gereint, Erec observes that the dwarf deals very harshly with the maiden:

\[
\begin{align*}
daz sach diu künegőn und Ërec 
daz ez si mit der geisel sluoc 
die ez in der hant truoc, 
über houbet und über hende
\end{align*}
\]

and, therefore, gallantly volunteers to seek the information the queen desires: "er sprach: 'ich wil riten dar, /daz ich iu diu mære ervar!'" (70-1). He criticizes Ider for not censuring the dwarf:

\[
\begin{align*}
Èrec dô ahten began, 
der ritter enwære dehein vrum man, 
daz er ez vor im vertruoc 
daz sin getwerc die maget sluoc.
\end{align*}
\]

but, as we shall see below, neglects to conduct himself in a knightly manner. The selfish attitude characterized by Chrétien is transformed by Hartmann into egotism and blind

42 The insult to Guenièvre is twofold. First, her maiden was injured, and second, the information she requested was denied by a stranger passing through the land of which she is queen.

43 Later at court the queen mentions that Erec went to avenge his grief (see lines 1143f.).
vengeance. This becomes apparent at the instant Erec also receives a blow from the dwarf's whip ("mit der geisel ez in sluoc,/als ez die maget hete getân" [97-8]). Suddenly, the shallowness of his gallantry is exposed. "Erec erlebt zum ersten Mal, wie die höfischen Werte der rohen Gewalt gegenüberstehen." His immediate reaction is one of shame for having the queen witness the insult:

er gelebete im nie leidern tac
dan umbe den geiselslac
und schamte sich nie sô sêre
wan daz disu unère
diu künegin mit ir vrouwen sach. (104-8)

Instead of concern for the maiden's injury and for the insult to G-inover, the audience is allowed to witness a demonstration of excessive self-pity evident only in Hartmann's work. Erec returns to the queen concerned only with his shame:

als im der geiselslac geschach,
mit grôzer schame er wider reit.
alsô klagete er sin leit
(schanvar wart er under ougen):
"vrouwe, ich enmac des niht verlougen,
wan irz selbe habet gesehen,
mir ensî vor iu geschehen
eine schande alsô grôz
daz ir nie dehein min genôz
eines hâres mê gewân.
daz mich ein sus wènic man
sô lasterlichen hât geslagen
und ich im daz muoste vertragen,
des schame ich mich sô sêre
daz ich iuch nimmer mêre.
vürbaz getar schouwen.
und disse juncvrouwen,
und enweiz zwiu mir daz leben sol,
ez ensî daz ich mich des erhôl
daz mir vor iu geschehen ist." (109-28)

44 Carne, Frauenthalen, p. 31.
In his plea for permission to pursue Ider, we detect that Erec is completely oblivious of the fact that others have also been wronged. He seeks vengeance only for himself:

ir gesehet mich nimmer mère, ichn gereche mich an disem man von des getwerge ich mål gewan

and thereby neglects the responsibilities that have unexpectedly been placed on him. "Erec ist plötzlich zum Mittelpunkt eines Geschehens geworden, das den ganzen Hof angeht, denn er hat nicht nur eine persönliche Rache zu vollziehen, sondern auch eine Schmach zu tilgen, die der Königin und damit der höfischen Gesellschaft angetan wurde." 46

The Evening with Coralus

After Erec bids the queen farewell, he pursues Ider to the town of Tulmein where preparations are under way for the sparrowhawk festivities. In a house outside the town he finds lodging with an old man named Coralus, his wife and daughter, Enite. In the course of the evening Erec's egotistic attitude and obsession for personal vengeance (see lines 167ff.) again become apparent.

Coralus' appearance immediately reveals that he is a poor but noble man:

sô hete der selbe altman eine schåfkürsen an

45 Later when Ginover relates the events to Arthur, Erec's selfish attitude is again exposed (see lines 1133f.).

46 Meng, Vom Sinn des ritterlichen Abenteuers, p. 25.
His house is old ("ein altez gemiure" [252]) and at first gives the appearance of being abandoned: "'ich sihe wol daz ez ëde lit'" (269). Although in need of accommodation, Erec is reluctant and almost ashamed to ask for lodging (see lines 302-3) from someone who has so little. The old man, however, welcomes Erec to all his humble existence can provide: "er sprach: 'n'à sit mir willekomen/ze dem und ich nà haben mac'" (305-6).

Hartmann explicitly illustrates Coralus' state of deprivation by listing riches that are noticeably absent from his home. The expensive carpets and fine bedding (see lines 368ff.), associated with the home of a nobleman, contrast sharply with the family's meager possessions:

si geleisten wol ein reine strô:
dar über genuoecte si dô
eines bettes âne vlîz,
daz bedahte ein lîlachen

(382-5)

Although Enite's beauty (see lines 310f.) speaks well of her noble heritage ("ir geburt was ãne schande" [439]), she wears an old torn dress:

der roc was grüener varwe,
gezerret begarwe,
abehære über al.
dar under was ir hende sal
und ouch zebrochen eteswå

(324-8)

and must groom Erec's horse (see lines 317f.) because the family cannot afford a servant (see line 350).
The foregoing characterization is clearly designed to evoke pity and sympathy from Erec as well as from the reader:

swen disse edelarmen
niht enwolden erbarmen,
der was herter dan ein stein. (432-4)

Erec, however, is not responsive to the hardships surrounding him. It does not occur to him to inquire why a man of his own social standing leads such an existence. Even under these pitiful conditions Erec's egotism prevails. At the first opportunity he questions his host concerning the crowds in the town and the identity of the knight he had followed into Tulmein. When Coralus responds with the story of the sparrowhawk, Erec presses for advice on how he may avenge his grief and relates for a second time the injustice committed against him:

mir ist ein leit von im geschehen
daz ich immer klagen sol,
ez ensi daz ich michs erhol
sin getwerp mich harte sere sluoc,
daz ich im durch nöt vertrouc:
er was gewàftent und ich blôz,
des ez dò benamen genôz.
grôz laster muoste ich dò vertragen.
daz sol min herze immer klagen,
mirn gevüege got noch den tac
daz ich ez gerechen mac. (481-91)

Again he neglects to mention the maiden's injury or the insult to the queen. Erec's indifferent attitude toward the problems of others allows him to think only in terms of

47 Only as a result of Hartmann's parenthetical remarks (see lines 396ff.) do we learn that Coralus had once been a wealthy and honored count. All his possessions had been unjustly taken from him by force.
how Coralus may be of service to him. He, therefore, asks in quick succession to borrow Coralus' armor (see lines 499ff.) and daughter (see lines 504ff.) in order to take part in the tournament.

Coralus' bleak existence as described by Hartmann is characterized with equal severity by the author of Gereint and somewhat milder by Chrétien. Their heroes do not demonstrate Erec's selfish quest for vengeance. Erec and Gereint are capable of temporarily setting aside their problems to show compassion for the plight of others. Both react in precisely the manner one would expect of a well bred knight. They question Coralus about his state of indigence before turning the conversation to their own problems. In their presentation we immediately detect

Neither Gereint nor Chrétien's Erec ask to borrow Coralus' arms. In Gereint Coralus volunteers them: "Those arms are there that were mine, thou couldst have..." (p. 236). Chrétien's Coralus also volunteers them after being asked for advice on where some may be obtained (see line 605).

In Gereint (p. 236) the house is described as "an old ruined court" of which only a "broken hall" remains. Coralus and his wife are dressed in "old tattered clothes." Enite, who tends to Gereint's horse, wears "a shift and a mantle very old and growing threadbare." In Chrétien's Erec the family's poverty is indicated primarily by Coralus' admittal to same (see lines 509ff.) and by the description of Enite's dress (see lines 401ff.). Despite Chrétien's less explicit characterization of Coralus' poverty (he still possesses embroidered cushions (see lines 479ff.), has a servant (see lines 485ff.) and eats reasonably well [see lines 488ff.]), his Erec is more responsive to the observable facts than are the other two heroes.

Chrétien, for example, specifically tells his reader that Erec listened to all that his host had to say before moving the discussion to his own problems (see lines 547ff.).
the absence of self-pity so readily observable in Hartmann's Erec (see lines 481-91). Gereint demonstrates his unselfishness by only briefly mentioning his injury and also by remembering the maiden's involvement: "...an injury I received from the dwarf, and a maiden of Gwenhwyfar, Arthur's wife..." (236). Chrétien's Erec makes no mention of his injuries. He contents himself by simply saying:

"Cest chevalier, je ne l'aim pas.
Saichiez, se je armes avoie,
l'esprevier li contrediroie."

(602-4)

("I do not like that knight. Upon my word, had I some arms I should challenge him for the hawk.")

The Sparrowhawk Tournament

During the battle for the sparrowhawk, the reader is again made aware that Gereint's challenge is not based on blind personal vengeance. He is, no doubt, determined to avenge his loss of honor, but one is reminded that Gereint's purpose is twofold. His injury and the injuries to others are inseparable. This fact is best illustrated by the reminder he receives from Coralus during the low point in the tournament: "'Chieftain,' said he, 'remember the injury thou didst receive from the dwarf. And was it not to seek to avenge thine injury thou comest here, and the injury done to Gwenhwyfar, Arthur's wife?'" (p. 238).

Although Chrétien's Erec finds strength primarily in the memory of his injuries\(^5\) (see lines 917ff.) and in

\(^5\)As previously mentioned (see p. 30 above), Chrétien's Erec also tends to be somewhat egotistic in the statements
the beauty of Enite (see lines 911f.), he does remember the queen and the pledge he made to her (see lines 912f.). His double purpose for coming to Tulmein has not been forgotten.

Enite's beauty and the memory of his tragic day also encourage Hartmann's Erec to fight with more determination:

unz daz Erec der junge man
begunde denken dar an
waz im ûf der heide
ze schanden und ze leide
von sinem getwerge geschach.
und als er dar zuo ane sach
die schönen vrouwen Eniten,
daz half im vaste striten:
wan dâ von gewan er dô
siner krefte rehte zwô. (930-9)

but throughout the tournament, as elsewhere, he neglects to mention or even think of the queen and her maiden. When the defeated Ider begs to know the reason for Erec's anger, Erec responds once again with his customary answer:

"nû schamet iuch durch mine bete,
als ich mich gester tete,
dô ich von iuwern schulden
die schame muoste dulden
diu minem herzen nâhen gie." (990-4)

His victory is personal and selfish:52 "sînen geiselstreich er rach" (950). Not until Ider has asked for mercy does Erec acknowledge that others have also been made to suffer.

he makes about his injuries. These statements, however, are not comparable to the excesses uttered by Hartmann's Erec. The overall attitude of Chrétien's hero is not selfish as we see by his compassion for Coralus.

52"Noch hat er es nicht gelernt, für andere zu handeln—sein Hauptziel bei dem Ausritt ist Rache für die eigene Schande, nicht für die Mißhandlung der Jungfrau oder die Mißachtung der Königin." Carne, Frauengestalten, p. 31f.
For the first time since departing from the meadow where the insult occurred, Erec mentions the queen and her maiden:

"...ez enmœze mëh vrouwe diu kûnegin wider ir laster gëret sin. ir butet ir grôz ungemach, daz ir nie leider geschach: wider si sô habet ir vil getân. des sult ir ir ze buoze stân: wande siz vil sûre klaget. iuwer getwerc sluoc ir maget..." (1024-31)

To this he quickly adds, for the second time in less than forty lines, that he too was involved:

"...ouch sluoc ez mich alsam sit daz ich disiu mâl gewan. sehet, ich binz der selbe man." (1033-5)

The three heroes accept Ider's plea for mercy and spare his life. For Chrétien's Erec, as well as for Gereint, Ider's defeat is sufficient revenge for their personal injuries. That portion of the insult which pertains to the queen and her maiden is settled by sending Ider to court where he must place himself at Guenièvre's (Gwenhwyfar's) mercy. Hartmann's Erec, however, is not so easily pacified. He, too, sends Ider to Ginover but his personal desire for vengeance, disguised in hitherto unshown concern for the maiden's injuries (see lines 1050ff.), is not satisfied.

53 Given the conditions under which the insult occurred, Erec plays the role of Ginover's champion and as such must put consideration for her above all personal motives. Only an inexperienced youth could be excused for behaving in this manner.

54 Gereint specifically states this: "Sufficient for me, however, is that which I have done to thee for what injury I received of thee and thy dwarf" (p. 239).
until he has given the dwarf a vicious beating:

> er hiez ez zwêne knehte
> üf einen tisch strecken
> unde wol durchrecken
> mit guoten spizholzen zwein,
> daz ez üf sinem rücke schein
> dar nach wol zwelf wochen. (1065-70)

The selfish streak in Erec's character which was illustrated above can be readily observed only by the reader. It remains hidden from Arthur and the members of his court. The reports that reach the Round Table are furnished by Ider (see lines 1214-59) and by Erec himself and work to enhance Erec's esteem (see lines 1286ff., 1305ff.). "Außerlich erscheint Erec den Rittern des Artushofs als untadeliger Held, denn er hat die Beleidigung des Hofes und seiner selbst gerächt (1286-90). Innerlich ist Erec jedoch der Ehre, die ihm auf Grund seines Sieges zuteil wird, nicht würdig. Es ist ein Scheintriumph."55 This apparent discrepancy between Erec's true and projected characters is also observable at the Prûrin tournament (see p. 45 below).

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55 Holub, Die Bedeutung und Funktion der Kampfszenen, p. 55.
V. THE TOURNAMENT AT PRÚRÍN

Having defeated Ider at Tulmein, the heroes of the three works in question return to court where they receive a joyous welcome. Arthur and the queen are exceedingly happy that the sparrowhawk adventure was a success. The heroes are praised for their bravery and Enite receives recognition as the fairest maiden at court. Shortly after their arrival, Erec and Enite grow impatient and a wedding date is announced. Prominent and interesting personages from many kingdoms are invited marking the occasion as a gala celebration. Before the wedding guests depart it is agreed that a tournament should take place between the towns of Tarebrón and Prúrin. The contradiction between Erec’s behavior at this tournament and his lack of self-confidence on the preceding eve offers the fourth proof for my contention that Erec is not a knight.

Authenticity

In Chrétien’s text the tournament at Prúrin fulfills the function of further displaying Erec’s knightly abilities. Chrétien indicated in the introductory verses of his text that Erec is one of the great knights at Arthur’s court (see lines 82ff.). At Tulmein he demonstrated

56 In Chrétien’s Erec the tournament is held on the plain of Teneboc. The event is not mentioned in Gereint.
his ability to defend the honor of the court against an outside enemy, while at Prûrin he affirms his standing by matching his skills against a field of his accomplished peers. After two days of fighting he is recognized as having won the honors of the tournament:

```
d'anbedeus parz trestuit disoient
qu'il avoit le tornoi veincu
par sa lance et par son escu.
Or fu Erec de tel renon
qu'an ne parloit se de lui non;
mus hom n'avoit si boene grace
qu'il sanbloit Ausalon de face
et de la lengue Salemon,
et de fierté sanbla lyon,
et de doner et de despandre
refu il parauz Alixandre.
```

(2204-14)

(Every one on both sides said that with his lance and shield he had won the honours of the tournament. Now was Erec's renown so high that no one spoke save of him, nor was any one of such goodly favour. In countenance he resembled Absalom, in language he seemed a Solomon, in boldness he equalled Samson, and in generous giving and spending he was the equal of Alexander.)

It appears, therefore, that Chrétien's Erec has completed a cycle: he starts out as a recognized knight; endures a period of insult and the redemption of his honor; finally he returns to court. By marrying Enite and by distinguishing himself at Prûrin, he has attained the height of knightly perfection and as such the romance could close here with a "happy end." According to definition, all the prerequisites for verligen have thus been met.

Using twice as many lines as Chrétien (cf. quote to fn. 14) Hartmann leads his hero through a frenzied series of battles. For three days Erec repeatedly demonstrates his bravery and talents, rapidly defeating his opponents.
The horses of his victims to which he is rightfully entitled do not interest him. His only concern and purpose for being at the tournament is to win fame and honor:

\[ \text{dó geviel im diu ère} \\
\text{diu in an lobe zierte,} \\
\text{daz er vünfstunt tjostierte} \\
\text{alsô daz nie ritter baz.} \]  

\[(2433-6)\]

The pace he has set is so frantic that horses and shields must constantly be exchanged in order for the fighting to continue. Moreover, on one occasion he charges into battle without his helmet. Both alone and as a member of a team Erec continues to win until no challengers remain and the tournament closes.

Although there are many differences in the two authors' characterizations of the individual events of the tournament, the end result is the same. Hartmann's Erec also emerges as the hero and victor. Accordingly, it would appear that he has attained the knightly ideal, the same level of perfection as Chrétien's hero:

\[ \text{Erec der tugenthafte man} \\
\text{wart ze vollen lobe gesaget.} \\
\text{den pris hete er då bejaget,} \]  

\[(2811-3)\]

The foregoing suggests that any previously made statements concerning Erec's unknighted status are no longer valid. On the contrary, Erec emerges as champion
of the tournament for no other purpose than to satisfy the demand for authenticity by Hartmann's contemporaries.\(^{57}\)

To accomplish this, Hartmann named Chrétien as his source\(^{58}\) and generally adopted for *Erec* the overall structure of Chrétien's work. By transcribing the major episodes, Hartmann established a foundation of legitimacy for his novel and was able to achieve the same unity as Chrétien. Because of this effort, Hartmann's *Erec* became a work of many contradictions. Since Hartmann envisioned his hero somewhat differently, he was not satisfied with simply translating from the French master. Instead, he was determined to add material of his own creation\(^{59}\) to the existing framework which, in order to retain the faith of his audience, he could neither change nor omit. Because the new and old were often incompatible, contradictions arose which the young and, as yet, inexperienced Hartmann\(^{60}\) possibly could not eliminate. On the one hand, for example, Hartmann

\(^{57}\) The importance of authenticating material is best illustrated by Wolfram who deemed it necessary to invent Kyot as his source for *Parzival*.

\(^{58}\) "also uns Crestiens saget" 4629\(^{12}\). Had Hartmann not named Chrétien directly, the audience might still have recognized the source and, subsequently, been more sensitive to any major departure from it.


\(^{60}\) Cf. Kuhn, "*Erec*," p. 133.
characterized Erec as less than a full knight, whereas, simultaneously, he reproduced episodes from Chrétien's text which necessitate Erec's knighthood.\footnote{Since Idar was a knight, Erec should have been his equal to challenge him. In addition, he is designated a member of the Round Table and allowed to marry the daughter of a count, yet Hartmann repeatedly portrayed Erec as an unknighthed youth. As we have seen above, the evidence which supports this is so plentiful that it cannot be explained as a coincidence.}

A contradiction of this nature is readily observable in the events surrounding the tournament at Prūrin. It will be shown below that Erec's social standing should not be determined by the material borrowed from Chrétien for authentication, but rather by Hartmann's own contribution. Similar to Erec's Round Table membership, his victory at Prūrin cannot be taken at face value.

**Erec's Doubt**

Married and enjoying the status at court one would associate with knighthood, Erec has changed little since our first introduction to him. On the eve of the wedding feast, only a short time had elapsed since the victory of his first and only battle. Rather than further developing his skills, he rested on his laurels and entered the tournament at Prūrin with only the experience of Tulmein as background. Unlike a knight who has often participated in this most characteristic of knightly endeavors, Erec behaves like a novice.\footnote{Characteristically, Hartmann refers to Erec's youth four times in less than 80 lines during the preparations for the tournament (2255, 2285, 2324, 2331).} His first concern is how he may present
himself in a manner befitting his name:

Érec fil de roi Lac
maneger gedanke phlac,
wie er dar sô kæme
als sinem namen gezæme,
wan er vor der stunde
turnierens nie begunde. (2248-53)

for he fears the itewiz\(^{63}\) of courtly society:

vil dicke gedåhte er dar an,
in swelhem werde ein junger man
in den årsten jåren ståt,
daz er daz immer gerne håt.
er vorhte den langen itewiz. (2254-8)

To assure success, he relies on others for advice on proper conduct:

deste grœzeren vlîz
gåben sine ræte
wie erz dà wol getæte. (2259-61)

and on Arthur for help in providing suitable equipment (see lines 2269f. and 2324ff.). A famed knight, especially one of the Round Table, would most certainly possess his own armor and would not be in need of advice on such a familiar matter.

Hartmann's characterization of Érec on the night prior to the tournament is unprecedented. The reader is allowed to see him not as a brave knight, but rather as a young man who has grave doubts as to his abilities and his place in courtly society.\(^{64}\) Uncertain of himself, he

\(^{63}\) Lexer translates itewiz as: "strafrede, verweis, schmähung, tadel, schmach," Handwörterbuch (Leipzig, 1872), I, 1463.

\(^{64}\) It is of interest to note that Érec did not harbor these feelings immediately prior to his battle with Ider, where their occurrence would have been more expected. A possible explanation is that his obsession for revenge may have prevented such thoughts from surfacing.
deliberately avoids the merriment of the other contestants: "Erec herbergete dort/von den andern an ein ort" (2378-9).

He believes that he is not sufficiently accomplished to deserve participation in their celebration:

und enwolde sich niht gelichen
einem guoten knehte,
und von allem rehte.

(2383-5)

er endøhte sich niht sø vollekomen
noch an manheit vernomen,
daz ez im erloubet mõhte sin. (2388-90)

"He is diffident, even fearful of the outcome of the contest," yet the following day he rides into battle with the confidence and ability derived only from experience. Had he won only a selected number of events, as one might well anticipate, the account of his performance would have been feasible. Instead, Erec emerges as the unlikely hero and winner of the entire tournament:

Erec der tugenthafte man
wart ze vollen lobe gesaget.
den pris hete er dâ bejaget, (2811-3)

Even Gawain, the most perfect knight at Arthur's court (see lines 274f.) failed to accomplish as much:

Ãne Erecken fil de roi Lac
sô bejagete dâ niemen mëre:
wan er bejagete guot und ère. (2749-51)

So great is Erec's success that on the basis of his physical abilities alone, his virtues are likened to famous biblical and historical personages:

daz man begunde gelîchen
sin wisheit Salomõne,
sin schoene Absolõne,

an sterke Samsônes genôz.
sin milte dûhte si sô grôz,
diu gemâzete in niemen ander
wan dem milten Alexander.  (2815-21)

It is quite apparent that Chrétien had a strong influence on this portion of the text (cf. lines 2204f.), for Erec's behavior at the tournament seriously contradicts the background provided him by Hartmann. The doubts Erec expresses about himself and the references to his youth nullify the credibility of his command performance.
VI. THE VERLIGEN

In Chrétien's work, Erec's abilities and fame are credible primarily because the author has allowed his hero sufficient time in which to acquire such characteristics. Since Erec was a member of Arthur's court for three years prior to the sparrowhawk adventure (see lines 653f.), the knightly skills and bearing he demonstrated, both in dealing with Ider and in the tournament, are not surprising. The brief period from the beginning of the narrative to the verligen represents, therefore, the final stage of his long quest for perfection. Here he reaffirms his abilities in combat and adds as a crown to his laurels the most beautiful woman at court. Having attained his aspirations, he asks Arthur's leave and returns to his homeland. Within a short time the knightly arts and duties he had once enjoyed are neglected in favor of devoting his attention solely to his wife:

Mes tant l'ama Erec d'amors,
que d'armes mes ne li chaloit,
ne a tornoiemant n'aloit.
N'avoyt mes soing de tornoier:
a sa fame volt dosnoier,
si an fist s'amie et sa drue;
en li a mise s'antendue,
en acoier et an beisier; (2430-7)

(But Erec loved her with such a tender love that he cared no more for arms, nor did he go to tournaments, nor have any desire to joust; but he spent his time in cherishing his wife. He made of her his mistress
and his sweetheart. He devoted all his heart and mind to fondling and kissing her, and sought no delight in other pastime.

In the opening passages Gereint's author offers less praise for his hero than does Chrétien (see fn. 17). However, there is no evidence to suggest that Gereint is not a knight. If, at the outset, Gereint were intended to be somewhat less experienced than Chrétien's Erec, the author eliminated any possible difference in their standing by having Gereint remain at Arthur's court three years after his marriage: "Gereint from that time forth loved tournament and stern combats, and he would come victorious from all. And a year was he thus, and two, and three, until his fame had spread over the face of the kingdom" (p. 246). Thus, on the eve of the verligen Gereint and Chrétien's heroes are equal in their attainments.66 When Gereint discovers that no one is worthy of his challenge, he loses interest in tournaments and devotes his time solely to Enite: "And he loved his wife and peace in his court and songs and entertainment, and he settled thereto for a while. And thereafter he loved dalliance in his chamber and with his wife, so that naught save that was pleasing to him" (p. 250).

As in Chrétien's text, Hartmann's Erec departs from court shortly after his victory at Prûrin. The homecoming

66 Gereint's standing is further enhanced by the fact that he continued to participate in tournaments after returning home (see p. 250).
pleases his father, King Lac, to such a degree that he willingly relinquishes his authority by designating Erec and Enite king and queen of the land. Erec, however, has no interest in the duties of a king. He prefers to devote himself completely to his new bride:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Erec was} & \text{ biderbe unde guot,} \\
\text{ritterliche} & \text{ stuont sin muot} \\
\text{è er wip} & \text{ genæme} \\
\text{und} & \text{ hin heim kæme:} \\
\text{nù só er heim komen ist,} \\
\text{dø kørte er allen sinen list} \\
\text{an} & \text{ vrouwen Eniten minne.}
\end{align*}
\]

Unlike Chrétien and the author of Gereint, Hartmann makes no mention of a three-year tenure at Arthur's court, nor does Erec continue to participate in tournaments after returning home. His fame and total experience, therefore, were acquired in an extremely short period of time. Sparnaay, noticing this flaw, states that "die Situation wird daher ziemlich sonderbar: bloß ein Abenteuer hat Erec bestanden, nur in einem Turnier ist er Sieger belieben, ein sehr berühmter Held kann er also noch nicht sein. Das Motiv des Verliegens büßt dadurch viel von seiner Wirksamkeit ein."\(^{67}\)

Accordingly, since Erec did not attain the perfection of his two predecessors, it is obvious that the customary definition of verligen does not apply to him. Rather than constituting a fall from a previous level of excellence, the verligen episode is yet another phase, a continuation of his immature and unknighthly existence of which he is made

\(^{67}\)Sparnaay, "Zu Erec-Gereint," p. 224.
Therefore, when he undertakes the aventiure-Fahrt, it is not for the purpose of regaining his lost honor, but rather, as Schneider suggests, to repent the behavior displayed prior to the verligen by establishing himself as a knight both in deed and manner. 68

The aventiure-Fahrt serves yet another purpose. Despite his limited experience, Erec has been crowned king and has acquired the hand of a beautiful woman. His youth and unknighted status suggest that he was neither eligible nor qualified to accept the responsibility of either. "Ereks und Enites Liebe war nicht 'wirklich,' nicht errungen, sondern rasch erworben, nicht verdient, sondern schnell gewährt..." 69 He must, therefore, endeavor to prove his worthiness of the honors so effortlessly and undeservingly acquired.


69 Wapnewski, Hartmann von Aue, p. 54.
CONCLUSION

To substantiate the contention that Erec's verligen is not credible, it was shown in this thesis that Erec did not fulfill the requirement of being a famous and accomplished knight. The following arguments were presented.

I. Since Hartmann's test is a fragment, it was first necessary to demonstrate that the missing portion could not alter the characterization of the hero. This goal was accomplished by examining the fragment for information pertaining to the missing portion and by analyzing the introductions to Hartmann's other works as well as those of his sources. It was established that Erec appears for the first time at the beginning of the fragment and that the missing portion contained no mention of his knighthood.

II. As a first step toward proving that Erec was not a knight, his inexperience prior to the sparrowhawk tournament was exposed. Unlike Chrétien and the author of Gereint, Hartmann did not lavish his hero with praises. On the contrary, throughout the period prior to the verligen, Erec is repeatedly referred to as a youth. It was shown that his inexperience is manifest in his unknighthly and clumsy appearance, in the queen's protective attitude and in Ider's attempt to dissuade him from fighting.
III. An ideal indication of Erec's social position is his standing at court. Although Hartmann tells us that Erec is a member of the Round Table, his statement must be viewed with caution. It is demonstrated that if Erec belongs to the Round Table, his membership must pre-date his first tournament. As an inexperienced young man he would not be entitled to such status. Furthermore, the queen's request that Erec not pursue Ider to avenge the insult implies that he is neither capable nor is his honor at stake. Both points support the contention that at this stage in his career he is not an accomplished knight.

IV. One of the strongest arguments against Erec's being a knight is based on his unknighthly behavior. He ignores his primary responsibility in pursuing Ider, namely, avenging the queen and her maiden. Instead, the journey becomes a selfish quest for vengeance in which the injuries and hardships endured by others are disregarded. I have shown that from the moment of the insult to the defeat of Ider, Erec's egotism prevails.

V. At the Prûrin tournament, Erec is characterized both as a champion and as a young man who gravely doubts his abilities and place in courtly society. This apparent contradiction is resolved when it is considered that Hartmann desired to authenticate his work by closely following Chrétien. Of greater interest is Hartmann's creative material. It was demonstrated that Erec's self-evaluation is not representative of a knight. This, in turn, offsets the impression created by his command performance.
VI. Finally, it was shown that in contrast to Chrétien's hero and to Gereint, Erec did not have sufficient time to acquire the skills necessary to achieve knightly standing and recognition. Also, since Erec had engaged in only two tournaments prior to the verligen he lacked adequate experience to attain the perfection of his two predecessors. As a result, the customary definition of the term verligen is not applicable to Erec.
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