

THE THREE ESTATES AND OTHER MEDIAEVAL TRINITIES

Joseph A. Dane

The notion of Three Estates is familiar to most readers of mediaeval literature and to most serious readers of the criticism devoted to this literature; it refers to a tripartite model of society which distinguishes three social classes: first-estate *oratores* (a clerical class), second-estate *bellatores* (a military class), and third-estate *laboratores* (a working class).¹ Yet what modern scholars are willing to consider variants of the three-estates formula varies considerably. In the following paper, I do not attempt to demonstrate the existence or frequency of a three-estates "theme" in mediaeval literature -- the reader may refer to the studies cited in the notes for far more examples than will be included here. Rather, I wish to consider the question "what constitutes a true variant of such a theme?" What, for example, is the relation between the mediaeval formula of three social classes (a formula stated explicitly in many mediaeval works) and Dumézil's ideological model of "trois fonctions" (a model derived from earlier texts containing no explicit reference to a tripartite model of society)? And is it useful to include as a variant of the Three Estates those mediaeval "estates" satires that simply list social classes without relating these classes to a tripartite model?

A three-estates model has been applied to mediaeval history and to mediaeval literature by a number of scholars, most notably the French historian, Jacques Le Goff, and the French literary historians and critics,

Jean Batany and Paul Zumthor.² These scholars employ the vocabulary of Aelfric noted above (*oratores-bellatores-laboratores*) and all to some extent rely on the work of Georges Dumézil and his elaboration of a similar tripartite model of "trois fonctions."³ Dumézil's studies, however, are not primarily concerned with mediaeval texts or with mediaeval definitions of three social classes. To Dumézil, the model of "trois fonctions" refers to an actual structure of early Indo-European society. Variations on this model which appear in literature are indications of ideological changes in a society. And in literate societies, a "fonction" cannot be unambiguously correlated with a particular class.

Despite the citation of Dumézil's work and his problematic notion of "fonctions," mediaeval literary historians have relied heavily on earlier studies and definitions of the literary genre "états du monde." One result has been that the vocabulary of Three Estates has been applied not only without reference to an actual historical state of affairs (Dumézil insists throughout his work on the historical basis for his notion of "trois fonctions") but even without reference to the "tripartism" that would seem essential to the model of the Three Estates. Although no single work is responsible for this apparent paradox, several influential works of the past century should be noted. Gaston Paris is in many ways representative of an earlier attitude toward such formulae as the Three Estates. In *La Littérature française au Moyen Age* Paris speaks of a four-class structure of mediaeval society, one which includes the bourgeoisie in addition to "nobles," "clercs," and "vilains." Yet in his discussions of satiric and didactic literature which illustrate an "états du monde" theme, neither a three-class nor a four-class structure is mentioned. All that is required in such a genre is that the author "passe en revue . . . les diverses classes sociales de son temps."⁴

An equally important work in the history of Three Estates criticism is Charles V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age de la fin du XIIe au milieu du XIVe siècle*, vol. 2: *D'après des moralistes du temps*, an extensive survey of satiric literature in mediaeval France.⁵ Although Langlois' work is not often cited today, it has been extremely influential; for in many respects it has defined both the texts and, in certain cases, the particular passages of those texts, relevant to the study of

the relation between mediaeval social classes and contemporary literary treatment of those classes. But in his introduction Langlois claims he has included in his study only those "sincere" moralists who have both seen and considered the social conditions of their day. He omits from his discussion what he considers trite and stereotyped texts: precisely those texts, it should be noted, that would give the clearest evidence of a poetic genre or a common formula of expression. To Langlois, who was interested less in literary forms than in actual social conditions, commonplace formulae and literary imitation were unimportant. The phrase "états du monde," which Paris uses to refer to a literary device and which in more recent histories has become a near synonym for "Three Estates," is glossed somewhat differently by Langlois: "Etats du monde, c'est-à-dire des conditions sociales."⁶

Langlois' work is the basis for the English work by Ruth Mohl entitled *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*.⁷ And it is perhaps Mohl's work that (at least for the English literary historian) has been most significant in extending the topic "Three Estates" to include nearly any text that refers to social classes and in making the phrase "Three Estates" nearly equivalent to "états du monde." Mohl's debt to Langlois is acknowledged on p. 1, and the definition of her topic is given on p. 5: "the literature of the estates of the world."⁸ A more recent book by Jill Mann recalls Mohl's title and relies explicitly on Mohl's definition of material: "any literary treatments of social classes which allow or encourage a generalised application."⁹ The absence of the word *three* from Mann's title is significant; for it acknowledges the absence of any notion of tripartism in her own work and in the works on which she relies.¹⁰ In all these works a wide definition of "états du monde" or even "Three Estates" serves to offer the widest possible basis for discussion. Furthermore, the assumptions expressed explicitly in Langlois' work continue to exert an influence: the reductive, overly-simplified view of a society is rejected in favour of the more original formulation, the eccentric text, the text that is regarded as aesthetically superior.

Such assumptions are based on aesthetic judgments and on a convention of aesthetic judgments (e.g., "Chaucer is better than Gower"). The work of Paul Zumthor has tended to move away from such judgments. Yet

despite the re-orientation that Zumthor's work has given to the study of mediaeval French literature in this particular case, the same result obtains as in Mohl's work. Although Zumthor repeatedly mentions the tripartism inherent in the "type-cadre" of Three Estates, his definition recalls that of Mohl and of Paris: "un type particulier de satire sociale, les 'états du monde,' qui prendra bientôt une grande extension et consiste en une énumération pittoresque de 'types' humains, déterminée par un postulat général: le chevalier combat, le clerc prie, le vilain travaille."¹¹ A similar definition reappears in Zumthor's later *Essai*, where, again, the enumeration of estates ("états du monde") is considered an *amplificatio* of an underlying three-estates schema.¹² Here, the equation of Three Estates and "états du monde" is explicit. Yet again, the texts included in this genre need not exhibit any tripartite form or expression. They are the same texts cited by Mohl and by Paris under the heading "états du monde" -- texts originally classified in this genre without reference to a tripartite schema.¹³

This brief survey is hardly exhaustive. It suggests, however, that two entirely different sets of aesthetic assumptions have led to similar conclusions in regard to the Three Estates. To earlier French critics, a commonplace expression such as "There are three estates in society: clerics, knights and laborers" would have been unoriginal and thus unworthy of consideration. To Zumthor, such a formula would suggest a premise or pretext for a larger genre of satiric texts -- but a genre formally determined by enumeration of social classes, not by any particular numerical structure of classes. The adjective "Three" has thus little place in discussions of the mediaeval Three Estates. And it should be noted that if such tripartism is disregarded, any reference to Dumézil's work is largely superfluous.

To relate any general satire to the theme of Three Estates seems to me unwarranted. Nor do I consider the use of the formula or "cliché" of Three Estates an indication of a lack of poetic originality.¹⁴ What I call the "Three Estates" is less a stricture from which the artist or theologian must break free than an intelligible formula he can employ in order to establish a basis of communication with his audience. An enumeration of social categories in itself (e.g., "états du monde") has no privileged

status here if regarded as a simple *amplificatio* of the unqualified noun "Estates"; some form of tripartism is essential. A legitimate variant must be clearly generated by the topic or "postulat général" of Three Estates, or it must exhibit a form from which a three-estates schema is recoverable.

The model of "trois fonctions" elaborated by Dumézil differs from that to be developed below, which is based on mediaeval texts and designed for application to those texts. Dumézil's model describes a tripartite structure of society, organized according to three "fonctions" (roughly equivalent to what other writers refer to as "estates"):¹⁵

first *fonction* -- sovereign (includes judicial and priestly);

second *fonction* -- military;

third *fonction* -- (characterized by food production, fertility, nourishment, generation, and so on).

Each category has a lexical tag or set of lexical attributes; in addition, each has a particular structure: the first *fonction* is binary (priestly and judicial functions are opposed, although not, according to Dumézil, in conflict); the third is characterized by diversity. Although Dumézil himself has categorically denied that this model is a mere "structure of thought"¹⁶ (it represents rather a fact of Indo-European social structure), the specific formal structure of each *fonction* gives at least a clue as to why his model can have such wide applicability -- why the variety of mythological and historical texts cited by Dumézil seems to exhibit the same underlying model of *fonctions*. Only the second *fonction* is marked by a singular "function" -- that of combat and defense. Dumézil's model, then, is at least partially grounded on three logical categories: duality, singularity, and diversity. That which is excluded from such a social schema or that which is external to it can be defined by a fourth logical category -- negativity. One realization of such an organization would be the four Indian castes, where the fourth caste (outcasts) fall outside the limits of the three higher castes, each of which has a positive social value.¹⁷

The mediaeval Three Estates differs slightly from Dumézil's model, which for convenience I have considerably simplified; the most significant difference can be seen in relation to the notion of sovereignty. In

Dumézil's formulation, sovereignty is equated with his first *fonction*; the instances Dumézil himself notes of military encroachment into sovereign domain are just that: encroachments, and aberrations from the basic model.¹⁸ However, in mediaeval history, such military encroachment into the domain of sovereignty is less an exception than a rule. Military power (a second-estate attribute) increases to the extent that such power becomes political, and the feudal "sovereign" bears a closer resemblance to a military warlord than to a judge or priest.¹⁹ Although in mediaeval texts that refer explicitly to Three Estates it is the clerical class that retains the lexical attributes of the first estate, as second-estate "power" is seen as something more than strictly military force, this first clerical estate becomes defined largely in terms of its priestly function (the cleric *prays*, the warrior *fights*, the labourer *works*) and in terms of its literacy -- its control over written texts. The judicial function is no longer a monopoly of a single estate; there is a split between ecclesiastical and secular justice, and each of the first two estates controls a particular type of justice.²⁰ Although most references to the Three Estates list the clerical estate first, certain texts list warriors *first*. The following is an early fourteenth-century text by Jean de Condé, addressed significantly to secular "seigneurs" ("seigneurs / Des grans regnés et des honneurs," lines 21-22):

Il sont .iij. estat, c'est du mains,
 Seigneurs, de çou soyés ciertains:
 Chevalerie et prestrage
 Et puis ordre de mariage. (lines 29-32) ²¹
 [There are three estates, at least
 (Be sure of this, my lords)
 Knighthood and priesthood
 And then the order of marriage.]

Jean defines the duties of each estate in turn, beginning with duties of the knight, which include both military and judicial duties:

Li chevaliers, con chevaliers
 Justes et louiaus justiciers . . . (lines 37-8)

Tous jours est priès de la bataille
 Et si garde c'on ne l'asaille. (lines 79-80)
 [The knight, along with just
 knights and loyal judges . . .
 Is always prepared for battle
 and careful of being attacked.]

The priest's functions are limited to instruction ("gouvrenener et estruire," line 161). The "ordre de mariage" is concerned with maintenance of the family (lines 179-81).

As the texts to be cited below will show, Jean's order of estates is not a "standard" one; it is probably an index of an anti-clerical bias on the part of Jean or his intended audience. But neither is this text unique or simply eccentric. For the relation between the first two mediaeval estates is a probematic one; neither estate has clear dominance. Certain literary periods may express this conflict more sharply than others. For example, the debate poems between cleric and knight or between their representatives (Phyllis and Flora in *Carmina Burana* 92) are largely from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries;²² the *chanson de geste* from the same period has itself been described as "la terrain littéraire de la lutte entre la classe cléricale et la classe militaire."²³ Such a class conflict, whether actual or merely imagined by poets, is a useful literary "pretext" -- it can produce such literary forms as the debate, the *chanson de geste*, or even an "unfinished" romance such as Crétien de Troyes' *Perceval*, where the irreconcilable split between clerical wisdom and military prowess and the impossibility of convincing resolution serves as the basis for "endless" poem.

The three-estates model found in mediaeval texts, then, does not depict a clear hierarchy of classes culminating in a sovereign. It is essentially the result of two binary divisions, one vertical, one horizontal, with the relation of the first two estates to the third estate unambiguously one of superiority:²⁴

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| I. Clericus | II. Miles |
| III. Laborator | |

The first estate is associated less with political authority than with wisdom (*sapientia*). Power (*potestas*) -- an attribute of the second estate -- can be political as well as military. Such a model offers no clear solution to the issue of sovereignty. The sovereign is not unambiguously an estates figure at all, and when he is explicitly mentioned in reference to the Three Estates, he transcends the entire estate structure. In this sense, the ideal king is defined as analogous to God -- the transcendent creator of Estates. An often quoted text that illustrates this relation is a tenth-century English text attributed to Aelfric:

Aelc riht cynestol stent on þrim stapelum, þe fullice ariht stænt. An is *Oratores*, & oðer is *Laboratores*, & þridde is *Bellatores*. *Oratores* syndon gebedmen, þe Gode scylan þeowian, & dæges & nihtes for ealne þeodscype þingigan georne. *Laboratores* syndon weorc-men, þe tilian scylan þæs þe eal þeodscype big sceal libban. *Bellatores* syndon wig-men, þe eard scylon werian, wiglice mid wæpnum.²⁵

[Each proper sovereign throne stands on three columns, which stands fully secure. The first is *Oratores*, the second *Laboratores* and the third *Bellatores*. *Oratores* are priests, who serve God and concern themselves day and night for all society. *Laboratores* are workmen, who work the earth by which all society lives. *Bellatores* are warriors, who guard territory by force of weapons.]

An earlier text illustrating the same relation is Aelfred's late ninth-century translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* where the following passage is interpolated into the Boethian text (Book II, pr. 7):

[Philosophia speaking]: Hwæt, þu wast þæt nan mon ne mæg nænne cræft cyðan ne nænne anweald reccan ne stioran buton tolum and andweorce. . . . þæt bio þonne cyninges andweorc and his tol mid to ricsianne, þæt he hæbbe his lond fullmonnad; he sceal habban gebedmen and fyrðmen and weorcmen.²⁶

[Listen, you know that no man can teach any skill nor obtain power nor guide without tools and instruments. And the tools

and instruments employed by the king in order to rule are that he have his land fully populated; he must have priests, warriors, and workers.]

Although the order in which the three estates are listed varies in mediaeval literature, and particular functions are not always related to the same estate (justice, associated with Dumézil's first *fonction*, could be associated either with a military or a clerical class in the Middle Ages), a basic schema of Three Estates appears in texts throughout the mediaeval period. Furthermore, the objection to Dumézil's work, that in none of the texts which he analyzes is a model of three *fonctions* explicitly stated, would not apply to the mediaeval period.²⁷ Reference to a tripartite social structure is direct and explicit.²⁸ *Le Livre des manières* by Etienne de Fougères, bishop of Rennes (1168-78), contains the following quatrain:

Li cleric deivent por toz orer;
 Li chevalier sanz demorer
 Deivent defendre et enorer,
 Et li paisant laborer. (lines 673-76)²⁹
 [Clerics must pray for everyone;
 Knights must without hesitation
 Protect and honour;
 And peasants must work.]

Names of particular estates (particularly the third) can vary,³⁰ as well as the name for estates in general (e.g., *ordres*, *estats*). Often particular estates are not identified at all, but that there must be three of them is assumed:

Deus a treis ordres establi entre gent
 E furent fait mult necessairement
 Pur tenir pais e saintefiement.³¹
 [God established three orders among men
 And they were made out of great necessity
 In order to maintain peace and sanctity.]

And occasionally, a precise chronological reference is given for God's establishment of the Three Estates. Honorius of Autun relates the establishment of three classes to the three sons of Noah in *De Imagine Mundi*

Sem filius Noe ipse est idem qui et Melchisedec, vixit sexcentos et duos annos. Hujus tempore divisum est genus humanum in tria: in liberos, milites, servos. Liberi de Sem, milites de Japhet, servi de Cham.³²

[Sem, the son of Noah, and the same one as Melchisedec (!), lived six hundred and two years. In his time, the human race was divided in three: into freemen, warriors, and servants, freemen from Sem, warriors from Japhet, servants from Cham.]

In *La Bible* of Hugues de Berzé (early thirteenth century), the establishment of Three Estates is more closely connected with the establishment of Christianity:

Quant il nous ot d'enfer rescous,
S'ordena trois ordres de nous.
La premiere fu sans mentir
Des provoires pour Dieu servir
Es chapeles e es moustiers,
E li autre des chevaliers
Pour justicier les robeours,
Li autre des laboreours. (lines 179-86)³³
[When God saved us from Hell,
He established three orders among us.
The first was formed (in truth)
Of priests to serve God
In churches and chapels,
And the next was of knights
To render justice to thieves
And the next was of workers.]

At times the schema is used simply to describe a gathering that is widely attended. In the following lines from the *Roman des Sept Sages*, the phrase "li noble borgois" representing the third estate suggests that the poet

means "everyone of importance":

La assamblent li chevalier,
 Li cardonnal et li clergier,
 Et apriés li noble borgois. (lines 1209-11)³⁴
 [And there the knights assembled,
 Cardinals and clerics,
 And finally, the noble bourgeoisie.]

Clearly, there is no single definitive formula that emerges here, no single *locus classicus*. The modern scholar's own difficulties in defining and naming the three estates (or orders) are not unique to him, and the fluidity in terminology has good precedent, not only in mediaeval texts such as those cited above but also in classical texts. Even Socrates had trouble sorting out the vocabulary of social estates.³⁵ Furthermore, there is no claim in the above texts that the tripartite formula corresponds to the nuances of social reality. Certain recognized classes, such as the haute bourgeoisie, threaten the functional tripartite model of society with a model of social status whereby rank is determined by economic considerations; these classes can be accommodated to the tripartite model with the addition of an additional category or with the modification of one of the three categories, or they can be simply ignored. Yet the model itself persists despite its inadequacies as a descriptive tool. In the moralities of the sixteenth century, the Three Estates can supply the names of characters as well as the entire structure of a play.³⁶ The model is thus at least vital enough to serve as a basis for whatever satiric message a particular poet or playwright may wish to make.

The primary reference in all the above examples is social. But the Three Estates is also part of a larger paradigm -- one which orders lexical items according to a social schema, yet one in which the social meaning of the schema is no longer primary and perhaps no longer even relevant. The popularity of tripartite schemata in mediaeval religious and poetic writings is at least partially responsible for this higher-level paradigm: any triad is potentially analogous to any other. Conceivably, a paradigm could be constructed from all tripartite formulae, but it would be one with little specificity. The tripartite formulae I wish to relate

to the Three Estates as part of this larger paradigm are more limited and include only those which exhibit the same semantic configuration as do the Three Estates formulae. The most important are Trinitarian formulae. Before discussing these, two points should be noted. The first relates to problems of hermeneutics -- both mediaeval and modern. It should be clear from the examples I will juxtapose that inclusion within a single paradigm does not constitute a relation of identity, nor does it necessarily suggest an allegorical one. To describe knight/cleric debates as veiled allegories of the Christian Trinity would be as ludicrous as to define all Trinitarian formulae as simple variants of often frivolous poems. The distinction between profound doctrine and frivolous song may be arbitrary, but it is clearly a distinction which the authors of the following citations expected their readers to make or to assume. Secondly, the hierarchical ordering of lexical entries in many mediaeval Three Estates formulae and in most Trinitarian formulae is one where second-estate traits dominate first-estate traits. If such formulae correlate with social facts, the class structure of mediaeval society could be seen as related to the modification of tripartite schemata on both the satiric and the theological levels.

That both social and theological expressions may proceed from the same verbal or conceptual matrix is suggestive, but it is also cautionary. We can accept analogy as a legitimate mode of thought, as did our mediaeval predecessors; however, to accept the verbal schema as an object of faith, or to argue that ultimately the world is a complex *signum* meaningful only in relation to an ineffable *res* (God), would be a hermeneutic leap that few members of modern culture (including mediaevalists), and perhaps far fewer members of mediaeval culture than sometimes assumed, would be willing to make.

The analogy between the Three Estates and the Trinity is made explicitly in a sermon by Wycliff: "Almyghty god the trinyte, fadir, sonne and holy gooste . . . hath fowndid his chirche up-on thre statis, awnswerynge or acordynge to thes thre persones and her propirtes."³⁷ Whether Wycliff is repeating a popular analogy or inventing it (I know of no parallels outside the work of Wycliff) is unimportant. The relation between the Three Estates and the Christian Trinity is implicit in the traditional

"propirtes" (whether real or linguistic) of each Trinitarian person and of each social estate. The two most important Trinitarian formulae for our purposes are (1) *unitas-aequalitas-connexio*, which describes a logical or mathematical structure, and (2) *potentia-sapientia-bonitas*, which describes the Trinitarian persons in terms of function or attribute. Both resemble the three-estates formulae discussed above. Augustine's Trinitarian formula in *De Doctrina Christiana* (I.v.5) is *unitas-aequalitas-connexio*, a formula that was to remain popular through the Middle Ages. In this formula, the Holy Spirit is subordinate to or dependent on the basic binary pair Father/Son; it is the connection (or *amor*) between Father and Son. As we have seen, the structure of the Three Estates is similar: the relation of the third estate to the first two estates is different from the relation between the first estate and the second estate. Knights and clerics are related horizontally (neither is unambiguously superior to the other); the third estate *villain* is unambiguously inferior to either a knight or a cleric.

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine recommends that the Trinity be used not only as an object of faith but also as a tool for psychological analysis.³⁸ And in the twelfth century, the Trinity becomes a tool for mathematical, physical, and linguistic analysis. Abelard draws an analogy between the Trinity and the three grammatical persons: I/you/it.³⁹ Abelard's *actor* for such analysis is, again, Augustine in *De Trinitate* (IX.ii.2):

Ecce ego qui hoc quaero, cum aliquid amo tria sunt: ego et quod amo, et ipse amor, amans, quod amatur . . . amor.

[Note the following analysis: When I love something, three things are involved -- I myself, that which I love, and love itself, that is to say, the lover, what is loved and love.]

The subject is a self-contained entity (*unitas*); the beloved object is dependent on the loving subject but exists in a relation of equality to that subject. Subject and object are linked as "I/you" and their relation is expressed by the connecting verb "to love." *Vestigia Trinitatis* exist in, or can be found in, both the world of objects (*res*) and the world of language (*signa*).

Another commonplace formula particularly relevant here is *potentia-*

sapientia-bonitas.⁴⁰ This differentiation of Trinitarian persons by attribute is analogous to the differentiation of social classes by function: military (power), clerical (wisdom), third estate (production of material goods). Furthermore, in this form the Trinitarian formula is also applicable to the four causes -- an analogy made explicit in John of Salibury's *Policraticus* (vii.5):

Nam in Thimeo, dum causas mundi subtilius investigat, manifeste videtur exprimere Trinitatem quae Deus est, efficientem causam constituens in potentia Dei, in sapientia formalem, finalem in bonitate quae sola induxit eum ut omnem creaturam bonitatis suae participem faceret.⁴¹

[For in the *Timaeus*, when Plato so subtly considers the causes of the world, clearly he seems to express the Trinity, which is God -- establishing the efficient cause in the power of God, the formal cause in the wisdom of God, and the final cause in God's goodness which alone leads Him to make each and every creature a participant in His goodness.]

John's text is interesting in that only three of the four causes are mentioned. The fourth cause is generally taken to be matter, and since matter is something through which God operates (it is not an attribute of the creating God), John omits it. I have previously mentioned a fourth category external to the tripartite schemata of the Three Estates. And John's implied fourth cause, matter, relates to the Trinitarian causes the same way that the fourth Indian caste relates to the three major castes, and the same way that the body relates to the tripartite soul. This fourth term is marked by negation or exclusion. In several mediaeval sermons God is given credit for the creation of the Three Estates; the problematic "fourth estate," however, identified as the merchant class, is said to be the work of the devil.⁴² The Christian Trinity, then, and what is external to it, expresses the same logical categories underlying Dumézil's *fonctions*: Pater is *unitas*; Filius is of binary nature (God/man); Spiritus Sanctus is marked by diversity of operation (e.g., the Seven Gifts of the Spirit); and what is external to the Trinity is evil, *malitia*, matter, or the devil himself.

What is interesting about these Trinitarian formulae is that the same hierarchical relation obtains between *potentia* and *sapientia* found in many mediaeval formulations of the Three Estates, where the second-estate knight (and the attribute of power) is listed first. In Dumézil's hierarchy of *fonctions*, and in classical formulations of the tripartite soul and its accompanying virtues, *sapientia* occupies the highest rank:

priests	head	<i>prudentia</i>	<i>sapientia</i>
warriors	heart	<i>fortitudo</i>	<i>potentia</i>
laborers	<i>renes</i>	<i>temperantia</i>	(<i>voluntas</i>)

In the specifically Christian formulae, however, *potentia* dominates:

warriors	Pater	efficient cause	<i>potentia</i>
clerics	Filius	formal cause	<i>sapientia</i>
laborers	Spiritus	final cause	<i>bonitas</i>
	Sanctus		

What appears to have taken place is a modification in an inherited conceptual schema -- a modification perhaps in accord with social modifications and the increasing political power of a military class.⁴³

The above Trinitarian formulae are only a few of the more obvious ones and many variations are possible. But in view of the possible relation of these formulae to social structures, particular variations from this schema could be indicative of a particular social bias. The Franciscan emphasis on the Spirit and the inauguration of the Third Age of the Holy Spirit by Joachim de Flore could be seen as directly related to the rise of the third-estate bourgeoisie; a focus on the Son at the expense of the Father (particularly in religious drama) could be seen as less an expression of historical or theological dogma than an expression of the clerical bias of the dramatist. In any case, the social relevance of a theological meditation on the Trinity is guaranteed by the analogous conceptual structure of society.

The Three Estates, then, is not simply a verbal formula that appears in scattered satiric literature. It proceeds from the same matrix that serves to generate treatises and literary works on the Trinity, the tripartite soul, the four causes, and even the four virtues. The question

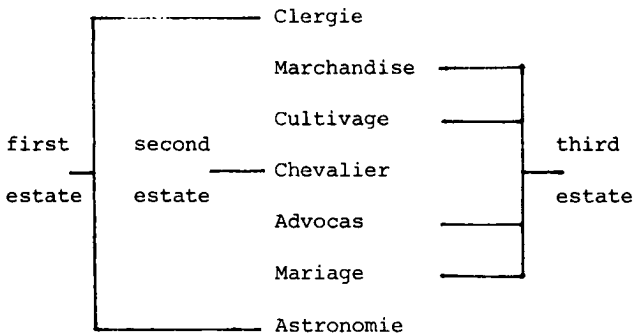
of whether the structure of society generates descriptions of the Trinity or whether the Trinity imprints its own image on society may be unanswerable; but the question itself is only possible because the formal schema of the Three Estates enables such diverse topics as God, society, and ethics to be related coherently.

Previous discussion of the Three Estates in mediaeval literature has taken the word "estates" as a topic and as a result has included within that topic any social treatise or satiric work that refers to social classes or even to a single social class. The present study has concentrated rather on the first lexical element: the Three Estates as discussed here is a schema that structures social vocabulary into a recognizable tripartite pattern. Although the Three Estates can be related to literary genres -- e.g., "estates literature" or works dealing with the "états du monde" -- the schema is relevant to such works only if a tripartite formula can be seen to order the categories of such a list or if a tripartite schema can actually be recovered from those categories. For example, included in the collection of French *fabliaux* by Montaiglon and Raynaud is a poem entitled by its modern editors: "Des Estats du Siècle." In this *fabliau*, the hero (identified only as ".i. fils non estable," [line 2] "an unplaced son") is contemplating an occupation or an "estat" (line 4) in the world. He successively considers and quickly rejects "clergie," "marchandise," "cultivage," "chevaliers," "avocas," and finally "mariage."⁴⁴ In the final lines, he settles on a career in astronomy:

Et propousa toute sa vie
 Estudier Astronomie,
 Et savoir du ciel la nature;
 Quar de la terre n'a plus cure. (lines 111-14)
 [And he decided to devote his life
 To the study of astronomy,
 And to know the nature of the Heavens:
 For he had no more concern with the earth.]

The *fabliau* is similar to many "états du monde" poems: professions and social classes are simply listed in sequence. But the relation of this *fabliau* to the Three Estates suggests that the ordering of those estates

is by no means random. Seven "estates" are listed: clergie, marchandise, cultivage, chevalier, avocas, mariage, astronomie. The first and seventh occupations ("clergie," "astronomie") are clearly first-estate clerical functions: our hero begins and ends with a clerical occupation. The fourth item, "chevalier," identifies the second estate; the hero rejects this estate precisely because of the physical dangers involved in it. The remaining choices ("marchandise," "cultivage," "avocas," "mariage") describe a diversity of positions available in the third estate.⁴⁵ The Three Estates schema, then, operates to organize this *fabliau* as follows:



My analysis of this *fabliau* may be open to objection, as is my earlier analysis of *Carmina Burana* 92; and I do not claim that the application of a Three Estates schema necessarily *explains* this poem. However, if we consider this a Three Estates poem, and not simply an "états du monde" poem, the occupational entries exhibit an order that is more than simply sequential. The poem begins and ends with a particular estate -- the first estate: "chevalier," which unambiguously identifies the second estate, is the middle term. The four other entries are distributed symmetrically between the entries marking the first and second estates and can themselves be construed as third-estate categories.⁴⁶ This *fabliau*, then, illustrates both the "états du monde" theme and an underlying Three Estates schema. But the "états du monde" theme (generating a list of social categories) does not in itself imply the existence of a tripartite paradigm either here or in any other text.

What I have outlined above deals with a mediaeval (and perhaps modern) structure of thought. Mediaeval society need not correspond to this

schema -- a schema which serves only to order the idea of that society (whatever its true nature) into discrete conceptual categories. The influence of the schema on the actual structure of society is a question best answered by historians, although I have already suggested an example of a reverse influence -- the influence of social structure on a theological formula.⁴⁷ Whether society or language provides the fundamental categories to which the other tends to conform, whether such categories are essentially the same, or whether the two sets of categories exert mutual influence -- all these are theoretical questions to be answered only by the declaration of a thesis that will be ultimately unprovable. Yet any one of these theses could be productive, and in my opinion any one of these theses would be more sound theoretically than a methodology (either literary, theological, or historical) that disregards verbal formulae such as the Three Estates and takes social reality or the mediaeval metaphysical cosmos as a *res* entirely distinct from verbal cliché and explicable without recourse to the unoriginal and stereotyped formulae from which most language is constructed.⁴⁸ One may ignore the mediaeval cliché in favour of the modern one, or one may attempt to redefine the cliché itself; but the linguistic formulae cannot be avoided. One's object, whether literature, history, or theology, must be defined largely on the basis of arbitrarily selected verbal documents, each with its own set of verbal and conceptual commonplaces -- the empty formulae of expression without which no communication is possible. One such formula is "There are three estates." And the use of this formula in a particular text is not in itself an index of a particular meaning, nor is it an index of a particular intent. It is of equal utility in satiric, mystical, and obscene literature and guarantees only a modicum of intelligibility. Our acceptance of the cliché "There are three estates" is only an acceptance of a language -- a system of *signa* -- which can subsequently express such apparent contradictions as "there are (in fact) four estates."

NOTES

¹ The formula *oratores-bellatores-laboratores* appears first in a tenth-century text of Aelfric, quoted below, p. 290. The names used by both mediaeval and modern writers to identify the estates vary, and no single text or formula should be regarded as a *locus classicus*. For the earliest mediaeval references to the doctrine, see Marcel David, "Les 'Laboratores' jusqu'au renouveau économique des XI-XIIe siècles," *Etudes d'histoire du droit privé offerts à Pierre Petot* (Paris 1959) 117 n. 30, and Claude Carozzi, "Les Fondements de la tripartition sociale chez Adalbéron de Laon," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 33 (1972) 683-702.

² Jacques Le Goff, *La Civilisation de l'Occident médiéval* (Paris 1964) 319-43; Jean Batany, *Approches du "Roman de la Rose"* (Paris 1973) 71-79; "Des 'Trois Fonctions' aux 'Trois Etats'," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 18 (1963) 933-8; Jean Batany and Jean Rony, "Idéal social et vocabulaire des status ('Le Couronnement de Louis')," *Langue Française* 9 (1971) 110-18; Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris 1972) 134-36. See also: David (at n. 1) 107-19 and references contained in notes, pp. 114-19; and Maria Corti, "Models and Antimodels in Medieval Culture," *NLH* 10 (1979) 339-66.

³ Georges Dumézil, *L'Idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens*, Collection Latomus 31 (Bruxelles 1958). For a 100-entry selected bibliography of Dumézil's extensive writings and a useful critique of his work, see C. Scott Littleton, *New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil* (rev. ed., Berkeley 1973). I have retained Dumézil's word "fonction" without translation when referring to his work.

⁴ Gaston Paris, *La Littérature française au Moyen Age (XIe-XIVe siècle)* (3rd ed. Paris 1905) 29, 170. Jean V. Alter (*Les Origines de la satire anti-bourgeoise en France [Moyen Age-XVIIe siècle]* [Genève 1966] 21) notes that while Paris' four-class formula may be descriptive of a social reality, mediaeval writers either distinguish many classes or use a tripartite formula.

⁵ (1902; rev. ed., Paris 1925). Langlois' major discussion is confined to a few texts, e.g., the *Bibles* of Guiot de Provins and Hugues de

Berzé, *Livre de Manières*, etc. Extensive citations of other texts are included in his notes.

⁶ Langlois (at n. 5) vii.

⁷ (New York 1933). Mohl's work is still invaluable, particularly for the extensive citations in chap. 3: "History of the Form: Continental Version."

⁸ Mohl's comments on Helinant's twelfth-century *Vers de la Mort* are indicative of the range of her definition: "[Helinant's poem suggests] how this genre probably began. Its theme, that of the power of death over all mankind is a common one in later literature of estates. Here the theme simply suggests to the poet that he name the different classes" (p. 34).

⁹ *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge 1973) 3. Mann's identification of "types" and "commonplaces," particularly in the work of Gower, is intended to show the more artistic treatment such types receive in Chaucer's General Prologue.

¹⁰ Mohl (at n. 7) 8-12 specifically excludes tripartite social formulae that do not refer to mediaeval feudal society. Among those texts excluded are Plato's *Republic*, the Rig-Veda, and the two Old English texts of Aelfred and Aelfric cited below.

¹¹ Paul Zumthor, *Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VIe-XIVe siècles)* (Paris 1954) 183, discussing *Le Livre des manières*. Zumthor's bibliographies in both *Histoire* and *Essai* include only recent works and no direct reference to Langlois, Paris, or Mohl appears.

¹² Zumthor (at n. 2) 134-35.

¹³ E.g., *Le Livre de Manières*, Helinant's *Vers de la Mort*, the vernacular *Bibles* by Guiot de Provins and Hugues de Berzé, Jean de Meun's *Testament* (cited by Paris but not by Mohl). See Zumthor's indices under "états du monde," in *Histoire* (at n. 11) 318 and *Essai* (at n. 2) 506.

¹⁴ By "cliché" I mean only the recurrent types that language (particularly literary language) must use in order to be intelligible. A cliché is not a mark of poetic incompetence, but only an indication that a poet is trying to make sense. See: Zumthor (at n. 2) 82; Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington 1978) 39, and "The Self-Sufficient

Text," *Diacritics* 3 (1973) 40 (on "language stereotypes"): "verbal structures that have no meaning *per se*, but serve as lexicon and even as pre-fabricated syntactic sequences for whatever meaning may be demanded by the context."

¹⁵ A concise definition of "fonctions" is given in Dumézil (at n. 3) 18: "les trois activités fondamentales que doivent assurer des groupes d'hommes -- prêtres, guerriers, producteurs -- pour que la collectivité subsiste et prospère." It should be noted that Dumézil rejects the equation of his "fonctions" with social classes: the tripartition of classes in some societies is simply one expression of a basic tripartition of ideological "fonctions." The most problematic of the "trois fonctions" is the third; see *ibid.* 19. "Abondance" is a word frequently used by Dumézil to identify this "fonction"; and in an article by Vasilij J. Abaev, "Le Cheval de Troie," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 18 (1963) 1041-70, *pref.* Dumézil, the third "fonction" is identified as "économique" (p. 1063) (French tr.).

¹⁶ See, e.g., Georges Dumézil, "Religion indo-européenne: Examen de quelques critiques récentes (John Brough, I; Angelo Brelich)," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 152 (1957) 10, where *yin-yang* is rejected as analogous to his "fonctions" because it is merely "un mode de pensée, un principe formel de classification."

¹⁷ For the association of the mediaeval "fourth estate" with evil and the devil, see below, p. 296 and n. 42. Dumézil (at n. 3) 7 suggests that the fourth class in post-Vedic Indian society is not indigenous and thus not relevant to his ideological schema: "[Elle] est coupée des trois autres et par nature, irrémédiablement souillée. De cette quatrième, hétérogène, il ne sera pas question ici."

¹⁸ The effacement of higher level gods by the military god Indra in later Indian epic is given as one example; Georges Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Germains: Essai sur la formation de la religion scandinave* (Paris 1959) 24. Similarly, the "militarization" of Germanic culture is offered as an explanation of relations between divinities in Germanic mythology -- particularly the prominence given to Odin (first "fonction," magic) and the descent of Tyr (first "fonction," judicial) to the rank of the warrior Thor; see: *ibid.* 65-74; Georges Dumézil, *Mythes et dieux des Germains:*

Essai d'interpretation comparative (Paris 1939) 145-46; *Heur et malheur du guerrier: Aspects mythiques de la fonction guerrière chez les Indo-Européens* (Paris 1969) preface. A similar militarization of higher estates is implied in Philippe de Beaumanoir's *Coutumes de Beauvaisis* (late thirteenth-century), where the power to carry on war is confined to nobles: "Guerre par nostre coustume ne puet cheoir entre gens de poosté, ne entre bourgeois. . . , car autre que gentil homme ne pueent guerrier" [War by our customs cannot fall between men of power nor between burgeses. . . , for only nobles are permitted to wage war]. Am. Salmon, ed., *Collection de Textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire*, 24-39 (1899-1900; rpt. Paris 1970) ch. LIX: "Des Guerres," secs. 1671-72.

¹⁹ For the "elasticity" in the categorization of the king, see Georges Dumézil, "L'Idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens et la Bible," *Kratylos* 4 (1959) 110 and *L'Idéologie tripartite* (at n. 3) 23-33. On the virtual identity of chiefs and professional warriors in feudalism, see Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* (1939-40) tr. L.A. Manyon (Chicago 1961) II, 313, 444-46.

²⁰ On the distinction between ecclesiastical and secular legal jurisdiction, see e.g. Philippe de Beaumanoir, *Coutumes*, ch. XI, secs. 311-60.

²¹ Jean de Condé, "Li dis des trois estas dou monde," ed. Aug. Scheler, *Dits et contes de Baudouin de Condé et de son fils Jean de Condé*, 3 vols., *Chroniqueurs et Trouvères Belges* (Bruxelles 1866-67) II, 49.

²² For discussion of knight/cleric debates, both in Latin and in the vernacular, see Charles Oulmont, *Les Débats du clerc et du chevalier dans la littérature poétique du Moyen-Age* (Paris 1911), and Edmond Faral, "Les Débats du clerc et du chevalier dans la littérature des XIIe et XIIIe siècles," *Romania* 41 (1912) 473-517, and *Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du Moyen Age* (Paris 1913) App. 1 "Le Jugement d'amour ou Florence et Blancheflour," pp. 250-69. See also Maurice Delbouille, "Tradition latine et naissance des littératures romances," in *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, ed. Hans Robert Jauss and Erich Köhler, vol. I: *Generalités* (Heidelberg 1972) esp. 49-56. Such debates are "horizontal"; neither knight nor cleric has clear

superiority and the third estate is not represented, except perhaps as the pastoral setting itself in *Carmina Burana* 92; see Alfons Hilka and Otto Schumann, eds., *Carmina Burana*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg 1930-41) I, pt. 2: *Die Liebeslieder*, no. 92, stanzas 2 and 6. An example of a "vertical" debate genre is the *pastourelle*, showing a confrontation between a knight and third-estate shepherdess; see Karl Bartsche, ed., *Altfranzösische Romanzen und Pastourellen* (1870; rpt. Darmstadt 1967). Although the knight is occasionally foiled in these confrontations, the genre is premised on the absolute social superiority of knight to *villain*; see William T.H. Jackson, "The Medieval Pastourelle as a Satirical Genre," *PQ* 31 (1952) 156-70 and Erich Köhler, "La Pastourelle dans la poésie des troubadours," in *Etudes de langue et de littérature du Moyen-Age offertes à Felix Lecoy* (Paris 1973) 279-92.

²³ Le Goff (at n. 2) 323. The romances of Chrétien de Troyes and the Arthurian cycle thus represent the dominance of the first-estate or first "fonction" over the second. Evidence for such a conflict is by no means confined to the narrative genre; in addition to the debate poems noted above, see e.g., the thirteenth-century lyric by Peire Cardenal, probably inspired by the Albigensian Crusade, "Clergue si fan pastor / et son aucizedor"; [The clergy pretends to be shepherds, but they are actually killers]. Peire complains that clerics have stolen "la seinhoria" from kings, emperors, dukes, and counts by trickery. R.T. Hill and T.G. Bergin, *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, 2 vols. (2nd ed., New Haven 1973) I, 200-02.

²⁴ The relation of the Three Estates to binary divisions (free/non-free; clergy/laity) is stressed by David (at n. 1) 109-10. See also Bloch (at n. 19) I, 291-92, and for the mythological solidarity of the first two "fonctions" against the third, see Dumézil, *Dieux des Germains* (at n. 18) 26.

²⁵ Thomas Wright, ed., *The Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to that of Edward II*, Camden Society, O.S. 6 (1839; rpt. New York 1968) 365. In the *Proverbs of Alfred*, *Piers Plowman*, and the Latin poem for which Aelfric's text is cited as a note, the king is also placed in a position transcending the Three Estates; see *ibid.* 99 and 364-67.

²⁶ Walter John Sedgfield, ed., *King Alfred's Old English Version*

of Boethius' "*De consolatione philosophiae*" (Oxford 1899) 40; I have expanded the abbreviations in Sedgfield's text. Batany, "Des 'Trois Fonctions' aux 'Trois Etats'" (at n. 2) 937, suggests that Aelfred may have sensed a relation between this formulation and the classical tripartite soul.

²⁷ John Brough, "The Tripartite Ideology of the Indo-Europeans: An Experiment in Method," *University of London, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22 (1959) 84. See also Dumézil's polemical but instructive response, "Religion indo-européenne" (at n. 16).

²⁸ In addition to the texts below, see Mohl (at n. 7) 20-96, and the useful citations in P. Meyer, "Mélanges de poésie anglo-normande," *Romania* 4 (1875) 392 n.

²⁹ Albert Henry, *Chrestomathie de la littérature en ancien français* (3rd ed., Bern 1964) 206.

³⁰ More common than Etienne's "li paisant" are forms based on the Latin *laboratores*; see e.g. the French tr. of *L'Image du monde* in Thomas Wright, *The Latin Poems Commonly Attributed to Walter Mapes*, Camden Society, 16 (London 1841) 179: "clerc, chevalier, ouvrier de terre," and the prose redaction of Gossouin (1246) in Batany, *Approches* (at n. 2) 73: "clers et chevaliers et laboureeurs de terres."

³¹ Irville C. Lecompte, ed., *Le Roman des Romans: An Old French Poem*, Elliott Monographs 14 (1923; rpt. New York 1965) lines 753-5.

³² PL 172. 166A-B. I believe this is the text referred to by Le Goff (at n. 2) 326. For a full discussion of the poetic vernacular version, see Charles V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age du XIIe au milieu du XIVE siècle*, vol. 3: *La Connaissance de la nature et du monde d'après des écrits français à l'usage des laïcs* (Paris 1927) 135-97.

³³ Félix Lecoy, *La "Bible" au Seigneur de Berzé* (Paris 1938).

³⁴ Jean Misrahi, ed., *Le Roman des Sept Sages* (Paris 1933).

³⁵ Socrates' scrambling of terminology is undoubtedly intentional. After discussing the training necessary for his military class, Socrates adds:

"It would perhaps be better if those we before called guardians (φύλακας) . . . we now call auxiliaries and allies to rulers (ἐπικούρους τε καὶ βοηθοὺς τοῖς τῶν ἀρχόντων δόγμασιν)" (*Rep.* 414a)

In Bk. IV (434C) φυλακτικός indeed does refer to a first-estate sovereign class, appearing in a triad with χρηματιστικός and ἐπικουρικός, and in Bk. VI (503B) φύλαξ refers to the philosopher-king. But in Bk. V (458C and 464A-C) φύλαξ again refers to warriors and alternates as a synonym with ἐπίκουρος. That βασιλεύς (in 473 it refers to the philosopher-king) generally means a military chieftain (as in Homer), and δημιουργός (in 434 it refers to the "third estate") is the name for the creating god in the *Timaeus*, does not help to keep Socrates' vocabulary more firmly in place.

³⁶ E.g., "L'Eglise, Noblesse et Pauvreté qui font la Lessive" (Recueil Le Roux de Lincy, vol. I, no. 23) and "Tout le Monde" (a personification accompanied by three personages: a noble, a clergyman, and a merchant) (Recueil Le Roux de Lincy, vol. III, no. 8), both described in Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire du Théâtre comique en France au Moyen-Age* (Paris 1886), nos. 24 and 62, pp. 55, 99-100; "Moralité à cinq personnages des Trois Estaz reformez par Rayson," described in Eugénie Droz, *Le Recueil Trepperel I: Les Sotties* (Paris 1935) xxv. See the discussion by Mohl (at n. 7) 80-81 (French plays) and 175-79 (English plays). Mohl claims, however, that the number of estates represented is "usually four."

³⁷ "The Clergy May Not Hold Property," ed. F.D. Matthew, *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted*, EETS, O.S. 74 (London 1880) 362, quoted in Mohl (at n. 7) 101. The analogy drawn by Wycliff is that set forth below: Father-second estate; son-first estate; Holy Spirit-third estate.

³⁸ See notes in the edition of P. Agaësse and J. Moingt, *La Trinité*, Bibliothèque Augustinienne 16 (Paris 1955). Various metaphysical trinities are suggested in Bks. IV and VI: *aeternitas-veritas-voluntas*; *res-imago-congruentia*; *esse-intelligere-vivere*; *unitas-species-ordo*; *origo-pulchritudo-delectatio*. Bks. IX and X concentrate on psychological trinities: *amans-amatus-amor*; *mens-notitia-amor*; *memoria-intelligentia-voluntas*; *memoria-scientia-voluntas*; etc.

³⁹ *Theologia Christiana*, PL 178. 1257D.

⁴⁰ E.g., Bonaventura, "Itinerarium Mentis in Deum," ed A.C. Peltier, *S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, vol. XII (Paris 1868) 5A-B. For use of the

same formula by Abelard, Gilbert of Poitiers and Guillaume de Conches, see Theodore Silverstein, "The Fabulous Cosmogony of Bernard Silvestris," *MP* 46 (1948) 114-16.

⁴¹ See also Thierry of Chartres, "Tractatus de Sex Dierum Operibus," ch. 2, in Nikolaus M. Häring, *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School*, Studies and Texts 20 (Toronto 1971), edited also by Häring in *AHDLMA* 22 (1955) 146-57; Edouard Jeuneau, *Guillaume de Conches: Glosae super Platonem*, Textes Philosophiques du Moyen Age, 13 (Paris 1965) 98 and note a (quoting the above text of John of Salisbury). Tripartite formulae derived from the *Timaeus* were not confined to learned Latin treatises. *Placides et Timeo*, a vernacular work, finds the origin of societal classes in Old Testament history, but attributes the theory of three estates to Plato; see Langlois (at n. 32) 309-12.

⁴² E.g., a thirteenth-century sermon by Jacques de Vitry cited in A. Lecoy de la Marche, *La Chaire française au Moyen Age (spécialement au XIIIe siècle)* (2nd ed., Paris 1886) 416; see also G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge 1933) 553-54.

⁴³ See the analysis of the development of the myth of Troy by Abaev (at n. 15) and references above, n. 22.

⁴⁴ Anatole de Montaiglon et Gaston Raynaud, *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, vol. II (Paris: 1877) 264-68; the *fabliau* is one of the first texts mentioned by Langlois (at n. 5) II, xviii, and is discussed briefly by Mohl (at n. 7) 69-70. Certain of the words used to identify an estate in the *fabliau* are more properly "titles." I simply repeat those used in the text.

⁴⁵ For marriage as a third estate, see Jean de Condé, "Li dis des trois estas dou monde," quoted above, p. 288. The determining feature of the other third-estate choices is economic; the advocate works for a fee. "C'est celli par qui mieus luy samble / Que l'en met plus d'argent ensemble. / Avocas gagnyent sans grant poine" (lines 79-81). He felt he could earn the most money by being an advocate; lawyers get good returns on minimal investment.

⁴⁶ A further relation to the Three Estates is in numerical structure: the first estate is represented by two entries ("clergie" and "astronomie"), the second estate by one, and the third estate by four.

This correlates with the numerical structure typical of the Three Estates -- duality, singularity, diversity.

⁴⁷ The most striking example of the embodiment of a verbal cliché in a social and political reality might be the creation of the *Etats Généraux*; see Le Goff (at n. 2) 132-34 and Mohl (at n. 7) 14-15. See also: C.H. McIlwain, "Medieval Estates," *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. VII: *Decline of the Empire and Papacy* (Cambridge 1949) 683-6; Georges Picot, *Histoire des Etats Généraux* (2nd ed., 1888; rpt. New York 1969); Claude Soule, *Les Etats Généraux de France (1302-1789): Etude historique, comparative et doctrinale* (Heule 1968). These scholars accept the date of the formation of the *Etats Généraux* argued by Picot as 1302 under Philippe le Bel. It should be noted, however, that to the non-historian the texts on which Picot bases his argument for the 1302 date seem as open to interpretation as any of the literary texts cited above: e.g., the phrase in the King's letter of convocation addressed to the Seneschal of Beaucaire (1302): "nos. . . cum prelatibus, baronibus et aliis nostris et ejusdem regni fidelibus et subjectis, tractare et deliberare volentes." See Picot, *op. cit.* 20 ff.; Georges Picot, *Documents relatifs aux Etats Généraux et assemblées réunis sous Philippe le Bel*, Collection de Documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France 35 (Paris 1901) 1; and for a more manageable selection of documents, Ch.V. Langlois, *Textes relatifs à l'histoire du Parlement depuis les origines jusqu'en 1314*, Collection de Textes 5 (Paris 1888). Arguments for and against the 1302 date are summarized in Soule, *op. cit.* 21-5.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Lucien Febvre's preface to Marie Ungureanu, *La Bourgeoisie naissante: Société et littérature bourgeoises D'Arras aux XIIIe et XIIIe siècles*, Mémoires de la Commission des Monuments Historiques du Pas-de-Calais 8, 1 (Arras 1955) 5: "noblesse, clergé, bourgeoisie, c'est une chimère et une illusion." See, however, the excellent review by Henry Roussel, "Notes sur la littérature arrageoise du XIIIe siècle," *Revue des Sciences Humaines*, N.S. 87 (1957) 249-86.