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**English Chivalry from its Infancy to
Modern Times**

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*



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I would like to thank primarily to my wife, whose patience and understanding were pivotal in allowing me to study and spend much of my free time submerged in books and other resources, leaving her on her own for many an evening.

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1 Introduction

The objective of this work is to point out the correlations English medieval chivalry has in the modern world and its legacies that are reflected in various spheres of the current-day society. It also aims to create a concise introduction into the topic of chivalry in medieval England and Europe, mapping some of its prerequisites, origins in Britain in the eleventh century, its ensuing evolution throughout several hundred years, up to its decline and disappearance corresponding with the end of feudalism. The thesis attempts to prove that “chivalry is not dead” in ways that go beyond a simple gallantry towards women, presumably the most stereotypical interpretation of *chivalry* today.

Chivalry in itself is a rather complex subject to define in simple terms. For the purposes of this paper the concept of chivalry reaches far beyond courtly manners and polite behaviour, and encompasses all that can be associated with medieval knighthood, a term which is interchanged freely with chivalry in historical resources as well as in this text. Chivalry is thus portrayed as being represented in the knightly demeanour on both the battlefield and in court, in rituals that originated in the Middle Ages, some of which are kept till this day, in heraldry which had undergone a massive expansion in connection to knighthood, in literature and films where this topic has scarcely lost any of its attractiveness, but also in much darker sides of human history - in the atrocities of war but also in their counterbalance in the form of prisoner taking, in which the age of chivalry played a significant role.

The thesis is split into two main parts, the first of which is dealing predominantly with the history of chivalry, whilst the second focuses more on its legacies in the present, yet exceptions to the rule can be found in both sections. Although the historical part may seem somewhat descriptive, it was my intention to

depict a given subject in a way that allows for a better understanding and appreciation when contemplating its overlap in the present day.

The historical part begins with etymology so that the reader is familiarized with the origins associated to terms that gave names to the topic, followed by the first appearances of knights in Europe and in Britain, a circumstance that is associated with the Norman conquest of England in 1066. In the following sub-chapter I look into the ways in which a medieval warrior could attain knighthood, until finally arriving to the origins of chivalry proper, what it meant and how it was shaped, as well as how it influenced the medieval society. Included is the notion of the famous “code of chivalry” which, interestingly, has never been codified into a comprehensive array of listed values, contrary to the popular belief. The next section is then dedicated to darker, yet important stages of medieval knighthood – to crusades and its outcomes, including the Templars. Next I mention other military orders with a somewhat nobler aura, such as the Order of the Garter in the reign of Edward III. At that time chivalry in its traditional sense was already in decline and its raw military purpose was unstoppably being replaced by social functions it provided to the holders of the knightly titles. Before looking into the manifestations of chivalry in the current day, enumeration of some of the more prominent literary works from the era labelled as Romanticism is presented due to the fact that some of its representatives drew heavily on medieval themes.

The following main chapter and the second part of the work is dedicated to the manifestations of medieval chivalry in the modern society. The knighting ceremony and titles connected to it, heraldry and its current use in the UK, the chivalric “code” of a medieval warrior and the current moral values as listed in the UK Army material as well as courtly manners evolving into some of the present rules of etiquette, are all among the topics discussed. Finally, the concluding chapter is not only devoted to summarizing

of what has already been mentioned, but it also highlights some of the less obvious parallels chivalry and its legacy left in the modern society even outside of the UK, which was the predominant focus throughout the work.

Among the primary resources used is *The Knight in History* (1986) by Frances Gies, which is a comprehensive, detailed and accessible introduction to the topic, a work widely recognized among historians and a part of a curriculum in numerous universities. *The Warrior and World of Chivalry* by Robert Jones (2011) offers, apart from an overall history of knighthood spanning almost a thousand years, some particular insights into the military aspects of the medieval knight, such as weaponry and tactics, and their use in the major events that shaped knighthood. Charles Phillips in his *Knights & the Golden Age of Chivalry* presents a wide variety of details pertaining to chivalry and presents them in a compact and organized way. To conclude the brief summary of my chief resources it is necessary to mention the works by Peter Coss and Maurice Keen, both British historians and colleagues, whose *The Knight in Medieval England 1000-1400* (1993) and *Chivalry* (1984) respectively proved to be valuable, in-depth resources on many a detail that some of the other historians only briefly mentioned.

2 Knights in History

2.1 Etymology

An introduction to the history of knights and knighthood can perhaps be best initiated by exploring the roots of the words denoting the image of this mounted medieval soldier. The Latin term for ‘a soldier’ is *miles*, a word which was later replaced by derivations of ‘a horseman’ in languages such as French (*chevalier*), German (*Ritter*), Italian (*cavaliere*) or Spanish (*caballero*). In Anglo-Saxon, the

expression for a mounted soldier was *cniht*, originally referring to ‘a boy, youth’ or ‘servant, attendant’ with its plural form of *knighthen*, meaning ‘the military follower of a king or other superior’, as can be found in the *Online Etymology Dictionary* (Harper). All these predecessors of the word ‘knight’, as used today, denote an armoured cavalryman, usually in service of a lord.

2.2 The Emergence of the Knight

The emergence of the knight in history is a debated subject due to the scarcity of records from the critical periods. Germanic tribes as well as the Romans both had in their heyday a distinct class of cavalry which was in many ways comparable to the knights of the Middle Ages, yet their distinction based on attributes such as armour and weapons, social class and the institution of knighthood itself does not allow for a direct link between the two. Fortunately, in comparison with the origins of the knight in the world, the emergence of knighthood in Britain is contrastingly easy to identify. There is an agreement among historians that a knight, a horseman with ties to his lord, as will be further described in detail, was introduced to Britain no sooner than during the Norman conquest and the famous Battle of Hastings in 1066. During the battle King Harold’s army was fighting solely on foot, and was overwhelmed by the forces of William of Normandy, in which cavalry already played a vital role (Phillips, *Knights* 33). While Phillips recognizes the achievements and valour of the well-known warriors of the 9th and 10th centuries, he refers to them as mounted warriors or warrior-kings, rather than knights, due to the simple fact that “the idea of the making of the knight through the formal admission to a chivalric brotherhood” (34) was as yet non-existent. It is also worth noting that the emergence of knights was closely bound to the military advances of the Middle Ages, most markedly the spread of the use of stirrups, high saddle and

nailed horseshoes, as concluded in *The Battle of Hastings: Sources and Interpretations* from 1996 by Stephen Morillo. Supposedly, before these advances all riders dismounted before a battle, the main advantage of having a horse being reduced to the fact that the troops were fresher than if they came on foot. With the employment of stirrups, the horsemen had a much better grip on their horses and were much more difficult to knock down (Morillo 222).

Despite these advances in riding equipment, the prevalent and basically romanticised picture of brave knights in shining armour, riding formidable chargers and fighting battles or winning tournaments is rather a misleading image if applied on these early periods. The actual appearance of a knight's armour, weapons and horse equipment evolved dramatically throughout the centuries and so a sixth-, eleventh- and fourteenth-century cavalryman or knight were much different-looking figures. As Frances Gies aptly observes in *The Knight in History*, the inaccurate concept that knights assumed a more or less similar image for the duration of their entire existence is largely a result of the appealing Arthurian literature (18). In reality, there is a gap of several hundred years between the cavalymen of a post-Roman Britain (from the times of the legendary King Arthur) and the glamorous armour-plated knights covered in colourful coats of arms of the late Middle Ages, when knighthood in its traditional, medieval sense was already in its decline. Accordingly, the notion of courteous and moral protectors of the innocent, sitting at the Round Table, does not correspond with how historians view the early manifestations of knights. "Ignorant and unlettered, rough in speech and manners, he earned his living largely by violence, uncontrolled by a public justice that had largely disappeared" is the depiction of a tenth-century knight provided by Gies (30-32).

Gies further explains that knights performed something of a “cornerstone” (19) function of feudalism. This statement is supported in the way that any land granted by a lord to his vassal¹ was exchanged by the military services of knights, which the vassal must have secured, usually by granting or leasing land to them in return. All these three parties were bound by an oath – the lord offered protection and support to his vassals, who pledged their loyalty to them. In much the same way, a vow of loyalty and protection bound vassals and their knights. These relationships defined this medieval model of social system: “feudalism was in essence the association between lord and armed followers supported by the conditional gift of land” (26). Phillips even ventures that “the Norman invasion of England in 1066 could be termed as a ‘feudal war’ . William’s noble vassals were fighting for the promise of titles and land . . . [and Normans] imposed their own feudal society in place of England’s existing nobility” (Phillips, *Knights* 33). Taking these facts into consideration, the conquest of England in 1066 was a major step in the spreading of feudalism in Anglo-Saxon Britain. With feudalism came the knight, who, for the next several hundred years, contributed to shaping the cultural and political landscape of the kingdom.

One not yet mentioned and vastly important element in the mosaic of the birth of knighthood was the Church. It seems the representatives of the Church were among the first to realize the potential this warrior force offered. Peter Coss summarizes this endeavour as an attempt “to direct and control the profession of arms . . . [and] to give rise to the idea of knights directly serving the international church and ultimately to the crusades” (46). Not uninterestingly, Gies adds a dimension of authenticity to this area by stating that the Church was actually afraid of these unrestricted men-at-arms and

¹ A man in the Middle Ages who promised to fight for and be loyal to a king or other powerful owner of land, in return for being given land to live on (“Vassal”).

therefore worked to have them on their side, so to speak: “the efforts of the Church [were] first to tame and then to harness the brute” (20).

Apparently, in the eleventh-century Europe any means of law and order were very limited and the predecessors of knights contributed to the mayhem by exploiting their superiority they had over the common folk. Gies explains that the basic incentives of the Church to exert influence over these warriors was first to secure its own property and people (church personnel as well as peasants, who contributed to its wealth) and second to promote the idealism of peace and harmony that it needed for undisturbed operation (32-33). The extent to which individual knights responded to such appeals were various, yet the Church succeeded in establishing itself as an inseparable part of knighthood, thus creating a “class consciousness” (35) that involved personal responsibility towards the Church and the unarmed population. Perhaps not surprisingly, once the Church had a sufficient number of knights following its preaching, it started to regulate and limit the knightly behaviour. And thus what started as a prohibition of spilling blood on Sundays and in or around churches, was later extended into the abolition of any violence on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and all holy days, finally leading to the prohibition of killing any Christian (35), rendering all knights of the eleventh century incapable of hurting anyone except people of different religion, a step which in essence prepared the ground for the “soldiers of Christ”, the Crusaders. It is of importance to point out at this stage how involved the representatives of Christianity were in harnessing the most formidable martial forces of their time. Despite the fact that knighthood has always remained a secular affair, the Church was very successful in using it to its purposes.

2.3 Ceremony of Knighting

The ceremony of knighting assumed various forms and shapes and had an evolution of its own, differing both in degrees of opulence and the number of accompanying procedures each aspiring knight had to undergo. Contrary to the uncertain origins of knights, the knighting itself has its documented roots in old Germanic rites of initiating a boy into manhood, during which a sword and a shield was given to the young man in a public ceremony (Tacitus 240). In the same manner, a sword or a sword-belt was bestowed upon every new knight since the first records in 11th century England (Phillips, *Knights* 42). Despite the profound involvement of the Church in knighthood, the ‘dubbing’² itself has always remained a secular event. Even if a priest or a bishop was present at the ceremony, the knighting could only be executed by another knight – be it a king or a landless knight, a man could only be knighted by another member of the knightly order. The Church, however, succeeded in imbuing the process with own symbolism and agenda, as explained by Jones. The knight’s new duties, including the protection of the defenceless, maintaining peace and administering justice, were “analogous to those espoused by the Peace of God³ movements . . . as the bishops and clergy . . . sought to bind the local knights into supporting these same precepts” (Jones 162). The ceremony itself evolved during the centuries but in its core involved a purification bath (analogous to baptism), the wearing of a white shirt to symbolize purity, a white belt as a symbol of chastity, and a sword taken from an altar as a tool for dispensing justice and protecting the innocent (162). These lofty ideals, however, could not match the reality of life in at least two ways.

² The verb “to dub” appears first in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* from 1086 when William the Confessor knighted his son Henry (Phillips, *Knights* 43).

³ Efforts of the Church to protect certain social classes at all times pronounced in 989 in Charroux, France were, together the eleventh-century Truce of God, which aimed to protect all classes at certain times, two major religious movements impacting the basic tenets of knighthood (Gies 33-35)

First, the Church itself did not shrink from interpreting its preaching in a way that actually promoted bloodshed (the blatant example being the crusades, as will be discussed in chapter 2.5) and second, for many a knight the status meant a permission to kill and rape, as has been observed in some recent studies, such as in *By Sword and Fire* by Sean McGlynn: “for others [the ceremony of knighting] meant a licence to rape, burn, plunder and kill” (96).

Besides the knighting of individuals, mass-knighting ceremonies were also quite common, during which a large number of squires were knighted alongside somebody prominent, usually a prince. The most cherished occasion, however, was the very rare occurrence of knighting on the battlefield. This, often a very hasty and inglorious ceremony, was performed before, during or after a battle to signify the knight’s great valour or achievements. There was also another, more practical side to knighting when done before the battle begun – a knight’s pay was considerably higher than a common soldier’s, and if captured, there was a higher probability of being treated with respect and kept alive for ransom. Ransom played a vital role especially in the centuries when knighthood attained higher social status. Whenever the situation allowed, knights were taken prisoner for the possibility of a generous ransom, which in many cases ruined entire families of the captured knights. The higher the rank of the captured knight, the more money could be extracted for their release (McGlynn 99). The knightly codex did play a role in sparing lives of the enemies but only in a limited way, the true incentive in this regard seem to have been the bounty.

2.4 Chivalry and the Knight’s Code

The concept of chivalry, as interpreted today, is but a fragment of what it used to be and to mean in the Middle Ages. In medieval times it meant an ideology

encompassing all aspects of its follower's life. The origins of chivalry are not documented in a way that it would be easy to point out to a specific year or event to be able to declare its birth. Peter Coss suggests that the “chivalric code of honour” started to take shape in the first half of the twelfth century (49), while Jones' estimation reaches much further - into the fourteenth century when he believes first attempts on codification were made in the early books on chivalry such as the ones from Geoffrey de Charny or Honoré Bonet (144). Maurice Keen, who can be counted among the most prominent historians specializing in the Middle Ages and a holder of the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire title (see chapter 3.1 for more information on chivalric orders) supports a different thesis by stating that tangible characteristics of chivalry are enumerated for the first time in Etienne de Fougères' *Livre des manières* from the 1170's: “we can observe that . . . the *Livre des manières* has at least a claim to contain the first systematic treatment of chivalry” (4). This discord only demonstrates that there was no official authority overlooking such affairs and thus any conclusions on the beginnings of chivalry and its code can only be ascertained by interpreting the written records of variable origins and focus recorded in this early history of knighthood. In contrast, all the aforementioned historians agree that the vast majority of records from this period were of ecclesiastical origin, which creates something of a paradox when considering that something almost exclusively secular (putting aside religious symbolism imbued in the process of knighting) should mainly be described in religious writings.

The qualities of behaviour associated with the “code of chivalry” were never unequivocally presented in any a resource in a form of a list. Various authors, be it knights themselves, philosophers, poets, or theological authors, put their emphasis on different qualities based on the focus of their works. The values themselves were, once

again, a subject to gradual development throughout the centuries. Jones divides the process into three distinct categories which I decided to make use of. In the first stage, during the period when chivalry was gradually taking shape, the written records mention characteristics emphasizing warriors' strength, skill with weapons and prowess. The most valued personality traits are considered courage, largesse, fairness and loyalty (144-6). It does not come as a big surprise that there is a notable distinction being made between knights who followed the Church and who did not. The “good” knights’ qualities were consequently listed as those of the “protectors of priests and monks, of the weak and the pilgrims” (Coss 49).

Come the second half of the twelfth century, knighthood was increasingly becoming a part of the Nobility mainly due to the fact that the knight was increasingly becoming a “landholding social elite” (Jones 148). It was the time when the most influential writings on the topic were created, portraying knights of impeccable characters and unwavering qualities, such as the *la Table Ronde* stories by Chrétien de Troyes⁴. The knightly virtues of this period were connected with lordship to accommodate the interconnection with the aristocracy and, perhaps more importantly for their reach into the future, to the courtly manners: dancing, poetry, music, witty speech, honour towards women, courtly love (148). “This was a cultivated society as well as a wide-ranging one in terms of wealth and ancestry” is a summary offered by Keen (22). During this period, chivalry is also, for the first time, coined as an *order* by de Troyes: ““The Order of chivalry’ . . . is the highest order God has willed and made” (77).

⁴ These were, among others, *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion* and *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart* depicting the notoriously-famous tales involving king Arthur, Lancelot and the knights of the Round Table (Gies 93).

The third major influence, as described by Jones, was that of the Church itself (151). As already mentioned, the Church successfully adopted knights for its cause at quite an early stage, shaping their ideology to reflect the wishes of its representatives. Into the ideological mixture then came the tenets of religion, resulting in knights seeking higher callings and deeper spiritual answers than those offered by their ladies. However incompatible these three traits may seem, that of a warrior, courtier and a Christian, they did function together, creating the complete picture of this medieval figure: “the differing strands fused together, building on each other to create a mode of behaviour that was at the same time practical and violent and idealistic and spiritual” (160).

2.5 Crusades

The crusading period is an inseparable part of the history of knighthood, one that undeniably left its marks in consciousness and rhetoric across the chasms of time. It is also an undying testimony that the greatest atrocities can be committed on the ground of noble causes, a concept that has time and again appeared throughout the human history, as I will further explore.

The identification, numbering and even dating of the crusades is a debated subject. There are resources specifying as many as nine crusades in total as well as various side campaigns occurring in between or alongside these, while other sources consider only the first five crusades as real crusades and use specific names for the subsequent campaigns. Some reasons for this confusion are the motives the various campaigns had, their demographic location and also their outcomes. The original idea of the First Crusade at the very end of the eleventh century, conducted to reclaim the holy city of Jerusalem from the Saracens and thus offering religious vindication of a “just

war”, led to return the city under Christendom, often differed from the purposes of the subsequent crusades, which not rarely stemmed out of political rather than spiritual incentives (Phillips, *Crusades* 7-9).

Crusades themselves had major implications on the medieval knight and chivalry itself as well as on the following chapters in human history in the centuries following the Middle Ages, as some historians claim. Jones is summarizing the former by stating that “crusading established itself deep within the psyche of knighthood, shaping chivalry into a more pious and spiritual ethos” (53). And indeed, from the first attempts of the Church to control knights (chapter 2.2) to one of the major influences of chivalry (chapter 2.4), it is noticeable that the (initially enforced) spirituality was one of the major contributing factors of sculpting the shape and form of chivalry. The crusades could then be then considered as the ultimate display of how the Church exerted its control and shaped world history using its ‘soldiers of Christ’ to fulfil its schemes.

The latter claim on how the crusades were reflected in the centuries after the last campaign was long over is justified for example by seeing the naval exploratory voyages of the 15th and 16th centuries, including those of Christopher Columbus, as being inspired by the crusading ideology (Phillips, *Crusades* 251). Phillips explains that Columbus, when trying to convince the Spanish throne to finance his voyages, allegedly claimed that the discoveries of wealth in the “New World” had the potential of financing another crusade, an image presumably appealing to the monarchs. Coss is, on the other hand, rather conservative with his assertion of these influences: “it is not at all easy to gauge the effects of the crusade upon contemporary knighthood” (46). He then concedes that one of the undeniable effects was at the very least the tone of ecclesiastical chroniclers, whose depiction of chivalry prior to the crusades was predominantly disapproving or directly condemning, while later it transformed into tales

of glorification and appraisal supporting the “just wars” against the “enemies of Christ” (46).

The topic of the crusades have had its reach in a variety of ways also into the modern world. One of the examples is the unrelenting interest of film producers in the theme of crusading and medieval warfare, which can be seen as a direct reflection of the interest of public in this topic, since the main purpose of the motion picture industry is to create income by offering entertainment appealing to a sizeable portion of public willing to pay for such amusements. Films such as *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), *Braveheart* (1995) or *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) are just a handful of conspicuous examples of films revolving either around knighthood or directly around the crusades, and were commercially successful and internationally awarded (“IMDb”).

The very word ‘crusade’ is still in active use today, the standard definition by the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary being “a long and determined effort to achieve something that you believe to be right or to stop something that you believe to be wrong” (“Crusade”). It is also commonly used in a collocation ‘moral crusade’, though this phrase tend to be used ironically. There are some well-documented uses of ‘crusade’ in formal speeches, such as the “Crusade for Freedom” delivered by Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1950 at the Columbia University as a part of the fund-raising efforts in the fight against communism in Europe (Jacobs 242). Another, rather speculative use, was made by George W. Bush in his speech following the 9/11 attacks, when stating: “This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while” (“President”). This aggravated the Muslim and Jewish community due to the historical connotations the word has retained over the centuries and had to be withdrawn from the former president’s repertoire (Phillips, *Crusades* 10).

The legacy and renown of the crusades has bridged the centuries and even after the decline and downfall of knighthood it still resonates and triggers emotional response (be it positive or negative) in the societies of the 21st century. The following sub-chapter is dedicated to one of its direct creations, a concept perhaps as famous as the crusades themselves, The Knights Templar.

2.6 The Knights Templar

The Order of the Knights Templar was one of the military orders whose name and legend has become yet another concept of chivalry that reaches into the modern day. It was established in Jerusalem under the name of The Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon directly after the First Crusade (1095-99) in the need of protecting pilgrims travelling into the Holy Land to see the recovered religious treasures, who were incessantly attacked on the road, as well as to garrison the conquered territories (Gies 125). The Order's exact beginnings are shrouded in the mists of time perhaps due to the fact that one of the Order's central archives located on Cyprus was destroyed by the Turks in 1571 (Nicholson 6) and thus the number of the initiating knights of the Order range between two and nine in various resources. These were very poor knights stationed in the Holy Land, whose mission was based purely on spiritual motives. They succeeded in their protective missions and were recognized by the ecclesiastical authorities throughout Europe after accepting the monastic rule of the Cistercian monks in 1128 (Jones 159), becoming a unique mix of monks and knights. The spiritual mission, their humbleness and the asceticism they displayed were "held up as paragons of the knightly virtue, and a lesson to the secular knights who squandered their lives and souls in sinful pride and violence" (159).

The Order's noble aims were rather popular also in secular circles. Soon the Order counted members in hundreds and also was given grants, financial and administrative privileges as well as exemptions from taxes that eventually made it self-sufficient and independent of all jurisdictions, until finally the only body with some authority over it was the Pope himself (Gies 127). With the wealth pouring from gifts encompassing vast expanses of lands, castles, cattle, goods and gold, the Templars became loaners and financial overseers by 1135. Within a decade, they were able to lend enough capital to the king of France Louis VII to fund a Second Crusade (136). From the poorest and desolate knights the Templars evolved into "bankers on a large scale, a position facilitated by the international nature of their organization" (Barber 1).

The turning point and a downfall of the Order took place at the beginning of the 14th century when the crusading all but lost its appeal to the European powers. It was a time when the forces of the Middle East reclaimed their lands, destroying one bastion of Christianity after another, until finally the close of the 13th century saw an end of all European Christian presence in the Holy Land (Gies 153). In consequence, the Templars lost their reason for existence. Still considerably wealthy and powerful an organization, the Order had become too tempting an asset for the king of France Philip IV to ignore. In 1307 king Philip, circumventing the Pope, had several of the Order's highest representatives captured and tortured, until finally extracting discrediting confessions out of them. Swaying the Pope at his side, Philip IV and his secular judicial powers as well as the Inquisition then subjected hundreds of Templars across all Europe to interrogation which often resulted in burning at a stake, violently stemming any resistance as a result. Within a year the entire Order, leaderless and under constant persecution, was in ruin (Barber 1-3).

The Order's fame, however, survived its violent uprooting, and, be it either because of the aforementioned lack of records depicting their affairs or due to the alleged profanities obtained from individual Templars during their torture (including the still-popular conspiracies including secretive hierarchy and worship), its legend and symbol of the red cross on a white background are still present in the culture of the modern society even outside of the traditional bastions of chivalry, such as France and England. To give an example the wine cellars of Cejkovice in South Moravia claim its foundation being shaped by the arrival of the Templars into this region in 1230s ("About"), while the castle Templštejn near Jihlava ascribes its origins to Templars in the years preceding 1298 ("Description").

2.7 The Most Noble Order of the Garter

In order to explore the inheritance of perhaps the most famous and enduring of the medieval orders, the Most Noble Order of the Garter, it is necessary to understand the contexts on which it was created. The Order was established by Edward III who first intended to create an order of Arthurian knights bearing the name Order of the Round Table, apparently smitten by the legends of King Arthur and his fabled companions. Edward III was an ardent advocate of chivalry and was arguably the last English king who practised knighthood in its pure and original sense, and who strived to live by its code yet also who used it as a pretext for a lavish show of power, which was also the case for the kings after him, without the quality of truly trying to live as a true knight, however. Having stated that it must be added that Edward's chivalry ended when his sense for pragmatism and military strategy met with the need to achieve his goals, as could be witnessed for example in what is presumably the second most famous battle in English history (after Hastings) – that of Agincourt in 1415, when, in the course of the

battle, the king had French prisoners executed in numbers closing to two thousands, including the members of the French nobility (McGlynn 146-47).

Here I would like to shortly diverge from the main subject and briefly touch on King Arthur himself, which seems to be an undying topic to this day. The very existence of King Arthur is uncertain. No mention of him is made by any post-Roman chroniclers, such as Gildas or Bede, until at the end of the eight century an English chronicler Nennius leaves a first mention in his *Historia Britonum*, stating that Arthur fought the Saxons alongside the king of Britons, killing hundreds of enemies on his own (Gies 89). For the next four centuries the story lay dormant only to be resurrected almost to its final form and glory by Geoffrey of Monmouth around 1136, who made Arthur a king and added the famous characters of Merlin, Gawain, Guinevere and others. Gies suggests that it was Monmouth's medievalizing of the story that made it so popular at that time: "kings Arthur's court is the court not of a sixth-century British chieftain but of a twelfth-century king, modelled after contemporary Anglo-Norman prototypes" (90). Geoffrey's work was very popular and widely adapted, notably by a Norman scholar Wace, who added several elements to the story, along with Celtic myths the story is now interwoven with, including the renowned Round Table (91).

Up to that point the works were only in various French vernaculars, an attribute first broken by a Saxon poet Layamon, who translated it into Middle English. The last marked development of the story was conducted by Chrétien de Troyes (as already mentioned in chapter 2.4), who added the famous characters of Lancelot and Perceval, Arthur's capital Camelot and the motif of the Holy Grail (92-3). The development of the Arthurian story played an important role in the history of knighthood. The great medieval works, such as Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by an unknown author, represented pure and romantic ideals pertaining to

knighthood which were instilled into the awareness of the literate public: “what the . . . romances express is not so much an ideal of knighthood in the service of religion but of knighthood as a religious service in itself. Herein lies their special significance for the historian of the chivalrous mentality.” (Keen 61).

Coming back to the origins of The Order of the Garter, the story has it that the king changed the originally intended name Order of the Round Table after a small accident at the court, when his mistress⁵, the Countess of Salisbury, lost her garter, receiving sneers from several onlooking noblemen. The king picked the garter up and, putting it on his own leg, uttered the famous words which became the Order’s motto: *honi soit qui mail y pense* (“shame come to him who thinks evil of it”) (Phillips, *Knights* 6).

The Most Noble Order of the Garter itself was established at Windsor Castle on 23 April 1348 (Phillips, *Knights* 111), two years after the famous battle of Crécy (which is of importance as it seemed to have been the decisive matter for the king as to which initial battle-proven knights would be allowed into the Order). Jones, however, states that it was not until 1349 when the Order came into formal being (122). It is believed that originally the king intended to have hundreds of members yet at the day of its creation only twenty-six members: King Edward and his son, the Black Prince (Prince of Wales), and 24 other knights who had all proved their worth, were bestowed with the honour.

Jones further asserts that the establishment of the Order served far more practical purposes than were the rather romantic ideas of embodying chivalry. By a careful selection of the highest nobility among the Order’s members, Edward III

⁵In the sense of “beloved” or “sweetheart” as used in the medieval times. As per Ben Zimmer, executive editor of *vocabulary.com* and a language columnist of *The Wall Street*, the pejorative connotation was not associated with this word until the early 17th century (Zimmer).

essentially bound the potentially most powerful opponents to his reign in the country to his cause: “Edward III’s Order of the Garter was the most striking manifestation of the *rapprochement* with the higher nobility . . . and in particular its most martial elements to him” (Coss 123).

Some of the vows each knight had to take denied them to fight on an opposing side, to leave England without the king’s permission or commanded them to always wear the Order’s insignia (a dark-blue garter) in public (Phillips, *Knights* 111). Juliet Vale, who has published one of the most recent works on the origins of the Order - *Edward III and Chivalry*, builds upon these conclusions and extends the picture by adding: “[Edward III’s] achievement in the institution of the Order . . . was two-fold: to provide a perpetual memorial to the justification of his own kingly claims; and also to create a prestigious chivalric élite comprising [of] . . . established noble families and allies abroad . . . who were characterised first and foremost by loyalty to the Order’s head” (Vale 95).

The Order of the Garter has held its tradition from 1348 to this day. Its membership is considered among the highest-ranking honours in the United Kingdom, one which can only be conferred by Her Majesty the Queen herself, who was appointed to the Order in 1947 by her father king George VI. The Queen, as the current sovereign of the Order, can choose to honour “those who have held public office, who have contributed in a particular way to national life or who have served the Sovereign personally” (“Order”). In compliance with the tradition, the Order consists of the monarch who represents its highest authority, the Prince of Wales – a title descended from the Black Prince, and 24 knights who bear the title of Knights Companion. The membership was extended above the original limit in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to include other members of the Royal family with the title Royal Knights

Companion, and also non-UK citizens - the Extra Knights Companion (“The Most Noble”), among which are counted the monarchs of other kingdoms, namely of Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Spain and Japan (“Members”). The traditionally male membership in the Order was revised at multiple times in history, most recently by The Queen in 1987, and thus currently even women, Ladies (a female equivalent to a Knight), are part of it.

While St. George is the patron of the Order, new members of the Order (if there are vacancies) are announced every year on St. George’s day on April 23 and the ceremony itself, when the new knights take their oaths, takes place in June in St. George’s Chapel in Windsor Castle (“Order”). Each knight is granted own stall in the chapel where a stall plate with the knight’s plate bearing arms is placed. As the stall plate remains in the chapel even after its owner’s death, the chapel has, over the centuries, become “one of Europe’s finest collections of historic heraldic design” (“The Most Noble”).

2.8 Twilight of Knighthood

There are several factors comprising of social, political and cultural changes, ranging from the developments in medieval weaponry to the practical end of the feudal system and the Middle Ages, which contributed to the gradual decline of knighthood. These changes were not sudden and thus the knight co-existed on the battlefield for a while with a far more superior force of the gunfire infantry and was forced to share his social status with the ever-stronger landowning gentry⁶, who sought to reach the privileges traditionally bestowed upon knights. By 1600, the long, sometimes glamorous and more often bloody profession of a knight was but a reflection of what it

⁶ From Anglo-Norman French *genterie*, based on *gentil* (gentle) = people of good social position, specifically the class of people next below the nobility in position and birth (“Gentry”).

had been during the reign of Edward III and the monarchs preceding him, his place on the battlefield no longer required, his values and valour more part of poetry and legend than a real-life experience.

As noted in chapter 2.2, knighthood was born and inseparably bound to feudalism, which was based upon a chain of allegiances binding lords owning or leasing land to their vassals in exchange of protection, provided by knights. The rise of towns filled with merchants replaced this traditional bond with the one between the king and his subjects (or between an elected representative and citizens), as money became more abundant and important than land (Phillips, *Knights* 122). Ironically, this development seems to be a direct outcome of the endeavour which is considered an illustrative example of knighthood – the crusades – during and after which numerous of trade routes were opened. More trade meant advancement in the town building, which started to fill with wealthy merchants. Among other factors contributing to the decline as listed by Linda Alchin on her website Medieval Life and Times, are the Black Death of 1348-1350, which reduced the population of England by more than a third, a disaster that led in turn into the Peasants Revolt of 1381 when peasants fought for better living conditions and the possibility of their relocation to towns where they were eventually allowed to buy freedom. Next, the professionalism of armies and an establishment of a centralized government with a monarch at its head who took ever more lands and power from the nobles, are also changes that weakened the position of knighthood (Alchin). A summary on this topic by Francis Warre Cornish (1839-1916) offers several interesting views of the legacies of chivalry as seen by an author living a century ago:

Chivalry had no reality except as the symbol of feudal power. When that fell away, it passed into the hands of heralds and masters of the ceremonies, and before long sank into contempt, leaving its trappings to

become the ornament of state pageantry. Chivalry had served its time. It had regulated the spirit of war and brought it into harmony, or at least into a treaty, with religion ; it had ennobled the relations between men and women, and given women a station from which they have never fallen; it had given lustre to the virtues of honour and courtesy ; it had softened the barbarity of war ; and had left its virtues and graces to be developed by later ages. (Cornish 334)

Such a romanticised picture of chivalry is very contrasting to the present-day rhetoric in medieval studies, which, if not openly condemning knighthood as a pretext for murder and violence, are at the very least rather hesitant in giving credit to the institution of chivalry as a whole as something having such beneficial aspects in the mentioned areas, such as the “barbarity of war” or “ennobled relations between men and women” (334).

The function of knights in society gradually ceased to be exclusively military. Dubbing became only honorific, its receiver no longer required to perform any fighting. The knightly status could be achieved by administrative or domestic services and it ceased to follow the ideals of equal brotherhood, various ranks among knights were becoming a commonplace (Jones 214). “Handbooks of chivalry that had once been so popular gave way to handbooks of courtesy. These books taught not how to be a knight but how to be a gentleman The gentleman replaced the knight as an ideal. He was a figure of society rather than a warrior” (Phillips, *Knights* 122-23).

As already foreshadowed, social changes were but a piece in the mosaic of the decline of knighthood. Alongside these was the development of warfare itself, slowly pushing the knight out into antiquity. A raise in quality of infantry with a large-scale use of pikemen, together with the appearance of the longbow, crossbow and finally of

gunpowder artillery, were slowly changing the face of battles, gradually rendering knights, who considered fighting at a distance a sign of cowardice and would not change their ways, vulnerable and incapable of being the decisive force of a skirmish any longer (Phillips, *Knights* 116-19). The shock-combat performed by the heavy cavalry of knights was no longer the turning point of battles. As Johnson surmises, the composition of armies as well as their purpose itself was changing. Campaigns in the 15th century (already during the Hundred Years' War) took longer than in the preceding periods due to the fact that their predominant goal was to conquer and hold land (especially in France), rather than causing political or economic hardships, with far lower opportunities for spoil, ransom, renown or financial reward (213). This, together with the high cost of the new means of weaponry, including hand guns, cannons and the gunpowder these new weapons needed, partook in a new trend of army professionalization, an army of mercenaries whose main goal was income and who were financed by the crown (Gies 218).

Several resurrection attempts were made throughout history to revive the lost lustre of chivalry. Henry VIII himself was an enthusiast in jousting and were known to hold lavish tournaments lasting for days, yet these were mere amusement and performed “by the book” (222), their main purpose to create a spectacle and entertain, rather than to train for a real battle. Heraldry flowered and the practicality of armour gave way to embellishment and pompousness.

Literature, which played a fundamental role in promoting chivalry in the past, also registered attempts for revival. William Caxton re-printed several chivalric books such as the then two hundred years old manual for knights *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry* by Raymond Lull and keenly promoted works by Froissart (Gies 222), a renowned French 14th century chronicler whose keen interest was to record “noble

adventures, and deeds of arms, performed in the wars between England and France . . . [so that it] may be properly related, and held in perpetual remembrance” (Uden 96). These attempts were, however, rejected and overpowered by Renaissance humanism and Protestantism, which identified chivalry with Catholicism (Gies 225). Historians such as Gies and Johnson both agree that the devastating blow in the field of literature was delivered by Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* from 1605, whose character of an old mad knight, who, having read one too many knight-errant stories, roams through the countryside and fights phantom foes in the name of an illusionary lady (225).

2.9 Romanticism

The theme of chivalric adventures in literature re-appeared again on a large scale in a period that is sometimes labelled as the second phase of Romanticism, “comprising the period from about 1805 to the 1830s, [that] was marked by a . . . new attention to national origins, as attested by the collection and imitation of native folklore, folk ballads and poetry . . . and even previously ignored medieval and Renaissance works” (“Romanticism”). The works in this period could be characterized by an emphasis on emotion, individualism and on glorification of the past. Among the renown novelists and poets and their works of that period can be named for example Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770), who gained fame for medieval manuscript forgeries (“Chatterton”), John Keats (1796-1821) and his ballad *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and *The Cenci*, Lord Byron’s (1788-1824) *Don Juan* or Sir Walter Scott’s (1721-1832) *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (“The French Revolution”).

In general the entire Victorian era can be classified as a time when the interest in medieval matters was very high. Not only in literature but also during social events people (presumably only some and of higher social status) endeavoured to resurrect the

chivalrous atmosphere for example by organizing mock-tournaments. Probably a best example of these was the Eglinton Tournament of 1839, which aimed to recreate a medieval tournament, banquet and a ball, drawing “an enormous throng . . . [including] baronets, knights and ladies” (Gies 228). Due to a sudden and enormous downpour, the event had to be cancelled and even though it was re-enacted two days later, “the fiasco in the mud was the image that lingered” (228).

3 Medieval Chivalry in the Modern World

Chivalry has directly or indirectly left numerous legacies in the modern world. In the hopes of not being too presumptuous I would name all royal and aristocratic institutions of the current-day Britain principally all descendants of this phenomenon. The monarchy, aristocracy itself, the House of Lords, heraldry, knighting and the system of honours have all evolved from times which were shaped by knighthood and its influence over the social elite. Beside these, more subtle and less obviously connected matters can be associated to chivalry, such as some of the rules of etiquette. The common concept of the English themselves being renowned for their extensively polite manners, a wide-spread myth which might have its roots in the courtly approaches towards women in the English medieval court, is already a rather ‘long shot’ yet still having at the very least a possible tendency of being connected to the times of a knightly gallantry.

This section extends on what has already been mentioned as a chivalric heritage in the modern society in an attempt to support the thesis fully.

3.1 ‘Sir’ and ‘Dame’

The most obvious of all expressions of medieval knighthood would probably be the ongoing custom of knighting in Britain. Knighthood (or its female equivalent damehood) is, by some, considered one of the highest achievable honours in the UK and strict rules apply to whom it can be awarded and who can use the title ‘Sir’ or ‘Dame’. The nominees come from all spheres of human activities and are selected for their contribution to national life: “recipients range from actors to scientists, and from school head teachers to industrialists” (“Knighthoods”). The titles ‘Sir’ or ‘Dame’ together with the right to wear the insignia presented during the ceremonial dubbing can only be used by British citizens who received the honour from The Queen herself (or a member of the Royal Family acting on her behalf). Other authorities, such as the Realm's Governor-General can also confer a range of honours either to UK, Commonwealth or foreign citizens, yet a strict protocol applies as to who can wear the insignia in the UK and use the titles.

The system of honours, including membership in various orders, has become rather complex, yet the tradition of a monarch as the only authority being able to grant membership to a chivalric order is still standing. The Order of the Bath (founded in 1725 for services of “highest calibre”, its name taken from the medieval custom of bathing as a part of the knighting ceremony), Order of St. Michael and St. George (founded in 1818 by George III and granted for extraordinary services abroad or within the Commonwealth), or the Orders of the British Empire (founded by George V during World War I to reward services to the war effort by civilians) are just a handful of the chivalric orders that are, beside The Order of the Garter, awarded by The Queen, and incorporate knighting of people receiving the honour, provided that the rank within the

order is high enough. Despite the popular belief, the exclamation ‘Arise, Sir...’ is not used during the ceremony (“Knighthoods”).

3.2 Heraldry

Although heraldry dates further than the Middle Ages, it was the chivalric ethos which caused its powerful expansion. The exact origins of heraldry remain uncovered by historians. Some sources place it to antiquity, to the times of Troy (Jones 165), while other use more general terms, such as “the Greeks”, “Romans” or “Oriental nations” (Cornish 155) as the first nations to use it. The mutual agreement is that some form of heraldry preceded chivalry and was used for a distinction in battle. The consensus continues with the assertion that it was chivalry that brought a significant boom into this area, which resulted into a complex and almost scientific discipline tracing the intricacies of coats of arms⁷, with designs that are often reminiscent of pieces of art.

The early knights used personal emblems in order to be more easily identified on a field of battle so that their valour and heroism does not go unnoticed. As the Nobility became an inseparable part of knighthood, another reason for wearing heraldic arms appeared – that of extending one’s chances of survival as wearing a coat of arms meant the prospect of ransom if captured by the enemy, reducing the risk of being unnecessarily killed. Knights first adopted the signs and designs of their lords but with a greater wealth and status during the second half of the 12th century they increasingly started wearing individual images (Jones 166). With a high social status came the need to preserve family achievements in the succeeding generations and thus the symbols became hereditary. It was customary to add some elements to the design in case a notable event transcended, as well as to incorporate designs of other families in the

⁷The term “coat of arms” originates from the fact that originally a tunic or surcoat emblazoned with an insignia was worn over a knight’s armour (Phillips, *Knights* 112)

event of marriages, such as was the ‘quartering’ (splitting the shield into four parts where multiple emblems could be placed). With the increasing complexity of such quarterings, which in essence evolved into a display of a family tree, heraldry became an important social function as it announced the wearer’s lineages and loyalties.

“Heraldry, then, served as an index of a knight’s personal prowess and status and that of his family and those with whom he had a social affinity” (Jones 168).

In Britain, the use of arms is a matter of civil law and is regulated by the College of Arms and the Court of Chivalry. The College of Arms was founded in 1484 and has functioned ever since as an institution which creates and maintains the official register (“College”). The use of heraldry in Britain is still rather extensive and concerns institutions as well as individuals, even where the nobility is not involved. Courts, churches, universities, city councils, guilds as well as sport clubs are all using this symbolism. Individuals can have the College of Arms perform a genealogical research as well as have a brand new coat of arms created.

For a portion of people, heraldry is still a living topic. Only three years ago the town council of Deal Town and its football club were accused of unlawfully using their emblem and, after some research and a final decision coming from the College of Arms, had to alter their design so that it was not resembling one from an already non-existent borough (“Deal Town”). Before Kate Middleton wed Prince William on 29 April 2011, her father had the College of Arms create a brand new coat of arms for the Middleton family, an emblem Kate, unlike her siblings, could only use for a short time before the wedding because after it was to be combined with the Prince’s (“Royal wedding”). Issues like these suggest that heraldry can still be a debated subject in Britain.

3.3 Modern-day Soldier

The knight in his prime formed a decisive force of medieval armies. There are certain parallels worth exploring between the values this force was supposed to adhere to as described in chapter 2.4 and the current values and standards of the British Army. Strength, skill, prowess, courage, largesse, fairness and loyalty are examples listed as the basic knightly values in the Middle Ages and it seems that over centuries these changed very little when defining the sought-after characteristics of a fighting force. The official UK Army website lists its “core values and standards” in the following way: loyalty, integrity, courage, discipline, respect for others, selfless commitment (“Join”).

Interestingly, these six core values, as described on the UK Army website, differ only very marginally from those created in times almost a thousand years ago. Loyalty and courage have their direct matches while discipline was fundamental in the process of becoming of a knight, when squires served their lords in all necessary matters. It could be argued that knights on the whole had little respect for the common folk, pursuing own or their lord’s goals regardless of the consequences on the well-being of all lower classes, which was where the Church interfered in an attempt to shape them in protectors of the weak, helpless, and the clergy, of course.

Apart from the codification of behaviour towards protecting the populace, knights were supposed to be respectful of one another, which they were to some extent – at occasions or for a personal gain, such as ransom or war booty. The textbook example of respecting each other being the battle of Brémule in 1119, where out of the approximately 900 English and French knights engaged in the fighting only three were killed. The preferred way of dealing with defeated knights was taking them prisoner (Coss 49-50). Selfless commitment, the last of the UK army core merits, is probably the

most disputable of the six, since the most pervasive goals of the medieval warriors were likely to be selfless only very rarely.

It is debatable whether and how the chivalric tenets influenced the behaviour of a medieval knight and a very similar discussion could be brought up today regarding the values of a modern-day army and some of the deplorable conduct individual soldiers sometimes exhibit in war zones. The battle-related aspects of medieval chivalry, such as was the respect for fellow warriors even on the opposing side, however, can be linked for example to how combatants today treat the wounded and prisoners, as outlined in the Geneva Conventions, which will be further discussed in the closing section of the thesis.

3.4 Etiquette

While the qualities and principles of a knight as a warrior can be tentatively linked to the code of conduct of the modern British Army, the courtly aspirations of a 12th century knight, such as dancing, poetry, music, eloquence and honour towards women seem to have left an imprint in the civil codex of a proper behaviour – the etiquette. It is exactly courtly manners, an inseparable part of etiquette, which probably represent the predominant picture most everyone would name when asked about their explanation of *chivalry*. The British website of Debrett's, a publisher of norms of etiquette as well as of the annual list of the Britain's allegedly most distinguishable people, does not forget to list in among the long list of the current, respectable notions of a proper behaviour chivalry itself, categorizing it as a traditionally viewed notion of "the courteous behaviour of a man towards a woman" ("British"). Beside chivalry, there are terms such as politeness, tact and tolerance – all applicable to what could have originated in medieval courtly manners. Therefore, it does seem that the legacy of the

twelfth-century troubadours, poets and story tellers, as described in chapter 2.4, has survived to this day in the form of British rituals, social occasions and manners, at least in the way they are described as ideals to look up to.

4 Conclusion

One of the main objectives of the thesis was to identify any possible manifestations of medieval chivalry that can still be observed in the modern world. By researching its origins and gradual development during the Middle Ages and beyond, it was possible to link the direct or indirect legacies of chivalry that have survived to this day and in so doing validate the main thesis stating that “chivalry is not dead”, even when leaving aside all gallantry towards women, an image which is most commonly presented when broaching the subject in the contemporary society.

Knights as a social order were introduced to Britain with its conquest by Normans in 1066, when William’s heavy cavalry overpowered the foot soldiers of King Harold. The cavalry of this period already bore marks of knighthood and employed the elements of knighting (dubbing) and oath keeping to vassals and their lords. This, in turn, brought feudalism to England as the vows of protection and military services were all made on the basis of granting or leasing land, the primary commodity of that age. The first proofs of the heritage were already made with these events, such as the honorific title ‘Sir’ (and later ‘Lady’), which is, at occasions, still bestowed on selected individuals by Her Majesty The Queen as an expression of formal appreciation. The distinct class of knights, evolving into higher nobility, is then another outcome which is pervasive in the English society, where it still plays a role in the civil as well as political aspects of life (the House of Lords being an obvious example).

The romanticised image of merciful knights, the protectors of women and innocent, riding in shining armour to stop any injustice is a myth drawing from the legends of King Arthur and reaching far beyond the borders of England, and the entire Europe. Because of the works of medieval scholars and poets, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Layamon or Chrétien de Troyes, and later owing to the Romantic ballads, novels and poetry, this myth took a deep root in general consciousness and became unanimously accepted view of chivalry, despite its unsubstantiated foundations.

Considering these implications, films or popular fiction portraying King Arthur as a gallant knight of the twelfth century is a fallacy based on the chivalric literature which simply embellished and idealized this legendary figure into something he could not have been even in the case that Arthur ever existed. Intertwined with the legend are yet other chivalric traditions which still influence the affairs of contemporary England – The Order of the Garter and other chivalric orders, which were founded in the course of the Middle Ages and also after. What started as an endeavour of Edward III, whose Order bound the highest Nobility in the country by vows of loyalty, evolved into numerous imitations in the course of history, leading into an array of orders that are currently part of the honorary system in the UK, used to confer accolades of diverse importance and meanings to people who have somewhat attributed to the image of the UK. These are singers and actors, scientists and researchers, highly positioned officials or members of foreign monarchies, as well as ordinary people whose contribution to society or specific deeds were ascertained as exemplary. Another example is the popular notion of the “code of chivalry”, which has never been truly codified in a sense of a coherent list of virtues yet some of the mentioned merits do resemble the “six core values and standards” of the UK Army.

Other parallels, such as the one connected with the efforts of the Church, are not as positive, quite the contrary. The thesis tells about the very beginnings of knighthood and how the Church exerted its power to shape it into the means of its own tool. On one hand this seemingly resulted in much of the restraint of the violent and unchecked behaviour some (or even a majority) of the early knights exhibited, in an attempt to replace their lust for power and wealth with the ideas of a higher call. On the other hand this act handed one of the most powerful weapons of the Middle Ages over to the Church officials, such as the 11th century Pope Urban II, who did not hesitate to use it for fulfilling own agenda in much the same way as any secular king would, if not worse, because with the power of the Church sanctifying their actions, knights became virtually untouchable when killing and raping in the name of Christianity.

Massacres which took place during the crusades were committed in the name of the Church. These campaigns were promoted as “just wars” with a “noble cause” against the infidel. Even though separated by centuries, the war atrocities which were carried out by crusaders in the Middle Ages in the name of a noble cause seem to have created a direct association with other, more recent conflicts in Europe, such as World War I, during which a “noble cause” was, once again, used as propaganda to justify the cruelties. British theologian Nigel Biggar confirms: “during its 1,500-year history, the “just war” tradition . . . has developed two sets of criteria, one regarding the justice of going to war in the first place (*ius ad bellum*) and the other regarding justice in the course of fighting (*ius in bello*)” (Briggar).

Unfortunately, the involvement of the Church in world’s conflicts was not confined to these two occurrences. Other such example could be the collaboration of the Church representatives with the Nazis, as presented in George S. Paul’s article: “Christianity had the capacity to stop Nazism before it came to power, and to reduce or

moderate its practices afterwards, but repeatedly failed to do so because the principal churches were complicit with . . . the Nazis” (Paul).

The icon of chivalry, a knight, was, in return, used by Nazis in their propaganda of 1936 Reichsparteitag Rally Day (“Reichsparteitag”), and also as one of the highest Nazi medal, the Knight’s Cross (Bianchi). Apparently, the aura surrounding the medieval knight has remained strong for centuries, resulting in the usage of its symbol for lofty as well as despicable ideals.

It is refreshing to observe that there are also other examples, associating chivalry with institutions that help people, rather than hurt them. Although not linked directly, the chivalric custom of taking prisoners rather than a straightforward killing of the enemy, together with their respectful treatment, can be considered a medieval version of the Geneva Conventions that are “at the core of international humanitarian law . . . that regulates the conduct of armed conflict and seeks to limit its effects” (“The Geneva Conventions”). Despite the fact that the medieval prisoner taking was, as discussed, likely much more about the prospect of a generous enrichment, rather than about any altruistic motives, it did establish a new way of treating prisoners.

The Geneva Conventions are a series of four international treaties dating back to 1864. The first Geneva Convention outlines the protective measures applicable to wounded and sick soldiers on the land, as well as for medical and religious personnel. The second Geneva Convention then strives protects wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel at sea. The third applies to prisoners of war – it regulates the conditions of places where prisoners are captured and where they labour, their financial resources, judicial proceedings and also repatriation after the end of a conflict. The fourth Geneva Convention, adopted in 1949, provides protection to civilians in wartime, outlining the obligations of the occupying power to the civilian population, including

humanitarian relief, as well as to the foreign civilians in the occupied territory (“The Geneva Conventions”).

The thesis is trying to prove that the medieval institution of chivalry, beside its most common association and manifestation of courtly behaviour and etiquette, has survived in a number of diverse displays a thousand years from its infancy in the Middle Ages to the modern times. The aristocratic institutions of the United Kingdom, knighting, heraldry, literature and films, the legacy of the Knights Templar, the treatment of the prisoners of war, as well as the general awareness of the period with all its glory and rawness seem still engraved deep in a modern-day society consciousness.

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English Resumé

The bachelor's diploma thesis maps the origins and evolution of knighthood in England, the birth of chivalry and its legacies in the modern world. From the Norman Conquest in 1066, which can be considered a decisive event in introducing a knightly elite to Britain, the paper attempts to give evidence how knighthood, through its gradual development, shaped the face of English society. It presents that what started out as a mere need to wield a fighting force to protect one's lands and estates, developed into a defining characteristic of the entire period of the Middle Ages, its symbol of a gallant knight in a shining armour now imprinted in the minds of a modern-day society. The thesis shows that chivalry has succeeded in bridging the gap of centuries and still resonates in many respects in the contemporary world, in the surviving aristocratic institutions of the United Kingdom, in the ceremony of knighting, heraldry, as an undying motive of literature and films as well as in the less obvious manifestations of chivalric values, such as the treatment of the prisoners of war, which has been codified in the Geneva Convention treaties.

The aim of the thesis is to point out at the fact that the commonly used saying "chivalry is not dead" means much more beyond the simple courtesy towards women and that it, despite the centuries dividing the modern society from the Middle Ages, is part of our daily lives in more ways than commonly thought.

Czech Resumé

Bakalářská diplomová práce mapuje původ a evoluci rytířství v Anglii, zrození rytířských cností a jejich odkaz v moderním světě. Od vítězství Normanů v roce 1066, což by se dalo považovat za rozhodující událost pro zavedení rytířské elity do Británie, práce podává důkaz o tom, jak rytířství, skrze svůj postupný vývoj, měnilo tvář Anglické společnosti. Práce předkládá, že co začalo jako obyčejná nutnost obrany pozemků a statků, se vyvinulo v obraz charakterizující celé období středověku, jehož symbol galantního rytíře v lesklé zbroji je nyní vtisknut v představách moderní společnosti. Teze dále ukazuje, jak rytířství úspěšně přemostilo celá století a v mnoha ohledech je stále patrné v dnešním světě, v přeživších aristokratických institucích Spojeného Království, v obřadu pasování na rytíře, heraldice, jako nehynoucí motiv literatury a filmu, stejně tak ale i v již méně nápadných projevech rytířských cností, jako je nakládání s válečnými zajatci, jež je ustanoveno v Ženevských úmluvách.

Cílem práce je poukázat na fakt, že projevy středověkého rytířství jsou obsaženy v podstatně více faktorech, než je pouhý projev galantnosti k ženám, a že i přes ta staletí, která dělí moderní společnost od středověku, je rytířství součástí našich běžných životů v ohledech, o kterých se běžně nepřemýšlí.

in its infancy" adverb still in an early stage Space tourism is still in its infancy" Usage of the words and phrases in modern English. infancy" noun (singular, uncountable) 1 the period of a child's life before it can walk or talk: She had five children, but four of them died in infancy. 2 in its infancy something that is in its infancy is just starting to be developed: Agricultural Longman dictionary of contemporary English. infancy" [[t]Éá]±nfÉ™nsi[/t]] 1) N UNCOUNT: usu poss N, prep N Infancy is the period of your life when you are a very young child. ...minute details of Deborah's infancy. ...the development of the mind from infancy onwards. 2) N UNCOUNT: usu in poss N I