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Publication Date
2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

The Overheard Song: Medieval Lyric in the Mixed Genre

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in English

by

Ricardo Matthews

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2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Overheard Song: Medieval Lyric in the Mixed Genre

By

Ricardo Matthews

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Professor Elizabeth Allen, Chair

This dissertation examines a medieval genre that combines narration, in prose or verse, with inserted lyrical poems. Although well known in France, this "mixed genre," whether as a prosimetrum or its all verse variation, has received very little scholarly attention in English, even though it was a very popular literary form in medieval England. Chaucer, for example, organizes his *Troilus and Criseyde* with a series of inserted lyrical set pieces designed to emphasize both the passions of love and its inevitable undoing. Medieval lyrics, however, have been described as playful exercises in rhetorical conventions, whose seemingly repetitive repertoire of conceits and figures point more to the rules of composition than to our Romantic conception of the poem as self-expression. And yet, within the mixed genre, narrative frames surround these conventional poems, grounding them in concrete incidents, and so create a "contextual subjectivity" for the singer, a fiction of the self that emanates from the song. In revisiting the problem of the medieval "lyric I," so often called impersonal and conventional, I argue that the mixed genre introduces a new concept of song as a locus of subjectivity within a framed performance. I am interested in the form's capacity to suggest, or even stage, the impression of a singular, emotional subject in a variety of works: Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, the *Tristan en prose*,

John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Charles of Orleans' two books, one in French and the other

English, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

INTRODUCTION

SONG AND SUBJECT

The world as it is represented in Middle English literature is filled with the expressive sound of music and song. In the *Parliament of Fowles*, for example, Scipio sees and hears in the nine spheres the "welle (…) of musik and melodye" (62), while down below, in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, in the woods, besides the same source, fountain or *welle*, a love sick Sir Palomides, after voicing a complaint, composes "a ryme of La Beale Isoud and hym," a song sung so "merueyllously lowde" (10.86) that Sir Tristram, as he rides by, overhears it and is angered enough to want to draw his sword.[1] Between the celestial sphere of music and songs heard accidently in the woods, we find open meadows, as in *The Floure and the Leafe*, where a "world of ladies" (137) emerge from the surrounding grove singing, or in the *Belle dame sans mercy*, where a pale man dressed in black is forced outwardly to feign "gret gladnesse" (118) and sing.[2] Unfortunately, we are told, "the complaynte of his moost hevynesse/ Came to his voix alwey withoute request" (121-22). In the city, Oxford to be precise, we hear a young student at night playing his harp or psaltery "So swetely that all the chambre rong;/And *Angelus ad virginen* he

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[1] Larry D. Benson, ed. *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); James W. Spisak, ed. *Caxton's Malory: A New Edition of Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur Based on the Pierpont Morgan Copy of William Caxton's Edition of 1485*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California, 1983).
[2] D.A. Pearsall, ed. *The Floure and the Leafe and the Assembly of Ladies* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962) and Dana M. Symons, ed. *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2004).

song;/And after that he song the Kynges Noote" (3215-7). Then the teller of this tale, the Miller, remarks how "blessed was his myrie throte" (3218). His rival for the attentions of his host's eighteen year old wife, a foppish clerk full of "love-longynge" (3349), accidently wakens her husband when he sings "in his voys gentil and smal" (3360) a few couplets:

> "Now, deere lady, if thy wille be,
> I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me." (3361-62)

The rest of his song is muffled as we move into the bedroom where the host suddenly awakens confused. We also know, by the end of the tale, the young wife will show little *rewe* or pity for him. And then we have the prison towers, where Palamon, one May, listens from his cell to a girl gathering daisies in a garden below while "as an aungel hevenysshly she soong" (1055); in another, an imprisoned Scottish king, James I, listens to a nightingale sing so loudly, that "all the gardyng and the wallis rong" (229).[3] Moved by its harmony, he transcribes "the text" (231):

> Worschippe, ye that loveris been, this May,
> For of your blisse the kalendis ar begonne,
> And sing with us, "Away, winter, away!
> Cum, somer, cum, the suete sesoun and sonne!"
> Awake for shame! that have your hevynnis wonne,
> And amorously lift up your hedis all:
> Thank Lufe that list you to his merci call. (232-38)

The natural optimism of this song with a little song inserted inside binds two literary traditions together—one French, as can be seen by nightingale's stanza of choice, not just Chaucer's "rhyme royal" but Machaut's *septains,* and the other, English and alliterative—in a narrative form that uniquely celebrates the composition and singing of songs.[4] That form is a unique

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[3] Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, eds. *The Kingis Quair and Other Poems* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2005).

[4] Though various theories of the "rhyme royal" have been argued, including an Italian thesis that suggests Chaucer adapted Boccaccio's eight-line *ottava rima* stanza (abababcc) for *Troilus* by subtracting one line from the middle, Daniel Poiron's tables show that the preferred stanza of Guillaume de Machaut, a poet of great influence on Chaucer, was the seven-line, decasyllabic in ababbcC; in other words, the "rhyme royal." Chaucer seems to have made the conscious decision of choosing the familiarity and prestige of Machaut's *septains* as a traditional indicator of great love poetry for his own innovations. Daniel Poiron, *Le poète et le prince: L'évolution du lyrisme courtois*

mixture of genres. It can take shape as a prosimetrum, with its alternating use of prose narrative

and lyric inserts, or as its all verse variation: combining verse narration with lyrics—what Ardis

Butterfield calls "verse with verse," Sylvia Huot, "lyrical narrative poetry," and Judith Peraino,

"interpolated verse narratives."[5] This had a long but until recently, little noticed presence in

English literature.

1. Bringing the Mixed Genre into Focus

In the thirteenth century, French authors, inspired by Boethius' example of philosophy

mixed with "rhetoricae ac musicae melle dulcedinis" (the honeyed sweetness of rhetoric and

music)(3), wrote romances that included inserted poems or songs.[6] Though Boethius was not the

only author to write Latin prosimetra, the idea of a text that could both write and reflect upon

poetry—and in the voice of a prisoner too, so evocative of the later trouvère *prison amoureuse*

topos—made for a more immediate model to emulate than the cosmological visions of Martianus

Capella, Bernard Silvestris or Alain de Lille.[7] However, Alain's *De planctu naturae*, with its

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de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orleans (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), pp. 374-5, 385-87.
For the rhyme royal and its modern coinage, see Martin Stevens, "The Royal Stanza in Early English Literature,"
PMLA 94.1 (January 1979): 62-76. For a different view' see James Dean, "Gower, Chaucer and the Rhyme Royal,"
Studies in Philology 88.3 (Summer 1991): 251-75.

[5] Ardis Butterfield, "*Aucassin et Nicolette* and Mixed Forms" in Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl, eds. *Prosimetrum:
Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 67-98; Sylvia Huot,
From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry (Ithaca: Cornell
University, 1987) and Judith A. Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love: Song and Self-Expression from the Troubadours to
Guillaume de Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 234. Butterfield also uses "romans à chansons"
and Peraino, "lyric interpolated romances." Greg Stone prefers "lyrico-narrative texts," that is "narrative romances
with periodic lyric insertions," and Galvez, "lyrico-narrative." Instead of romances, Poiron focuses on "*dits* lyrico-
narratifs." Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), p. 21; Gregory B. Stone's *The Death of the Troubadour: The Late
Medieval Resistance to the Renaissance* (University of Pennsylvania, 1994), p. 59; Marisa Galvez, *Songbook: How
Lyrics Became Poetry in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012), p. 39; and Poiron, *Le poète et le
prince*, p. 204.

[6] H. F. Steward, E. K. Rand, S. J. Tester, eds. *Boethius: Theological Tractates, The Consolation of Philosophy*
(Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973).

[7] Prosimetrum seems to have been a twelfth-century coinage defined as a branch of poetic composition. The
prosimetrum was known in antiquity as a *satira* and was associated with formal disruption at the service of playful
content. According to Ziolkowsky, the Menippean Satire had only a "patchy influence" in the Middle Ages. He

own connection to the amorous environment of the *Roman de la rose*, would also become an influential model, as will be seen in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. In France, prose gave way to verse in the narratives, as if to reinforce the importance of song in the late Middle Ages.[8] Jean Renart, one of the mixed verse's first practitioners, seems to have used previously written songs found in the trouvère and troubadour canon to add a patina of "realism" to his own *Roman de la rose*. Unlike *Aucassin et Nicolette*, another early French "cantefable" (41.24), which parodies the *chanson de geste* with alternating *laisses* of prose and verse more in a manner reminiscent of the Chartian prosimetra, Jean Renart's characters break out into song while working, traveling between castles, attending feasts and, in connection to a tradition of troubadour and trouvère songs, simply because they are in love.[9] Jean explains in the prologue why he has "fet noter biaus chans" (notated beautiful songs)(2) in "ceste conte en romans" (this tale in the form of a romance)(1): "Por ramenbrance des chançons" (for the remembrance of these songs)(3), a motivation reminiscent of Marie de France and her own ambitions to remember the Breton *lays*.[10] This "novele chose" (new thing)(12), this new or original work, resulting from the mixture of one genre, romance, with another, song, for the telling of one tale,

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could find only one example of the ancient term *satira* in the early Middle Ages but it referred exclusively to Martianus Capella and his influence on Boethius. However, Dronke found a small fragment of the *Satyricon* in a commentary by Boethius. Jan Ziolkowski, "The Prosimetrum in the Classical Tradition" in Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl, eds. *Prosimetrum: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 45-66 (qt. 51) and Peter Dronke, *Verse with Prose from Petronius to Dante: The Art and Scope of the Mixed Form* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 30. For trouvère images of the prisoner and hostage see Roger Dragonetti, *La technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise: Contribution à l'étude de la rhétorique médiévale* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1960, rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), pp. 94-97, 107-10.

[8] If prose does make an appearance in the vernacular mixed genre, it is either in response to another genre, as in the *Tristan en prose*'s rewriting of the Arthurian Vulgate, or prose becomes treated as another kind of insert, as can be seen in the inclusion of a sermon in *The Canterbury Tales* and the many inserted letters in Machaut's *Voir Dit*, Froissart's *Prison amoureuse*, Christine de Pisan's *Livre du duc des vrais amans* and *Les Douze dames de rhétorique*.

[9] Jean Dufournet, ed. *Aucassin et Nicolette: Edition critique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984).

[10] Jean Dufournet and Felix Lecoy, eds. *Jean Renart: Le Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole* (Paris: Champion, "Champion classiques," 2008). Some discussion has focused on this *faire noter* because it seems to imply the inclusion of music when there is no musical notation in the manuscript. However, *noter*, outside the domain of music, also includes the writing or recording of things to be remembered. Jean Renart seems to be playing with both it musical and memorial features.

produces two alternating actions for the reader: "l'en i chante et lit" (one sings and reads therein)(19) even when the manuscript does not include musical notation. Other romances, as well as many fourteenth-century *dits amoureux*, use lyrics—that is, to say, short songs or poems in a variety of historic forms or genres—to reclaim the central position of song in relation to narration.

Though "lyric" has recently become a contested term, there are enough references to singing in the mixed genre to make "lyric" work without having to justify its rare appearances from a lexical standpoint.[11] "Song" is the preferred term since the distinction between a song and poem was not so absolute in the Middle Ages. Dante, for example, writes in the fourteenth-century *De vulgari eloquentia* that "armonizantes verba opera sua cantiones vocant, et etiam talia verba in cartulis absque prolatore iacentia cantiones vocamus" (those who harmonize words call their work songs; even when such words are on the page, away from any performer, we call them songs)(2.8).[12] Eustache Deschamps, in his late fourteenth-century treatise, the *Art de dictier*, theorized on what was already evident in practice; that songs sung and songs recited were two variations of the same "science" (394d) of music: one accompanied by musicians and sung with artfulness, *musique artificiele*, and the other recited with our own "natural" voices, *musique naturele*.[13] In the *Franklin's Tale*, Chaucer associates lays sung and lays read or listened to

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[11] Ardis Butterfield, "Why Medieval Lyric?" *ELH* 82.2 (Summer 2015): 319-43.

[12] Steven Botterill, ed. *Dante: De Vulgari Eloquentia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996).

[13] Deborah Sinnreich-Levi, ed. *Eustache Deschamps: L'Art de dictier* (East Lansing: Colleagues, 1994). Deschamps offers practical reasons for elevating the natural. Sometimes sweet words need to be recited when musical accompaniment is not around as, for example, in secret places or before a lady. He also says that natural music can be heard in the reading of a book aloud to a sick person. For important discussions of the *Art de dictier* see Roger Dragonetti, "'La poésie…Ceste musique naturele': Essai d'exégèse d'un passage de l'*Art de Dictier* d'Eustache Deschamps" in *Fin du Moyen Age et Renaissance: Mélange de philologie offerts à Robert Guiette* (Anvers: Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1961), pp. 49-64, reprinted in *"La musique et les lettres": Etudes de littérature médiévale* (Geneva: Droz, 1986), pp. 27-42; I. S. Laurie, "Deschamps and the Lyric as Natural Music," *Modern Language Review* 59.4 (October 1964): 561-70; Kenneth Varty, "Deschamps' *Art de Dictier*," *French Studies* 19.2 (April 1965): 164-68; Glending Olson, "Deschamps' *Art de Dictier* and Chaucer's Literary Environment," *Speculum* 48.4 (October 1973): 714-23; James I. Wimsatt, "Natural Music in Middle French Verse and Chaucer" in *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto:

when describing the art of the Bretons: "layes with hir instrumentz they songe/ Or elles redden hem for hir plesaunce" (712-13).[14] "Song" then is the medieval term to describe any short lyric with or without music when the particular form (ballade, rondeau, virelays, lay) or function (complaint, prayer) is not stated explicitly in a text.[15]

The art of writing short poems in the vernacular tradition then became associated with music, mostly because of its use of *rhythmus*, though, like grammar, vernancular poetry too borrowed from rhetoric as an art of composing words in an ornamented manner.[16] For Jean Molinet, "Rethorique vulgaire" (vernacular rhetoric) was "une espece de musique appellee richmique" (kind of music called rhythmic)(216), that is, metrical.[17] More importantly for this study, Deschamps explains that music, whether artful or natural, "se face de volunte amoureuse a la louenge des dames" (is made from an amorous desire for the praise of ladies)(395b), a subtle reference not only to Machaut's own collection of poetry, the *Louange des dames* but to a

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University of Toronto, 1993), pp. 3-42; Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2007), pp. 57-70; and Philipp Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis: Speculative Music Theory and Poetics, from Saint Augustine to the Late Middle Ages in France* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 2013).

[14] For reading as listening see Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996).

[15] Julia Boffey, "Forms of Standardization in Terms for Middle English Lyrics in the Fourteenth Century" in Ursula Schaefer, ed. *The Beginnings of Standardization* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 61-70. For Dante, *cantio* seem to refer to both song in general and a genre or form in particular, the troubadour *canso* or Italian *canzoni*: "quapropter tam cantiones quas nunc tractamus, quam ballatas et sonitus et omnia cuiscunque modi verba sunt armonizata vulgariter et regulariter, cantiones esse dicemus" (and so it is not only the *cantiones* we are treating but also the ballate and sonnet and all kinds of words that are harmonized in the vernacular or Latin should be called songs) (2.8).

[16] Not only does John of Garland situate his *artes* with "Gramatice, quia docet congrue loqui; Rethorice, quia docet ornate dicere; Ethice, quia docet siue persuadet ad honestum" (Grammar, since it teaches how to speak properly; Rhetoric, since it teaches how to speak elegantly; and ethics, since it teaches or instills a sense of what is right), the latter, associated with Cicero, but he also cites Boethius' *De institutione musica* and its grouping of song and poetry together because of the use of *rhythmus* in verse. Dante describes songs, written or sung, "fictio rethorica musicaque poita" (a composition or fiction arranged with the help of rhetoric and music)(2.4). Furthermore, Dante seems interested in both the rhythmic and harmonic possibilities for words. Traugott Lawler, ed. *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974), pp. 2-7. However, in regards to Deschamps and *musique naturele*, while Varty and Jeserich describe the difficulties and consequences of not placing poetry under rhetoric, Dragonetti tries to reveal his originality by separating Deschamps from a Boethian tradition. Varty, "Deschamps' *Art de Dictier*," Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis* and Dragonetti, "La poésie." For music and the vernacular treatises, see Ernst Langlois, ed. *Recueil d'arts de seconde rhétorique* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), pp. iii-iv; Douglas Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), pp. 150-53.

[17] Langlois, *Recueil d'arts*.

purpose we will find played out over and over again in the mixed genre, whether prosimetrum or verse, of a lover composing and singing songs for his lady, or in the case of Iseut and Toute Belle, for her man.[18]

Romances like the *Tristan en prose* or the *dits* of Guillaume de Machaut repeatedly focus on singers, whether knight-poets or lovesick clerks, and stage the conditions in which a song is produced and overheard. And in some manuscripts, like those for Machaut's *Remède de Fortune*, the *Roman de Fauvre* and some manuscripts of the *Tristan en prose*, a song may also include its musical notation, while in others, like Charles of Orleans' famous personal manuscript, space is left for music to be added later. But most of the time, the song is something to be heard in the imagination or to be understood, as Deschamps points out, as melodic eloquence, a pleasing rhetorical language of "douces paroles ainsis faictes et recordees par voix plaisant aux escoutans qui les oyent" (sweet words thus composed and recited by a voice pleasing to those listeners who hear them)(395c). This is at least Chaucer's understanding of song when he describes the man in black's "lay" (471) in the *Book of the Duchess* as a "maner song,/ Withoute noote, withoute song" (471-72). In either case, lyric or song, both imply a conscious form of writing in which the writer shifts out of narrative verse or prose and presents a highly condensed, rhymed, stylistic, formulaic, metrically and syntactically complex "song" in one of a variety of historic forms, whether refrain, rondelet, lay, ballade, chant royal, rondeau or virelay.

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[18] Deschamps claims this natural music was equally part of song contests or "puys d'amours anciennement et encores acoustumz en plusiers villes et citez des pais et royaumes du monde" (Puys of love in the old times and still today held in several towns and cities of the countries and kingdoms of the world)(395c). But at least in the in the thirteenth-century statutes for the London Puy, the rules remind its members that the winning "song" must be notated and sung "Kar saunz le chaunt ne doit om mie appeler une resoun endite chauacoun, ne chauncoun reale corounee ne doit estre saunz doucour de melodies chaunte" (Because without singing, one cannot rightfully call such a composition a song, and no crowned royal song can be without the sweetness of sung melodies)(225). Thus clarifying the definition of song with its traditional meaning. Henry Thomas Riley, ed. *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum et Liber Horn*, vol. 2, part 1 (London: Longman, 1860).

By the fourteenth century, English examples of the mixed-verse variation of the prosimetrum, the *dits amoureux*, made popular by poets such as Nicole de Margival, Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart abound. One of the prologues to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, for example, includes the poet singing a ballade for both the god of Love and Queen Alcestes. Unfortunately it is not well received and Love criticizes him for forgetting to include Alcestes "in thi song to sette" (F 540) among the ballade's many exempla of beautiful women.[19] The song itself is formally set apart from the narration by a rubric, "Balade," following the fashion of the French *dits*. It is in Machaut's favorite seven-line, decasyllabic stanza in ababbcC with a pastiche of images derived from his disciples, Deschamps and Froissart. Finally, in the fifteenth-century, Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* ends with the singing of a "ballade nwe" (1338), not only because it is written on the spot but perhaps because he provides new innovations in the refrain, innovations found later in Charles of Orleans' own English ballades.[20]

However, unlike in English, much work has already been done on the French prosimetrum and its mixed verse variation that is useful in approaching the English tradition. Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, for example, in situating Machaut's *Voir Dit*, a narrative in verse about the compilation of a book with inserted prose letters and songs (some notated), sketches out a "typology of inserted lyrics," a practice she describes dominated narratives in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[21] She describes short poems being either assimilated into a narrative as moments of singing, as we find in romances, or in the case of the *Voir Dit*, narratives

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[19] Chaucer's failure to please Love and the resulting critique of his work is a humorous "send-up" not only of Machaut's *Jugement du roy de Navarre* but also Froissart's *Dit de la marguerite*, which ends with the lover waiting expectantly for Love to heal him. In the G prologue, the missing reference to Alcestes is added to the refrain, enthusiastically announcing "Alcestes is here" in the first half of the line. Furthermore, the ballade is sung by a company of ladies as they walk into the grove where Chaucer will be insulted by Love this time for not writing in the spirit of the Alcestes he knows.

[20] J. Allen Mitchell, ed. *John Lydgate: The Temple of Glass* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2007).

[21] Jacqueline Cerquiglini, *"Un engine si soutil": Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIVe siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1985), p. 24.

flowering out of song. Her most important point is that the infamous lyric I, that "je indifférencié," becomes invested either by the character singing the inserted song or, in the case of the *dits*, by the first-person narrator who is also the singer.[22] In both cases, the works are self-reflective; that is, always taking into account the composition of those songs. Maureen Boulton elaborates on Cerquiglini's concise description of the function of "lyric insertion" by cataloging the particular purposes of each appearance of song, whether to enhance the setting by making song part of the atmosphere, as seen in Jean Renart, or to indicate a character's emotions either as monologue, dialogue or, as found in the *Tristan*, a letter or message.[23] She also describes more experimental works where song are used to structure, not flow from, narrative.

More importantly, Boulton argues that the form is less about the quotation or borrowing of songs than in "combining genres," genres which could function in the same work independent of each other, whether as romance or lyric, without sacrificing either poetic or narrative coherence.[24] Paul Zumthor describes medieval writers playing with contrasts, from the most local level, like a rhythmic rupture along the line, to the generic.[25] Daniel Poiron and Hans Robert Jauss find in these formal combinations or hybrids the force behind the creation of new medieval types or genres.[26] For Boulton, this "hybrid genre" is not only reflective of thirteenth-century aesthetics in both literature and music, as can be seen in the *chanson avec des refrains* and the motet, but more directly as a continuation of romance's approriation of lyric conventions

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[22] Ibid., p. 27.

[23] Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *The Song in the Story: Lyrical Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200-1400* (University of Pennsylvania, 1993), p. 2. For a recent study cataloguing the purpose of refrain insertions in the verse variation of the mixed genre, as well as in didactic literature, see Anne Ibos-Augé, *Chanter et lire dans le récit médiévale: La function des insertions lyriques dans les oeuvres narratives et didactiques d'oïl aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, 2 vols. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).

[24] Ibid., pp. 2, 14, 272-74.

[25] Paul Zumthor, *Langue et techniques poétiques à l'époque romane (XIe-XIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1963), p. 177.

[26] Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, p. 314; and Hans-Robert Jauss, "Littérature médiévale et théorie des genres," *Poétique* 1 (1970): 79-100.

as can be seen in Chretien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la charette*.[27] For Kevin Brownlee, the

"generic hybrid" that first made up the Latin mixing of prose and verse and then the "narrative

poem with intercalated lyrics" became a "canonical form," the *dit*.[28]

In trying to locate the origins of this hybrid form, Sylvia Huot argues that "lyrical

narrative poetry" developed out of an experimental "appropriation of lyricism by narrative poets"

in the Northern French *chansonniers* or song books from the mid-thirteenth and fourteenth

centuries.[29] These anthologies of trouvère *chansons*, Huot argues, were already organized using

"author identity," that is, by an author's name as well as a minature, and made possible a "hybrid

entity" combining romance's narrative discourse, with its focus on recounting stories of an

identifiable protagonist, and song's vivid manifestation of an amorous experience.[30] Italian

chansonniers for the Occitan troubadours also manifest this mixture by mediating snatches of

individual *cansos* or *sirvantes* with prose *vidas* or biographies, and *razos* explaining the fanciful

circumstances or reasons for a song's composition.[31] Later, the *dits amoureux* would take up

not only the allegorical world of the *Roman de la rose*, but also its first person projection in

narrative form of the infamous "lyric I."

Huot's theory, however, has been criticized. Jennifer Saltzstein, for example, cautions

against seemingly attractive teleologies like "song to book" or "lyric to narrative" while

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[27] Boulton, *Song in the Story*, pp. 273, 282, 289-90.

[28] Kevin Brownlee, "Generic Hybrids" in Denis Hollier, ed. *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1994), pp. 88-92 (qt. 91).

[29] Huot, *From Song to Book*, pp. 46-47.

[30] Ibid., pp. 83-85.

[31] Elizabeth W. Poe, *From Poetry to Prose in Old Provençal: The Emergence of the Vidas, the Razos, and the Razos de trobar* (Birmingham: Summa, 1984) and "The *Vidas* and *Razos*" in F.R.P. Akehurst and Judith M. Davis, eds. *A Handbook of the Troubadours* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), pp. 185-97; Jean-Michel Caluwé, "*Vidas* et *razos*: Une fiction de chant," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 32.125 (January-March 1989): 3-23; William E. Burgwinkle, *Love for Sale: Materialist Readings of the Troubadour Razo Corpus* (New York: Garland, 1997) and Sarah Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotations and the Development of European Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013).

Butterfield has pointed out that some "romans à chansons" predate the *chansonniers*, such as the *Tristan en prose*.[32] Furthermore, Yelizaveta Strakhov has recently shown that fourteenth and fifteenth-century lyric compilations tend to rubricate a "respective form (balade, rondeau, virelai, etc)" more often than "authorial attribution" to an individual song as Huot claims.[33] In other words, a song's genre can be more important than its author as an organizing principle. This rubricating of historic song forms can equally be found in both Chaucer and the French *dits*. Nevertheless, Huot's idea of the mixed genre as a "repository for song," what Butterfield calls "song transcription," is fecund.[34] Songs can find a home in narrative, what Butterfield calls "anthology narratives," a space not only to perform song but preserve them in a "newly hybrid generic relationship."[35] This new narrative solution to organizing and identifying song, whether authorially, formally or dramatically, reveals a true "genre in the making": the mixed genre.[36]

Unfortunately, as Butterfield points out, discussions of this "generic invention," so pertinent to this period, is strangely muted in Middle English studies.[37] Unlike Boulton and Butterfield, for example, who can supply an authoritative list of all extent French examples of "narrative works containing lyric insertions," no such list can be found covering Middle English.[38] The mixed genre is given only passing reference in Middle English studies. James Wimsatt has given elaborate historical reasons for the existence in Middle English of the "long poem with intercalated lyrics" and surmised that perhaps the causes for this lack of awareness is too much focus on the part of scholars on narration and not enough acknowledgment of the

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[32] Jennifer Saltzstein, *The Refrain and the Rise of the Vernacular in Medieval French Music and Poetry* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 2013), pp. 151-54; Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, pp. 25-6, 174.
[33] Yelizaveta Strakhov, "Politics in Translation: Language, War and Lyric Form in Francophone Europe, 1337-1400" (diss. University of Pennsylvania, 2014), pp. 70-71.
[34] Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 53 and Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 1.
[35] Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 174.
[36] Ibid., pp. 21, 29
[37] Ibid., p. 225.
[38] Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 295.

central place of lyric in late fourteenth-century literature.[39] Indeed, in his important literary

history, James Simpson offers only a brief acknowledgement of the fifteenth-century interest in

"self-contained lyrics, lyrics set into a sequence, or lyrics set into a larger narrative frame."[40]

Derek Pearsall briefly acknowledges *Troilus'* "inset 'lyric' poems" and Lydgate's "frame for a

series of eloquent love poems and orations" when discussing the *Temple of Glass*, while Thomas

Stillinger, in describing an intertextual network connecting Dante, Petrarch, Boccacio and

Chaucer, mentions briefly "books that combine lyric and narrative modes of writing."[41] But

none of these accounts investigates the precise interactions between narrative and lyrics in braod,

literary historical terms.

Part of the dearth of scholarship may be a problem of recognition. Unlike poets in the

French and Latin traditions, Middle English writers simply did not write in as highly

recognizable a form as the "mixed form" of prose with verse as Peter Dronke calls it.[42] In fact,

Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl's book on the prosimetrum makes no mention of a Middle English

tradition.[43] After an examination of the narratives of the period, I could find only a few Middle

English examples of the traditional prosimetrum pattern of alternating prose and verse. *The

Canterbury Tales* is the most important example but we must also include Gower's *Confessio

Amantis* with its Latin marginalia in prose, Hoccleve's *Series* and *The Lover's Mass* with its

interesting allusion to the *Tristan en prose* and the small rewards or "gerdouns of woful

Palamydes" (epistle).[44] The most curious example of an author avoiding the prosimetrum is Sir

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[39] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, p. 53 and "The French Lyric Element in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 15 (1985): 18-32.

[40] James Simpson, *Reform and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 176.

[41] Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 213, 215 and Thomas C. Stillinger, *The Song of Troilus: Lyric Authority in the Medieval Book* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992), p. 12.

[42] Dronke, *Verse with Prose*.

[43] Harris, *Prosimetrum*.

[44] Kathleen Forni, ed. *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Selection* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2005).

Thomas Malory who chose to adapt the *Tristan* without including any of its lays or *lettres en vers*. There does, however, seem to be some reflection on the prosimetrum in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. Facing the monumental task needed to describe a daisy—Chaucer is about to embark on a humorous rewriting of the *marguerite* genre made popular by Machaut and Froissart—Chaucer remarks, "Allas, that I ne had Englyssh, ryme or prose,/ Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght!" (F66-67). Instead of reading verse and prose as two distinct options, his example of the modesty topos recognizes two kinds of writing, prose and verse, associated together with narrative conditions and poetic self-expression brought together in one mixed genre, the prosimetrum.

Eleanor Johnson, however, has recently published an engaging book on the prosimetrum in Middle English literature. Her study of the "mixed form" is not organized around songs but rather around the interplay between prose and verse, not only on the page, as in *The Canterbury Tales* or Hoccleve's *Series*, but also by inference, as in the prose *Ars dictamen* and *Troilu*s, or the Latin commentaries and the *Confessio Amantis*. More importantly, her idea of the prosimetrum is not only Boethian *thematically* but *formally* as well. For Johnson, the "mixed form" does not denote a descriptive mixture of literary types, but rather a Neo-Platonic *informing* of Middle English literature with Boethian ideas.[45] In other words, the prosimetrum as both an idea and a reality on the page "formally embodies" a Boethian "commitment to making sense sensible" and form meaningful.[46] In Johnson's reading Boethius' moral ideas transform the prosimetrum into

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[45] James Simpson has shown how Gower plays with ideas associated with God's divine informing of matter in the way Genius attempts to inform each story with an idea, some moral some not, within the formal structures of a tale. James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995), pp. 1-10.

[46] Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago), pp. 78, 209.

the "mixed form protreptic," a literary form deeply informed by Boethius' moral purpose.[47] Any

writer of the prosimetrum then must respond to a moral core at the center of the form.

This argument works extremely well in regards to texts with a Boethian character: *The*

Parliament of Fowles, Charles of Orleans' English book or any other text where Venus appears

out of the blue as a substitute for Philosophy. But it does not work with the *Tristan en prose*, a

prosimetrum rewriting of the Vulgate *Lancelot-Quest* about an un-reformed, adulterous poet-

knight, or Charles of Orleans' French book whose narrative ends in melancholic remembrance of

his dead lady and hope for his return to France. Even Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, as we will

see, plays with multiple "essences," some Alain de Lille, the *Roman de la rose*, and the Middle

French fixed form poets, and some Boethian with Genius' exhortations and Venus' intervention

at the end. But this amorous intervention into the *consolatio* tradition may in fact mark a

conscious secular revision of Boethius' fortune "without adopting Boethius' values."[48] Alistair

Minnis, in fact, has found that the amorous revisions of Boethius do not necessarily include a

moral engagement.[49]

Finally, Johnson's theory of form as having accompanying philosophical and theological

accoutrements may not accurately represent the entirety of medieval understanding of

composition as we find in both the *artes poetriae* and the prosimetra.[50] A Chartrian analogy can

be found between God giving form to matter and poets to their material. Chaucer, for example,

alludes to Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* in *Troilus* when he describes how a builder, when

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[47] Ibid., p. 199.

[48] T. Matthew N. McCabe, "'Al université de tout le monde': Public Poetry, English and International" in Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and R. F. Yeager, eds. *John Gower in England and Iberia: Manuscripts, Influences, Reception* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 2014), pp. 261-78 (qt. 271).

[49] Alistair Minnis, "'I speke of folk in seculer estaat': Vernacularity and Secularity in the Age of Chaucer," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 27 (2005): 25-58.

[50] Both Dragonetti, in analyzing the *Art de dictier*, for example, notes a shift away from thinking about music and poetry in a philosophical manner, in what he calls the Boethian tradition, to greater attention to both arts as a practice and an experience. Dragonetti, "La poésie," pp. 55-56.

he "hath a hous to founde" (1.1065)—a felicious use of a rhetorical term associated with *inventio*

—does not begin building the house right away but reflects first on a plan and then sends "his

hertes line out fro withinne" (1.1068).[51] Though Vinsauf's "intrinseca linea cordis" (inner

design of the heart)(44), on the surface, is Neo-Platonic in origin, what ultimately guides the

writer/builder is in fact, *poesis,* poetry, looking upon itself "in hoc speculo" (in this mirror)(49),

that is, the very manual the reader has opened.[52] In other words, form becomes associated with

practical instruction and the figures illustrated in his *ars poetica*, laws given to poets so as to

inform their compositions with the elegance and ornamentation needed to truly bring a poem into

existence.[53] Form then becomes associated not with acts of moral persuasion or exhortation but

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[51] An early commentary of the *Poetria nova* glosses the house to be built as refering to both *inventio* and then afterwards *narratio*. Marjorie Curry Woods, ed. *An Early Commentary on the Poetria nova of Geoffrey of Vinsauf* (New York: Garland, 1985), pp. 16-17.

[52] Ernest A. Gallo, ed. *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971). Deschamps makes the same allusion when discussing geometry in the *Art de dictier* 394b. The Chartrian origins of both the artist in analogy with the creator and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's "archetypal" model of the artist's imaginative conception of his work are combined here. Though Neo-Platonic, Kelly also points out that the "link to neoplatonic speculation about Creation and invention was broken" through Aristotelian commentaries on the *artes* whether in books or the classroom. Poetic composition soon served "pedagogical and practical purposes analogous, in a medieval setting, to those which grammar and rhetoric served in Roman times: training in poetic eloquence for literary and public performances." Douglas Kelly, *Arts of Poetry*, pp. 64-68, 91-96, 101, 108-9, 127-33 (qts. 113). See as well the difference between Geoffrey's "idea" that comes into form through the help of the manual and John of Garland's more practical *materia nuda* (naked material) to be embellished later. For the classroom context of the Latin manuals, see Edmond Faral, ed. *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1962), pp. 99-103; Kelly, *Arts of Poetry*; and Marjorie Curry Woods, *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the Poetria nova across Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2010).

[53] Rhetoric understood as formal and topical prescriptions for the writing of poetry is in fact grammatical in origins but Ciceronian in its conceptualization. Murphy situates these Latin "preceptive grammars of the *ars poetriae*" as a hybrid creation inspired by the atmosphere of a twelfth-century "grammatical revolution." Parr describes the practical application of rhetorical ideas to poetry, what he calls "rhetoric applied to verse," as a result of changing emphasis in the trivium between *grammatica* and *dialectica* resulting in rhetoric's association not with ideas but with linguistic ornamentation. James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 135-93 (qt. 161) and Roger P. Parr's introduction to *Geoffrey of Vinsauf: Documentum de modo et arte distandi et versificandi (Instruction in the Method and Art of Speaking and Versifying)* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1968), pp. 20, 30-32 (qt. 13). See as well H. Lubienski-Bodenham, "The Origins of the Fifteenth Century View of Poetry as 'Seconde Rhétorique'" *Modern Language Review* 74.1 (January 1979): 26-38; Kelly, *Arts of Poetry*, pp. 44-53, 67-68 and Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, eds. *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009), pp. 48-51.

with rhetoric's other, more medieval focus: *elocutio* and the composition of poetry for the delight and pleasure of its listeners.

To understand inserted lyrics in rhetorical terms is, first of all, to decouple them from strictly morally persuasive purposes and to examine instead their entertainment value.[54] Rhetoric is in its broadest sense "artificiosa eloquentia" (artful eloquence) or the "elegans juncture dictionum" (elegant joining of words) as when the Franklin modestly apologizes for his lack of elegance, his "rude speech" (718), because "I lerned nevere rethorik" (718-19); that is, he never learned the art of handling tropes and figures, the "Colours of rethoryk" (726).[55] In a narrower sense, the term denotes a rhetoric "des choses rimées" (of things rhymed) taught in the *artes rithmica* or *metrica*, as when Chaucer in the *House of Fame* appeals to Apollo, the "God of science" (3.1091), to help him with his verse.[56] He is not after a display of poetic mastery found in an "art poetical" (3.1095) because his "rym ys light and lewed" (3.1096); that is, lacking in *ornate difficultas* or difficult ornamentation associated with the *stylus gravis*.[57] Rather, he hopes that Apollo can help make his poem "sumwhat agreeable,/ Though som vers fayle in a sillable" (3.1098). The only exhortation then is not a moral imperative, but a demand for the pleasurable rejuvenation of existing commonplaces, proper arrangement, eloquent word choice, metrically correct lines, and harmonious proportion to the overall structure of a poem or, in regards to vernacular poetry, within a particular fixed form or genre.[58] As Machaut writes in the *Prologue* to his collected work,

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[54] Carruthers warns against the "ethical" overreach of didactic and religious poetry and calls for a comprehensive reinterpretation of medieval literature that has been "over-theologized and over-moralized" (8) by critics. Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013).

[55] Woods, *Early Commentary*, p. 111.

[56] Langlois, *Recueil d'arts*, p. 11.

[57] Kelly, *Arts of Poetry*, p. 79.

[58] Kelly notes that in the French manuels, poetic forms are musical in origin. Ibid., p. 151.

> Retorique versifier
> Fait l'amant et metrefier,
> Et si fait faire jolis vers
> Nouviaus et de metres divers:
> L'un est de rime serpentine,
> L'autre equivoque ou leonine,
> L'autre croisie ou retrograde,
> Lay, chanson, rondel ou balade (5.147-54)
>
> (Rhetoric makes the lover versify and use meter, and compose
> agreeable verse, new, and of different measures: One is serpentine
> rhymes, the other equivocal or leonine, the other crossed or retrograde,
> lay, song, rondeau or ballade)

Furthermore, rhetoric "li aourne son langage/ Par maniere plaisant et sage" (ornaments his language in a pleasant and wise manner)(5.157-58). This understanding of language, as being adorned by rules governing writing, is crucial in understanding not only how French and English medieval writers approached their own work but also the mixed genre as a conscious mixture of rhetorical prescriptions.[59] Furthermore, as I will show, Machaut's only animating principal in the creation of a poem is love acting through the lover-poet. This is the fiction that underpins many of the romances and *dits* with inserted lyrics written in England and France.

2. Form and Genre

Machaut's *Prologue* is also a good place to study the transition from a philosophical and theological formalism to the purely rhetorical one we see in both the manuals and the mixed genre. There, in its mix of prose rubrics, narrative verse and four ballades, Nature appears to *inform* his art in her address to him: "Guillaume, qui fourmé/ T'ay a part, pour faire par toy former/ Nouviaus dis amoureus plaisans" (Guillaume, I who formed you on the side in order to

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[59] The addition of wisdom to eloquence is also Ciceronian in origins with oratory idealized. By the middle of the fifteenth century, virtourous eloquence will also be associated with Quintilian, as can be seen in the *Douze dames de rhétorique*. David Cowling, ed. *George Chastelain, Jean Robertet and Jean de Montferrant: Les Douze dames de réhtorique* (Geneva: Droz, 2002).

form through you new pleasing, amorous compositions)(1.3-5).[60] Nature's *informing*, the very

essence of her moral authority, however, results not in a general composition or *dit* of an

indeterminate *forma* but instead a very specific literary genre, the *dits amoureux*, love narratives

in verse or prose, often with inserted ballades, lays, rondeaux and virelais. Nature's primacy is

then diminished with the introduction of seven other allegorical figures associated with the arts

and the material they work on. Nature brings with her Sense (Dialectic, Logic), Rhetoric and

Music, all arts, while Love brings with her Sweet Thought, Pleasure and Hope, to give

Guillaume "matere a ce parfaire" (3.8).[61] It is not Nature's formalism, but rhetoric's *materia* and

inventio that together truly help him compose

> dis et chansonnettes
> Pleinnes d'onneur et d'amourettes,
> Doubles hoquès et plaisans lais,
> Motès, rondiaus et virelais
> Qu'on claimme chansons baladées,
> Complaintes, balades entées,
> A l'onneur et a la loange
> De toutes dames sans losange (5.11-18)
> (dits, little dance songs, full of honor and loved ones, double hoquets
> and pleasing lays, motets, rondeaux and virelays, which some call
> "chansons balladés," complaints, grafted ballades for the honor and the
> praise of all ladies without flattery)

These taxonomies of musical and poetic forms become formulaic in fourteenth and fifteenth-

century poetry, from Machaut's "Balade, rondel, virelay" (7555) in the *Voir Dit*, Froissart's

Orphic art "De canter balade et rondiel/ Et virelays" (1714-15) in the *Paradis d'amour*, or even

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[60] Ernest Hoepffner, ed. *Oeuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*, vol. 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1908).
[61] The meaning of Machaut's *Scens* is difficult. While Leach prefers to leave the word untranslated and Zingesser sticks to a more general "meaning," *Scens* is not just the poet's capacity for topical invention (Kelly) but the faculty that coordinates his genius or *engin* in the matter of composition with discretion, discernment, judgment, understanding and art (Lukitsch. Cerquiglini-Toulet). Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2011); Eliza Zingesser, "The Genesis of Poetry: Guillaume de Machaut's *Prologue*, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and Chartrian Neoplatonism," *Viator* 32.2 (2011): 143-56; Shirley Lukitsch, "The Poetic of the Prologue: Machaut's Conception of the Purpose of his Art," *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983): 258-71; and Cerquiglini, *Un engine si soutil*.

Oton de Grandson's shuffled "rondeaux, baladez, virelais" (10.1), to Gower's "Rondeal, balade and virelai" (1.2709, 2727) in the *Confessio Amantis*, and the Franklin's description of Aurelius' love sickness: "Of swich matere made he manye layes,/ Songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes" (947-48). In fact, it is Chaucer in the *Legend of Good Women* who seems to look upon these *formes fixes* as generic types when Alcestes clarifies and names the kind of songs or hymns he wrote for Love "many an ympne for your halydayes,/ That highten balades, roundels, virelayes" (F421-22, G410-11).[62] The naming of a particular form within a larger genre of *ympne* or song speaks of pre-existing formal types, Jauss' "formes closes" that define new medieval sub-genres.[63] In the *Book of the Duchess*, he describes the *lay* as a "maner song" (471), that is, a particular kind of poetic writing.

Form however does maintain its traditional understanding as an informing creative idea giving shape to material when it comes to describing the composition of a lay. What is interesting is how traditional formalism becomes a feature of a specific poetic genre. Froissart, in the *Joli Buisson*, connects form to the lay's particular twelve-stanza structure when he writes that Love "m'a mis en voie/ De faire le lays sus tel fourme" (put me on the road to composing the lay in such form)(3548-49).[64] This image of composition as movement along a road is

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[62] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ed. *Guillaume de Machaut: Le Livre dou Voir Dit (The Book of the True Poem)* (New York: Garland, 1998); Joan Grenier-Winther, ed. *Oton de Granson: Poésies* (Paris: Champion, 2010); Russell A. Peck, ed. *John Gower: Confessio Amantis*, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2000-2004).

[63] Jauss, "Littérature médiévale," p. 95. Poiron also notes in the Middle Ages a shift from designating genres based on literary themes and material to pre-established formal structures writers will use in their compositions. However, certain themes, like the complaint or pastoral, retain their status as genres independent of a designated form. Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, pp. 313-14. For an interesting discussion of medieval "generic thinking," see Julie Orlemanski, "Genre" in Marion Turner, ed. *A Handbook of Middle English Studies* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 207-21. For the importance of reading poetry generically and not "lyrically" see René Wellek, "Genre Theory, the Lyric, and *Erlebnis*" in Herbert Singer and Benno von Wiese, eds. *Festschrift für Richard Alewyn* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1967), pp. 392-412, Ralph Cohen, "History and Genre," *New Literary History* 17.2 (Winter 1986): 203-18 and Jonathan Culler, "Lyric, History and Genre," *New Literary History* 40.4 (Autumn 2009): 879-99.

[64] Anthime Fourrier, ed. *Jean Froissart: Le joli Buisson de jonece* (Geneva: Droz, 1975).

traditional, what is interesting is how open that road in the composition of a lay can be.[65]   A lay

is filled with multiple possibilities in terms of stanza design, an idea can inform multiple stanzas

in new and exciting ways provided that the final stanza repeats the form of the first.[66] In the

prosimetric *Prison amourese*, Froissart again uses "fourme" (3158) to describe another lay.[67]

However, form's association with the lay's open design is not unique to Froissart. In

Deschamps, for example, he discusses the "forme et la taille d'un lay" (400b) and Baudet

Herenc, a poet whose patrons included Charles of Orleans, more than forty years later in his

Doctrinal de la Seconde Rhétorique, will expand the idea of form to include as well the "forme

de balade" (185), as a synonym for the structure or cut (*taille*) of a poem.[68] But Deschamps

more often speaks of the "facon des laiz" (399c) in the same way he does with ballades and any

other poetic construction from meter to stanza length. The "diverses manieres" (396a) or

"diverses faissons" (165-66) or even Chaucer's simple "maner" (471) of making songs are the

working poet's understanding of poetry.[69] For Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, the very

mentioning of a text's *maniere* or *modus* of writing reflects a new medieval way of

understanding genre as related to "textual form or method" and not a Classical understanding of

genre with content.[70] Finally, for the anonymous author of the early fifteenth-century *Règles de

la seconde rhétorique*, Machaut is "le grant retthorique de nouvelle forme qui commencha toute

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[65] Mary Carruthers, "The Concept of *ductus*, or Journeying through a Work of Art" in Mary Carruthers, ed. *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), pp. 190-213.

[66] For the fourteenth and fifteenth-century lay see Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, pp. 400-406

[67] Anthime Fourrier, ed. *Jean Froissart: La prison amoureuse* (Paris: Klincksiek, 1974).

[68] Langlois, *Recueil d'arts*.

[69] Kelly associates this concern for a poem's *modus agendi* with the *accessus* tradition of Latin prologues to the *auctores*. Douglas Kelly, "The Poem as Art of Poetry: The Rhetoric of Imitation in the *Grand Chant Courtois*" in William D. Paden, ed. *Medieval Lyric: Genres in Historical Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2000), pp. 191-208. For the *accessus* tradition, see Alistair Minnis' classic study *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitude in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1988).

[70] Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar*, pp. 45-47 (qt. 45).

tailles nouvelles" (the great rhetorician of new form who began all new shapes)(12), a confusing

tribute in that Machaut's name follows that of Phillipe de Vitry, who is credited as being the

musician-poet who "trouva la maniere des motès, et des balades, et des lais, et des simples

rondeaux" (found the mode of motets, ballades, lays and simple rondeaux)(12), as well as a

series of musical inventions.[71] Machaut's forms then are the new ways of writing these already

invented musical and literary genres by employing new "cuts" (*tailles*) or poetic structures for

stanzas and rhymes.

Though form as the defining term for the proportions of a poem in relation to its idea

seems to have gained ground in the sixteenth century, for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,

listing a variety of *ways* to compose words was enough. When Flos, in Froissart's prosimetric

Prison amoureuse, offers encouragement to his anonymous friend Rose's making of a book, he

imagines it containing "lettres, epitles, escriptions, traitié amoureus, balades, virelais, complaints

et toutes manieres de divises" (L12).   This variety of compositional forms is far more

subdivided than the traditional generic demarcations of prose and verse or even narrative and

poetry.[72] It describes rather a medieval preoccupation with categories and sub-categories of

writing that make the idea of form in some ways too general to be of use. To understand the

prosimetrum and its verse variation is to understand how complex prose and verse can be.

Whether form or genre, these texts consciously reflect particular ways of writing love songs, and

even more importantly, the particular conditions that make a song possible. Song within the

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[71] Langlois, *Recueil d'arts*.

[72] As Jauss, Copeland and Sluiter have shown, the Middle Ages used a variety of ways for organizing genre distinct from Goethe's famous triad of Epic-Lyric-Drama that is used to this day, such as genre based on style (*humile-medium-sublime*) to genre based on particular content (*tragica-comica-satirica-mimica* or *fabula-argumentum-historia*) as well as new hybrid forms, such as the *dit*. Jauss, "Littérature médiévale," pp. 80-81, 92-95; Copeland and Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar*, pp. 42-44.

context of its own making and within particular poetic types make up the most essential element of what can be called the mixed genre.

Though Middle English abounds with examples of the mixed-verse variation, often times the inserted songs are not as clearly distinguished formally from the narrative as we find in French examples, where the kind of song – lay, ballade, chant royal, rondeau, virelay – is either declared in the narration by the poet, labeled in a rubric above the insert or simply recognizable as one of the *formes fixes* by being formally distinct from the favored octosyllabic rhymed couplets used in the narrative. In English this is not always the case. For example, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, a work inspired by Machaut's *Fontaine amoureuse* with its one hundred and twenty complaints ending with a rondeau, makes no formal, metrical distinction between the narrative verse and the "lay" (471) the man in black recites. The fact that Geoffrey cannot tell us, in his grief, if the man "made of rym ten vers or twelve/ Of a compleynte to hymselve" (463-64) is an ironic contrast to Machaut's persona joyously transcribing the lover's complaint and discovering, once he is quiet, that what he has been copying is not prose but "Cent rimes toutes despareilles" (One hundred rhymes all different)(1052).[73] With Chaucer, there is even the sense that this *song* isn't even the lay he heard, not just because of its indeterminate length, but because of its lack of syntactical inversions or metaphorical development associated with medieval lyric.[74] Even Philomena's song in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, though metrically irregular, as we will see, is still consciously lyrical. In the *Kingis Quair*, James I sings to the "notis of the philomene" (428) in one seven-line stanza. Isolated, the song's stanza prepares us for a ballade

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[73] Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, ed. *Guillaume de Machaut: La Fontaine amoureuse* (Paris: Stock, 1993).
[74] With inserted lyrics, readers usually made aware of the generic difference between the narrative and song because of the latter's verbal sophistication even in the smallest fragment of song. Steven R. Guthrie, "Meter and Performance in Machaut and Chaucer" in Rebecca A. Baltzer, Thomas Cable and James I. Wimsatt, eds. *The Union of Words and Music in Medieval Poetry* (Austin: University of Texas, 1991), pp. 72-100 as well as "Machaut and the *Octosyllabe*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 20.1 (Spring 1987): 55-75, reprinted in R. Barton Palmer, ed. *Chaucer's French Contemporaries: The Poetry/Poetics of Self and Tradition* (New York: AMS, 1999), pp. 111-36.

or chant royal as would be found, perhaps, in a French *dit*, but there are no further stanzas. The fact that the book's narrative is also written in the same stanzaic form, combining Machaut's ballade stanza with Chaucer's narrative one, crystalizes the very nature of these kinds of dream visions as song unfolding in time. James I's marvelous song sung to the notes of a nightingale, nevertheless, disappears in a stanzaic form that should enhance its poetic qualities rather than obscure them.

3. Rhetoric and the Singer

The prosimetrum and its all verse variation evoke two features of medieval poetry simultaneously: the conscious, rhetorical manipulation of literary conventions, in a highly formal context, and the classical understanding of song as inspired expression. By studying a mixed genre so invested in the centrality of song, this dissertation will also investigate not only the lyrical "impulse" to sing implied by the insertion of songs into a narration, a topic central to my chapters on the *Tristan en prose* and the *Knight's Tale*, but also the subject who sings, the singer or poet. The idea of the poet has been analyzed extensively in Machaut studies as a phenomenon of the late fourteenth-century through his persona's "self-presentation as poet" in the *dits* and the ensuing problems of "poetic selfhood."[75] But the idea of a poet is equally present in the thirteenth-century *Tristan*, a prosimetrum that rewrites the prose *Lancelot* from the perspective of a knight-poet. The result is a book filled with poets and singers responding to their own experiences—generally, of love—with the composition or singing of songs. The mixed genre

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[75] Kevin Brownlee, *Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1984), pp. 1-123 (esp. 5), a reworked version of "The Poetic *Oeuvre* of Guillaume de Machaut: The Identity of Discourse and the Discourse of Identity" in Madeline Pelner Cosman and Bruce Chandler, eds. *Machaut's World: Science and Art in the Fourteenth Century* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1978), pp. 219-33; and Cerquiglini, *Un engine si soutil*.

then, from the *Tristan* to the Middle French *dits amoureux* and their Middle English offshoots, evokes an Orphic model of the poet and poetry as "inspired." Though inspiration is a rhetorical topos in medieval poetry, the attractiveness of this convention, the illusion of spontaneous creativity over laborious composition, authenticates the song's *sinceritas*.[76] This influence exerted on the poem by a narrative frame portraying poets under duress or overcome by joy, experiencing love and singing about it, may in fact be at the origins of our modern understanding of the lyric as capturing the mood of a poet speaks from the heart. When Jonathan Culler complains about a prevalent pedagogical model that treats a poem as an overheard dramatic monologue in order to "imagine or reconstruct a context: identifying a tone of voice" and from there "infer the posture, situation, intention, concerns, and attitudes of a speaker," he is also describing a way of reading poetry that is eminently medieval.[77] The only difference is that the context, the gestures, the very origins of a poem, are not imagined by a reader but supplied by a frame, whether in the mixed genre or in the Italian *chansonniers* or anthologies of troubadour *cansos* and *sirventes* with their *vidas* and *razos* in prose describing the life and circumstances of a poet and his song. In fact, as we will see in the first chapter, the medieval mixed genre is filled with overheard songs, with writing understood as the product of compelled emotions.

However, unlike our impressions of an inspired "Orphic" song, the medieval mixed genre often represents the composition of a lyric less as coming from outside the poet—as from a Muse, or Nature, or even the imagination—than as a rhetorical task. Poets will run the gamut of Ciceronian rhetoric from *inventio* to *pronunciatio* in the composing and singing of songs. In the

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[76] For inspiration as a topos, see Dragonetti, *La technique poètique*, pp. 143-49, 187, which seems to be based on Curtius' topos of compelled writing, a variation of the modesty topos. Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1990), p. 85.

[77] Jonathan Culler, "Changes in the Study of the Lyric" in Chaviva Hošek and Patricia Parker, eds. *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1985), pp. 38-54 (qt. 38). For problems with the lyric as dramatic monologue see also Culler, "Why Lyric?" *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 201-6 and "Lyric, History and Genre" as well as Herbert Tucker, "Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyrics," in Hošek, *Lyric Theory*, pp. 226-43.

most detailed examples, such as Machaut's *Voir Dit* and Froissart's *Prison amoureuse*, we also

find the compiling of books to preserve those songs. In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Troilus,

first touched by love as an experience, searches for an appropriate way to express it as the

material of a song:

> And over al this, yet muchel more he thoughte
> What for to speke, and what to holden inne;
> And what to arten hire love he soughte,
> And on a song anon-right to bygynne,
> And gan loude on his sorwe for to wynne (1.386-90)

Troilus is holding an internal dialogue about invention: he wonders what features of his material

—that is, his feelings and thoughts, his experience in loving—can be transformed "for to speke,"

that is, to sing, and what should be discarded or left unsaid.[78] The necessity for editing implies

that his material must be compressed, formed and conventionalized in order for it to be received

by its audience and heard as pleasurable. In this sense, the rhetorical activity of the composer

lies in the way he conforms experience to literary convention.

This is the moment when Ciceronian composition and *elocutio* gives way to a situational

awareness of rhetoric's other purpose, persuasion, a feature very much alive in the mixed genre

because of the narrative's representation of each song's circumstance, composition, singing and

reception. Rhetoric's public role as civic engagement is central to writers like Martianus

Capella, Isidore of Seville and John of Salisbury, though less so with the *artes* and its increasing

engagement with figurative writing.[79] Aware of this other purpose, a thirteenth-century

commentator on the *Poetria nova* clarifies the dual tradition of a poetic and public rhetoric when

he writes that a "rethor est qui tradit artem ornate loquendi; orator vero qui agit secundum artem

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[78] Speaking and singing are synonymous in Deschamp's *L'Art de dictier* 395c.
[79] For the increasing interest in tropes and figures see Gallo's comparison between Classical, Medieval and Renaissance rhetoric in *Poetria Nova*, pp. 159-66.

illam quam tradit Tullius" (a rhetoritician is one who teaches the art of ornate expression; an

orator is one who acts according to the art Cicero teaches) before focusing on the former.[80] In

the fifteenth-century prosimetrum *Les Douze dames de rhétorique*, with its mixture of prose

letters and narrative with allegorical poems and two rondeaux, twelve allegorical figures

associated with rhetorical education teach Ciceronian virtues for the writing of poetry without

any mention of persuasion. Brunetto Latini will expand the Ciceronian context of virtue and

good governance into the domain of a lover's persuasion when he includes "la chanson dont li

uns amant parole a l'autre" (song of which a lover speaks to the other)(3.4).[81] As we will see,

Gower's Genius, in adopting both Cicero and Latini, will combine both in the *Confessio*: one as

doctrine and the other as situational, focused on Amans' many failed attempts to convince his

lady of his love. In this way, songs then can equally be understood as written messages. Not

only is this notion reinforced in the *tornada* or envoys of the troubadour and certain Northern

French forms, but also in the *Tristan en prose*'s famous Arthurian *lettres en vers*. Songs in the

mixed genre then reveal not only their situational origins, but also, by the end of the Middle

Ages, encorporate the rules of the *ars dictaminis* or the art of letter writing. In that way, Amans'

letter to Venus falls under both this hybrid nature of lyric as well as the whole petitionary

aesthetic of Thomas Hoccleve and Charles of Orleans.

　　　Though rhetoric turned to eloquence, there are still remnants of rhetoric's original

persuasive purpose in regards to a poem's public or private reception. Geoffrey of Vinsauf

reminds the aspiring writer that ornamentation "dulcescit ad aurem" (is sweet to the ear)(955)

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[80] Woods, *Early Commentary*, p. 6.
[81] Spurgeon Baldwin and Paul Barrette, eds. *Brunetto Latini: Li Livres dou Tresor* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003). Rhetoric and love as an act of persuasion can also be found in Andreas Capellanus' expansion of the situational rhetoric of Ovid's *Ars amatoria* in *De Amore*'s dialogues as well as the speeches in *The Parlement of Fowles*.

and by extension a "nova delectatio" (new delight) for the mind of the listener. Not only must

the tastes of an audience be taken into account, but for both Curtius and Dragonetti, the very

form of poetry had a persuasive element. Both argued that even if the manuals made no explicit

mention of the *function* of the opening stanzas of the poem, the Ciceronian understanding of the

exordium or the introduction's role in the *dispositio* or organization of a discourse to make the

listener receptive, was still at play in the poem by example and imitation.[82] The *captatio*

benevolentiae, or the capturing of the good will of an audience, can be found in certain poetic

formula: whether direct, as when the singer's states his purpose or describes his frame of mind,

including love's inspiration, in a manner designed to make the listener sympathetic to the

singer's plight; or subtle, with the inclusion at the beginning of a setting, the *locus amoenus*, to

ravish the listener with pleasurable sensations. In performance, *pronunciatio*, or the delivery of

the song, whether recited or sung, completes the acts of persuasion song can imply.[83] Aman's

failure to find songs capable of changing his love's mind may be a failure of rhetoric in this truly

Ciceronian sense as an act of amorous and literary persuasion.

Once Troilus begins to sing his opening line, "If no love is, O God, what fele I so"

(1.400), we can hear the persuasive *captatio* working upon us. Even without the rubric

identifying the piece as a *canticus* of Troilus' making, the reader or listener recognizes

immediately not only a change in genre, from narrative to some form of lyric poetry, but a

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[82] Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 70, 85-89, 92-98, 195 and Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 140-93. In John of Garland, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *principium* (beginning of a poem) is mixed with Cicero's *exordium* (introduction of an oration) in the composing of both persuasive letters and pleasing poems. *Parisiana Poetria*, pp. 56, 58, 62, 68. See also Kelly, *Arts of Poetry*, pp. 68-69.

[83] For *pronunciatio* and performance of rhetorical texts see Jan M. Ziolkowski, "Do Actions Speak Louder than Words?: The Scope and Role of *Pronuntiatio* in the Latin Rhetorical Tradition, with Special Reference to the Cistercians," Monika Otter, "Vultus adest (the Face Helps): Performance, Expressivity and Interiority," and Martin Camargo, "Special Delivery: Were Medieval Letter Writers Trained in Performance?" in Mary Carruthers, ed. *Rhetoric beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), pp. 124-89.

change in tone. And by engaging with a paradoxical situation orchestrated by love, we as an audience begin to identify with the song's sentiments: the passion he feels and the fear it engenders.[84] What is further added to this recognizably conventional love poem, figuratively and syntactically different from the narrative, is the idea of a lived experience, documented by the story, and transformed into a poem. Part of the sympathy elicited by the *captatio* is that the song seems to validate a series of experiences already verified in the narrative by the audience and associated with one cause, a singular passion or love. As will be seen in the *Knight's Tale* and the *Tristan*, the mixed genre always proposes a love object at the origin of song, a dramatization, if you will, of a rhetorical prescription that poetry must work with material that is already amorous and conventional in nature.[85]

The resulting *Canticus Troili*, Troilus' song inserted into the narration, is the culmination of a search for the answer to the question: In what form can I express my feelings and sing a proper song? This is a question repeatedly asked in the *prosimetra* and its mixed-verse variation. For the reader, *Troilus* stages a singer's struggle to compose a lyric that expresses his own proper emotion while leaving out any excess or unshaped matter of experience. Looking at the lyric, the reader understands, through its staging, not only how a song is made but also how this internal content is transformed into conventions which, at least in the context of this staging, both rhetorically match an experience and achieve a certain affective effect upon the reader or listener. And yet, Chaucer lets us know that there is more, that while rhetorical conventions can

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[84] For a description of the pathetic register see Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 146-51.

[85] The amorous nature of poetry is repeated not only in the Seconde Rhétorique but also Guilhem Moliner's Occitan *Leys d'amors* where the "fons desta gaya siensa de trobar" (fountain of this joyful art of composition) is for true love's purpose. Even Deschamps, in writing his treatise for Louis of Orleans, Charles' father, waves away any consideration of composing *sirventes* or religious chants royals because "nobles hommes n'ont acoustume de ce faire" (noble men do not customarily compose them)(398a). Adolphe Félix Gatien-Arnout, ed. *Guilhem Molinier: Las Flors del Gay saber estier dichas Las Leys d'Amors* (Toulouse: J.-B. Paya, 1841), vol. 1, p. 4.

express feeling, not everything fits, that some things remain left out, that some things are left at the service of the narration which often supplies an explanation for the song.

This idea of a private experience made public through singing situates the prosimetrum and its mixed-verse variation then in a central place regarding medieval poetry and, I might add, medieval subjectivity. On the one hand, we have a medieval conception of poetry, based on rhetorical models, and on the other hand, we have the idea of the poet understood as being outside the poem but integral to its reception as authentically expressive, a conception of subjectivity which develops from what has generally been described as a twelfth-century "discovery of the individual." This dissertation explores how the prosimetrum or mixed-verse genre stages an individual or subject as the author not only of a poem but also, within the context of its narration, a lover expressing sincere and authentic feelings within a recognizably conventional environment. As we will see, both the prosimetrum and its all verse variation seem to call attention to an apparent contradiction in medieval literary culture: that at the same time a poem can be understood as both reflective of playful topical invention and sincere, inspired, self-expression.

4. Virtual Song

Medieval poetry as a mode of self-expression seems to move us away from a traditional understanding of the rhetorical arts. Robert Guiette, Roger Dragonetti and Paul Zumthor, struggled with this same contradictory problem in their pioneering studies of trouvère poetry and the rhetorical tradition by addressing the notoriously difficult question: Who is singing? They argued that medieval lyrics differ in principle from a "Romantic" idea of the poet's expression as authentic, experiential, original and sincere. Instead of the "inspired" poet who sings, they

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endeavored to enter into the poem itself, examine its form and listen to its "musical rhetoric."[86] Intent on fixing the subject of poetry as the poem itself, they carefully identified what rhetorical conventions helped create a song and how the marker for a singer, the infamous "Lyrical I" first discussed by Leo Spitzer, could instead be understand as a *je sans référant*, that is, a poetic voice without a personal poet, an "I" whose subjectivity is formed by the poem, for the poem.[87] Guiette insisted that the medieval poet "does not represent," that is, present contextualized and authentic feeling in poetic form, but rather responds to the demands of "song" in general, that is, to the rhetorical environment that makes a song possible.[88] Dragonetti, his student, described these powerful possibilities for making a song as "virtual" in the grammatical sense of inflections or forms waiting to be actualized but whose virtuality not only organizes but conditions the very speaking or singing of a song independent of the poet's experience or existence.[89] Poetry then is always in a *potential* state, rather than responsive to circumstance as we find in the mixed genre. Zumthor called this virtual foundation for the possibilities of poetic writing, that "complex of motifs and formulaic expressions, not themes," *registres*, and these *registres*, for Zumthor, make poetic language cohere "in the multiplicity of their manifestations."[90] In other words, they allow for a variety of songs or poems to bind together as the expressions of one "homogeneous discourse" marking the possibilities and limits of medieval poetry while allowing as well for

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[86] Robert Guiette, "D'une poésie formelle en France au moyen âge" (1949) reprinted in *Romanica Gandensia* 8 (1960): 9-23 (qt. 11).

[87] Leo Spitzer, "Note on the Poetic and the Empirical 'I' in Medieval Authors" *Traditio* 4 (1946): 414-422. The *je sans référant* is actually Lucia Vaina-Pusca's term found in Paul Zumthor (with Lucia Vaina-Pusca), "Le *je* de la chanson et le *moi* du poète chez les premiers trouvères 1180-1220" *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 1.1 (Winter 1974): 9-21. Her contribution, unfortunately, is not included in Zumthor's anthologizing of this important article in *Langue, texte, énigme* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 181-96.

[88] Guiette, "D'une poésie formelle," p. 14.

[89] Roger Dragonetti, *La technique poètique*, p. 559; and "Trois motifs de la lyrique courtoise confrontés avec les Arts d'aimer" *Romanica Gandensia* 7 (1959): 5-48, reprinted in *La Musique et les lettres*, pp. 125-68; and *Le mirage des sources: L'art du faux dans le roman médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p. 219.

[90] Paul Zumthor, "Recherches sur les topiques dans la poésie lyrique des XIIe et XIIIe siècles" *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 2.4 (October-December 1959): 409-27 (qt. 420) and "Registres linguistiques et poésie aux XIIe-XIIIe siècles" *Cultura Neolatina* 34.2 (1974): 151-61 (qt. 154).

startling intertextual networks shared between poets and books.[91] Instead of homogeneity, Peter

Haidu prefers to focus on a medieval textuality that will "give itself as repetition, as 're-text'"

while Alexandre Leupin, a student of Dragonetti, sees in these rhetorical conventions a "formal

matrix that determines the specificity of an individual text."[92] In other words, through a novel

re-arrangement of that discourse, the originality of a poet's text, his singularity, comes through.

And so, freed from responding to individual circumstance, the medieval poet was

understood as responding joyfully to this repetition, to these "homogeneous varieties of a poetic

discourse," as the rhetorical expectations of his art, unburdened by a "Romantic" need for

originality and yet original in the way he responds to the possibilities of his art.[93] The poet's

impulse then is not an inspired response to the phenomenon of love but rather a compelling

desire to find topics in order just to sing. As Guiette writes, "He sings. And what he sings is the

need, the desire, to sing."[94] This singing defines, for Zumthor, the very expression of love itself,

with each arrangement an enclosed garden, filled with noisy birds, whose gates are closed once

the songbook is put away.[95] Any pleasure, for the poet and the listener, is found in the song's

unique arrangement of those rhetorical elements, an awareness that they are all participating in

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[91] Zumthor, "Registres," p. 154. Nolan calls this phenomenon as "the possible" in relation to a particular literary epoque, a variation of Jauss' horizon. Maura Nolan, "Style" in Brian Cummings and James Simpson, eds. *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010), pp. 369-419 (qt. 398).

[92] Peter Haidu, Alexandre Leupin and Eugene Vance, "Medievalism: Testing Ground for Historicism(s)? (A Roundtable)," *Paroles gelées* 9 (1991): 1-32 (qt. 5) and Alexandre Leupin, *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1989), p. 3.

[93] Zumthor, "Registres," p. 154. For arguments of originality in medieval literature see William Calin, "Singer's Voice and Audience Response: On the Originality of the Courtly Lyric, or How 'Other' was the Middle Ages and What Should We Do About It?," *L'Esprit créateur* 23.1 (Spring 1983): 75-90 and Ernstpeter Ruhe, "*Inventio* devenue *troevemens*: La recherche de la matière au Moyen Age" in Glyn S. Burgess and Robert T. Taylor, eds. *The Spirit of the Court: Selected Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, Toronto 1983* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), pp. 289-97.

[94] Guiette, "D'une poésie formelle," p. 14.

[95] "They cease to exist outside the text. No more prolonging, no *beyond* the song. The door to paradise is closed again, a paradise noisy with birds" (136) in Paul Zumthor, "De la circularité du chant (à propos des trovères des XIIe et XIIIe siècles)" *Poétique* 2 (1970): 129-40. For the famous synonym "aimer-chanter" see also Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 215-16 and Amelia E. Van Vleck, *Memory and Re-Creation in Troubadour Lyric* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), pp. 19-25.

what Guiette called the "game of commonplace poetry," *including* sincerity as a rhetorical mode.[96]

The real limit to this rhetorical theory of poetry is not found in the current musicological attempt to rehabilitate the medieval singer from Guiette, Dragonetti and Zumthor's supposedly "anti-subjective" stance, but in the mixed form which incorporates the same rhetorical poetry while at the same time narrating each song's fictional circumstances, undermining any idea of song's fundamental anonymity and autonomy. If we step away from the purely autonomous lyric to the prosimetrum or its narrative verse-lyric hybrid, we find the autonomy of the song complicated by the addition of a narrative layer that not only frames the lyric but also represents, contrary to Guiette's objection, the actual inspiration, composition and singing of a song. In other words, we are given a view of lyric making that is very different from the way Guiette, Dragonetti and Zumthor define it, even when the words chosen by medieval poets to describe this phenomenon are rhetorical in origins. Instead, we are given an image of poetic creation more associated with Orphic inspiration and "lyric power."[97] And even in cases where the decision to write appears less inspired than responsive to social interactions—such as Richard II's solicitation of Gower to write "Som newe thing" (Pro. 51) as they float along the Thames in the first redaction of the *Confessio*; or the back and forth requests for poetry in Machaut's *Voir*

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[96] Guiette, "D'une poésie formelle," p. 18. For the game as a social collaboration within a "coterie" with poets making intertextual references see Jane H.M. Taylor, *The Making of Poetry: Late-Medieval French Poetic Anthologies* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007) and Yolanda Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013). So as not to dismiss *sinceritas* entirely as "rhetorical," it can be located in the poet-singer's attempt to compose and sing well since the first injunction of conventional writing is to be eloquent. Dragonetti writes, "The fact that sincerity works in rhetoric only as an effect of style or impression within the register of a discourse's credibility never stops a writer from demonstrating his talent or his genius," an idea that seems to echo Leclercq's profound meditation on the sincere expression of spiritual matters and the exigencies of rhetoric to "écrire bien" (write well) Dragonetti, *Mirage*, p. 219 and Jean Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1956), pp. 243-50.
[97] See the first chapter of Robert Von Hallberg's *Lyric Powers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) for this traditional view of poetry.

Dit and Froissart's *Prison amoureuse*; or the simple encouragement by allegorical figures, as in Margival's *Dit de la panthère* and Froissart's *Paradis d'amour*—love is still represented as the driving motivation, or better, the primary cause for the composition and performance of a song.[98]

If the inserted lyric then ties a song to an experience (always of love) and reflects that experience in a conventional form, then we find ourselves moving in directions very different from Guiette who, in opposition to what he called a "Romantic" understanding of poetry, focused instead on medieval poetry in isolation as the manifestation of rhetorical conventions rather than an approximation of authorial experience. And yet these lyrics, even in their isolation as autonomous, seemed to imply a fictional world outside their own making. Eugene Vance has shown that individual medieval lyrics still adhere to what he calls a "latent narrative," that is, an implied narrative structure which further grounds a song's conventions: the lover, a resistant lady and her husband or his rivals.[99] This does not mean that narration precedes the lyric or vice versa. Chrétien de Troyes clearly lyricized narration, whereas the *Roman de la rose* narrativized lyric. With the *Louange des dames*, Machaut found in the grouping of lyrics the appearance of a proto-narrative.[100] The combinination of narration and lyric that is the mixed genre simply exploited the recognition that "medieval song contains at least the potentiality for a fictional world."[101] In a way, the implied narrations found in a lyric poetry's use of particular topoi could

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[98] For Curtius, inspiration was to be understood within the topos of compelled writing. Kelly argues that within the context of the *artes*, writing is always done at the initiation of a patron, while Taylor and Plumley describe a "profoundly collaborative lyric culture" or "coterie," to use Marotti's term. Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 85; Kelly, *Arts of Poetry*, p. 96; Taylor, *Making of Poetry*; and Plumley, *Art of Grafted Song*, p. 10. Even within this complex nexus of inspiration and solicitation, many of the works still focus on poets *working*, such as the *Voir Dit* and *Prison amoureuse* where composition includes drafting and revising, and Dante's *Vita nuova* with its commentary on poetic technique within the context of inspiration. The fifteenth-century prosimetrum *Les Douze dames de rhétorique* adds anxiety into the mix with an established writer at odds with how he is to respond to the solicitations of a young and flattering new author.

[99] Eugene Vance, *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1986), p. 101.

[100] Plumley argues that the grouping of ballades into ballade sequences with their implied narratives were written from the example of Machaut's *Louange des dames*. Plumley, *Art of Grafted Song*, p. 336.

[101] Calin, "Singer's Voice," p. 8.

override its perceived autonomy. The mixed genre clarifies this relationship when narration and lyric are made to face each other. Song's conventionality enters into the contingencies of historical time while narrative's gallop is halted by reflective moments of individual self-expression.

Troilus' song, the *Canticus Troili*, as it is noted in a rubric above the poem, makes this structure explicit. The rubric authenticates Troilus' "ownership" of the song in the genetive, a unique marker in the mixed genre since rubrics are usually used to designate only a song's generic form. More importantly, Troilus suffers narratively and then composes a lyric within the rhetorical topoi of amorous suffering. Framed this way, the song justifies its use of conventions on narrative grounds as authentic. We can see this phenomenon as well in Dante's *Vita nuova*, where many of the sonnets and *canzones* seem to justify the prose narration. For example, when Dante dreams of Beatrice's death, he tells us he saw in his imagination that "li uccelli volando per l'aria cadessero morti, e che fossero grandissimi terremuoti" (the birds flying through the air fell dead and the earth trembled with great violence" (23).[102] Afterwards, in the *canzon*, we find that prose line rendered in verse: "cader li augelli volando per l'are,/ e la terra tremare" (Birds flying through the air fell and the earth shook) (23.52-53). Within the fiction of the *Vita*, poetry is the result of a lived experience rendered in prose. Through a change of form, a narrative dream finds itself transformed into poetic imagery. This narrative causality that suggests a lived experience can be translated into another genre. This causal relationship seems to replicate our own modern understanding of authorial intent and the situatedness of lyric song as the result of experienced events.[103] But this order could easily be reversed, raising questions about whether a

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[102] Stanley Appelbaum, ed. *Dante: The New Life/La Vita nuova* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006).
[103] The poet's narrated *intentio* could be seen as a poetic variation, if you will, of the prose *accessus ad auctores*, prologues to Latin commentaries. Holmes notes, in discussing Dante's *Vita nova*, that Dante's prose commentaries provide "authority and authenticity" to the "anecdotal circumstances" that lead to a composition. In other words,

song comes from anywhere, to reveal the same game Guiette observed in poetry being played out in the prose but with poetry being its material instead of the conventions. Poetry then furnishes the *materia* for prose. Dante's images of birds and earthquakes in the prose could simply be a translation of the poetic line in order to justify the narrative's idea of poetry as both inspired and authentic.

In Uc de Saint Circ's prose troubadour *vidas* and *razos* found in the Italian *chansonniers*, Dante's direct inspiration for the *Vita nuova*, Occitan *cansos* can be reinterpreted in perverse and funny ways. In the prose *razo* or "reasons" for the composition of Bernart de Ventadorn's "Can vei la lauzeta mover/ de joi sas alas contra.l rai" (When I see the lark move with joy, its wings against a ray of light), the poem's image of *la lauza*, the lark, a bird associated with rational music making in Alain de Lille, is transformed into a series of *senhals* or secret names for the lovely vicomtesse de Ventadorn, *Alauzeta*, the young woman he loves, and *Rai*, the knight she loves.[104] The *razo* explains that one day Bernart snuck into her bedroom and saw his Alauzeta open her dress and receive the knight as he entered her bedroom. The lark's wings joyfully fluttering in the sunlight become an erotic image for her legs moving in sexual delight as the knight enters her. Such an image explains Bernart's *grans envaya* or great envy while watching the lark, I mean, his lady, in the ecstasy of her *jauzion*, that joy taking on its other, orgasmic meaning. The effect is at once to reduce and to explain the nature of what could be described as

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prose provides "evidence that [a song] was produced by someone who 'really' experienced what is recounted in it." On the other hand, Poe has questioned a theory posed by Egan that the Occitan *vidas* were derived from the scholastic *accessus* and sees instead a confluence in thinking about authors, intentions and individual works at this period. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*; Olivia Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), pp. 127-28; Poe, "*Vidas* and *Razos*." pp. 189-90; and Margarita Egan, "'Razo' and 'Novella': A Case Study in Narrative Forms," *Medioevo Romanzo* 6.2-3 (1979): 302-14.

[104] Quotations from Jacques Roubaud, ed. *Les Troubadours: Anthologie bilingue* (Paris: Seghers, 1971), pp. 128-31 and Jean Boutière and A. H. Schutz, eds. *Biographies des troubadours: Textes provençaux des XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris: Nizet, 1973), pp. 20-25, 29. For the lark see Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae* 2.24.

a lyric feeling evoked in the poem. What is mystified by the poem's imagery becomes exposed in an obscene and expository manner.

Moreover, in a narrative form so conscious of the *conditions* for writing poetry, as opposed to the *techniques* of writing poetry (the hallmark of the rhetorical manuals), poetry begins to reflect the prose that surrounds it in the same way prose reflects the verse it is framing. What is important to recognize is that it is in the fiction of prose, the narrative intentions it offers to poetry, that binds the two together. This is very different from the way medieval poetry is understood outside of a prosaic framing. For Guiette, other non-fictional reasons are needed to describe the same impulse to sing. Instead of love, he proposes rhetoric, or better, the love of writing. Rhetoric becomes a way at looking at how and why poetry is created. We can see most clearly this reflection on writing or *self-reflexivity*, to use Leupin's term, a specular writing which allows us to see "the *grain* or particularity of an individual writer's desire to write," in Chaucer's comments to the reader before he "transcribes" Troilus' song: "Loo, next this vers he may it fynden here" (1.399).[105] In other words, what the audience will find is both a written record of a performance that marks Troilus' particular subjectivity as composer and a new kind of *inventio* or "finding" that equally shows Chaucer playing with the possibilities of the mixed genre.

In "finding" Troilus' song, Chaucer asks us to participate in a shared activity that connects Chaucer, Troilus and the reader to a larger rhetorical tradition. Heinrich Lausberg in his important handbook on classical rhetoric describes composition or *inventio* as the poet's

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[105] Leupin, *Barbarolexis*, p. 4. Note, however, in a UCLA roundtable, Haidu tries to open up self-reflexivity to social history, not as determining, but written into the text by the author, while Leupin argues for the idea of a text as *littérature* not entirely anchored by historical determinacies. Haidu, Leupin and Vance, "Medievalism."

search for his own proper expression in terms of location: where to "find" this expression.[106]

The places or *loci*, the prescriptive *topoi* or rhetorical commonplaces, proven worthy for

"finding" ideas to develop in poems, have already been amply described by Ernst Curtius.[107] But

Lausberg unexpectedly points us to a clearer answer to the question Guiette was asking: "who is

singing?" In thinking about Troilus, we can rephrase the question in spatial terms: "Where is the

song found?" In the context of Troilus, it cannot simply be answered as within himself, as

articulated through a rhetorical tradition of writing, but more specifically, found inside another

book, by another author. In this case, Petrarch and his sonnet, "S'amor non è, che dunque è quel

ch'io sento?" will stand in for Troilus' own authentic feelings.[108]

This particular "finding" goes beyond ideas of *auctoritas* prevalent in Chaucer studies

since Petrarch as an *auctor* cannot vouch for the form he writes because the sonnet as a poetic

form and his stature as poet were unknown in England. And so, Chaucer invents a new author,

the Latin sounding "Lollius" (1.394), close enough to "Tullius" or Cicero to make his

composition work. The hybridity of this new name will add luster to the hybrid form he creates

for the *Canticus Troili* in order to maintain some feature of the common literary heritage shared

by his community of readers and writers. Still, because it is a translated song, new questions

emerge that go beyond the potential disconnect already explored between fictional feeling and

inspiration on the one hand and a proscriptive rhetoric highlighting artistry and playful

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[106] Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 119.

[107] However, Kelly cautions against confusing what he calls "historical topics," frequently used *topoi* as catalogued by Curtius and Dragonetti but not included in the *artes* but rather, from the *exercitatio* of poetic texts with the "artist in invention" seeking "to identify places (*loci*) in his *matiere* that are suitable for elaboration or elucidation in conformity with context." Douglas Kelly, "Topical Invention in Medieval French Literature" in James J. Murphy, ed. *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), pp. 233-35, 246-47 (qt. 234)

[108] *Canzioniere* 132. For Chaucer and his relation to Italian literature in general and Petrarch in particular—always an ornament of the "heigh stile" (*Clerk's Prologue* 41) yet always reconfigured through a French prism—see as well William T. Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010).

conventions on the other. Like other mixed works that incorporate "found" songs, such as

Margival's use of Adam de la Halle in his *Dit de la panthère*, the *Canticus Troili* asks the reader

to think about the status of previously independent lyrics and the ways they are altered by new

settings. The reader can't help but ask what happens when a previously written song, written in

response to previous "experiences" by a previous poet—in the case of Petrarch, the *Canzioniere*

is a narrative in its own right—is put into a new narrative context foreign to its original making

and sung by a new fictitious poet.[109] The reader naturally looks upon Troilus' invention

differently when it is revealed that it is a translation and asks how, as a translation of a previous

song, it can in in any way coincide with the emotional experience described in the narrative

frame. The answer of course is the universal flexibility of poetic conventions.

Sarah Kay has described how Bernart de Ventadorn's Occitan *canso* "Can vei la lauzeta

mover" when translated into French and inserted into Jean Renart's mixed-verse romance

suddenly "evaporates into pure song," thus reasserting its fundamental anonymity and rhetorical

non-specificity, while Greg Stone finds, in the same romance, characters and situations

flourishing out of "the linguistic, discursive seed of song."[110] For both, song's primacy is not

only paramount but also generative of the very narrative circumstances represented in the mixed

genre. Like Dante's *Vita* and Oc's *razos*, Renart "exposes romance's lyric roots, shows the

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[109] The *Canzoniere* can be read as a narrative cycle in its own right: Dante's *Vita* without the prose. For Chaucer's access to the complete *Canzoniere*, a subject of some debate, see Ernest H. Wilkins, "Cantus Troili," *ELH* 16.3 (September 1949): 167-73, Wendy Childs, "Anglo-Italian Contacts in the Fourteenth Century" in Piero Boitani, ed. *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983), pp. 65-88; and Stillinger, *The Song of Troilus*, pp. 171-78. However, Scattergood notes that no Italian books have been found in the book collections of the English aristocracy or merchants. On the other hand, he does not discuss any surviving records of books among Chaucer's true audience, "career diplomats, civil servants, officials and administrators who were attached to the court and government," an audience open to new, avant-garde English and French literature. So why not Italian? V. J. Scattergood, "Literary Culture at the Court of Richard II" in V. J. Scattergood and J, W, Sherborne, eds. *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 1983), pp. 29-43 (esp. 36, 38).
[110] Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*, p. 97; Stone, *Death of the Troubadour*, p. 134.

primacy of language in the invention of narrative."[111] Songs then can preserve their virtual

character even within a narrative setting. They can also play with the very idea of authorship as

can be seen in a remarkable *razo* for Arnaut Daniel's *canso* "Anc yeu non l'ac, mas ela m'a"

(Never did I have her but she has me). In the story, Arnaut, a troubadour who much inspired

Petrarch, is unable to come up with a song during a contest hosted by King Richard the

Lionhearted. Frustrated, he overhears one being composed aloud by an unnamed *joglar* in the

room next to his, a minstrel who previously claimed to the king he could *trobar*, "find" or

compose, "en pus caras rimas que el" (in richer rhymes than he).[112] Arnaut steals the song and

wins the contest to the protests of the hapless jongleur. In the end, "fo donatz lo cantar a.N

Daniel" (the song was given to Lord Daniel) by the English king. This seems to be the very

model of "giving as repetition," the *re-text* Haidu is describing when thinking about medieval

textuality. It also reflects a tendency in vernacular translations rooted in the Latin commentary

tradition that has a way of effacing all authorship and sources. The translation then is not a

supplement to the text but instead replaces it.[113] The same can be said about the *Canticus Troili*.

In a sense, Troilus' composition is a kind of *re-invention*.[114]

A particular love experience then is really not the point. Conventional forms of poetry do

not represent authentic, unmediated, experiences of love; rather, they represent, as Guiette points

out, their own playful conventionality and, we can add, citationality. And yet, Troilus' *Canticus*

is so unconventional as to suggest something like authenticity. Without its Latin rubric

designating its status as a song, it can hardly be discerned from the narrative stanzas written in

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[111] Ibid., p. 134.
[112] Boutière and Schutz, *Biographies*, pp. 62-63.
[113] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991).
[114] Ibid., p. 202.

the same "rhyme royal" stanza and meter except for its complex poetic syntax and proliferation

of figures, which differ from the language preceding it. Furthermore, the *canticus* appears, on

the surface, to be written in one of the Middle French *formes fixes*, a ballade in the style of

Machaut with his favorite rhyme scheme and stanza, but in fact, its form is rather idiosyncratic.

In trying to translate Petrarch's strange new Italian form into a recognizable French one, Chaucer

employs two lyric genres at once: a *ballade* that is not really a ballade because it lacks the

requisite refrains and a *chant royal* that is not really a chant royal because it lacks the requisite

five stanzas, all without refrains, and an envoy addressed to the "Princes" of the Puy.[115] Aware

of the utter unconventionality of composing a pseudo-ballade for Petrarch's *sonetto*, Chaucer

then affixes a two stanza complaint, addressed to the God of Love, in the narrative that follows.

These two extra narrative stanzas complete and harmonize the three previous song stanzas by

turning them ironically into an utterly conventional five stanza *chant royal*. "O lord" (1.422) and

"lord" (1.430) even allude to the chant royal's envoy, while Troilus' reference to his "estat roial"

(1.432) and, later in the narration, the recognition that the God of Love will not deign to spare his

"blood roial" (1.435), alludes to the song's "royal" status in the Puys.[116] Chaucer's ingenious

solution in harmonizing the sonnet's original Italian form into some recognizable genre of

French origins speaks of that situational awareness at the heart of rhetoric, his need to retain

formal conventions so as not break up the illusion he is aspiring to create.

Inventing a half-ballade and half-chant royal, with the help of narrative stanzas written in

the same recognizable stanza Machaut favored, Chaucer reveals an author aware not only of

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[115] For a discussion of the chant royal see Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, pp. 360-66, 369-74 and Gérard Gros, *Le Poème du Puy marial: Etude sur le serventois et chant royal du XIVe siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1996). Note that by Deschamps' writing of his *Art de dictier* in 1392, chant royals could also include refrains, following the example of the ballade, while the ballade, under the influence of the chant royal, could include an envoy. This shows how supple the fixed forms could be. *Art de dictier* 397c.
[116] The manuals are quite explicit about the chant royal's association with the Puys, see Deschamps' *L'Art de dictier* and Ernest Langlois' collection of treatises from the Seconde Rhétorique in *Recueil d'arts de seconde rhétorique*.

audience, but also of narrative's determinant character in framing lyric. Because of the *canticus*'

doubly hybrid nature, it reinforces the "torment and adversite" (1.404) Troilus is feeling,

reflected in a formal manner as authentic in expression. We will see in Gower as well the same

attention to fractured form as instructive of the narrative state of the singer. In translating a

"found" poem, Chaucer demonstrates how the conventionalizing of emotion can be "translated"

from one singer to another like a relic moving from one locale to another, a fitting representation

of the versatility of an independent poem's flexibility and, ironically, authenticity, to fit any

narrative situation.[117]

Nevertheless, the poem's applicability to multiple contexts, its ability to express, at least

within the context of a narration, the possibility of a truthful experience for all lovers, points not

only to a universal conception of love, which is shareable by all, but also an experience of love

that is paradoxically textual. With Troilus, we gain access to his narrative suffering by means of

a song that is already in existence, and ironically, already framed by the *Canzoniere*. But the

result of the new framing or staging of the lyric as the end result of both emotional inspiration

and fictional composition is that the reader is called upon to assess the difference between

Troilus' *Canticus Troili* and "S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?" and by extension

their two authors, Troilus and Petrarch. We are also encouraged to wonder about the kind of

love Troilus is embarking on if the music he creates from its material is so utterly foreign in

design. The inserted lyric in the mixed genre not only allows for a fundamental ambiguity

around the idea of an authentic speech, it also makes the reader aware of a form that seems to

shape—or as we shall see in the case of Romeo and Juliet, *inhabit*—the experience of a singer,

marking him as a subject of love.

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[117] This flexibility is seen in the first romances with lyric inserts, including Jean Renart's *Roman de la rose*, which were dependent on the use of "found" trouvère lyrics.

By the late Middle Ages, the tradition of love is resolutely feudal with a sovereign lord ruling over the lover, whether as the lady or the God of Love himself.[118] But it also makes us aware, in a more prosaic manner, that a form exists that both creates love and subjects lovers to an experience which is already codified, structured and adequately expressible in song.[119] This love then is more than simply intertextual; it exists already as a form that both conditions and makes possible this so-called experience. We seem to be moving into territory occupied by what can only be described as a hermeneutic argument: love's outpouring as already packaged in poetic conventions and genres, or pseudo-genres if we're thinking of Troilus. But Machaut, Deschamps and Guilhem Molinier had already essentialized poetry as explicitly amorous in origins when talking about composing verse.[120] Ability, both natural and learned, becomes the real issue. Still, we must take into account that once we enter into the framed world of the mixed genre, we are no longer talking about the working medieval poets Guiette and his admirers were trying to access, but poets who have become fictionalized and whose poetry, just as equally conventional as before, is now personal. In other words, by framing songs, suddenly a subject comes into view.

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[118] However, Peter Haidu, in analyzing a lyric by Chrétien de Troyes, describes a feudalism in decline where the necessary exchanges of services between lord and vassal has been put out of whack. Peter Haidu, "Text and History: The Semiosis of Twelfth-Century Lyric as Sociohistorical Phenomenon (Chrétien de Troyes: 'D'Amors qui m'a tolu')," *Semiotica* 33.1-2 (1981): 1-62. By the time of Charles of Orleans, this relationship between Love and lover shows all the hallmarks of "bastard feudalism" with its contracted services.

[119] I am thinking of Lacan's reading of Augustine's *De magistro* in the first seminar where he argues for a limit to language, that it cannot signify the "real" —"language was not made to designate things" (1.254)—while paradoxically asserting that the "real" as potentially "signifiable" by being enveloped within a signifying structure (the "symbolic"). This lone appearance of the *signifiable*, an important but underdeveloped concept, is formulated under pressure by Augustine's use of *significabilia*. Jacques-Alain Miller, ed. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 1. Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953*-1954 (New York: Norton, 1999), p. 248.

[120] Machaut's *Prologue*; Deschamps, *L'Art de dictier* 395b; Molinier, *Las Flors del Gay saber*, vol. 1, p. 6.

5. Contextual Subjectivity

The mixed genre plays an important role in the ongoing discussion of subjectivity in the Middle Ages because of its focus on the personal origin of song: singers and composers. On the one hand, the genre is clearly the beneficiary of what has been described as the twelfth-century "discovery of the self" or "discovery of the individual," a phenomenon recognizable among the educated and secular elite.[121] Though less a "discovery" than a "renewed commitment" to greater self-reflection and awareness, the period also shows evidence of the "development of a richer and more precise vocabulary for the discussion of the self" and a new literary pose, whether "self-allusion" or "self-impersonation."[122] The mixed form calls special attention to these impersonations by staging the narrative context of song making while meditating upon the connection between singer, song and audience in a performance.

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[121] Recognized, for example, in the increasing interest in portraiture, the role of confession in a Church turning from group to personal salvation, increased religious meditation even among the laity, choices in determining one's religious life as well as more personalized forms of religious poetry. Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050-1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1987; orig. 1972) and "Individualism in Twelfth-Century Religion: Some Further Reflections," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31.2 (April 1980): 195-206, written in response to Caroline Walker Bynum, "Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31.1 (January 1980): 1-17, reprinted and expanded in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1989). Also, Martin Stevens, "The Performing Self in Twelfth-Century Culture," *Viator* 9 (1978): 193-212; John F. Benton, "Consciousness of Self and Perceptions of Individuality" in Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, eds. *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991, orig. 1982), pp. 263-95; Georges Duby, "Solitude: Eleventh to Thirteenth Century" in Georges Duby, ed. *A History of Private Life*, vol. 2 *Revelations of the Medieval World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1988), pp. 509-33 and Gerald A. Bond, *The Loving Subject: Desire, Eloquence and Power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 1995).

[122] Benton, "Consciousness of Self," pp. 264, 294; Stevens, "The Performing Self," p. 198 and Bond, *The Loving Subject*. Benton distinguishes this self-awareness from individualism or personality, eighteenth-century ideas of the self while Morris, in his debate with Bynum over her "discovery of the group," equally acknowledges deep terminological problems regarding the self or individual in this period. However, he argues any semantic challenge can be overcome with the recognition that no one is arguing for a nineteenth-century understanding of the "autonomous individual" for the Middle Ages. Morris, "Individualism," p. 205. Bond, however, sees this new subjectivity as a response to changes in feudalism with greater "subjugation." On the other hand, Haidu, while seeing the subject and his subjection as a uniquely medieval phenomenon because of changes in governance, Haidu nuances our understanding of the subject as 1) the person passively formed by governing and social structures; 2) a legal understanding of service to a lord or king; 3) the individual as active and free to make choices; 4) a textual "manifestation" of that historic and social subject; and finally 5) the subject of poetry, that problematic lyric "I." Both Haidu and Bond equally analyze this subjectivity as collective. Peter Haidu, *The Subject Medieval/Modern: Text and Governance in the Middle Ages* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2004).

Writing then is the crux. And yet, Augustine's *Confessions*, the benchmark for a

medieval self-consciousness and its eloquent articulation in writing, is of doubtful use because it

stands out less as a model and more as an aberration, a kind of writing as difficult to emulate as

Petrarch's strange *sonetto* for an English poet seeped in the French *formes fixes*.[123] On the other

hand, the conventionality of both Occitan and French love poetry seems to incorporate the idea

of autobiographic self-expression, even when running up against a fundamental anonymity—or

if we want to add an author's name, then pseudonymity—crucial to an understanding of

medieval poetry as deeply rhetorical. In looking for this elusive subjectivity in medieval

literature, we must be aware that "the intimate secrets that appear to yield themselves up are

actually subservient to metaphor."[124] This seems to confirm Zumthor's attempt to shut down any

possibility that a medieval poet might refer to his historic self, the very idea of autobiography.

We are dealing with an "'objectivated' poetry," he writes, "that is, poetry in which the subject

escapes us."[125] Amelia Van Vleck even describes highly self-conscious, historically identifiable

troubadours allowing their songs to be totally "recast" by others in order for them to be

performed. Though named, each song takes on a life of its own with its own unique variations

and stanza arrangement made by singers and then later compilers.[126] Kay even describes the

precarious state of subjectivity when "strung between the discursive poles of narrative and lyric"

in the mixed genre and its "mixed" conceptions of the self, one dramatic, the other, utterly free of

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[123] Both Zink and Spearing note that "autobiography" as a genre was of little interest to medieval authors. Michel Zink, *La subjectivité littéraire* (Paris: Puf, 1985), p. 172 and A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Autographies: The "I" of the Text* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2012), pp. 35-36, 64.

[124] Danielle Régnier-Bohler, "Imagining the Self: Exploring Literature" in Georges Duby, ed. *A History of Private Life*, vol. 2 *Revelations of the Medieval World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1988), pp. 313-93 (qt. 313).

[125] Paul Zumthor, "Autobiography in the Middle Ages?," *Genre* 6.1 (March 1973): 29-48 (qt. 30), reprinted in *Langue, texte, énigme*, pp. 165-80.

[126] The focus of Van Vleck's fascinating study is the transposition of stanzas in troubadour songs of the generation of 1170 and the expectations that songs will be emended once they are sent out into the world. Van Vleck, *Memory and Re-Creation*.

any referent.[127] Combined, she asks if we can even think of a single subject. We keep finding ourselves over and over again in a sea of rhetoric.

And yet, this influential theory of medieval poetry, however, seems at odds with writers such as Thomas Hoccleve or Charles of Orleans, poets who seem to incorporate not only their personal histories into their poetry but have also left behind documentary traces in government archives of the English bureaucracy that have nothing to do with Dragonetti's monastic forging of documents and the lure of sources, but instead records that seem to encourage biographical readings as a frame for the poems.[128] English literary history teaches that medieval writers in England were consciously meditating on their historical circumstances, albeit indirectly in the form of poetry. Hoccleve transforms a serious genre, the *speculum principum*, into a comical means of getting his elusive annuity because that annuity payment—as well as unpaid "off the clock" clerical fees—are not only part of the record but also incorporated into the fiction. In the case of Charles, more serious questions arise when documents and conventionality converge. His status as prisoner and widower seems to coincide with two literary topoi, the prisoner of love and the lover whose lady is dead, a variation of the absent lady found in Machaut, Chaucer, Chartier and Petrarch. The mixed form then is also a performance of historical context. It can at once be infused with convention and concerned with the historical specificity of speaker and audience. Machaut's *Voir Dit*, for example, is not only a prosimetrum about the compilation of a book, but also an ironic archive in the making with its preservation of prose letters and songs shared between the two lovers, with anagrams in the poems used to conceal and reveal their true names, and a narrative plot lines dictated by the calamities of fourteenth-century France including the plague and marauding troops. The *Tristan en prose* is described in its prologue as

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[127] Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*, p. 16.
[128] Dragonetti, *Le mirage des sources*, pp. 17-54.

estoire, the correction of a previous Vulgate translation of the Latin grail book found in Salisbury through the addition of poet-knights and their previously unrecorded songs. Indeed, when lyric is inserted as an expression of a narrative character, the situation may also produce a reflection on precisely that mixture of conventionality, poetic self-disclosure and historical circumstances.

On the other hand, historical identity can also be unravelled. A writer like Malory, for example, bears a name attributed to multiple historical figures, but like Chrétien de Troyes and any number of authors with seemingly symbolic names—both a Christian and Trojan, a perfect name for the final manifestation of *translatio studii* in the West—Malory is more attractive under the poetic etymological pull of Isidore's *Encyclopedia*.[129] Malory or "sir Thomas Malleorré, knight, as Jesu be hys helpe" (12. colophon) works better as a newly self-fashioned Tristram, "that is as muche to say as a sorrowfull byrth" (8.1) or *triste*. [130] When *Malleorré* is to be understood as a "vie maleurée," to quote Christine de Pisan, that is, an unfortunate, his identity is figured in his book through his central, dominating character, Tristram.[131] Even as solid a figure as Gower becomes a problem when a fictitious chronology invented by scholars to give order to his bibliography turns his frivolous love poetry into the folly of youth, while marriage brings sober, more reflective works. As will be seen, a little knowledge of literary form, thanks to a comment by Deschamps on the use of envoys in ballades, can alter any "biographical" trajectory of a work, placing frivolity, associated withg the lyric genre, very much after other, more serious genres.[132] Dragonetti warns that when "Displaced in the universe of a poem, historical facts and

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[129] For the significance of names in Chrétien de Troyes, see Dragonetti's *La vie de la lettre au Moyen Age (Le Conte du Graal)* (Paris: Seuil, 1980). For the many Malorys, see P.J.C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1993), pp. 1-35.

[130] Eugène Vinaver, ed. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

[131] *Cent Ballades* no. 6. Maurice Roy, ed. *Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, vol. 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886), p. 7.

[132] Some scholars have argued that Chaucer abandoned his French influences for more sophisticated Italian ones. But if we use the date of Deschamps' 1392 *Art de dictier* to set an approxamate date for the customary inclusion in French ballades of an envoy (following the example of the chant royal), then Chaucer's ballade "Womanly

historical persons take on a status and a function which no longer have much to do with any historical reality. Rather, history becomes the material for poetry, the fictive substratum of a symbolic meaning inscribed in musical thought."[133] It becomes difficult then to discern how much of that *materia* retains its referential function. In its very design, its very conventionality, song seems to imply instead an escape from both history and by extension, biography.[134]

The problem of subjectivity and song, the idea of a particular individual singing behind a song, or more accurately, *outside* a song, since song is over and over again conceived in medieval poetry as a walled garden, stumbles again and again against the ahistorical character of lyric conventionality. Stone, for example, in his important book on the tension between narration and troubadour song, finds an enthusiasm among poets for the anonymous "grammatical I" and a rejection of the nascent narrativization of song.[135] However, Butterfield and a new generation of musicologists have argued that songs were never autonomous but inserted in a variety of contexts, including different genres, such as the prosimetra and mixed verse romances.[136] Wary of Zumthor's "anti-subjective" position, Marisa Galvez argues that when organizing the great Northern French *chansonniers* around the names of the trouvères poets, the books seemingly give voice to a proper subjective identity, while Peraino sees in all of these anthologies, Occitan and French, "a project of creating 'individuals' in the manuscripts" as

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Noblesse," "Truth," "Lak of Stedfastnesse," "The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse" and maybe "To Rosemounde"—though "tresgentil" (25) seems more like an apostrophe to an envoy—as well as the ballade sequences "The Complaint to Venus" and "Fortune," would have to be dated after many of his Italian experiments. David Wallace, "Chaucer's Italian Inheritance" in Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), pp. 36-57.

[133] Roger Dragonetti, "Dante and Frederick II: The Poetry of History," *Exemplaria* 1.1 (Spring 1989): 1-15 (qt. 1).

[134] See for example the stimulating roundtable, Roger Dragonetti, Alexandre Leupin and Charles Méla, "L'enjeu et l'événement," *L'Esprit créateur* 23.1 (Spring 1983): 5-24.

[135] Stone, *The Death of the Troubadour*.

[136] Recently, she has explored the way snatches of poems, lineated in prose, found in a variety of manuscript contexts including the Armburgh Papers, and seem to respond to an anonymous network of similar poems. Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, pp. 2, 34, 76-79 and "Why Medieval Lyric?"

well as inventing, with the addition of the prose *vidas* and *razos* in the Italian compilations, an "authorial identity" securing "songs as self-expression."[137] Finally, Olivia Holmes, in looking at Italian "author-organized collections," especially those organized by the poets themselves, argues for an "autobiographical framework that identifies the first person speaker with a historical personage."[138] They all explicitly contradict Zumthor's assertion that an author's name— curiously he writes *person*—only "appears in order to confirm the objectivity of the text—nothing more."[139] And yet, as Peraino notes, songs, especially the love songs we are describing, "still present themselves as urgent self-expression" and not objective markers for an impersonal form of textuality.[140] Is there any way to account for this impression of self-expression as authentic?

Zumthor does open up the possibility of some referentiality in the *performance* of a song. While setting aside any real possibility for the existence of autobiography in medieval poetry, Zumthor notes that this *je*, this singing "I," while having no particular referent *inside* the text, may refer instead, outside, to the *locuteur*, that *person* singing the song in front of an audience.[141] In a similar manner, the reader or reciter of a lyric, may repeat over and over again the same "I" but internalize its first-person marker as his or her own, thus individualizing the act of speaking. This phenomenon is seen as well in prayer. Perhaps, for this reason, Sylvia Huot, who sees in the *chansonniers*, "a space in which to project performance," writes that "the concept of the lyric

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[137] According to Galvez, the *compilators* of the *chansonniers* stabilize Zumthor's dispersed lyric subject by grouping together songwriters and their genres, unifying one voice. Galvez, *Songbook* and Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love*, p. 124.

[138] Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, pp. 45-46.

[139] Zumthor, "Autobiography," p. 32. Bond describes the "prescribed author" as a "social construct" that "functions as the locus of interests, means, and goals which the reader (medieval as well as modern) identifies with intention. When granted 'authority,' it becomes the first conceptual framework activated for all kinds of interpretive decisions." Bond, *The Loving Subject*, p. 78.

[140] Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love*, p. 10.

[141] Zumthor, "Le *je* de la chanson," p. 12.

text as a 'free floating' performance piece" is made "available for appropriation by anyone who

wishes to take on the role of lyric persona."[142]   A. C. Spearing, while arguing that there are no

"fictional speakers," no "distinct subjectivity," represented in medieval literature, agrees that the

"I" belongs only to the "rhetoric of telling," a "space suitable for occupation by any actual

teller."[143] Finally, Kay, in an important book on the troubadours, finds in these same

performances a complicity between singer and audience in the small courts of Southern France

for the construction of a performative subjectivity grounded in "character."[144]   The troubadour

use of sincerity and *senhals*, or secret names for real people, promoted an autobiographical

effect, fostering an identification between listeners and singers, or, in some compositions,

listeners and the composers behind their singing messengers, the *jonglors*.

   What Kay is describing is a rhetorical situation very close to Aristotle's idea of ethos if

that specific appeal were open to us.[145] Robert Payne has argued that only with the idea of the

literary persona, as found in the *dits*, can there be a return to classical rhetoric's concern with the

ways "language mediates between speaker and audience," a concern, he notes, that disappeared

in medieval rhetorical manuals because of an overriding interest in the "relationship between

idea and poem."[146] But Latin and medieval rhetoric supplies ample examples of a concern with

authenticity, whether in *Ad Herennium*'s attention to *pronunciatio* in order to give the impression

that what the orator, or singer, is saying is not only convincing but "ex animo agi videatur"

(seems to come from the soul)(3.15.27) or in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's instruction for recitations

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[142] Huot, *From Song to Book*, pp. 189-90.
[143] Spearing, *Medieval Autographies*, pp. 5, 19.
[144] Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), pp. 144-45.
[145] Aristotle seems to have had no influence on medieval theories of discourse. Not only was the *Poetics* ignored but *Rhetoric*, while known, was not studied in conjunction with the Latin and medieval tradition of rhetoric but instead as moral philosophy. In fact, the book was never compiled in manuscripts with other rhetorical treatises. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, pp. 90-101.
[146] Robert O. Payne, "Chaucer's Realization of himself as Rhetor" in Murphy, *Medieval Eloquence*, pp. 270-87 (qts. 272).

with its focus on harmonizing motions between the outer and inner man with the text.[147] The

impression of a subjective interiority then is important in the delivery of any discourse.

Geoffrey's theory of recitation is further reminiscent of Cicero's example of self-persuasion in

De oratore, when the actor in reciting his lines comes to identify with the very words he

speaks.[148] Likewise, the singer could in his singing identify as well with the words he sings.

The singer then becomes equally the recipient, like the audience, of his own metrical discourse in

a specific time and in an identifiable place, what Aristotle would call *kairos*. He not only sees

himself as the subject of the song, he becomes the *je* of the song. This "lyric I" then differs in

many ways from Spitzer's universal "I." Instead, it seems closer to the *razo* accounting for

Arnaut Daniel's song even though it really isn't his song. But propriety is not really at play here.

Instead, the fictional context for the impression of a subjective appearance of the singer is

important. Oral introductions or commentaries before and after each song, the *vidas* and *razos*

that would later migrate into the manuscripts, could also supply that context to each

performance. As Zumthor notes, "If the author (who is perhaps one of the successive reciters)

has made of the *I* the subject of the statement, then this *I* functions as a potential force whose

actualization depends on the circumstances."[149] Rhetoric's *virtuality* comes back into play.

But Dragonetti's idea of the virtual is not Zumthor's seemingly authorless song. For

Dragonetti, the writer is not an inspired vehicle for poetry–sincerity and inspiration are just one

way of fictionally representing the self in a poem–but rather consciously works within a literary

tradition with prescribed rules of composition, making choices within a myriad of possibilities,

resulting in both poetic mastery and the creation of a unique, individual song. Zink describes the

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[147] Harry Caplan, ed. and trans. *[Cicero]: Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1954) and *Poetria nova* 2036-70.
[148] Cicero, *De oratore* 2.46.191.
[149] Zumthor, "Autobiography," p. 32.

great pride desplayed in the *trobar clus* tradition of writing complex, enigmatic poetry that

compelled attention to the text, the necessity for an exact manuscript transmission and praise for

an individual troubadour's poetic ability.[150] Jennifer Saltzstein, in studying motets made up of

multiple "found" texts, hears "the anonymous voice" of the composer as the "controlling

authorial presence that orchestrates a contrast between multiple textual subjects."[151] Gerald

Bond, in describing the development of a new kind of Latin and Occitan poetry in the twelfth

century, also recognized a new kind of subjectivity, modeled perhaps on Ovid, which vacillates

between the writer and a new public persona, the "loving subject."[152] We will see this persona

fully developed in the *dits amoureux* and their English inheritors, Chaucer and Gower.

However, as a test case, Bond presents the first troubadour, Guillaume IX, future grandfather of

the queen of England, Eleanor of Aquitaine, as his model in a reading dependent on the count's

biography. For Bond, Guillaume's poetry becomes referential only when biographical

documents can be used to frame the poem. Subjectivity then becomes the product of another

text. In the end, the "I" either merges with the text or is generated by another.[153]

On the other hand, in response to the restrictions imposed by Zumthor, restrictions Emma

Dillon characterizes as extreme, new textual manifestations of subjectivity have been proposed

that are oriented around that same textuality that seems to be an obstacle.[154] Van Vleck, while

defending Guiette, Dragonetti and Zumthor's focus on the formal elements of the medieval song,

still hears in each version of a troubadour *canso* both the voice of its named composer and the

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[150] Michel Zink, "Musique et subjectivité: Le passage de la chanson d'amour à la poésie personelle au XIIIe siècle," *Cahiers de la civilization médiévale* 25.99-100 (July-December 1982): 225-232 (esp. 229).
[151] Saltzstein, *Refrain*, p. 38.
[152] Bond, *The Loving Subject*, pp. 8-9.
[153] Zumthor, "Autobiography," p. 32. See as well Spearing, *Medieval Autographies*.
[154] Emma Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260-1330* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2012), pp. 23-24.

many jongleurs and scribes who amended the song to make it better.[155] In preserving

Dragonetti's conception of writing as an historic phenomenon made up of individual rhetorical

choices, while condemning Zumthor's radical anti-subjectivity, Sarah Kay famously proposes a

revision of what she calls scholarship's original "autobiographical assumption."[156] Conventional

poetry, she argues, does not necessarily exclude subjectivity. Rather, subjectivity is produced by

language, specifically a rhetorically infused language that cannot be read literally or better,

mimetically, in the sense that as language it represents *anecdotally* a biography. Such readings

are difficult to make. One is not often given biographical data inside the poem and when we do,

as we find in both Hoccleve and Charles of Orleans, we have to be aware of how any traces of a

public life are enfolded into a larger fictional reality. Kay instead points to an intertextuality

practiced by the troubadours as a way to undo what she sees as ahistoric readings grounded in an

"anti-subjective" view of rhetoric, a rhetoric strangely situated outside its persuasive preview of

audience, place and time for an exclusive focus on *elocutio*. That two *cansos* by two different

poets can allude to each other intertextually are grounds for a textual understanding of

subjectivity as poets speaking to poets. These allusions make self-representation an evident

feature of troubadour poetry without reference to the prose *vidas* and *razos* later attached to

them.[157]

     Kay, by attempting to subtract the biographical stratum of the narrative prose *vidas* and

razos later added to troubadour songs, seems, in a one way, to be trying to get back to a ground

zero for song in order to find an original manifestation of some historical subjectivity that cannot

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[155] She notes that in performance, the singer sings "partly with the voice of the original poet and partly with his own voice." Van Vleck, *Memory and Re-Creation*, p. 194.

[156] Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*, pp. 2-5.

[157] See Wilson's fascinating reading of the *vidas*, where each troubadour's "biographer" stresses not only a "dynamic coequivalence of identity, love experience, and song" (516) but also "metonymic associations implicit in geographical and historical references" (514).). Elizabeth R. Wilson, "Old Provençal Vidas as Literary Commentary," *Romance Philology* 33.4 (May 1980): 510-18

be discounted as fictitious or narrative. The mixed genre, contemporaneous with the *vidas* and *razos*, plays with that same subjectivity in an equally textual manner, but with the added benefit of an overtly fictitious frame, the very frame Kay is trying to escape. In its "objective" third-person form, as seen in the *Tristan en prose* and Chaucer's *Troilus* and *The Knight's Tale*, the mixed genre evokes the secret circumstances of songs.[158] In its "subjective" first-person form, writers like Machaut, Froissart and Chaucer name themselves as persona, their "signature" enveloped willingly and purposely into the very fiction being written down. In both cases songs undergo a transformation. They accrue an identity. But in the mixed genre, we can truly find that oscillation Bond attributes to Guillaume IX between the persona of the author as singer, written as such in the narrative text, and the author of both the narrative and the interpolated poems, a seemingly authorial act of "caprice."[159]

The singing "I" of the mixed genre then is given a fictitious identity, or better a textual identity, whose "voice" is the voice of a different register of language, that of narrative transposed to poetry, opening up the possibility then of our own conception of self-expression as authentic and sincere. The lyric voice–passionate, in love, optimistic or despondent, confessional, metrically and syntactically complex, allows us to be privy to private thoughts, that is, to an interiority that the autonomous rhetorical notion of lyric does not convey. When songs are framed within a larger narrative, context determines the meaning of the song, guiding all reading beyond its rhetoric play because ultimately a song's artfulness is not as important as the motivations and meaning it reveals about a character. As the result of an experience that becomes the *materia* for the composition of a song, form loses its primary role and is relegated to the service of meaning. Experience then rejuvenates conventional poetry, making it appear fresh

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[158] Zink, *La subjectivité littéraire*, p. 72.
[159] Zink, "Musique et subjectivité," p. 231.

and "new," by expanding meaning's possibilities beyond the horizons of rhetoric.[160] Comparing two identical poems, one collected in a *chansonnier* and the other framed within the context of a narrative, reveals how different these voices are: one a tradition, an expectation, a delight in the variability of the *re-text*, the other, a voice, as we understand it, in monologue with itself but also overheard. And yet both are eminently textual.

If subjectivity in the Middle Ages is a textual event, then the mixed genre calls attention to a different understanding of textual subjectivity in song as it emerges from the *context* of fiction, a contextual subjectivity, if you will, taken up by the song. Guiette, Dragonetti and Zumthor's original insights into the rhetorical nature of poetry, the way it creates expectations of subjectivity within the poem without referring historically to any specific singers, are transformed in the mixed genre through the context of characters responding to love circumstances and finding ways of forgetting that these rhetorical forms have no referential value. The fictitious nature of love poetry, once subjectivity is asserted by the singing "I," is replicated within the frame of fiction. Instead of working backwards through the poem, following already actualized rhetorical conventions and techniques, to find the traces of an author making decisions, the mixed genre asserts in the opposite direction that the events and emotions portrayed, its contexts, inspire authentically and sincerely an author to write and a singer to sing. In the first case, subjectivity, while remaining textual, is still an hypothesis, as seen in the biographical sketches of both the Italian *chansonniers* and modern scholarship; in the mixed genre, subjectivity, while textual, is asserted as eminently plausible and real because it is framed as such. It is this second subjectivity, framed by a narration, by a context, which "represents," to use Guiette's discounted term, our sense of being a subject in the world. The

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[160] Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 132.

inherent ambiguity of the first-person enunciation or singing subject points to an emerging sense of the self as contextual through the framing of once autonomous songs with psychologically and emotionally affected singers, singular composers found in specific narrative environments. Further, by staging the self as contextual, mixed forms mediate the complex relations between singer, song and world. The implication of this sort of subjectivity is that one aspect of the rhetorical nature of the poetry—its medieval focus on eloquence and topoi—comes into tension with an older, situational understanding of the art—its contingent, specificity of expression. When lyric is framed by narrative, it calls attention to the singer in ways that differ from how scholars of troubadour, trouvère and fixed form poets have thought about medieval poetry. While remaining rhetorically conventional, it is also performative in a rhetorical understanding of the word. And part of the performance that it stages is an emotional process that leads ultimately to the expression of a singular, individual song. Narrative is broken, all linear time and causality interrupted, for a momentary singing that encapsulates one crystallized moment. What at first can be read as a conventional game of rhetoric becomes a meaningful search for a true song.

This dissertation explores a deliberately varied set of texts in order to discover the range of consequences of writing in the mixed form. Each text reflects upon the options of individual authors, thinking about their own languages in an entirely open genre whose only criteria is the narrative actualization of a song. To narrow its scope, it will focus on the mixed genre as it was composed in England, not necessarily in English. England was a beneficiary of a larger literary tradition associated with the French language, not simply as the colony of a foreign poetics from across the channel but as participant in a cross-channel kingdom in contact with a variety of French speaking regions and dialects. Furthermore, because of its important administrative use,

French in the context of a trilingual England cannot be understood as "non-English" and its literature as strictly English in terms of language.[161] With literature now broken down by nationalities, we forget that many of the masterpieces of French medieval literature were written in England: the *Song of Roland*, the *Vie de Saint Alexis*, the *Lais* of Marie de France, the *Roman de Tristan* by both Béroul and Thomas of Britain, the *Tristan en prose*, at least fictionally, the poetry of Oton de Grandson and Jean de le Mote, some of Froissart's *dits* and much of the French poetry of Charles of Orleans.[162] To look more closely at the English tradition of inset lyric is to investigate anew the complex relations between English and French prosimetric traditions. These connections make Butterfield's observation on Chaucer's own literary point of view very pertinent to my dissertation. "From a medieval point of view," she writes, "Chaucer is part of the history of French culture, rather than French culture being part of the history of Chaucer."[163] In other words, French poetry in many ways cannot be read as "foreign" but "English."[164]

The first two chapters explore ways in which narrative frames understand and interpret songs. "The Overheard Song" focuses on a tradition of knights, and later clerks, listening to other knights complaining in song of their resistant loves. In Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and the *Tristan en prose*, the fundamental anonymity of unframed songs suddenly gives way to autobiography

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[161] Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 275 and Rossell Hope Robbins, "The Vitner's Son: French Wine in English Bottle" in William W. Kibler, ed. *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patron and Politician* (Austin: University of Texas,1976), pp. 147-72.

[162] Froissart is described in the *Règles de la seconde rhétorique* as having composed "tous ses fais a l'onneur de la partie d'Engleterre" (all his accomplishments for the honor of the side of England). Langlois, *Recueil d'arts*, p. 14.

[163] Ardis Butterfield, "Chaucer's French Inheritance" Boitani, *Companion to Chaucer*, pp. 20-35 (qt. 21). For a charming elegy to the lost French poet, Chaucer, and Wimsatt's's hypothesis of the French "Ch" ballades in University of Pennsylvania MS French 15. Rossell Hope Robbins, "Geoffroi Chaucier, Poète Français, Father of English Poetry," *Chaucer Review* 13.2 (Fall 1978): 93-115 and James I. Wimsatt, ed. *Chaucer and the Poems of "Ch"* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2009, orig. 1982).

[164] Ardis Butterfield, "French Culture and the Ricardian Court" in A. J. Minnis, Charlotte C. Morse and Thorlac Turville-Petre, ed. *Essays on Ricardian Literature: In Honor of J. A. Burrow* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), pp. 82-120 (esp. 95).

when they are placed within a frame. For both Palamoun and Tristan, the referential nature of

framed songs becomes a vexing problem because every overheard song can potentially be about

your lady and any conventional anonymity in song is only a fictional play of omission where

identity will eventually be revealed in the narration. Narrative ultimately supplies drama to any

song sung and subjectivity to any *je sans référent*. In the second chapter, "Grail Songs," the

Tristan en prose becomes a case study for an overarching theory of song as formulated not by

the songs themselves but by the romance's narrative frame. Prose then reveals an explanatory

function in contradistinction to song's emotive qualities. In the *Tristan*'s particular rewriting of

the Vulgate *Queste del saint graal*, the grail loses all of the religious connotations it had accrued

since Robert de Boron, and becomes associated with Iseut. As a substitute grail, she initiates a

different quest for her knights: the writing of new love songs. Grail writing becomes a new

variation of inspired writing, at once conventional and referential.

In the next two chapters, we focus on the lyric persona invented by Machaut and Froissart

in their *dits amoureux*. In "Lyrical Gower," I argue that Gower's use of the *dits* tradition

becomes a way for him to play with multiple literary personalities, as lover and old man, while in

dialogue with his own poetic genius and with his own identity as author working within the

frame of a literary genre. In "Lyric and the Documentary Self," I explore the way in which

Charles of Orleans' literary identity becomes entangled with England's administrative culture in

a unique "documentary" frame associated with the official prose of the English bureaucracy. By

treating Charles' two books as a kind of prosimetrum, those documents surrounding his

imprisonment function as a kind of prose supplement or "schedule" to the book's verse. The

result is not only traces of his physical confinement in the ballades and rondeaux, forms

seemingly incapable of marking something so subjective as an historic person, but an author organizing that material while being a royal prisoner of England.

Finally, the dissertation ends with a look to the future, to what has been called the Renaissance or Early Modern, but what may in fact be the final period of a very long Middle Ages. If medieval institutions and literary practices survived beyond the so-called Middle Ages, so did its understanding of subjectivity. "Between Verse and Prose," describes the debilitating social effects of prose on the lovers Romeo and Juliet. Focusing on the play's three sonnets, I look at how narration intrudes into this seemingly autonomous amorous form and how poetry resists that intrusion. A fitting end to a conception of poetry, or better, conceptions of poetry—utterly rhetorical, conventional and generic, utterly inspired, subjective, but at once textual and seemingly genuine—invented by the Middle Ages and then, once sent out into the future, narrowed and naturalized, made not medieval, but universal.

CHAPTER 1

THE OVERHEARD SONG: CHAUCER'S *KNIGHT'S TALE*, *THE PARLIAMENT OF* FOWLES AND THE *TRISTAN EN PROSE*

The scene is familiar to any reader of romances or *dits amoureux* with lyric inserts. A man, sometimes a clerk but in this case a knight disguised in his enemy's household as a squire, the same status shared by the poet, is overcome by great emotions and feels compelled to sing.[1] The time is May and the air is filled with the songs of birds. The scene evokes the *locus amoenus* where May inspires not only acts of love but songs.[2] This knight, Arcite, is awoken by a particular bird, the lark, that "messager of day" (1491), which Alain de Lille calls the "noble harpist" because its art consists of an almost infinite division of musical tones.[3] In the *Parliament of Fowls*, the lark is also the love object of the "merlioun, that payneth/ Hymself ful ofte the larke for to seke" (339-40). The lark's music then brings immediately to mind love, or more specifically, Arcite's love for Emelye.

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[1] Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, eds. *Chaucer Life-Records* (Austin: University of Texas, 1966). Eustache Deschamps, in the envoy to his famous ballade dedicated to Chaucer, praises him ironically, as a "Poete hault, loenge d'escuiye" (High poet, pride of squires)(31). Ian S. Laurie and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi, eds. *Eustache Deschamps: Selected Poems* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[2] For a general discussion of the *locus amoenus*, the springtime setting for love poetry, see Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953) and Roger Dragonetti, *La technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise: Contribution à l'étude de la rhétorique médiévale* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), pp. 163-69.

[3] All Chaucer quotations from Larry D. Benson, ed. *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Alain of Lille, *De planctu naturae* 2.24. For a general discussion of the lark and the nightingale as songbirds, see Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Poetry and Nature in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

Escaping the court, he plunges into the forest on his horse. Then, in a grove, still mounted, he makes for himself a "gerland of the greves" (1508), whether woodbine or hawthorn leaves the writer or speaker cannot say definitively—the frame is confusing, first an independent romance, *Palomon and Arcite*, as told by a clerk in the service of King Richard; then later the tale of a knight who saw much crusading in Egypt, Russia and Grenada—but nevertheless, the garland is in the manner appropriate for those who must do their "observaunce to May" (1500).[4] The god of love's presence is felt and so naturally his thoughts run to his love, Emelye. In that wood, riding under so many singing birds and wearing his garland crown, he sings.

> And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene:
> "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
> Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May,
> In hope that I som grene gete may" (1509-12)

By evoking May's flowers and his chaplet of leaves, *The Knight's Tale*'s song or "roundel" (1529) actively participates in a continental debate between the followers of the flower and the followers of the leaf; that is, between a love that is ephemeral in appearance like a flower, as Deschamps writes, full of "beauté, bonté, fresche colour" (beauty, goodness, of newly acquired color)(764.14) but nevertheless perishes "au neant" (to nothing)(767.23), and an everlasting love that endures like the leaf of a tree, which "aux oysiaux fait chanter leurz doulz chans" (makes birds sing their sweet songs)(764.7).[5] Arcite's love for Emelye, like his song, seems to be

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[4] For the garland of leaves and the "observation of May" see George L. Marsh, "Sources and Analogues of 'The Flower and the Leaf,'" *Modern Philology* 4.1 (July 1906): 121-67 and 4.2 (Oct. 1906): 281-327 as well as Susan Crane's chapter "Maytime in Late Medieval Courts" in *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), pp. 39-72.

[5] For Deschamps' series of flower and leaf ballades, chant royal and a rondeau, see Auguste Henry Edouard, le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire, ed. *Oeuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, vol. 4 (Paris: Firmin Didot, Société des anciens textes français, 1884), pp. 257-64 and Marsh, "Sources and Analogues," pp. 126-31. The connection to flower and leaf debates seems to go in and out of fashion when discussing Arcite's "Maying." While Marsh clearly saw a courtly connection, Savage saw instead a larger, more popular tradition. Moore prefers to split the difference between a courtly tradition—he cites Deschamps' *Lay de Franchise*—and popular May games. Marsh, "Sources and Analogues"; Henry Savage, "Arcite's Maying," *Modern Language Notes* 55.3 (March 1940): 207-9; and Bruce Moore, "'Allone, Withouten Any Compaignye': The Mayings in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 25.4 (Spring 1991): 285-301.

associated with both the flower and the leaf. Previously, in her own "observaunce" (1045) of

May, she had gathered in her garden "floures, party white and rede" (1053), that is, the daisy or

marguerite, as she sang a song, heard high above "the braunches grene" (1067), in a tower, by

two prisoner knights.[6] In praising the green, Arcite's song professes a lasting love for Emelye, a

marked contrast with the flowers Emelye picks for her own garland.[7]

This is not the only time the flower and the leaf appear in Chaucer. In the F prologue to

The Legend of Good Women, Chaucer's humorous send-up of Froissart's *Dit de la margarette*,

our love sick clerk worries he will be unable properly to "praise aright" (F 67) his daisy, and so

calls for aid from all lovers and poets, "Whethir ye ben with the leef or with the flour" (F 72), to

help him praise this *flour*. But this being Chaucer, he also asks forgiveness for any offense if it

is discovered that he has repeated, I assume in English, what "ye han in your fresshe songes

sayd" (F 79) in French. This is an interesting intertextual moment, Chaucer hoping to glean "an

ere/ Of any goodly word" Machaut and Froissart may have dropped behind in the composition of

their own *marguerite* poems.[8] Though he may protest that "In preysing of the flour" he is not

"agayn the leef" (F 189), his singular fixation on a "flour that I so love and drede" (F 211), a love

identified with *eros* or lovesickness, results, at least in the F prologue, with accusations of

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[6] In the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower as an old man sees in a vision lovers wearing garlands "Some of the lef, some of the flour" (8.2468). Russell A. Peck, ed. *John Gower: Confessio Amantis*, vol. 1 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2000).

[7] McCall notes that Chaucer is very specific about dating Arcite's *observaunce* as May 3 (1462-3), a day associated in Ovid with "irrational love" and the goddess Flora. If this is true, then Arcite's intentions as a lover of the leaf may already be undone. As for Emelye, the fact that she is first introduced gathering flowers and then later wearing green when riding with Theseus and her sister only reveals, for Stock, her "ambivalent affiliations" (210). John P. McCall, "Chaucer's May 3," *Modern Language Notes* 76.3 (March 1961): 201-205 and Lorraine Kocchanske Stock, "The Two Mayings in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*: Convention and Invention," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 85.2 (April 1986): 206-21.

[8] This moment makes us appreciate John Scatergood's observation that Chaucer's audience was not simply aristocratic—their tastes were too old fashioned, no books of Machaut and his disciples are found in their libraries—but those running the English government whose tastes were not only continental but, to use Scattergood's word, *avant-garde*. V. J. Scattergood, "Literary Culture at the Court of Richard II" in V. J. Scattergood and J, W, Sherborne, eds. *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 1983), pp. 29-43 (esp. 36-37).

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fickleness by the god of Love.[9] Love sickness and amorous debates become a way for Chaucer

to address his own love affair with a French tradition while remaining steadfast in his pursuit of

an English art. English and French will form a complex intertextual network, as will be seen,

when the idea of Arcite's three-line refrain is more fully discussed.

Arcite dismounts and, while singing his rondeau, walks deeper into the woods where

another knight, "by aventure" (1516), is hiding, a fugitive who has recently escaped the duke's

prison.[10] This escaped prisoner, Palamoun, listening with great interest, moves quietly to hear all

of Arcite's song. We know he listens to the song's entirety because we are told, after the

opening three lines of the rondeau's refrain are inserted, Arcite stops only later when he "hadde

romed al his fille,/ And songen al the roundel lustily" (1529-30). Michel Zink has observed that

the use of refrains in the mixed verse variation of the prosimetrum can create a literary illusion

that outpaces the insert's narrative frame; that the fragment of a song can represent its complete

singing even if the narrative does not record the rest of the verses.[11] If the *Knight's Tale* gave

provision to a fully sung rondeau how long would Arcite's song last? Listening to all of Arcite's

rondeau allows us to imagine not only its length as a feature of the fiction but equally its status as

overheard.

This chapter then imagines that rondeau in all its possible contours, not only the formal

nature of its implied insertion, but also its participation in two important literary traditions

associated with the mixed genre: one, the transmission of refrains, which tie a refrain to other

texts, and two, the contextual understanding of framed songs that, while retaining their rhetorical

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[9] For *eros* or *hereos* in Chaucer see the *Knight's Tale* 1373-74 and Mary F. Wack, ed. *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1990).

[10] That Palamoun's escape seems to happen at night (1462-3) only extends Arcite's *observaunce* and singing.

[11] Michel Zink, "Le Lyricism en rond: Esthétique et seduction des poèmes à forme fixe au Moyen Age," *Cahiers de l'association international des études français* 32 (May 1980): 71-90 (esp. 80).

conventions of medieval poetry, transform each song's implied anonymity, not because of its universalizing eloquent figurations but because unknown knights are the singers and the material of each song is assumed to contain a discrete, secret core to be interpreted despite those conventions.

1. Missing Rondeaux in Chaucer

Though a rondeau begins and ends with a refrain, it is never just a refrain. Refrains are the "cellule génératrice" of the genre, the "point du depart" from which all amplification, if the rondeau is long, or abbreviation, if the rondeau is short, takes place.[12] By giving us only the rondeau's opening three line refrain, a snippet of Arcite's fuller song, Chaucer asks us to imagine both *musically* and *textually* its scope and length.

Chaucer's understanding of the rondeau as a musical form is drawn from the complex artistry of the *Ars nova* associated with Guillaume de Machaut.[13] Ardis Butterfield's comparison between a rondeau composed by the trouvère Adam de la Halle and a later rondeau by Machaut should give us an idea of the length of Arcite's singing time:

> The experience of listening to a rondeau by Adam de la Halle does little
> to prepare one for the experience of listening to one by Guillaume de
> Machaut. Despite the fact that both songs are described by the same
> term - rondeau - the soundworld in each is markedly different.
> Machaut's rhythmical complexity is not only of a different order, but
> the scope, balance and relation of the music and textual components
> have changed. (…) The difference in length is obvious and paramount.
> Adam's rondeau takes 1'20 to sing, Machaut's 5'20. The refrain (…)
> lasts as long as the entire performance of Adam's rondeau.[14]

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[12] Eglal Doss-Quinby, *Les Refrains chez les trouvères du XIIe siècle au début du XIVe (*New York: Peter Lang, 1984), p. 64. The image of a cell is picked up from Bec, who describes the rondeau's refrain as "la cellule de base" and the "élément générateur." Pierre Bec, *La lyrique française au Moyen Age (XIIe-XIIIe siècles: Contribution à une typologie des genres poétiques médiévaux*, vol. 1 (Paris: Picard, 1977), p. 226.

[13] Nigel Wilkins, *Music in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1979).

[14] Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 273.

Butterfield's comparison of a mixed-metered 11-line rondeau by Adam ("Diex , comment porroie") with an octosyllabic 8-line rondeau by Machaut ("Quant je ne voy ma dame n'oy/ Je ne voy riens qui ne m'anoye") gives only an approximate idea of the length of Arcite's song.[15] The separation between the two rondeaux is three more lines of music and text on Adam's part and thirty-one more syllables for Machaut. But Arcite's rondeau is even longer. Like Adam's, it is a *rondeau tercet*, that is, a rondeau built out of a three-line refrain, which opens the poem, but unlike Adam's, it is made up of thirteen lines in the style of Machaut's *tercets* with musical accompaniment.[16]

Machaut's influence on the length of Arcite's rondeau can be measured by one manuscript of *The Parliament of Fowles*, Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 4.27 (Gg), which includes, in a different hand, a *rondeau tercet* whose opening refrain follows the same rhyme scheme as Arcite's (ABB) with Machaut's preferred thirteen lines of text. Whether a fifteenth-century restoration of a lost rondeau, previously distorted in surviving manuscripts but found elsewhere in a manuscript now lost—Chaucer himself says he composed "balades, roundels, virelays" (F 423/G 411) in the *Legend of Good Women*—or a complete invention added to the *Parliament* to fulfill the promise of the missing "nexte vers" (679), a kind of license

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[15] Pierre-Yves Bodel, ed. *Adam de la Halle: Oeuvres completes* (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1995), p. 192 and Nigel Wilkins, ed. *Guillaume de Machaut: La Louange des Dames* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), p. 11.

[16] With the development of the *formes fixes*, the 11-line *rondeau tercet* with an ABB rhyme scheme for the refrain (ABBaAabbABB) ceased being a musical form after Jean de Lescurel. Instead, Machaut preferred the 13-line version in ABB (ABBabABABbABB), as can be found, for example, in his prosimetrum the *Voir Dit* ("Dame se vous n'avez aperceu") with its accompanying music. The 13-line *rondeau tercet* was also used for poetry, as can be found as well in the *Voir Dit* ("Dame se vous n'avez aperceu") as well as the English triple rondeau "Merciless Beauty," occasionally attributed to Chaucer. The 11-line *rondeau tercet* remained for Machaut a strictly poetic form. Marcel Françon, "Rondeaux Tercets," *Speculum* 24.1 (January 1949): 88-92; Daniel Poiron, *Le poète et le prince: L'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orleans* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), pp. 319-38; Nigel Wilkins, "The Structure of Ballades, Rondeaux and Virelais in Froissart and in Christine de Pisan," *French Studies* 23.4 (October 1969): 337-48, *One Hundred Ballades, Rondeaux and Virelais from the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969) and *Music in the Age of Chaucer*, p. 19; Omer Jodogne, "Le rondeau du XVe siècle mal compris du dit et de l'écrit" in *Mélange de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Pierre Le Gentil* (Paris: Jacques et Demontrond, 1973), pp. 399-408; and Daniel Calvez, "La Structure du rondeau: Mise au point," *The French Review* 55.4 (March 1982): 461-70.

to include a rondeau, any rondeau, to fill the gap where one should be, this rondeau inserted in a

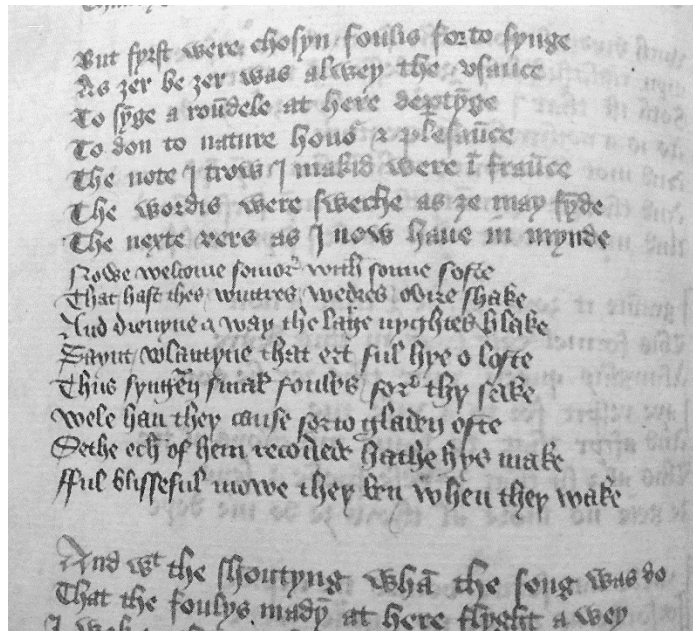Middle English mixed verse *dit* is revelatory for an understanding of what a *roundel* meant for

Figure 1.1. Detail of Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 4.27, f. 490v.

Chaucer.[17] Unfortunately, as is customary, the rondeau is severely abbreviated. Its thirteen lines

are cut down to eight.

> Nowe welcome somor with sonne softe
> That hast thes wintres wedres ovire shake
> And dreuyne a-awy the large nyghtes blacke
> Saynt volantyne that ert ful hye o lofte
> This syngen smal*e* foules for thy sake
> Wele han they cause forto gladden ofte
> Sethe ech of hem recov*er*ede hathe hys make
> Ful blissseful mowe they ben when they wake[18]

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[17] See Ralph Hanna's comments about both this "intrusion" in the manuscript of an alien hand, filling a gap equally found in H, and the "silent," hypothetical, editorial "reconstruction" of this rondeau in "Presenting Chaucer as Author" in Tim William Machan, ed. *Medieval Literature: Textes and Interpretation* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), pp. 17-39 (esp. 27-35). However, the presence of a fragment of the rondeau in one manuscript (J) and a reworking of the same material in the Machaut's *septains* or "rhyme royal" in another (D) seems to imply a missing rondeau made up of similar verses.

[18] M.B. Parkes and Richard Beadle, ed. *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Facsimilie of Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 4.27*, vol. 3 (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim, 1980), f. 490v and Frederick J. Furnivall, ed. *A Parallel-Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems*, Part 1 (London: Trübner, 1881), p. 98.

Refrains for rondeaux are always abbreviated in manuscripts—contemporary audiences were familiar enough with the form to be able to fill in the gaps—though usually not as extremely as this with the complete omission of other places where the refrain returns. Still, once the written form (abbababb) is clarified, that is, once we recognize that the first three lines make up a refrain (ABB) to be repeated elsewhere, then the remaining lines (ababb) correspond exactly to the appropriate number of lines for new material needed for a 13-line *rondeau tercet* (ABBabABabbABB). [19] Once unfolded, the length of the *Parlement*'s *rondeau tercet* matches the length of Arcite's rondeau and by extension, Palamoun's experience of listening to his rival's song. The refrains are in italics.

> *Nowe welcome somor with sonne softe*
> *That hast thes wintres wedres ovire shake*
> *And dreuyne a-awy the large nyghtes blacke.*
> Saynt volantyne that ert ful hye o lofte
> This syngen smale foules for thy sake.
> *Nowe welcome somor with sonne softe*
> *That hast thes wintres wedres ovire shake.*
> Wele han they cause forto gladden ofte
> Sethe ech of hem recoverede hathe hys make
> Ful blissseful mowe they ben when they wake.
> *Nowe welcome somor with sonne softe*
> *That hast thes wintres wedres ovire shake*
> *And dreuyne a-awy the large nyghtes blacke.*

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[19] Skeat, Pollard and Robinson were first to recognize the rondeau in Gg as a 13-line *rondeau tercet*. Furnivall, unsure of the line lengths of the refrains (the rules of the rondeau were not as clear as they are now), combined nineteenth-century philological conjecture with the traditional medieval copyist's abbreviations for refrains with a "[*Now welcome somor, &c.*]." Walter W. Skeat, ed. *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1894); Alfred W. Pollard, gen, ed, *The Globe Edition: The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: MacMillan, 1919); and F. N. Robertson, ed. *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933). On the other hand, Gilman, Phillips and Havely simply replicate the rondeau in its abbreviated eight lines. The latter placing the whole poem in brackets following Hanna's doubts about the poem. Morris turns the poem into a strange mix of the eight-line abbreviation and seven-line "rhyme royal" version, while Donaldson edits the poem into a ten-line Christine de Pisan rondeau with reduced half and final refrains *avant la lettre*. Arthur Gilman, ed. *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1880); Helen Phillips and Nick Havely, eds. *Chaucer's Dream Poetry* (London: Longman, 1997); Richard Morris, ed. *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 4 (London: Bell and Daldy, 1872); and E. T. Donaldson, ed. *Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader* (New York: Ronald Press, 1958)

I have always wondered if the choice of a *rondeau tercet* in the *Parliament* instead of the classic 8-line rondeau, still used by Froissart and Deschamps, has something to do with the three eagles or "tercelets" (659), as Venus calls them, forced to endure another Winter even as Summer approaches. Arcite, Palamoun and Emelye also make up a "tercet" of unhappy lovers. A *rondeau tercet* then seems the appropriate measure.

In *The Knight's Tale*, the song is brief on the page, hardly recognizable as an insert because of Chaucer's tendency to have songs integrated within the surrounding narrative's meter and rhyme.[20] Still, the refrain is identified as such afterwards, making it doubly important to understand what a *rondel* as a form conveys. Recognizing Arcite's rondeau as both a *rondeau tercet* in ABB ("May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,/ Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May,/ In hope that I som grene gete may") and fictitiously sung, we can imagine then not only Arcite's singing time but also the amount of time it might take for Palamoun not only to listen to his song but to become angrier and angrier. In terms of the *rondeau tercet* as an abstract object extended in a prolonged musical time, its length equally encourages us to recognize not only the amount of material to be developed, greater than in the shorter versions, but also invites us to identify ideas provocative to the song's listener, the overall effect of the refrain's repetitive nature. The form's logic is obsessive, its nature circular, as its refrain returns over and over again to the same theme, often from different angles if executed perfectly. The rondeau's circular movement truly represents Zumthor's idea of the "circularity of song."

Musically, as a rondeau sung, Arcite's refrain would initiate the two melodies that make up the song as it doubles over, always circling around the same musical phrases initiated by that

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[20] This is the reason why Chaucer's work is not recognized as part of the mixed genre tradition. Mitchell even notes that Arcite's song "is not distinguished metrically from its narrative setting" or only "partially separated from the narrative background" (561). Edward R. Mitchell, "The Two Mayings in Chaucer's 'The Knight's Tale,'" *Modern Language Notes* 71.8 (December 1956): 560-64.

opening refrain.[21] In other words, the first two lines of the refrain, "May, with alle thy floures

and thy grene,/ Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May," would share the same melodic phrase,

while the third, "In hope that I som grene gete may," changes to the second melodic phase.

From there, we can only speculate on the content of the lines but not their melodic form: two

lines of new material (in ab), then the half-refrain, "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,/

Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May," and then another two set of lines (in ab) all sung in the

first musical phrase.[22] There is a change with the next line of new material, the b-rhyme,

corresponding, as in the traditional 8-line *rondeau simple*, with the second melodic phrase before

the song returns to the same three-line refrain with which it began, "May, with alle thy floures

and thy grene,/ Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May/ In hope that I som grene gete may," with

its original melodic structure.   Although Chaucer only includes the refrain and leaves all of the

other lines uncertain, we can still perhaps hear in Arcite's singing how "syllables are stretched

into sounds" and lengthened to the point where meaning loses all comprehension and becomes

voiced as a pure sound of love.[23]

    If the refrain imposes not only a melody but also a central idea, it also represents, as

Daniel Poiron notes, a "radical immobilization of thought."[24] Machaut wrote a clever 8-line

rondeau on the nature of this immobility, "Ma fin est mon commencement/ Et mon

commencement ma fin" (My ending is my beginning and my beginning my end).[25] For Arcite,

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[21] In the classic 8-line rondeau, its two rhymes (a and b) correspond directly to its two musical units (1 and 2). Those units and rhymes together make up the following alternating pattern: ABaAabAB or musically 12111212. In other words, musically, the rondeau's first melodic line is repeated five times because the a-rhyme is repeated five times, while its second line, musically and textually, is repeated only three times. Nigel Wilkins, "The Structure of Ballades," and Bec, *Lyrique française*, p. 226.

[22] The melodic lines for the *rondeau tercet* in ABB are the same as the 8-line rondeau (12111212). The difference is which "extra" lines take on this melodic structure. Following Machaut's example, AB (1) B (2) ab (1) AB (1) ab (1) b (2) AB (1) B (2). Françon, "Rondeaux Tercets."

[23] Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 273.

[24] Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, pp. 320, 321, 326.

[25] Vladimir Chichmaref, ed. *Guillaume de* Machaut*: Poésies*, vol. 2 (Paris: Champion, 1909), p. 575.

as we will see, the refrain circulates around the same "poynt of his desir" (1501), Emelye. The

rondeau's circular structure resembles the garland of leaves adorning his hair, verdant and

everlasting. The rondeau can also, in its closed structure, become the perfect image of the

prison, where love is an impediment to satisfaction.[26] On the other hand, as a prison, it is also in

proximity to the beloved as it overlooks Emelye's garden. In that way even Arcite can exclaim

when set free, that is, exiled from her presence, "In prison? Certes nay, but in paradys!" (1237).

Arcite's rondeau, "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene," leaves us with much to

think about. Like that late fifteenth-century *compilator* filling in a yawning gap in the

Parliament manuscript where a melodious rondeau should be, we too want to fill in the rest of

Arcite's song in order to hear all of what Palamoun hears because it is Palamoun's hearing of

that now lengthy and elaborate song which is ultimately settled in the duke's arena. What does

he hear? Arcite's song can also be imagined rhetorically. Not only does the refrain "May, with

alle thy floures and thy grene/ Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May,/ In hope that I som grene

gete may" indicate its meter as decasyllabic, but in those three lines the appearance of two colors

of rhetoric, examples of *ornatus levis*, figures found in Geoffrey of Vinsauf that give poetry a

pleasing allure, while announcing a syntactical break with the narration. The first melodic phrase

(May…May) is an extended example of epanalepsis, the repetition of a word at the beginning

and ending of a sentence or line.[27] The whole refrain (May…I may) extends that figure further

but with the addition of paronomasia or the repetition of similar sounding words, in the same

way that the rime riche (May:may) is equally paronomasic in character.[28] Arcite's rondeau then

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[26] Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, p. 322.

[27] Matthew of Vendôme uses *epanalensis* (3.6) while Martianus Capella *prosapodosis* (5.533). Geoffrey of Vinsauf gives an example in the *Poetria nova* combining epinalepsis and antistrophe: "O malum! miserum malum! miserabile malum!" (1104). See as well examples in poetry across a variety of lines in Lausberg, *Handbook*, pp. 280-81. There he calls it *redditio*.

[28] Called *paronomasia* by Martianus Capella (5.532) and Matthew of Vendôme (3.9), the figure is also called *adnominatio* in *Ad Herennium* (4.21.29) and *annominatio* in Geoffey of Vinsauf's *Documentum* (64) and John of

is figuratively rich and as such poetically distinct from the narrative that surrounds it. This difference in language use between lyric inserts and the narrative surrounding it is a traditional feature of the mixed genre when only brief snatches of song are included. [29]

Arcite's use of rhyme is equally sophisticated. The refrain's homonymic *rime équivoque* (May:may) makes an excellent example of Jacques Legrand's "couleurs de rhethoricque."[30] If a rondeau by definition has only two rhymes (a and b), then what potential words in *–ene* and *–ay* can we imagine being sung in the musical structure we outlined above, especially if we play with its flour and leaf motif? The manuals of the Seconde Rhétorique, treatises which define the *formes fixes* after Machaut, allow us to imagine in their lists or rhyming dictionaries possible rhymes, whether *simples*, *riches*, *léonine* or *equivoques*, and by extension, the rondeau's potential content.[31] We can do the same with the MED if we limit choices to a vocabulary identified with Chaucer. In so doing, we can fill in the gap the same way that fifteenth-century copyist did with the *Parliament*'s missing rondeau, by hypothesizing all the possibilities of Dragonetti's *virtual* rhetoric. Since a new a-rhyme (-ene) in the 13-line *rondeau tercet* appears only twice in the new material, let us play, in the spirit of Guiette, with possible conventional images by using the far easier b-rhyme (-ay) with its three appearances. Would we hear joyful or *gay* birds (*jay*) singing either a *lay* or *virelay* before this amorous image is undone by the desperation in Arcite's final line of the refrain? Or by evoking the implied despair of the

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Garland (6.139-63). Examples can be found in the *Poetria nova* (1140-41). Geoffrey of Vinsauf's example of epanalepsis combined with anaphores, "Res mala! Res pejor aliis! Res pessima rerum!" (1103), is less paronomasia than polyptoton or traductio, the repetition of a word's root, not its case. However, this is another definition of adnominatio in *Ad Herennium* (4.22.31) because the figure is understood as a more global repetition of similar sounding words. For rime riche and paronomasia, see Lausberg, *Handbook*, p. 288.

[29] Steven R. Guthrie, "Meter and Performance in Machaut and Chaucer" in Rebecca A. Baltzer, Thomas Cable and James I. Wimsatt, eds. *The Union of Words and Music in Medieval Poetry* (Austin: University of Texas, 1991), pp. 72-100.

[30] Ernst Langlois, ed. *Recueil d'arts de seconde rhétorique* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), p. 1.

[31] Lists can be found in the *Règles*, Baudet Herenc's *Doctrinal* and the *Traité*. Langlois, *Recueil d'arts*, pp. 72-96, 122-65, 208-13.

refrain's last line ("In hope that I som grene gete may") would we hear an exclaimed "wellaway" (938), in the spirit of Charles of Orleans, as found in the *Knight's Tale*, or a reaction to the lady's "nay" (1243), in the spirit of Chartier and Roos, as found in the *Book of the Duchess*? We could also add fear so central to the experience of love (*affrai*). Finally, Chaucer could equally have chosen a *rime riche* to complement his use of a *rime equivoque*: "May" in this context equally brings on "dismay."

But Chaucer was also a rhetorical writer in the same vein as Machaut and his disciples and so, accustomed already to making choices, or actualizing potentials, we can follow in his work set rhyming patterns already associated with *May*/*may* and *grene*. Surprisingly, the pattern is limited. *May*/*may* in the *Legend* always accompanies "day," while *grene* qualifies Alceste as "quene" or the condition of being "sene" (seen).[32] In the G prologue, green also announces the arrival of nineteen girls. If we accept Chaucer's authorship of the triple *rondeau tercet* in ABB "Merciless Beauty," then we find two of the three rondeaux built around simple b-rhymes in -*ene*: *grene*, *quene*, *sene*, plus *sustene*, *kene* (grievously, painfully) in the first rondeau; and *bene* (bean), *mene* (as "I mean"), and the *rime riche lene* (lean):*clene* (entirely) in the third. As for the *rime equivoque* May:may, that can be found as well in the *Knight's Tale* as a transition between the Knight's inability to compose effectively in English Palamoun's feelings of anguish and Palamoun's escape one night in May before Arcite is awoken by the lark and is inspired to sing:

> Who koude ryme in Englyssh properly
> His martirdom? For sothe it am not I;
> Therfore I passe as lightly as I may.
> It fel that in that seventhe yer, of May
> The thridde nyght (as olde bookes seyn,
> That al this storie tellen moore pleyn) (1459-64)

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[32] In *Legend*, for May/may:day see F 35-36, 45-46, 107-108, 175-76 and 183-84. For grene:quene, F 213-14, 241-42, 302-3; G 185-86 as well as *Duchess* 497-98. For grene:sene, F 223-24, 340-41.

When the narrative *may*:*May* is echoed in the rondeau's *May*:*may*, the rondeau's refrain appears less as the initiation or *incipit* of an autonomous piece of poetry than a response to the frame that surrounds it. Even the first appearance of Emelye in the *Knight's Tale* is characterized by simple rhymes around the words *May* and *grene* together:

> This passeth yeer by yeer and day by day,
> Till it fil ones, in a morowe of May,
> That Emelye that fairer was to sene
> Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene… (1033-36)

By the time the reader gets to Arcite's rondeau, these rhymes call up images of the past, images designed fictionally to represent a history that comes into existence as the motivations for a song. *May* and *grene* are also projected forward, for example, one "May" (1675) when Theseus goes out to hunt the hart with his "queene" Ypolita and Emelye, "clothed al in grene" (1685-86).

Arcite's refrain seems to project lexically backwards and forwards inside the *Knight's Tale*. One could argue that the rhymes shared by both the rondeau and the narrative are an example of Chaucer's predictable patterned rhyming—isolated *grene* and *May* appear elsewhere in the romance—but grouped together one senses a narrative intrusion into the rondeau's refrain.[33] Arcite's lyrical moment, while interrupting the narrative, still lingers on words that have already become key-rhymes in the narrative, words that are crucial to the immediate conflict that breaks out once Palamon overhears Arcite's song and initiates a fight that Theseus brings a stop. But to understand Arcite's song as a rondeau is to linger on lyric itself as a form, to still narrative (and temporal change), even when lyric in the mixed genre is understood as the culmination of a narrative experience of love. Incomplete though it is, a refrain standing in for a complete song, activates other intertextual connections, ones that venture outside the romance to other literary traditions that orbit the *Knight's Tale*. Arcite's refrain, never isolated, already

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[33] For May:day see 1823-24, 2483-84; green:queen, 1685-86; green:sheen, 1067-68; green:seen 2175-76; 2297-98

connected intimately to the romance that frames it, also projects out into a larger textual network, continental in origins, that links the romances to other texts using refrains, not simply what has been described as a kind of medieval subgenre of the dance-song, a short, independent lyric piece called a *refrain*, but more accurately, a short lyric inserted into a variety of contexts, romances, poems and musical settings called a "refrain-citation."[34] The refrain-citation, in its purest state, seemingly acts as an independent lyric form, autonomous in the ways medieval poetry can be read as rhetorical, but in reality, is dependent on being interpolated into multiple potential frames in order to increase further its meaning.

2. Arcite's Rondeau and "Refrain-Citations"

Musicologists working on medieval songs and literary historians on both the mixed genre and poetry anthologies have recently become greatly interested in the repetition of certain interpolated refrains or "refrain-citations" along a wide network of medieval texts.[35] The refrain-citation, as a subgenre, is a well-documented medieval practice recognizable as a feature of mixed-verse narratives where inserted refrains in a narrative not only stand in for complete songs, but can also allude to other songs. The fact that Chaucer supplies only a refrain in the *Knight's Tale* is well within the tradition of the mixed genre. Jean Renart's thirteenth-century

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[34] John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Dance and Drama, 1050-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986), p. 461 and Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *The Song in the Story: Lyrical Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200-1400* (University of Pennsylvania, 1993), pp. 243-44.

[35] Butterfield, *Poetry and Mubuttsic* as well as *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009); Anne Ibos-Augé, *Chanter et lire dans le récit médiévale: La function des insertions lyriques dans les oeuvres narratives et didactiques d'oïl aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, 2 vols. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010); Judith A. Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love: Song and Self-Expression from the Troubadours to Guillaume de Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011); Jennifer Saltzstein, *The Refrain and the Rise of the Vernacular in Medieval French Music and Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013); Sarah Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotations and the Development of European Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013); and Yolanda Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013).

Roman de la rose, for example, famously stages refrains as complete musical performances sung

singularly or in groups "por ramenbrance des chançons" (for the remembrance of songs) (3).[36]

The fifteenth-century *Floure and the Leafe*, a poem much indebted to the *Knight's Tale*, with its

knights wearing garlands or "chapelets" (268) of hawthorn and woodbine, quotes a two-line

refrain to represent a complete 8-line rondeau sung not in English but instead in a corrupted,

garbled French which could mark the language's decline in England:[37]

> And she began a roundell lustely,
> That *Suse le foyle de vert moy* men call,
> *Seen & mon joly cuer en dormy*. (176-8)

The rondeau, we are told is then "answered all" (179) by a group of singers, "dauncing and

singing" (183), with "voice sweet entuned and so small" (180).[38] The impression given by this

shared performance—and this was the reigning understanding of refrains until very recently—is

that of a sung fragment or quotation from a previously known *rondet de carole*, completed

mentally by the reader or listener the moment the refrain is heard.[39] But Derek Pearsall has

identified the source for the *Floure*'s refrain not with a rondeau proper but with the opening lines

of a fifteenth-century *bergerette*, a rondeau-like pastoral dance-song with a full refrain repeated

after the second stanza called "Dessoubz la branche d'ung verd moy" (Under the branch of May

green).[40] Though that source does not include the crucial leaf, the *foyle*, its theme of a constant

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[36] Félix Lecoy, ed. *Jean Renart: Le Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole* (Paris: Champion, 1978).
[37] Skeats' reaction to what he calls these "unintelligible scraps of French" is utter bewilderment. Walter Skeat, ed. *Chaucerian and Other Pieces* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1897), p. 532n. For a conflicting picture on the state of the French language in England see Douglas A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely: The French Language in England, 1000-1600: Its Status, Description and Instruction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991) and the work of William Rothwell and David Trotter.
[38] Butterfield notes that court settings, whether inside or outside, signal the citation of dance songs. Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 50.
[39] Joseph Bédier, "Les plus anciennes dances françaises," *Revue des deux mondes* 31 (1906): 398-424 (esp. 406, 413-14). See also Robert Mullally, *The Carole: A Study of a Medieval Dance* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).
[40] Pearsall, *The Floure and the Leafe* (1962), pp. 138-39n as well as (1990), pp. 23-24n; Théodore Gérold, ed. *Le Manuscrit de Bayeux: Texte et musique d'un recueil de chansons du XVe siècle* (Strasbourg: Istra, 1921), p. 117 and Armand Gasté, ed. *Chansons Normandes du XVe siècle, publiées pour la première fois sur les mss de Bayeux et de Vire* (Caen: Le Gost-Clerisse, 1896), p. 135.   For the *bergerette* as a variation of the rondeau and not the virelai see

verdant love is clear. The *Floure*'s mixing of genres, a popular song inserted into a *dit*, shows

how adaptable refrains can be.

Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles* plays equally with this *refrain* tradition. Though

modern editions of Chaucer's English *dit* conclude with its famous rondeau in some form or

other, manuscripts tell another story. While three manuscripts include fragmentary examples of

its rondeau and four include no inserts at all, three manuscripts and the Caxton edition include

only a refrain-citation for the "nexte vers" which Chaucer tells us "I now have in mynde"

(679).[41]

<div align="center">

Que bien ayme a tarde oublie
(He who loves well, forgets slowly)

</div>

What comes to mind with this break in both the narrative and its rhyme scheme is not simply

proverbial wisdom, though it is included in medieval collections of French proverbs, but its

status as a song.[42] Shared by a chorus of birds, the line bypasses its proverbial roots to quote not

just one source but a whole intertextual network of songs, in a variety of genres, all sharing the

same line as an interpolated refrain-citation, from the final sententious moral at the end of the

mixed-verse *Roman de la Poire* to a variety of motets and trouvère *chansons*.[43] "Qui bien

Robert W. Linker and Gwynn S. McPeek, "The Bergerette Form in the Laborde Chansonier: A Musico-Literary Study," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 7 (1954): 113-22 and Stevens, *Words and Music*, pp. 180-81.

[41] Frederick J. Furnivall, ed. *A Parallel-Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems* (London: Trübner, 1871), pp. 98-99; *Supplementary Parallel Texts of Chaucer's Minor Poems*, Part 1 (London: Trübner, 1888), p. 98, *Supplementary Parallel Texts of Chaucer's Minor Poems*, Part 2 (London: Trübner, 1888), p. 98; and *Odd Texts of Chaucer's Minor Poems* (London: Trübner, 1868-80), p. 288. Morris and Skeat, not recognizing that two traditions were at work, one inserting full song, the other a refrain, printed both the rondeau and the refrain together. Richard Morris, ed. *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 4 (London: Bell and Daldy, 1872), p. 74 and Skeat, *Complete Works*, p. 359.

[42] For *Qui bien aime* as a proverb, see Joseph Morawski, ed. *Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1925), p. 67 (no. 1853). For a refrain's disruptive entry into a narrative, see Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 247 and Boulton, *Song in the Story*, p. 290.

[43] For *Qui bien aime* as a refrain, see Nico H. J. van den Boogaard, ed. *Rondeaux et refrains du XIIe siècle au début du XIVe* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969), p. 233 (no. 1585) as well as Benson, *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 1002; Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, pp. 248, 266; Butterfield, "French Culture and the Ricardian Court" in A. J. Minnis, Charlotte C. Morse and Thorlac Turville-Petre, ed. *Essays on Ricardian Literature: In Honor of J. A. Burrow* (Oxford:

aimme a tart oublie" also opens Machaut's *Lay de plour*, a lay describing the endurance of *fine amour* in the wake of a lover's death, as well as in the refrain to Deschamps' ironic *salut d'amour* "Je vous mercy, dames et demoiselle," a ballade as *lettre en vers* where Deschamps thanks all the ladies who thought prematurely that he was dead, "Car je voy bien: Qui aime, a tart oublie" (Because I see well, he who loves forgets slowly).[44] Together, these citations call to mind both the suffering of the eagles, if they *are* true lovers, and an ironic wink from Chaucer. The fact that this refrain-citation also appears in Machaut's mixed-verse *Remede de Fortune* and prosimetric *Voir Dit*, as a moral for wavering lovers, suggests that Chaucer is fully aware that a refrain's authority lies in its intertextual repetition.[45] Finally, in John Gower's *Cinkante Balades*, a ballade cycle that contains several poems evocative of the *Parlement of Fowles* and Oton de Grandson's *Songe Saint Valentin*, the refrain also appears in ballade 25 as "Car qui bien aime ses amours tard oblie" (Because he who loves well his loves forgets slowly) to represent helpless desire in the face of malicious slandering.[46] Jennifer Slatzstein argues that the refrain is part of a clerical tradition of quoting *auctores*, an argument that fits nicely with Chaucer's aesthetic.[47] The *Parliament* not only comes alive textually because of the line's "wandering existence," to quote Butterfield, but because, as Sarah Kay observes, readers confer authority not only on the refrain as citation but also the writer quoting it.[48] Its community of birds implies a community of readers, listeners and writers on both sides of the channel sharing the same literary culture. But Kay has also argued, in evoking Dragonetti's *Mirage des sources*, that a refrain's *appearance* as

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Clarendon, 1997), pp. 82-120 (esp. 99-107) and *The Familiar Enemy*, pp. 243, 246-50; and Saltzstein, *The Refrain*, pp. 71-72.

[44] Ernst Hoepffner, ed. *Oeuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*, vol. 1 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1908), pp. 283-91 and Gaston Raynaud, ed. *Oeuvres complètes d'Eustache Deschamps*, vol. 7 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1891), pp. 124-25.

[45] *Remede* 4258 and *Voir Dit* L 10, L 30, 7372.

[46] R. F. Yeager, ed. *John Gower: The French Ballades* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2011).

[47] Saltzstein, *The Refrain*.

[48] Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 131 and Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*, pp. 21-22.

cited can also confers upon it an authority that in fact does not exist. In other words, refrains can fabricate their own *auctoritas* without the backing of an *auctor*. The listener assumes the refrain's status as well as the author's on a presumption.

The Knight's Tale's refrain plays with that impression. Nowhere in the romance is Arcite's implied *rondeau tercet* described as a spontaneous act of invention like Troilus' *canticus*, an invention grounded equally in a clever effacing of its source, a phenomenon identified by Rita Copeland in vernacular translations.[49] Can we assume then that what he is singing, the rondeau "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene," is a song he has previously heard, though burnished by his own voice and his own love? Following the intertextual character of refrain-citations in many mixed-genre works, Arcite's refrain leads to two possibilities: either an independent refrain, as found in the *Parlement of Fowles*, migrating across multiple texts or the fragment of a larger "found" song, as seen in *The Floure and the Leafe*. And yet, the refrain's lack of proverbial sententiousness, one pathway for refrain-citations, closes off a potential area of research, while a quick perusing through the standard collections of Middle English lyrics produced no source, even among the paucity of surviving rondeaux in English.[50] Nor could I find an example among the English carols, whose opening *burden* functions similarly to the rondeau's refrain.[51] Perhaps its source is French, and yet nothing could be found that was close to Arcite's Middle English in either Nico van den Boogaard's standard

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[49] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991).
[50] Carleton Brown, ed. *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932); Rossel Robbins, ed, *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952) and *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); R. T. Davies, ed. *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), Thomas Duncan, ed. *Medieval English Lyrics 1200-1400* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).
[51] Although one carole in Greene's famous collection includes an overheard song (no. 540), no songs include a refrain or *burden* that mentions May or leaves. However, it should be noted that there are many carols dedicated to the ivy. Richard Leighton Greene, ed. *The Early English Carols* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935), pp. 93-5 and 304 and *A Selection of English Carols* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), p. 94.

repository for refrain-citations found in rondeaux or in rondeaux composed by Machaut,

Deschamps, Froissart and Grandson.[52] A search into popular French song also resulted in similar

findings.[53]

But unlike the *Floure and the Leafe*, where we can find the refrain's source, a refrain's

generic stability as a transmitted rondeau is not always assured. Even though the refrain has the

detached quality of a refrain-citation, ultimately, finding textual relations between Arcite's

refrain and other texts may not matter. [54] As Doss-Quinby has shown, refrains, those "éléments

voyageurs" found in multiple locations, can mutate into almost infinite variations making a

definite source even more difficult to identify.[55] In Christine de Pisan's *Cent Ballades*, for

example, the refrain to ballade 36, "Et qui pourroit telle amour oublier?" (And who could forget

such a love), is clearly a variation of the "Qui bien aimer a tarde oublie" refrain-citation

discussed earlier.[56] Kay has equally pointed out that refrain-citations, if not "fabricated" in

Dragonetti's understanding of the play of sources, can be misremembered or misrepresented or

even, misinterpreted.[57]

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[52] Nico van den Boogaard, ed. *Rondeaux et refrains*. Neither Machaut nor Grandson have a rondeau celebrating May. In Deschamps, only one rondeau celebrates the month, "Doulx moys de May, vrais dieux des amoureux," while the mixed-verse prosimetrum or *dit*, the *Cour de Mays*, lacks the necessary flower and leaf theme. In Froissart, as well, has only one rondeau explicitly about May: "De quoi que soit se doit renouveler/ Uns jolis coers le premier jour de May." Vladimir Chichmaref, ed. *Guillaume de Machaut: Poésies lyriques* (Generva: Slatkine, 1975, orig. 1909), Joan Grenier-Winthner, ed. *Oton de Grandson: Poésies*, edited by (Paris: Champion, 2010); Rae S. Baudouin, ed. *Jean Froissart: Ballades et rondeaux* (Geneva: Droz, 1978), Saint-Hilaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, Auguste Scheler, *Oeuvres de Froissart: Poésies*, vol. 3 (Brussels: Victor Devaux, 1872), vol. 3. For a study of Chaucer's relations with the Middle French poets see James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993). Wimsatt also briefly discusses Arcite's "charming" (164) rondeau. V.A. Kolve discusses Froissart's influence on *The Knight's Tale* in general in *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1984), pp. 95-6.
[53] For example, Armand Gasté, *Chansons normandes*, while late in date showed the futility of the enterprise: a plethora of songs about May.
[54] This is Stevens's own conclusion when discussing a trouvère chanson with an unidentifiable refrain. Stevens, *Words and Music*, p. 469.
[55] Doss-Quinby, *Les Refrains*, pp. 21-4, 93.
[56] Maurice Roy, ed. *Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, vol. 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886), p. 37 (no. 36). See also ballade 55 which opens, "Qui bien aime n'oublie pas."
[57] Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*, p. 22.

Formal instability then puts into question the whole theory of the mixed-genre as a faithful repository for the fragment of popular songs. As some scholars have observed, many of these "refrains" make reference to no other outside source but stand independently as song.[58] Instead of an intertextual quotation, they seem instead to reference the context from which they spring.[59] In so doing, they generate the idea of a spontaneous performance of a song, not the singing of a known or "found" song. Arcite's rondeau seems to work this way. Arcite's refrain is designed to stage the spontaneous invention of a song that expresses his own singular feeling. Instead of looking for a source, it may be better to rethink the refrain's intertextual dimension as an *intratextual* wandering within the very frame of the narration. As has been seen in analyzing potential rhyme words, Arcite's refrain projects itself within the confines of *The Knight's Tale*'s narrative.

Instead of an exterior network of songs, as we found in *The Parliament of Fowles*, Arcite's refrain might be approached from within another convention of the mixed genre: hermetically closed off songs fictionally conceived as an experience, rather than literary or musical allusions. In that way, the song becomes the product of a text's interiority in the same way the *Roman de la rose* is conceived as "toute enclose" (38), textually cut off from any exterior beyond the walls of the garden.[60] Once its wicket gate is shut, the poem reflects internally, like the stones and surface of the "mireors perilleus" (perilous mirror)(1568) of Narcissus' fountain, all four corners of the garden. Zumthor equally thought of the song as an enclosed garden full of singing birds, but we are merely widening the optic, making the garden's framing as crucial as the birds singing in the understanding of that song. And as in the *Roman de*

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[58] Doss-Quinby, *Les Refrains*, p. 58; Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 50; and Saltzstein, *The Refrain*, pp. 13-16.

[59] Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, pp. 2, 57, 76.

[60] Armand Strubel, ed. *Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun: Le Roman de la rose: Edition d'après les manuscrits BN 12786 et BN 378* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1992).

la rose, the veracity of any expression—in this case, a song—is confirmed internally by the text surrounding it.

On the surface, Arcite's "May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,/ Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May,/ In hope that I som grene gete may," shares certain popular features of song refrains found in other mixed genre works. With its air of the communal in its evocation of a flower and leaf tradition, the refrain seems to evoke a performance pairing song with dance, *rondets* and *caroles*, by a courtly group Maying.[61] In such a popular context, the refrain's "I" retains its non-referential status because it can be occupied by any soloist in the group. As Poiron noted, such refrains represent not the voice of amorous rhetoric, as in the *grand chant courtois*, but the "impersonal voice of society and tradition."[62] But this is not the situation of Arcite's song. He sings alone in the woods and any public is found in the listening, not the participation, of his rival. As noted in regards to the intratextual wanderings of the refrain's *May*:*may* and *grene* rhymes, Arcite's rondeau is instead infused with an authentic, personal history. By having the frame and the refrain repeat back and forth the same patterns, they become unified together around the figure of the singer. Judith Peraino has noted a similar shift in Jean Renart, where the mixed genre changes the way refrains, once thought of as public, communal songs, become personal and expressive.[63]

If, as Butterfield has argued, we must be attentive to the context of these refrains, Arcite's is interesting not only because it shows Chaucer as an active participant in a continental literary tradition but also because it reveals Chaucer exploiting all the possibilities of this tradition by making his refrain simultaneously refer intertextually outside the song to a tradition and

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[61] Bédier, "Dances françaises" and Zink, "Lyricisme," p. 78.
[62] Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, p. 319.
[63] Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love*, pp. 260-61. For the refrain-citation and its link to the *grand chant courtois* see also Zumthor, *Essai*, pp. 249-50.

intratextually inside the narrative surrounding it. But these moves inside and out can also refer

to a song's causal relation to its singer and what Michel Zink describes as the secret

circumstances of songs.[64] Inside, the refrain makes reference through its rhymes to narrative

material that evokes both a past and an emotional substructure for the song; and outside, as

performed before an audience, consciously or not, the song takes on a secretive hue, as if aware

of the need for poetry to conceal the name and identity of his love object behind the moniker

"lady." In other words, the song seems to preserve the original anynonymity of rhetorical poetry,

but as an act of amorous discretion, grounded in the circumstances of narrative within the context

of competing rivals.[65]

  Songs then, as we will see, appear like strangers, mysterious intrusions in an orderly

world, which need to be interpreted by others in order to be understood.[66] Wary of revealing

their secret core, song in the mixed genre takes on conventional features to preserve any

necessary obscurity. How that secret core, always amorous, is revealed makes up the drama of

the mixed genre, where private identity and public recognition come into conflict over the

interpretation of a song. Butterfield's description of the length of time to sing a rondeau gives us

an idea of how long it would take to raise the concerns of a rival like Palamoun. With its

pronouns obscured and its syllables stretched musically to the point where language loses all

comprehensibility, Arcite's song becomes voiced as the purest sound of love. And for

Palamoun, that becomes a problem.

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[64] Michel Zink, *La subjectivité littéraire* (Paris: Puf, 1985), p. 72.

[65] The existence of a theory of discretion, that is, not openly naming your love, is a prohibition perceived not only in the troubadour use of *senhals* or "code names" but also in the development of an amorous doctrine derived from the *Roman de la rose* and can be found at work in French and English *dits*.

[66] Zink, "Lyricism en rond," pp. 75-76. See as well Butterfield's description of the way snatches of songs seem to appear in manuscripts that are not literary, such as the Armburgh Papers. Ardis Butterfield, "Why Medieval Lyric?" *ELH* 82.2 (Summer 2015): 319-43.

3. Referential Songs

For a song to have a secret, it must also have a singer with the intention of concealing the true nature of the song and a listener who can potentially understand it. However, as noted in the introduction, Robert Guiette, a Belgian poet and medievalist, was the first to argue that in the French trouvère tradition, songs affixed no subjectivity to the infamous "lyric I." Instead, this anonymous, grammatical marker organizes a melodic game played with rhetorical commonplaces.[67] On the other hand, the prosimetrum and its mixed verse variation (the *Knight's Tale*'s form) creates, through its narration, the idea of an identifiable singing subject with the song understood as expressing a deeply felt subjective experience. The singer, the conventions he employs and the final lyric piece he composes are all understood through the context of framing that understands song as an inspirational act drawn from the heart. The mixed genre does this by taking the anonymous or rhetorical song and giving it both a specific identity and a dramatic context. Furthermore, this song will be overheard. This is very important because it brings into play the public role of refrain-citations. Arcite's refrain, by its intratextual connection to a larger narrative network, suddenly becomes both private, in that it is intimately connected to a definitive subject, Arcite, and public because it has to be heard in order to fulfill its narrative function, in this case, to set up a crisis for Palamoun. John Stuart Mills and Sir William Jones' definition of "lyric" as an overheard song suddenly has a decidedly medieval feel.

Let's go back to Arcite's rondeau and listen first to its emotional core. As noted earlier, one of the salient effects of the rondeau is its repetitiveness; its refrain seems to return again and

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[67] Robert Guiette, "D'une poésie formelle en France au moyen âge" (1949) reprinted in both *Romanica Gandensia* 8 (1960) : 9-23 and *Forme et senefiance* (Geneva : Droz, 1978), pp. 1-24. Stone emphasizes futher the anonymity of the grammatical "I". Gregory B. Stone's *The Death of the Troubadour: The Late Medieval Resistance to the Renaissance* (University of Pennsylvania, 1994).

again to one central point. Furthermore, in medieval poetry, any "I," like a refrain, has a travelling ad hoc quality—conventional, not personal—outside the subjectivizing domain of the mixed genre. Any singer while singing a song can assume the identity of that "I." Equally, any listener or reader can identify with and project onto that vacant grammatical marker.[68] When Arcite first returns to Thebes, one symptom of his "loveris maladye" (1373) is that "if he herde song or instrument,/ Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stente" (1367-68). Because Arcite's attention and thought are fixed on his love for Emelye, every love song he overhears with its helpless "I"s and resistant "you"s brings to mind his own predicament.[69] Identification then plays an important part in the reception of song. Just as Arcite is reminded of his own love, or experiences his love, by listening to public songs, Palamoun too will respond to Arcite's singing. For example, that final line of the refrain, "In hope that I som grene gete may," must remind him not only of his rival's desire, but also of his own desperate love for Emelye. A song overheard is always incorporated and received as one's own, just as Arcite's sourceless "found" song could be incorporated into his mental and emotional life and sung as his own. In this way, the mixed genre creates a subject through the individual appropriation of the conventional "I" within a particular context.

But the mixed genre is not about identification but fixed identities. If a song is contextualized by its narrative frame, as I have argued, and given a subjective grounding where none would normally exist in the rhetorical understanding of medieval poetry, then that "something green" heard in Arcite's refrain can also be understood by Palamoun as *specifically*

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[68] For listeners as readers see Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996).

[69] Peter of Spain's cure for the pains of *eros* or lovesickness, songs and the sight of beautiful forms, seems to backfire with Arcite, whose mind is not turned to new forms but focused on similarity. He sees and hears in all forms, the same woman, Emelye. Wack, *Lovesickness*, pp. 220-21.

referring to Emelye. That is, the song, as conceptualized within the mixed genre, can only be understood as a particular song about a particular woman—in the case of *The Knight's Tale*, the woman both the listener and the singer love—rather than a universal and general lady broad enough to incorporate the image of Emelye. Arcite's rondeau then is about Emelye and no one else. As the *Tristan en prose* will show, the tension between Emelye's specific identity and conventional medieval poetic imagery encapsulates an ambiguity essential to the function of lyric mixed with narrative.

However, Palamoun at first does not know that the singer is Arcite—his clothing identifies him as a squire—so the song initially remains in its universal or anonymous state as he listens, ignorant that the rondeau's conventional love object is actually Emelye. For a time, the song safely reflects the joyful play of conventions as Guiette's rhetorical theory of poetry describes. Furthermore, the ambiguity surrounding the song's subject invites all listeners to identification—the words equally suit Palamoun's own love for Emelye—because medieval lyric in isolation, by its very conventionality, can never be specific. Instead, songs accrue specificity only by chance, through the identification of the singer or the listener. The song grows in meaning in proportion to these points of identitification.[70] But in *The Knight's Tale* something strange happens. The singer finishes his song and falls silent.

> Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille,
> And songen al the roundel lustily,
> Into a studie he fil sodeynly,
> As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres
> Now in the crope, now doun in the breres,
> Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle. (1529-33)

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[70] As when I moved to Angers for a year to teach at their university. Since I had left behind my wife and daughter in Baton Rouge, I found the old Jimmie Rodgers' song "Miss the Mississippi and You" more and more specific as the length of their absence increased.

Chaucer's gentle mockery of the generically expected behavior of lovers in the mixed genre still recognizes as well that something private has happened out in the woods; that a private, interior moment has found its way into a song, or has been expressed through song. The listener too will increasingly understand his intrusion into the private thoughts or expressions of the singer. After the sigh, a conventional expression to denote the significance of Arcite's rondeau, a complaint follows that will clarify in quite specific terms the *razo* or reason for his singing: "Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye!/ Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye" (1567-8). One could amend that line by adding "Emelye, you have also been the cause wherefore I sing." This cause, explored so openly in the prose *razos* for troubadour songs, focuses on specific "reasons" for the composition of a song.

In the *Knight's Tale*, Palamoun's recognition of Arcite's specific reference to Emelye as the cause of his song is retroactive, as "a sentence, when written, seems to move backwards to complete its hold on itself."[71] Here, it takes two steps: one, hearing this strange squire in the forest exclaiming Emelye's name and then afterwards, retrospectively, recognizing that the song he has just heard is a song about the same woman he loves, a woman he claims as his own.

> This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
> He felt a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,
> For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
> And whan that he had herde Arcites tale,
> As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
> He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke (1574-78)

We can understand why Arcite's use of her specific name enrages Palamoun. But I detect a subtle transformation in relation to the song as well. Not just the complaint but the song in all its original rhetorical anonymity has suddenly becomes a tale.

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[71] Clark Coolidge, "Notebooks (1976-1982)" in Michael Palmer, ed. *Code of Signals: Recent Writings in Poetics* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1983).

> This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
> Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
> As fiers as leon pulled out his swerd. (1596-8)

Arcite's defense of his *tale* is a radical transformation of a rhetorical conception of poetry as conventionally playful, and peopled by non-referential subjects. Instead, it becomes personal and conventional language, the workings not of poetry itself as Zumthor sees it but of a poet trying to find the right words to express an experienced love in narrative. The mixed genre makes the narrative observable by framing the song in dramatic situations and naming singers.

Writing a song about a particular woman and singing it is not how scholars have understood medieval love lyrics. But Chaucer stages lyric as part of a particular tale, so that its general conventionality becomes subject to the particular story of Palamon and Arcite. The oscillation between convention and particular circumstances, rhetorical pattern and rhetorical situations, raises questions about the function of lyric itself within narrative. To help understand Palamoun's rage as wholly expected within a romance with inserted lyrics requires some remarks on Chaucer's most obvious influence, the massive thirteenth-century Arthurian prosimetrum, the *Tristan en prose*, which contains songs publicly sung—accidently "public" in the overhearing—yielding private meanings to those interested in the listening, private meanings, like Arcite's refrain, which connect intratextually to other places enclosed in the book. As will be seen, the *Tristan*'s lays wander throughout the book's many contexts and out to others, in the same way refrains do. In that way, allusion and citation become, if you will, figures for song in the mixed genre.

4. A Public Understanding

English knowledge of the *Tristan en prose* is well documented. Not only is the book bequeathed in English wills, but one of the most popular prose romances from the Middle Ages, Malory's abbreviated adaptation of the book (without its songs!), makes clear English access to a copy.[72] In the *Traitié*, Gower alludes to "la cronique et l'istoire/ De Lancelot et Tristans ensement" (15.1-2), or as Quixley translates it, to the "Cronyk and historie/ Of Lancelote and of Tristram," an overt reference to the *Tristan*'s conjoining of two separate romance traditions in the rewriting of the prose Vulgate *Lancelot-Grail* from the perspective of Tristan, a knight poet exiled in Arthur's realm whose songs and the songs of other knights are inserted.[73] In the *Cinkante Balades*, Gower's bitter lady, under the influence of the *mesdisantz*, even warns her deceitful lover that Lancelot and Tristan knew how to be discreet and not act "comun plus qe la halte voie" (more common than the highway)(43.14), a nicety that ignores the destruction of Arthur's kingdom. The linking of Tristan with the grail tradition can also be found in the prologue to the Laud MS's *Troy Book* where the author situates his Trojan tale within the context of many "romaunces rede" (11) like that of the *Tristan* Quest, "Off Tristram, and of Percyuale" (17).[74] Finally, Lydgate, in the *Complaint of the Black Knight*, focuses on the desperate love and

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[72] For example, in 1421, Matilda Bowes bequeathed "j librum that is called *Trystram*" to Elizabeth Whitchestre, while in 1426, the Duke of Exeter as well bequeathed "a book called Tristram" to his sister the Countess of Westmoreland. Even so vague a listing as a "liure du Romans du Roy Arthur" may include a *Tristan* portion. Robin L. Storey, ed. *The Register of Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham, 1406-1437* (Durham: Andrews, Surtees Society, 1951), vol. 2, p. 196; Nicholas Harris Nicolas, ed. *Testamenta Vestusta: Being Illustrations from Wills, of Manners, Customs*, vol. 1 (London: Nicholas and Sons, 1826), p. 209; V. J. Scattergold, "Two Medieval Book Lists," *The Library* 23.3 (September 1968): 236-39 (qt. 237).

[73] R. F. Yeager, ed. *John Gower: The French Ballades* (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2011).

[74] J. Ernst Wülfing, ed. *The Laud Troy Book: A Romance of About 1400 A.D.*, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, 1902-1903).

envy of the *Tristan*'s famous Muslim knight Palamedes as does the closing prose *Epistle* to the prosimetrum *Lover's Mass* or *Venus' Mass*.[75]

Chaucer's knowledge of the *Tristan* appears in subtler allusions. The *House of Fame* makes reference to Iseut and the multiple knights desperate for her hand, situations found only in the *Tristan*, while the *Parlement of Fowles*' "mortal strokes of the spere" (135) seems to evoke Tristan's unique death by King Mark.[76] The latter is especially resonant considering his name is listed later among the images painted in Venus' temple.[77] Finally, the conjoining of "Ysoude and Eleyne" (F 254; G 208) in the *Legend of Good Women* makes us think not only of Helen of Troy but also Elaine, daughter of King Pelles, who after sleeping with Lancelot in the grail castle, gives birth to Galaad.[78] More importantly, there is an undeniable resonance between the character of Palamoun and the *Tristan*'s doomed but passionate Palamedes as if Chaucer were *Frenchifying* his Italian source in the same way he rewrites Petrarch's sonnet in *Troilus* to make it resonate with an audience familiar with French modes of writing.

Boccaccio's *Teseida* stages Arcite's singing and Palamoun's listening very differently from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. In Boccaccio, Arcita, disguised as Pentheo, does sing and wear a garland, but to impress Emilia, and he often rides into the woods to complain with love (*chonamor*) about his predicament (4.66).[79] It is during one of these complaints that "by chance" (*fortuna*) Palemone's servant, Panphilo, happens to overhear him and run to tell his master (4.89). *The Knight's Tale* is very different. It follows the way the *Tristan* creates scenes of

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[75] Henry Noble MacCracken, ed. *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University, 1934), p. 396; and Kathleen Forni, ed. *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Selection* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2005), p. 97.
[76] *House of Fame* 1793-99.
[77] *Parliament* 290.
[78] Elaine is named as the mother of Galaad (his father is Lancelot) only in the *Tristan*, not the *Lancelot*, because of the influence of the Vulgate *Suite de Merlin*.
[79] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Theseid of the Nuptials of Emilia (Teseida delle nozze di Emilia)*. Translated by Vincenzo Traverso (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

complaint: a love-sick knight, off the road, deep in the forest, near a spring or well, lamenting in prose and in verse the state of his love as another knight comes upon the scene and listens.[80] The result is often violent because these laments lose their literary conventionality by associating the *dame* with a known person. Songs are associated then not strictly with poetic skill but with staged intrusions of voiced experience.

For the way Chaucer is thinking about Arcite's song and Palamoun's listening, Palamedes' complaint to the god of love while alone in the forest provides the model.

> Einsi parla Palamidés sour la fontainne celui jour; mout se blasme et mout se laidenge, en donnant a Amours grant los et grant pris. Or dist canchonnetes et lais, et tout es de madame Yseut. Or cante bas, or cante haut, tout ensi conme la vois li a donné, et tout ensi conme li cans li fait monter. Et tant cante celui jour en tel maniere que mout s'en vait reconfortant et mout a son cuer en joie. (V2 6.22)[81]
> (And so Palamedes spoke over the spring that day. He greatly reproaches and abuses himself while giving love great praise and esteem. Now he recites short songs and lays, all about lady Iseut. Now he sings low, now he sings high, in the same way his voice is given to him, and in the same way the song lifts him. And he sings so much that day, in that manner, that he goes on comforting himself with much joy in his heart.)

Palamedes' songs about Iseut are transformative. Vocally, he is able to sing two melodic lines simultaneously. The lay that follows will make this amorous miracle of music technical: Palamides sings "Bas et haut, et chante et deschant" (High and low, both *chant* and *descant*)(V2

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[80] Wimsatt argues, when analyzing Chaucer's use of Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* for *Troilus* that even if the matter is inspired by Italian sources, it is always "marked by the conventional forms and materials of contemporary French poems." I would also add "prose." James I. Wimsatt, "The French Lyric Element in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 15 (1985): 18-32 (qt. 21). Butterfield has pointed out as well that Boccaccio, being at the Angevin court at Naples, was also deeply influenced by French models. *Familiar Enemy*, pp. 296-98. For a study of the migration of French prose romance to Italy, including the *Tristan*, see Gloria Allaire and F. Regina Psakin, eds. *The Arthur of the Italians: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Italian Literature and Culture* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2014).

[81] Passages from *Tristan en prose* will be cited in the following manner: "C" for Curtis' edition of the opening of the *Tristan*, "V2" for Menard's edition which continues after Curtis' but the long, "vulgate" version of the *Tristan* and "V1" for Menard's edition of the shorter version. Renée L. Curtis, ed. *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 3 vol. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1963-85), Philippe Ménard, ed. *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 9 vol. (Geneva: Droz, 1987-97) and *Le Roman de Tistan en prose: Version du manuscit fr. 757 de la Bibliothèque nationale de France*, 5 vol. (Paris: Champion, 1997-2007). Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

6.24), replicating in verse what was described as narratively factual in prose. And yet one person cannot sing two melodic lines at once, the main line or chant and the higher *discantus*. How can one sing two voices simultaneously? The prose describes the song lifting him. If, as Zumthor always insisted, that loving and singing are synonyms, then it is Love who is accompanying him in song.[82] More important, by forgetting the reality that he will never have her, he derives joy from this miraculous song's comforting effect as if possessing her as the subject of lyric is enough. There is also almost a religious furor here, befitting Palamedes' association with a pagan and idolatrous religion. Iseut is the alpha and omega of all poetry. In the next chapter we will discuss the way songs seem to emanate from Iseut as she takes on characteristics of the grail, a quasi-religious source for the miracle of song, but for now we will focus on the way songs about her are written, sung and heard by others.

In Palamedes' singing, a song is not the formal exercise the later manuals seem to imply. Instead, the mixed genre isolates every rhetorical and musical technique and turns it into an act of inspiration grounded in an emotional experience. Once a classical topos, inspiration stands in the mixed genre for the deliberate composition of "canchonnetes et lais."[83] The experience of love becomes the very condition for the spontaneous creation and performance of sincere and true songs. This is the theory of composition at the heart of the *Tristan*, a theory reflected in Arcite's Maying.

After Palamedes' prose complaint, a *lay* follows, "D'Amours viennent li dous penser" (V2 6.24), a form that pre-dates the development of the *formes fixes* associated with Chaucer. Composed with octosyllabic lines in fifteen monorhymed quatrains, the song describes how the

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[82] Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 215-16.
[83] For inspiration as a form of the modesty topos in the exordium see Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 85 and *La technique poétique*, pp. 143-45.

power of love brings not simply sweet thoughts but "Boins dis et boins cans" (Good poems and good songs) (3). But because the book narrates many of Palamedes' failures, there is also a perceptibly dark turn. Because of love the singer becomes a slave, first begging to be let out of prison, then crying for mercy and then begging again to speak to his lady. The song's final desperation is eminently conventional:

> Dame, dame pour qui jou chante
> Bas et haut, et chante et deschant,
> Jou croi, se vous oés mon chant,
> Vers moi ne serés si trenchant. (49-52)
>
> (Lady, lady for whom I sing low and high, both *chant* and *descant*, I
> believe, if you hear my song, you will not be so sharp with me.)

The lady, source of miraculous polyphony, is also unreceptive to his song, a conventional attribute of the *dame* in trouvère poetry. But the *Tristan* works in the opposite direction from Zumthor's assertions of a non-referential subject of poetry. Instead the book makes clear the central status of poetic referentiality by asserting both identity and historical temporality in the making and understanding of poetry. In the next stanza, the lay answers the question we often ask–and Palamoun asks—when inside the prosimetrum: Who is the dame? What name does she carry behind her conventional appellation?

> Douces Yseut, des roynes dame,
> Biauté du siecle, estoile et jame,
> Ne soufres que mete sous lame
> Celui qui plus t'aimme que s'ame. (53-6)
>
> (Sweet Iseut, lady above all queens, beauty of this world, star and gem,
> suffer not that he who loves you more than he loves himself be put
> under a tombstone.)

Throughout the book, songs are addressed less to an indeterminate, yet poetic, "you" than to a specific person. Songs become letters sent by messengers. The so-called "Arthurian lai," a genre identified with the *Tristan* because it is organized by Arthurian content, is nothing more

than a *lettre en vers* sent from one character to another. This is not a genre that privileges

anonymity. For Palamedes, *dame* and *vous* both refer to one person, Iseut.

> Pour vous, dame, ai chest lay ditié,
> De chant et de dit afaitié.
> Se par vous n'est chief traitié,
> Mar vi ains biauté sans pitié! (57-60)

(For you, lady, have I recited this lay, this song and this fashioned
poem. If through you it is not completed in the end, bad news before
beauty without pity!)

 The remarkable thing about the *Tristan* is the rich vocabulary associated with composition, the

distinction between the vocalized melody (*chant*) and the lyrics (*dit*). Love as an experience and

conventional techniques work together to make the subject of a composition very specific. The

rhetorical *dame sans merci*—a figure that will find its fullest treatment in the fifteenth century by

Alain Chartier and Sir Richard Roos—is here revealed and her name is Iseut. In the context of

the grail, this is like an unholy rending of the veil, where an almost divine fiction is given an

ordinary reality. I use the term "veil" not out of a fondness for scriptural clichés but, as will be

seen in the next chapter, in response to a very deep connection made in the *Tristan* between

songs and the secrets of the grail.

This unexpected revelation, that the lady is specific and has a name, is shocking, not just

for the reader but also to Palamedes' listeners. Unknown to him, Tristan, dressed all in green—

not implying the constancy of the leaf, but a color associated in Arthurian literature less with

nature and more with sexual jealousy and madness—has also been listening and will react

violently.[84] But this is not the first song he has heard by this knight. Previously, Tristan had

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[84] Michel Pastoreau, "Formes et couleurs du désordre: Le jeune avec le vert," *Médiévales* 4 (1983): 62-72.
Pastoreau stresses that green knights, that is knights wearing green and gold, are purely literary creations in term of
heraldic colors. Real arms avoided the colors together. Because together the colors oscillate they imply a certain
madness and degeneration, including sexual jealousies and passions. See also D.W. Robertson, Jr. "Why the Devil
Wears Green," *Modern Language Notes* 69.7 (November 1954): 470-72. Readers of *Sir Gawaine and the Green
Knight* should also take note of the knight's description: "With gay gaudi of grene, þe golde ay inmyddes" (67).

listened to another composition Palamedes "avoit fait nouvelement, assés delitable à oïr et de

boin son" (had recently made, very delightful to listen to and with a good tune) (V2 6.23). Then,

Tristan's reaction was pure admiration, not the fury he feels now. He figured the singer was a

knight—even when the listeners later become clerks, as seen in Chaucer and the *dits amoureux*

tradition, singers are usually nobles.[85] More importantly for this discussion, Tristan recognizes

that what he has just heard was a "cans nouviaus pour ce que onques mais ne l'avoit oï" (new

song because he had never heard it before)(V2 6.23). Tristan's judgment of its novelty implies

not only that a song is composed with great emotion and skill—in the prosimetrum, songs are

both inspired and spontaneous—but also that it is public. Tristan's reaction to Palamedes' song,

in a way, replicates Mills' original observation about eloquence as speech purposefully heard, an

eloquence understood within the classical doctrine of rhetoric as a public discourse. Tristan can

identify the song's novelty because it has a new *public* hearing.

In the *Tristan*, a song must also have a life of its own within the public sphere to have any

value, which can include singers singing the songs of others. What is important for our

understanding of the mixed genre and its implied subjectivity is that in almost all examples of

singers performing songs publicly in the *Tristan*, a biographical explanation or set of reasons for

the song's composition prefaces the singing. For example, an excited young singer near the end

of the book, the *demoiselle à la harpe*, asks a disguised Tristan what song he would like her to

sing for him:

> Mais or me dites que vous volés ouir! Voléz vos ouir des lays qe fist
> monseigneur Tristan, le bon chevalier, le gentil? Je say de ses lays
> plus de quatre, si scay des lays Palamedés, qui furent trop bien dit, si

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J.R.R. Tolkien, E.V. Gordon and Norman Davis, eds. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967). Emelye also wears green and sings (1686 and 1055).

[85] On the generic shift from knights to clerks see Jacqueline Cerquiglini, *"Un engine si soutil": Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIVe siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1985) and Alexandre Leupin, "The Powerlessness of Writing: Guillaume de Machaut, the Gorgon and *Ordenance*," *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 127-49.

> scay le lay que madame la roÿne Yseut fist ja en Cornoaille, a celui
> point que Kahedin se parti de Cornoaille. Celuy lay scay je finement,
> car maintes fois l'ay recordé: celui doi je trop bien scavoir! Si scay le
> lay de Kahedin, qu'il fist en la Petite Bretaigne pour les amours de
> madame la roÿne Yseut. Si scay le lay de Lancelot du Lac, qu'il fist
> en Sorelois. (V2 9.64)
> (But now tell me what you want to hear! Do you want to hear the lays
> sir Tristan, the good and noble knight, made? I know more than four
> of his lays and I know Palamedes' lays, which were well composed,
> and I know the lay Queen Iseut already made in Cornwall at that
> moment when Kahedin left Cornwall. That lay I know completely
> because many times I have memorized it. That one I should know
> very well! And I know Kahedin's lay that he made in Brittany for the
> love of Queen Iseut. And I know Lancelot du Lac's lay that he made
> in Sorelois.)

Because of the existence of the *razos* and *vidas* in Italian *chansonniers*, scholars have long presumed that *joglars*, and perhaps even the troubadours themselves, performed songs with accompanying biographical information. The *Tristan en prose*, contemporaneous with the *chansonniers*, seems to confirm this hypothesis. Perhaps songs when performed always *had* an identity and the mixed genre then merely fictionalized a frame that was already standard performance practice. The singer's list of songs includes intratextual references to specific narrative events within the book, such as Kahedin's fruitless attempts to woo Iseut, her brusque rejection and his resulting death, as well as intertextual allusions outside the book, to the larger Vulgate cycle, where Lancelot's adventure in Sorelois can be found. The singer's identification of a lay written by Iseut, "celuy lay qui commence: 'Li solaulx luist et cler et beaux'" (that lay which begins, "The sun shines clear and beautiful")(V2 9.64)—a lay written at the beginning of the book after a suicidal Iseut received news that Tristan was killed—is further clarified by the author if there is still some confusion on the part of the reader that "celui lay vous avons nous ja compté ça arrieres en nostre livre" (we have already talked about this lay earlier in our book)(V2 9.64). By referring the reader back to the book, these intratextual references, like Arcite's

refrain, authenticate lyric as verifiable experiences. Prose's traditional function as historical

upsets song's once timeless state. These allusions, which fix song to a time and place, also make

us aware of the time it takes to read the book. The book's enormous length—one has to imagine

how long it would take to read it aloud—replicates fictionally a character's past.

When it is Tristan's turn to sing, the young lady asks "qe vos harpéz et nous dites aucun

novel dit" (that you play on the harp and recite for us some new lyric)(V1 5.149). Before these

new lyrics can be sung to the accompaniment of his magnificent harp playing, Tristan supplies

his own *razo* to set the context of his song for his listeners. He turns to Hector de Marés,

Lancelot's half-brother, to speak because Hector knows most of the events leading up to the

composition of the song:

> Mesire Hector, puis que ces nouveles que vous savés furent aportees,
> je chevauchoie un jour par une forest, tous seus, sans compaingon, tant
> dolans et esmaiiés c'onques si dolans ne fui. (V2 9.65)
> (Sir Hector, after this news that you know was brought, I was riding
> one day through a forest, all alone, without companions, very
> sorrowful and surprised that I was so sorrowful.)

Unlike the reference to Iseut's lay made by both the singer and the author, Tristan's remarks

leave the reader to wonder what specific event Tristan is referring. The reader would have to

race over all twelve volumes of the modern edition to recover that moment when Hector and

Tristan were together before separating or a moment when both knights shared similar

information, the news Hector is supposed to have known. Looking throughout the book, I could

find no reference to that moment which inspired Tristan's song. Perhaps it is there, perhaps it is

not. With the song's ultimate causes fictionally unknown, prose preserves some of lyric's

anonymity. The narrative Tristan does supply for his lay shares some similarities with Arcite's

expression of sorrow. Both ride into the woods, both dismount and both sing a song of sorrow.

> Si con je cevauçoie, je descendi adont devant une fontainne, et pensant que onques a nul jor du monde n'ot autant de dolor par amours conme j'ai eü, et de cele grant doleur fis un lay, et ches vers vous voel je orendroit harper. Et saciés c'onques ne fu harpé se par moi non. (V2 9.65)
> (And as I was riding, I then dismounted before a spring, and thinking that never in all the world was there as much sorrow because of the love I had, and from this great sorrow I composed a lay, and it is these verses I presently want to play on the harp for you. And know that never was this played on the harp but by me.)

The fourteen-line song which follows, "D'amours vient mon chant et mon plour" (From love comes my song and my tears), reveals nothing specific. Instead it develops conventional feudal topoi, the lover as *serf* and the lady as *seigneur*, without hinting in any way that the song refers specifically to himself or Iseut.[86] Still, as composer and singer, Tristan guides us into reading the song as both biographical and dramatic through the prose. It is as if prose exists to give drama to songs in performance.

In the context of such a conventionalized, anonymous-seeming lyric, the identification of a lover or beloved often comes as a shock. In these cases, narration intrudes into the song, as when Palamedes' explicitly sings Iseut's name in his lay and Tristan attacks him. Similarly, even for the reader, Iseut's name comes as a shock. No matter how often the narrative ties a song to a specific emotional circumstance, breaking lyric's fundamental rule of universal anonymity calls attention to the tensions at work within the mixed genre between the "rhetorical" as anonymous and conventional and the "lyrical" as self-expressive and biographical. Every figure or metaphor, every pronoun or apostrophe, found in a lay functions as a veil for those trying to peer into its workings from the outside. Think of Palamoun, faced with this mysterious object, this rondeau sung by what looks like a love-sick squire, and not being able to understand

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[86] On feudal images of the submission of the lover and the lady as seigneur in trouvère poetry see Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 72-77.

to whom it is addressed. The narrative turn in Chaucer's tale, the point that produces dramatic tension, is Palamoun's recognition that not only is Arcite in love with Emelye, as he states so explicitly in his complaint, but his rondeau is also retroactively understood as referring to her. Once understood, the hope in his refrain "that I som grene gete may" becomes shocking in its brazen vulgarity; the steadfastness of the green leaf turns into a sexual hunger akin to Sidney's Desire who "cries, 'give me some food.'"[87]

Palamoun's aggression is replicated elsewhere in the *Tristan* when references to a specific lady cause unexpected sexual anxiety on the part of the hearer, especially when it becomes clear that the song overheard is not about some abstract, rhetorical lady but *his* lady. The shorter V1 version of the *Tristan* includes a well-developed example of this phenomenon. Tristan and Palamedes ride together on a forest road with retainers in the rear. Tristan is deep in thought "com cil qi sa dame ne pooit oblier" (like one who cannot forget his lady) (V1 5.18). Often in the book these thoughts of love leave the knight open or receptive to inspiration and a song can appear out of thin air, but in this case, as they ride, Tristan hears instead a voice singing to his left. He pulls on the reins of his horse to stop and listen. It is a voice "qi trop bien chante et trop cointement" (that sings very well and very elegantly)(V1 5.18). Leaving their horses behind, both knights advance into the forest as quietly as they can. Palamedes knows the area.

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[87] *Astrophil and Stella* 71. Both Stock and Harrington draw the same conclusion. However, their readings are lexical in nature: they submit the refrain to the dictionary. Both note that the color "grene" has a sexual connotation. It may signify, as Harrington notes, "desire or sexual passion" (158). Stock even offers five different "translations" of the refrains' final line based on an etymological study:
> "In hope that I may obtain some sexual passion."
> "In hope that I may obtain someone who is inexperienced."
> "In hope that I may obtain someone who wears green clothing."
> "In hope that I may obtain someone's green clothing."
> "In hope that I may get some virgin green." (216)

For green clothing, see Tristan as a green knight above. Stock, "The Two Mayings" and David V. Harrington, Arcite's Song in Chaucer's *Knight' Tale* 1510-12," *Neophilologus* 71 (1987): 158-9. See note above regarding green clothing.

There is a spring or pool of water, a *fontaine*, just beyond the trees. The singer must be there. Slowly they approach under the delectable sounds of love until they see, standing there alone, a man, unarmed, singing over the waters. Tristan whispers to Palamedes that this knight is "le mielz chantant chevalier qe je oïsse oncques mes en tote ma vie" (the best singing knight that I have ever heard in all my life)(V1 5.19). Suddenly the knight stops, sighs like Arcite, and begins to cry. Then, like Arcite, he begins a complaint, in prose, muffled by sobs, bemoaning the *mesaventure* of having seen *her*, "la dame des dames" (the lady of ladies)(V1 5.19), a scriptural formula denoting his lady's maximum superiority.

As we have seen in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, these complaints clarify the references in the lyric to come, or in the case of Chaucer, after the fact. The complaint both prepares us to enter into that long musical duration Butterfield has described, an extended kind of musical time, amorous in all its purity, which answers the question "Who is this lady in the song who causes so much suffering?" Even if the causes for so much poetry are found in the prose that defines narration, prose prepares us to enter into song's discursive disjunction between figures grounded in a rhetorical tradition that makes poetry possible and an inspired reflection based upon a lived experience. The prosimetrum then plays with two alternating medieval conceptions of poetry, as Ernst Curtius noted, a vatic tradition associated with antiquity and the realities of the scriptorium with its "sweat-producing labor."[88]

The unknown knight's song appears universally applicable and deeply conventional, a lyric independent of historical circumstances, free of the constraints of time's passage,

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[88] Curtius observes that it is in the Middle Ages where divine inspired writing and "sweat-producing labor" converge. Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1990; orig. 1953), p. 475.

appropriate for different circumstances and different times. His lay opens with an invocation for all lovers to come to him.

> Vous, genz qi par amors améz,
> Qui d'amors estez enblasméz,
> Venéz a moi, ne vos creméz!
> Si d'amors chant ne m'en blasméz. (13-16)
> (You, people who love through love, who are wounded by love, come
> to me, don't be afraid! If I sing of love, do not reproach me for it.)

Understood poetically as a literary gathering of lovers, the song becomes, in the prose, factual, historical and time bound. Tristan and Palamedes *are* there to bear witness to the *je* singing before them, this unknown, *anonymous* knight. The song then shifts to addressing the universal god, Love. And yet, those who love because of this force, this love, and act through it and recognize its power in song—that's why Tristan and Palamedes have stopped to listen—will, in the end, hold the singer responsible for his song.

That responsibility happens in a remarkable way. In addressing his lady, the knight praises her beauty in an ecstatic moment intensified by the use of anaphora. Carried away by these repetitions, her stature grows, not only in the traditional sphere of amorous conventions but in the actual political sphere as well. In a dramatic gesture, the conventional *serf-seigneur* relation, shifts into the actual political realm of Logres and its king, Arthur.

> Vous m'etez honor et santé,
> Vous m'etez lumiere et clarté,
> Vous m'etez honor et beauté
> Vous m'etez pris et loiauté.
>
> Vous m'etes haubert et escu.
> Si par vos n'est, je suis vaincu.
> Vous m'etes et force et vertu.
> Plus poéz qe li rois Artu. (49-56)
> (You are for me honor and health, you are for me light and clarity, you
> are for me honor and beauty, you are for me worth and loyalty, you are
> for me mail and shield. If not through you, I am beaten. You are for
> me both force and power. You can be more than King Arthur.)

This Arthurian moment, so literary for the reader, is metaphorical in the lyric but actual in the context of the prosimetrum, as a commentary on Arthur's general ineffectualness as a king, especially once the grail is put into motion. The song's truth is reaffirmed not only by its allusion to the frame that surrounds it, but also by his love's ability to put things into motion by the very creation of this song. And as will be seen in the next chapter on the grail, these affirmations place the lady in a position greater than God's—or is it the god of love? Like the *Roman de la rose*, the *Tristan* purposely confuses the two.

Tristan is absolutely stunned by this performance, twenty-two quatrains in monorhymes, with complex shifting addressees. Unfortunately, one of the knights, probably shifting his weight to make the listening more comfortable, makes a noise. Did a branch crack or a leaf rustle or a breath exhale too loudly when listening to this astonishing performance? Whatever happens the singing knight responds in a violent manner. His private song for all lovers, the god and his lady has been violated by being both overheard and made historical.

Recognizing this pattern in the mixed genre is crucial. A song's content can create a conundrum for those who listen, and in this case, for those who sing. Song may be conventional and general, applicable to the lives of listeners, but it also arouses curiosity about its origins and the situation of its singer. In the *Fontaine amoureuse*, Machaut's clerk overhears a complaint and resolves to write it down. When he discovers to his astonishment that the complaint is made up of "Cent rimes toutes despareilles" (A hundred rhymes all different) (1052), he dresses quickly to learn "Qui cils estoit qu'oÿ avoie" (Who it was that I had heard) (1058).[89] Chaucer's clerk in the *Duchess*, after listening to the man in black's "ten vers or twelve/ Of a compleynte to hymselve" (463-64), approaches the knight and asks, "yif that yee/ Wolde ought discure me

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[89] Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, ed. *Guillaume de Machaut: La Fontaine amoureuse* (Paris: Stock, 1993).

youre woo" (548-49). Tristan equally approaches the singer to discover who he is; that is, he

asks the anonymous "lyric I" to identify itself. But the singer refuses, preserving his anonymity.

Later, after the unknown knight joins them, the "you" to whom each song was addressed

becomes for Tristan a worrisome concern.

> il amoit par amors et trop merveilleusement. Et il voit de si haut cuer
> et de si grant q'il pensoit bien q'il n'avoit mie son cuer si en tré haut
> lieu non. Et se li fesoit une paür, car li cuers li disoit adés q'il ne poët
> estre q'il n'amast sanz faille ou la roïne Genievre ou la roïne Yselt. Or
> por savoir en la droite certaineté de cest chose dit q'i remandre avec
> lui, et tant li tendra conpaignie q'il savra son non et la certaineté de
> cest fet. (V1 5.92)
> (he loved because of love and marvelously so. And he saw from his
> great and elevated heart that he had never placed his heart in such an
> elevated place. And if it scared him, it was because his heart told him
> continuously that it could only be that he loved without fail either
> Queen Guinevere or Queen Iseult. Now in order to know with right
> certainity what this situation says, he would remain there with him and
> offer him great company so that he will know his name and the
> certainty of this matter.)

Tristan responds with ideas drawn from of a medieval understanding of style. The quality of this

song could only be the expression of the knight's highest love for a lady worthy of such

eloquence, what Dante calls the *convenientia* or the suitability of a subject, in this case a woman

worthy of the highest praise, and the appropriate style or ornamentation used to describe her.

This rhetorical theory will be discussed later in relation to Gower. For Tristan, drawing not only

on rhetorical theory but also his own experience, such a love can be expressed only for a

Guinevere, Lancelot's love, or for Iseut, his own. He can only hope that this knight has no

intentions for his lady!

The problem of identifying the subject of his song is intensified by this unknown knight's

explicit rejection of any songs but his own. He is not a performer, like the girl mentioned above

or even Tristan, but a true lover in the purest sense as when loving and singing become, as

Zumthor famously noted, synonyms.[90]

> Sire, ce dit li chevaliers, or sachéz bien qe je n'aim mie mult a porter
> aucun escu des armes autrui, car je ne les puis trover jamais a ma
> volenté. Autrui lais, autrui chanz, ne chante je mie volentiers en ce
> solement qe Amors m'aprent chascun jor et enseigne me tent, et met
> mon cuer chascun jor en amor. (V1 5.93)
> (Lord, said the knight, know that I don't like carrying another man's
> coat of arms because I could never consider them to my liking.
> Another's lay, another's song, I won't sing at all willingly, only what
> Love teaches me each day, granting me a sign and setting my heart
> each day in love.)

This unknown knight puts the reader/listener on notice by his allusion to the bearing of other

knights' shields. Elsewhere in the book, both Tristan and Lancelot have both appropriated the

shields of others, especially Lancelot in the use of Palamedes'. This comment immediately

undermines even Tristan's theory of style by folding together military and literary forms of

impropriety. Is Tristan then worthy of singing Iseut's praises?

The prosimetrum calls attention to the ways rhetorical patterns are fit to individual

situations. We have already seen how Arcite, the young singer and Tristan himself, each lay

claim to rhetorical conventions that only retroactively appear more personal because of the

narrative frame that contextualizes the song and the singer-composers. Here, however, the

knight, unknown in that he is not framed by any biography or narrative, sings songs whose

conventionality can be felt but whose origins remain a mystery. And yet, his song is not shared;

its public status remains obscure. All his listeners know is drawn from an allegorical power that

acts as a force that inspires both composition and singing.

> Ce que Amor me comande, je faz. Si me duist et enseigne a trover lais
> et chançonnetes. Quant trové les ai, si les chante et m'i dedui et
> solace. Si je ai bien, si j'ai santé, et si j'ai bone aventure, sachiéz qe ce
> me vient d'Amors. (V1 5.93)

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[90] Zumthor, *Essai*, pp. 215-16.

(What love commands of me, I do. He instructs and teaches me to
compose lays or little dance songs. When I have composed them, and
sing them, I take pleasure there and solace. And if I am well, have
health and good aventure, know that it comes to me from Love.)

The unknown knight reveals himself to be a consummate artist who will sing only what he is

compelled to compose. If love has such power, then when he composes, or "finds" (*trover*) a

song—that is, uses his powers of *inventio*—it is always dedicated to one lady, "la dame des

dames mortielz" (the lady of all mortal ladies) (V1 5.94). Still, within the context of the

prosimetrum, this anonymity, the impersonal character of its rhetoric, must conceal something

personal. He isn't just mouthing words or singing the songs of someone else. What could its

secret core be?

In the mixed genre, every *dame*, every *vous*, refers not to a rhetorical tradition, but to a

woman. So who is she? We know she must be worthy of the inventions he uses. This is a

worrying situation. That is why Tristan would "volentiers savroit cele q'il aime" (willingly

know the lady he loves) (V1 5.94), the actual woman he venerates. Through an act of

deduction—is he thinking of Lancelot's scandalous use of Palamedes' arms, his explicit lack of

singing within the prosimetrum's narrative frame?—Tristan concludes that the only lady left to

be truly praised has to be Guinevere.

Et sachent tuit qe monseignor Tristan cuidoit voirement qe li
chevaliers amast la roïne Genievre et por l'amor de cele trovast il les
lays et les chançonnetes q'il trovoit. Tant oï monseignor Tristan lays
et chançonnetes del chevalier q'il trova qe li chevaliers avoit fet pres
d'autant de lays come avoit fet monseignor Tristan, et il chantoit si
bien et si envoisiement qe c'estoit .I. grant deduit d'oïr les. (V1 5.95)
(And everyone knows that sir Tristan believed truthfully that the
knight loved queen Guinevere and for the love of her he composed
lays and little dance songs. Sir Tristan heard much of the knight's lays
and little dance songs that he found that the knight had made almost as
many lays as Sir Tristan and would sing them so well and so
pleasantly that it was a great delight to listen to them.)

Tristan has no idea how wrong he is until after the mysterious knight agrees to show him the woman he loves, the woman for whom he writes all his songs—Iseut! Paradoxically, in misinterpreting the subject of his song, Tristan turns this unknown knight into another Tristan, his double, like the dwarf found in Thomas of Britain's verse romance. Indeed, the *Tristan en prose* as a whole is built on a structure of comparisons. Each knight enters into a series of relations that compare him to either Lancelot or Tristan. If Tristan is the greatest composer and Iseut the subject of his songs, then it would certainly be more convenient that this knight were comparable to Lancelot and his love for Guinevere. But such a comparison is fundamentally flawed. As hinted above, nowhere in the book do we ever hear Lancelot sing a song to or about Guinevere. In the context of a prosimetrum, that is a problem. It raises doubts about Lancelot's love, doubts reinforced by his wavering between God and the queen in the *Tristan*'s interpolations of the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal* that finish the book. The only knight comparable to the anonymous singing knight is Tristan alone, whose lady, as seen with Palamedes, inspires other songs by other knights. This knight is like Tristan in the same way Palamedes is like Tristan. They are not simply singers of conventional love lyrics; they are singers in love with the same *dame*, a troubling thought.

However, Tristan's misreading is understandable if songs are understood not as purely rhetorical expressions of a poet's eloquence than as concealing a hidden truth. Indeed, the audience too is equally flummoxed. If the book's narrative contents sum up an experience of time intratextually, there are no references to be gleaned. We are as much in the dark as Tristan. Without the frame—the knight keeps his identity close—we are equally susceptible to misinterpretation. Even Tristan's own wife, a ringing double of Iseut named Iseut aux Blanches

Mains, thinks the songs written for the queen are for herself because she too lacks vital information to interpret not only *vous* or *dame* but even the name *Yselt*.

> Il chante et nuit et jor d'Yselt de Cornoaille, et en fait vers et
> chançonetes. Quant Yselt aus Blanches Mens ot chanter d'Yselt, el est
> joiouse a merveilles come cele qui cuide certenement que ele soit cele
> Yselt por quoi Tristanz chante. En tel manere est engigniee et decüe
> trop malement (C 2.579)
> (He sang night and day and made verses and little dance songs of
> Iseult of Cornwall. When Iseut aux Blanches Mains hears him sing of
> Iseut, she is exceedingly happy like one who believed with certainty
> that she was that Iseult for whom Tristan sings. In such a manner she
> is terribly tricked and deceived.)

This cruel confusion serves again to reiterate the biographical, and by extension, dramatic, angle from which songs are conceived in the prosimetrum. Unlike Tristan's wife who misreads each "you," Tristan is hoping that the songs of the anonymous knight refer to anyone but Iseut, that this double of Tristan is no double, that there are other ladies worthy of song. And like Palamoun, when he eventually figures out that the *dame* does refer to Iseut, he will want to kill Helies, the name of the once unknown knight, just as he wanted to kill Palamedes.

In the *Tristan en prose*, the medieval idea of poetry as independent of experience and purely discursive falls apart. Songs that seemed free of any discernable references are assumed by those who overhear them to be discreetly referential, a literary concealment if you will. The "I" who is singing *is* the singer in the woods and the "dame" he is addressing an identifiable lady. The prosimetrum and its mixed-verse variation force its audience into a double awareness of poetry as the expression of the emotional experiences of individual lovers, a view of lyric that has recently been discredited.[91] To understand lyric in a medieval way, ironically, we are forced

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[91] See for example the debates between Culler and Jackson. Jonathan Culler, "Lyric, History, and Genre," *New Literary History* 40.4 (Autumn 2009): 879-99, "Why Lyric?" *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 201-6; and *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2015); Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, "Lyrical Studies," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27.2 (1999): 521-30; and Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton

to retrace our steps back into the field once claimed by Mills and Jones, that of the solitary singer and his overheard *tale*, to evoke Arcite's description of his rondeau, and ask the question, "Who?"

When Geoffrey, in the *Book of the Duchess*, asks the man in black, "Good sir, telle me al hooly/ In what wyse, how, why, and wherefore" (745-46), he is asking him to identify himself, proffer a *vida* that can be attached to the man's lay and narrate the very conditions that make the song a *tale* rather than just melodious eloquence. To contextualize a song is precisely the function of mixed forms. Tell me your name and the name of the lady you have lost. For the *Book of the Duchess*, that is the mystery that sustains that English *dit*, a mystery that to this day has scholars speculating on the true *biography* behind this poem just as Tristan does with the unknown knight.

As always in the prosimetrum, any interpretation is grounded in the recognition that there is a meaning outside the lyric—a truly hermeneutical project in the proper theological understanding of the word—and that that meaning, that source, a woman hidden behind all these harmonious words, is grounded in the narrative context that surrounds the song. In the mixed genre, there is always a poetic event, framed by trees marking out a clearing and when we cross that frame, that is the forest, we enter into the poem and its s*ource*, the pool of water, Malory's "well," the *Tristan*'s grail, which sustains the song.[92] But once there, we look back across to that frame and ask questions relating to a life beyond the clearing, referential questions associated with who travels through the forest to other places. The fact that a knight remains anonymous as he sings seems to preserve the essential nature of poetry as rhetorical, an effect similar to a series

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University, 2005) and "Lyric," in Roland Greene, ed. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2012).

[92] "We cross the frame into the poem" (4.5). Allen Grossman, "Summa Lyrica," *Western Humanities Review* 44.1 (Spring 1990): 4-27.

of narratives Greg Stone has discussed that consciously find ways to push back against the *narrativization* of song. But here, anonymity works to preserve a specific, inner core that is to remain discretely secretive until it is suddenly forced into the open.[93] In the case of the *Tristan* and the *Knight's Tale*, revealing the secret origins of song can be dangerous.

Anonymity is always a temporary position. Within the sensuous play of melody and sounds there is no discernable representations or references. But hidden within the song's conventions is a real human face, a face adored, but veiled behind poetic terms like "lady" or "you" or in the case of Arcite's refrain, "green." For the listener overhearing this song in a prosimetrum, the natural question is always "Who?" "Who is this singer, this singing 'I'?" and "Who is he singing about really, this 'lady'?" The "I" then is not the pure "lyric I" as we are trained to read as open, as an "I" marking an abstract but unindexable subject situated at the center of this music, Zumthor's *je* as the song itself, but rather a biographical "I," closed and concrete, an "I" who can be identified as a specific, historic speaker. In other words, the knight right there, singing in front of you. There is your "I." The only mystery will be his name if he will not tell you. Anonymity then relates to a fictional play of omission, a drama the mixed genre forces us to recognize. All poetry makes reference to someone but because of either good courtly decorum or a real fear of danger, that identity remains concealed. And it is prose or narrative verse, that furnishes the interpretation of these lyrics. In this context, medieval lyric seems far closer to the traditional criteria for "lyric": subjective, emotionally expressive and as Hegel remarked, occasional.[94]

Still, the interplay between prose and verse, between narration and lyric, is complementary. Narration achieves poetic time when the force of narrative momentum is stilled

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[93] Stone, *The Death of the Troubadour*.
[94] Hegel, *Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), vol. 2, pp. 995-6.

for a moment and concentrated in a single voice, even if that moment will be swallowed back into time; and lyric is given another textual world in which to expand its rhetorical effects beyond the limits of its carefully designed structure and forms. No longer keyed exclusively to a tradition associated with the rhetorical patterns and conventions of trouvères and *formes fixes* poetry, lyric now is allowed to expand its literary reach to play at being in the world, the result of historical persons and lived situations, when in fact it is inside a larger, more complex narrative world which paradoxically opens up song's possibilities while playing conceptually with its status as closed and hermeneutical.

The *Tristan en prose* clarifies how Arcite's song becomes a tale even as we see, in its participation in a continental tradition associated with the refrain, that as a discreet unit, it must move somewhere, whether outside the text as an intertextual reference, as seen with the *Parliament of Fowles*, or intratextually, within the very vocabulary of the narration. It is the latter, the movement within that gives heft and validity to his song. It also explains, in the discreet acts of concealment, how an overheard song can move a listener even if we are given no access to the entirety of the song, to the rondeau, just to its explanatory complaint. Still, we are able to imagine it, as we follow Palamoun listening as he gets closer to the source. We understand how Palamoun, once he overhears—Arcite's emotional and solitary rondeau as represented by its refrain, is conditioned to interpret it. His interest in Arcite's song is not only because of its beauty. The *Tristan* shows us that the first attraction to song is the quality of the sound and then the verse because often those who overhear a song are in turn songwriters. Characters in the mixed genre are conditioned to hear songs in many ways.

Finally, in the mixed genre and arguably in its autonomous form as well, lyrics, those expressive words in the service of love's music, become riddles to be solved. The *Tristan* opens

with its own version of the *Estoire del saint graal*, a massive pre-history tracing the ancestors of Tristan and their arrival in Britain with Joseph of Arimathea and the grail. There, they encounter beastly giants who offer riddles to be solved in exchange for a life. Solving riddles then function in the book as a kind of infancy for lyricism.[95] And so likewise, Palamoun listens…then resolves the riddle at the heart of Arcite's refrain. His reaction is the same as Tristan's: jealous fury. Then he steps into the clearing, clarifying once again how, in the mixed genre, narrative always has its hold on the inserted lyric or refrain. His violence bears witness to the song's own interior references and to its narrative context. It will take the duke himself, Theseus, to appear once more in that same clearing where narration and song struggle and enforce a new solution.

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[95] See for example Joël H. Grisward, "Un scheme narrative du « Tristan en prose » le mythe d'Oedipe" in *Mélanges de langue et de litérature médiévales offerts à Pierre Le Gentil* (Paris: SEDES, 1973), pp. 329-39.

CHAPTER 2

GRAIL SONGS: *THE LOVER'S MASS* AND
THE *TRISTAN EN PROSE*

In *The Venus Mass* or *Lover's Mass*, a Middle English prosimetrum found in Bodleian

MS Fairfax 16, the lover's complaint is rewritten as a mass, or more specifically, the opening

orders of the mass.[1] With its red Latin rubrics designating each section of the *ordo missae*, the

daily complaints of the lover take on a variety of poetic forms associated with the mixed genre

from the traditional complaint in octosyllabic rhymed couplets, the lay form as found in the

Tristan en prose, to a 21-line *rondeau cinquain* abbreviated in the manuscript to 17.[2] Bookended

by English *dits* written by Chaucer, Lydgate, Hoccleve and Sir Richard Roos on one side and, on

the other, a sequence of English *forme fixe* poems attributed to Charles of Orleans, the earl of

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[1] Hammond called this anonymous parody of the mass the "Lover's Mass" while Simmons simply identified it as a "Venus-Mass" written, he presumed, by Lydgate (389). Forni, in the edition we are using, prefers Hammond's title. Eleanor P. Hammond, ed. "The Lover's Mass," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 7.1 (January 1908): 95-104, Thomas F. Simmons, ed. *The Lay Folks Mass Book* (London: EETS, 1879), pp. 389-95 and Kathleen Forni, ed. *The Chaucerian Apocrypha* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2005), pp. 93-100.

[2] Forni transcribes the manuscript's rendering of the rondeau for her edition without noting that her 17-line poem (AAbbaaabAAaabbaAA) is an abbreviated 21-line *rondeau cinquain* (AABBAaabAABaabbaAABB A) with the first five lines making up the refrain. Her punctuation does not take this into account and ties the fifth line with the sixth line by a comma, making the last line of the refrain dependent on the first line of new material, denying the refrain's independence. For a general discussion on the problem of editing rondeaux see Nigel Wilkins, "The Structure of Ballades, Rondeaux and Virelais in Froissart and in Christine de Pisan," *French Studies* 23.4 (October 1969): 337-48; Omer Jodogne, "Le rondeau du XVe siècle mal compris du dit et de l'écrit" in *Mélange de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Pierre Le Gentil* (Paris: Jacques et Demontrond, 1973), pp. 399-408; and Daniel Calvez, "La Structure du rondeau: Mise au point," *The French Review* 55.4 (March 1982): 461-70 (esp. 467-69).

Suffolk and possibly Roos, the *Mass* then reflects a literary mixing associated with both France and England.[3] For example, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* is evoked in the prosimetrum's *Misereatur* with its list of the lover's sins and expressions of hope that Venus and "hyr bishop, Genius" (56) will intervene and "pute daunger out of place" (54). In the mass' first reading or *Epistle in prose*, the lover recounts his perilous pilgrimage in the service of the god of love. He describes moments when he "lookyd backward to consydren and sen the fyn and the ende of my worthy bretheren and predecessours in love" (179-80). The list of lovers that follows is dominated by Chaucer and his mixed works: "the grete trouthe of Troylus, perseverant to hys lyves ende" (181-82) as well as the examples of Penelope, Dido and Polyxena, named in the *Legend of Good Women*'s inserted *Balade* "Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere." Fairfax 16's version of *The Holy Legende of Martyrs of Cupydo*, what the lover calls Chaucer's *Legend*, seems to weaken those deliberate intertextual connections from the perspective of the manuscript as a whole.[4]

As the *Mass* proceeds, it gives the impression that the lover is taking on the authorship of many mixed works. Besides Chaucer and his *Legends*, its *Confiteor* ("I Confess") also brings into play Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Not only does his confession cite Genius' ideal of

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[3] John Norton-Smith, ed. *Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16* (London: Scolar, 1979). As for attributing authorship to Suffolk or Roos for the lyric sequence which ends the final "booklet" of Fairfax 16 see Henry Noble MacCracken, "An English Friend of Charles of Orléans," *PMLA* 26.1 (1911): 142-80; Johannes Petrus Maria Jansen, ed. "The 'Suffolk' Poems: An Edition of the Love Lyrics in Fairfax 16 Attributed to William de la Pole" (diss. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1989) and Ethel Seaton, *Sir Richard Roos: c. 1410-1482, Lancastrian Poet* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961)

[4] Fairfax 16's version of Chaucer's *dit*, which the lover has "rad also ful often in my contemplatyf medytacons" (183-84), drops Dido's name from Geoffrey's song by inexplicably omitting the ballade's final stanza beginning with "Herro, Dido, Laudomia, alle yfere" (f. 86r), an odd lapse considering the rhyme scheme is marked out in the manuscript with ruling. Fortunately, the *Legenda Didonis martiris* remains in the *Legend* to keep *The Lover's Mass* tied to Chaucer mixed work intact (f. 95v).

rhetoric, a plain and open style, but it also suggests that its confessor, the lover, feels young like

Amans.

> I speke pleynly as I fel,
> Touchynge the grete tendyrnesse
> Of my youthe, and my symplesse,
> Of myn unkonyng and grene age (16-19)

With the addition of these allusions to Gower's *Confessio*, the lover seems to become the author

of two books simultaneously: deluded Amans and the *Legend*'s chastened clerk. More

importantly for this chapter, there is a third allusion in the *Lover's Mass* to another prosimetrum,

the *Tristan en prose* found in the prose *Epistle*, where the lover evokes "the secre trouthe of

Trystram and Ysoude, and the smale gerdouns of woful Palamydes" (184-85). To discover the

truth that binds these two legendary lovers and gives little comfort to the *Tristan*'s Muslim

knight, the reader has to go back to another poem in Fairfax 16 and gather another poem under

the authorship of the lover: *A Complaynte of a Lover's Life* as it is named in the manuscript but

also known as *The Complaint of the Black Knight* and attributed elsewhere to Lydgate.[5] There,

the lover-poet overhears, as he listens through the bushes near "a litel welle" (75)—a setting

recognizable from both the *Tristan* and the *Knight's Tale*—a knight complaining of love. In two

stanzas written in both Machaut's and Chaucer's *septains*, the knight includes the *exemplum* of

Palamedes and his fruitless desire for Iseut. The more he succeeds in arms, the less he succeeds

in love.

> And ay the bette he dyd in euery place,
> Throgh his knyghthode, and his besy peyn,
> The ferther was he from his ladys grace. (337-39)

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[5] Symons prefers the the first while MacCracken the second. Dana M. Symons, ed. *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2004), pp. 71-147 and Henry Noble MacCracken, ed. *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate,* vol. 2 *Secular Poems* (London: EETS, 1934), pp. 382-410.

Iseut's withheld grace suggests the meaning of the *Mass*' allusion to the *Tristan*. It is an image, as we will see, of the lady as grail, an image that will speak of a radical rewriting of the prose grail tradition from the perspective of songs.

The idea of the grail as the lady is not, on the surface, obvious in the *Complaint of the Black Knight* but the link between erotic love and theology is conventional in lyric contexts. Grace, as a theological concept, does find its way into the lover's cry for mercy in some trouvère poetry. In the *Tristan en prose*, Palamedes complains during the quest for the Holy Grail that if he could only have Iseut's body, then he would finally receive "sa grasse et l'amour de celui que j'aime" (her grace and love from the one I love) (V2 7.32).[6] As a *couleur religieuse* or religious metaphor, to use Roger Dragonetti's term, grace reinforces the lover's inferior position as supplicant to both the lady of his desires and a poetic manifestation of God as the god of love.[7] At the same time, grace's action through the sacraments, especially the eucharist, was already an explicit dimension of the grail after Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Aramathia*.[8] In the *Queste del Saint Graal*, Hector dreams of his half-brother Lancelot being beaten, thrown off his horse, and made to wear a garment of holly and ride an ass. The dream ends with a horrifying image: the *fountaine*, the spring or pool of water, suddenly *hides itself* from Lancelot as he is about to

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[6] Passages from *Tristan en prose* will be cited in the following manner: "C" for Curtis' edition of the opening of the *Tristan*, "V2" for Menard's edition which continues after Curtis' but the long, "vulgate" version of the *Tristan* and "V1" for Menard's edition of the shorter version. Renée L. Curtis, ed. *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1963-85), Philippe Ménard, ed. *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 9 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1987-97) and *Le Roman de Tistan en prose: Version du manuscit fr. 757 de la Bibliothèque nationale de France*, 5 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1997-2007).

[7] Roger Dragonetti, *La technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise: Contribution à l'étude de la rhétorique médiévale* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979; rpt of Bruges: De Tempel, 1960), p. 113.

[8] The theological workings of the grail in the Vulgate have been famously debated. For Pauphilet, the grail is a Cistercian manifestation of God in romance; for Gilson, the grail represents the grace of the Holy Spirit; and for Hamilton, the Eucharist. Albert Pauphilet, *Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal, attribuée à Gautier Map* (Paris: Champion, 1921); Etienne Gilson, "La mystique de la grâce dans *La Queste del Saint Graal*" reprinted in *Les idées et les lettres* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1932), pp. 59-91 and W. E. M. C. Hamilton, "L'interprétation mystique de *La Queste del Saint Graal*," *Neophilologus* 27.2 (1942): 94-100. For later assessments, see Pauline Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the Queste del Saint Graal* (Geneva: Groz, 1979) and Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *L'arbre et le pain: Essai sur la Queste del Saint Graal* (Paris: SEDES, 1981).

drink.[9] The spring, the hermit Nascien explains to Hector, is "li Sainz Graax, ce est la grace del Saint Esperit. La fontaine est (…) la douce parole de l'Evangile" (the Holy Grail, it is the grace of the Holy Spirit. The spring is…the sweet words of the Gospel) (159.1-3). The *fountaine* becomes an image of the grail as the *source* of grace. But as seen in our discussion of the *Tristan* and the *Knight's Tale*, the *fountaine* also functions as a setting for songs about love. It makes songs pour forth in the way the fifteenth-century *Douze dames de rhétorique* associates eloquence with grace flowing from the lips.[10] Likewise, in the *Tristan*'s version of the Quest, the grail is equally the *fountaine* or source of sweet eloquence and love poetry with grace coming not through the *Corpus Domini* that appears so often in the *Queste*, but from Iseut's body, whose access is secretly guarded by her jealous husband, Mark, and her jealous lover, Tristan.

In the *Queste*, the grail reveals to those who are worthy "les secrees choses Nostre Seignor" (the secret things of Our Lord) (158.10). *The Lover's Mass* picks up that image as well when it hints at "the secre trouthe of Trystram and Ysoude, and the smale gerdouns of woful Palamydes" (184-85). But like Palamedes, we never get to see the object of the mass, the Eucharist, that traditional image of the grail and by extension, love. After the *Epistle*, the *Lover's Mass* abruptly ends. There is no processional offetory, the liturgical model for the *cortège du graal* or procession of the grail, no communion, no *corpus*. By failing to complete or *achieve* the mass, to use the language of the *Queste*, the *Lover's Mass* reinforces the hermit's rebuke of Hector: he will not see "les secrees choses Nostre Seignor, qui ja ne vos seront mostrees, car vos n'estes pas dignes dou veoir" (the secret things of Our Lord, which will not be

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[9] "Et quant il ert abeissiez por boivre, si se reponnoit la fontainne, si qui'il n'en veoit point" (And when he lowered himself to drink, the pool hid itself so he could not see it at all) (150.7-9). All quotes from Albert Pauphilet, ed. *La Queste del Saint Grail: Roman du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1923).

[10] The allegorical figure of Eloquence opens her teaching by quoting a modified Psalm 44:31. David Cowling, ed. *George Chastelain, Jean Robertet and Jean de Montferrant: Les Douze dames de réhtorique* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), p. 140.

shown to you because you are not fit to see them) (158.10-11). Like Palamedes, Lancelot, Hector and the lovers of the *Confessio*, the *Legend* and the *Complaint*, the *Mass*' lover is also seen as unworthy. Any potential joy, as suggested in grail literature, will actively withdraw from the scene. The rewards or *gerdouns* of such quests are small indeed.

This Middle English allusion to the *Tristan en prose* should make us wonder how an amorous transformation of the mass can in any way be connected to the secret, amorous content of the *Tristan*. There are hints in Malory too of his discomfort when he declines to "rehearse" the ending of the *Tristan*, with its curious rewriting of the Quest for the Holy Grail from the perspective of love, to take up as his source the earlier, more "conservative" and "religious" Vulgate *Queste*. Both English writers—and we could include Lydgate too if he wrote the *Complaint*—recognized the *Tristan*'s startling reversal of what has been described as a monastic conversion of Arthurian material in the *Queste*.[11] The *Tristan en prose* uses religious metaphor to affirm the importance of love and song in the same way the Middle English *Lover's Mass*, with its series of poems followed by prose, reveals how love's sorrowful condition can only find its truest expression in songs whose imagery is religious in origin but whose tenor is amorous. In the *Lover's Mass*, amorous poetry replaces the liturgical *ordo*. A rondeau is used instead of the antiphonal hymn that usually opens the medieval mass.[12] But in the *Tristan en prose*, the grail retains its traditional features as grail, while its meaning is transformed from a literary object of veneration coded as religious to an amorous metaphor for the inspiration of song by the figure of

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[11] A monastic ethos for the *Queste del Saint Graal* has been famously discussed by Gilson, Lot-Borodine and Montarasso. However, Frappier argued that no monk ever wrote a romance. Gilson, "Mystique de la grâce," pp. 59-91, Myrra Lot-Borodine, *Trois essais sur le roman de Lancelot du Lac et la Quête du saint Graal* (Paris: Champion, 1919); Montarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry* and Jean Frappier, *Autour du Graal* (Geneva: Droz, 1977).

[12] John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

Iseut as a new grail. The result is a complete narrative re-invention of the grail quest as a meditation on the nature of song and composition in prose.

1. The Iseut-Grail

The idea of a woman as a figure of the grail, as the *dame-graal*, has some precedence. Even Malory, for example, evokes the destructive force of a Guinevere-Grail when he first remarks how "many of the knyghtes of the Rounde Table were slayne and destroyed" by the quest (17.17) and then equates that destruction with Guinevere's power saying that the queen herself is also "a destroyer of good knyghtes" (18.5). Alexandre Leupin, in his classic study of the Vulgate, equally recognized that Lancelot in the *Queste* conflates Guinevere with the grail in a kind of "formulaic expression that derives directly from the rhetoric of the *grand chant courtois*. The lost Grail is confused here completely with the fascinating body of the lady…The Grail has become, in Lancelot's eyes and desire, figure of the queen and vice versa."[13] As for Tristan's participation in the quest, Janina Traxler emphasizes Tristan's need to choose "between his mistress and the Grail" in the same way Lancelot must.[14] But in the *Tristan*, the grail is never treated as Tristan's personal quest but an obligation foisted upon all of the Round Table by Gauvains. As a prosimetrum that interpolates or copies much of the prose Vulgate *Lancelot-Grail* with new Tristan material—the book opens with a new *Estoire del saint graal* written about Tristan's ancestors as well as almost the entirety the *Agravain* portion of the *Lancelot en prose* and the *Queste del saint graal* with new material interspersed—any interpretation of the *Tristan* grail requires reading the borrowed Vulgate material askance or, as Janina Traxler

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[13] Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la litterature* (Geneva: L'Age d'homme, 1982), pp. 140-41.
[14] Janina Traxler, "« Amours est ausi conme li serpens »: Pride and Love in the *Prose Tristan*," *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 112.3 (1996): 371-86 (p. 382).

suggests, with irony.[15] Sylvia Huot is closest in understanding this difference when she remarks

that the pagan princess Chelinde, wife of Tristan's rebellious ancestor Sador, not only prefigures

Iseut but acts as an "erotic counterpart of the Grail" since their marriage contradicts the very

wishes of Joseph of Arimathea, the first guardian of the grail.[16] Even Jean Maillard's Neo-

Platonic observation that "Iseut is the fundamental element of his Quest because in being the

beloved, he finds the very reflection of the Creator" still suggests a fundamental substitution is at

hand in the book that reflects on lyrical values understood as amorous and associated with Iseut

and her body.[17]

      To recognize the erotic transformation of the grail into the *dame-graal* requires attention

to how descriptions of the grail found in the Vulgate are presented, used and transformed by the

prosimetric *Tristan*. In the *Agravain*, the final section of the *Lancelot en prose*, for example,

Lancelot watches a *damoisele*, the daughter of King Pelleas and the future mother of Galaad with

Lancelot, enter the main hall of the grail castle of Corbenic carrying the "vessel (…) en samblant

de galice" (vessel in the shape of a chalice)(4.78.51).[18] What is so fascinating is how quickly the

grail as vessel is sexualized. First, the girl's beauty is identified as being that of "une damoisele

que mes sire Gauvain ot tant regardee, si fu si bele et si avenanz de toutes choses que Lancelot

meesmes dist bien que onques mais a fame ne vit si grant biauté, se ne fu en sa dame la roine" (a

young lady on whom sir Gauvain looked intently, she was so beautiful and pleasing that Lancelot

himself says that never before has he seen such great beauty in a lady, not counting his lady the

queen)(4.78.51). At first glance, these reactions appear innocuous; if anything Lancelot's

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[15] Janina P. Traxler, "The Use and Abuse of the Grail Quest: Ironic Juxtaposition in the *Tristan en prose*," *Tristania* 15 (1994): 23-31.

[16] Sylvia Huot, "Unspeakable Horror, Ineffable Bliss: Riddles and Marvels in the Prose *Tristan*," *Medium Aevum* 71.1 (2002): 47-65 (qt. 53).

[17] Jean Maillard, "A vous Tristan…" in *Mélange de philologie et de la littératures romanes offerts Jeanne Wathelet-Willem* (Liege: Marche Romane, 1978), pp. 395-402 (p. 402).

[18] Alexandre Micha, ed. *Lancelot: Roman en prose du XIIIe siècle*, 9 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1978-1983).

indecisions are heightened by the addition of this other lady. But if we keep in mind Roger Dragonetti's observation that the grail is always "pierced by numerous looks," then within the context of the *Tristan*, Gauvain and Lancelot's desiring gaze calls attention to a substitution that explicitly eroticizes the grail.[19] Gauvain's response brings to mind not only his reputation for being a ladies man, but also his reputation for being the most verbal, the most *courtois*, a master of "teccheles termes of talkyng noble" (917) and "luf-talkyng" (927) as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* puts it.[20] In the Vulgate, this gaze initiates a critique that reveals Gauvain's alienation from the grail, his fundamental misunderstanding of the quality of this particular quest, which will ultimately result in a murderous rampage he is incapable of accounting for.

The *Tristan* purposely exploits this transference in its interpolation of the *Lancelot*'s passage to justify the grail's rejection by Tristan. Lancelot's gaze likewise shifts back and forth from the vessel to its holder. When he remarks in the *Agravain* section of the *Lancelot* that the vessel must be a "sainte chose et dingne" (4.78.51), there is still a distinction between the terrestrial and the spiritual, a comparison designed to highlight the difference between his love and the arrival of another more disruptive force, both spiritually (the grail carried by the *damoisele*) and sexually (the *damoisele*'s trick to get him into bed). But the *Tristan* immediately confirms, through its amorous adaptation of the very same passage, that a lady can also be a "sainte cose et digne" (V2 6.32). This amorous substitution between grail and woman is reinforced by Lancelot's reaction to King Pelleas' question about the vessel as found in both the *Lancelot* and the *Tristan en prose*. I will quote the *Tristan*'s version because Lancelot's fault is clearer.

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[19] Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre au moyen age* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), p. 229.
[20] J.R.R. Tolkien, E.V. Gordon and Norman Davis, eds. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

> Quant il orent mengié tout par loisir, si osterent les napes, et li rois
> demanda a Lanselot que li sambloit du rice vaissel que la damoisele
> aporta. "Il me samble, fist il, que de damoisele ni vi je onques si bele,
> mais de dame ne di je mie." Quant li rois oï ceste parole, si dist
> maintenant a soi meïmes que ce estoit voirs que on li avoit dit. (V2
> 6.33)
> (When they had eaten at their leisure, they cleared the tables, and the
> king asked Lancelot what he thought of the precious vessel that the
> young lady carried. "It seems to me," he said, "that in regards to the
> young lady, I have never seen anyone so beautiful, but I say nothing at
> all of ladies." When the king heard these words, he says immediately
> to himself that it was true what he had said to him.)

The slip from grail to Helayne, as the Vulgate's *damoisele* is named in the *Tristan* and Malory, is obvious. Helayne's association with the grail could not be more explicit. Even the original passage found in the *Lancelot* defines this first appearance of the grail and the quest that will follow as a search for an elusive femininity that is represented by the grail. Lancelot's misplaced gaze is ultimately the first indication of his struggle between adherence to the commandments of God and to those of the god of Love. The *Tristan*, in appropriating it, will drop Pelleas' direct comparison to Guinevere, the original *dame-graal*, after Lancelot remarks in the *Agravain* source on the beauty of the *damoisele*: "Quant li rois entant ceste parole, si pense tantost a ce qu'il ot oï de la roine Guenievre et bien croit que ce soit voirs que l'an li ot dit" (When the king understands these words, he immediately thinks of what he has heard of Queen Guinevere and believes well that it is true what he has said to him)(4.78.53). The *Tristan*, in excising this sentence, chooses to highlight the almost universal and divine power of the erotic object.

But as we saw in discussing songs in the prosimetrum, they have a way of being specific, of getting connected to particular identities. In this way, the *Tristan* attributes traditional images of the grail to a particular love object, Iseut. In a scene added after the quest begins, Tristan begins to have doubts about continuing his participation in the quest. His decision to return to

Joyouse Garde to find his true grail, Iseut, is highlighted by a poetic convention, the *locus amoenus*.

> Cele matinee fu li tans clers et biaus et li airs fu sans nublece, et li pré sont carcié de flours, et cil arbre sont foillu et vert, et cil oiseillon s'en esbaudissent par ces forés et vont cantant lour divers cans, qui assés sont delitable a oïr. Et ce est droitement a l'entrée de may. Et li cevalier [Tristan, Palamedes and Dynadans] qui sivoient le tans soulages vont entr'aus parlant de deduis et d'amours et de chevaleries, et ensi parlent entr'aus. (…) Mesire Tristrans, qui voit le tans si bel et si verdoiant et lé flours de diverses couleurs qui aperent cha et la, et ot le delitable chant de oisiaus qui vont cantant destre et senestre, conmence a penser erranment. Et cele qu'il ne vit ja a maint jour, il desirre qu'il le voie prochainnement et a joie et a boine aventure. (V2 6.158)
> (That morning, the weather was clear and beautiful and the sky cloudless. The field was covered with flowers and the trees were leafy and green and the trees were leafy and green and birds animate the forest, singing their variety of songs that are very delightful to hear. This was truly the beginning of May and the knights [Tristan, Palamedes and Dynadans] to pass the time, speak among themselves of pleasures, of love and of chivalry…And Sir Tristan, who sees that the weather is so beautiful and verdant with flowers of many colors appearing here and there and hears the delightful song of the birds who go singing to the right and left of him, begins to think at once. And she whom he hasn't seen for many days, he desires to see soon and to have joy and good adventure.)

Tristan and his companions have of course entered into a lyrical *topos*. But it is Tristan who is affected by this *locus* because the joy the place evokes reminds Tristan that his beloved, Iseut, is not there. He begins to complain about how far he is from "sa dame la gente, qui est biautés de tout le monde" (his lady, the noble, who is the beauty of the world)(V2 6.158). Finally, in this *absent* place, which is also a pleasant place, the place where all medieval love poetry begins, Tristan "en cel penser trueve vers auques delitables a oir et le chant trouva il autrsei. Et quant il a trouvé le chant, il le commence maintenant a chanter" (in thinking "finds" verse as pleasant to hear and "found" the melody too)(V2 6.158). That the grail inspires song is implicit throughout the book. Here, separated from her, he finds or composes a song and in the song, he finds his

love, his true object, *his* grail. This finding wanders between composition as *inventio* based on conventional topics and a true discovery coming from elsewhere. He makes a decision to return to Iseut because,

> Un an ai fait desloiauté;
> Se Diex m'aïst, ceste durté
> M'a mis lonc tans en obscurité. (V2 6.159, vv. 7-9)
> (For one year I have been disloyal, God help me, this hardship has put
> me in darkness for a long time.)

If God can help him out of that bitter year-long vow imposed by Gauvain on all the knights that Pentecost day to go on the quest, then he can finally return to her light. This light is equally an image associated with the radiant grail found in the Vulgate; not just the *cortège du graal*, the grail procession with its ".IIII. candeilles ardans et en .IIII. candeilliers" (four buring candles in four candelabras) (V2 6.46, from *Lancelot* 5.98.42), but also, when the grail's covering is finally removed, a light, "que laiens s'espandi si grant clarté, si fu avis a Boors qu'en mi les ex le feri uns rais de soleil" (that filled the room with such great luminosity, that it seemed to Boors that a sunbeam struck him in the eyes)(V2 6.47, from *Lancelot* 5.98.46). Later, when Lancelot looks into the grail's room, "Il ot laiens si grant clarté com s'il fust miedis" (there was inside such great luminosity as if it was the middle of the day) (V2 9.109, loosely based on *Queste* 255). Iseut's connection to this grail light is found in the shorter V1 version of the quest as well when Bruno sings as Palamedes and Tristan secretly listen: "Vous m'estes clarté et lumiere,/ Sanz ocurté et sans fumiere" (You are for me luminosity and light, without darkness and without smoke)(V1 5.20, vv. 57-8). Palamedes could also be evoking that grail which fills the palace with light when he declares that with Iseut "tous li mondes (…) est enluminés de vostre biauté" (all the world is illuminated by your beauty)(V2 8.138).

This clarity of the grail light around Iseut is combined with the same theological imagery found in the Vulgate *Queste* that associates the grail with the *corpus domini* and grace. Palamedes, in a complaint overhear by Tristan first from his window, then in the forest, cries out to Love if only he could have her body then he would receive "sa grasse et l'amour de celui que j'aime" (her grace and the love of the one I love)(V2 7.32).[21] In that meditation, he further reflects:

> Car de ma dame—qui est et clartés et lumiere plus clere que n'est
> l'estoile jornal, et qui est mireours du monde, et qui toutes biauté passe
> les morteus coses et les espiriteus, et qui est ausi Dex en tere et de
> clarté et de luour, conme Damediex est en ciel et en tere entre les
> angles de clarté (V2 7.32)
> (Because in regards to my lady, who is luminosity and light clearer
> than the morning star and who is mirror of the world and whose beauty
> surpasses all things mortal and spiritual, and who is also God on earth
> and both luminosity and light, as *Damedieus* is in both heaven and
> earth among the luminous angels)

All this hyperbole, the Marian imagery, the *speculum mundi*, the redefinition of the *Queste*'s defining categories of the terrestrial and the spiritual and of course the light, speak not only of a divine nature but the substitution of one object, the grail, by another, Iseut, the *dame-dieu*, the lady as lord god or *damedieus*. In the *Tristan en prose,* the lady's divinity is not ambiguous as seen when she arrives at Louveserp. The *dominus deus* is Iseut.

> Quant madame Yseut passe par mi la praerie, ce samble uns diex ki
> trespasse; ce ne samble mie dame morteus, ains samble cose esperital.
> Tout li cevalier de la praerie s'arestent pour li regarder et dient: "Vees
> ci Damedieu venir!" (V2 5.274)
> (When lady Iseut passes through the middle of the meadow, it seems a
> god who passes through. She does not seem at all a mortal lady, but
> rather a spiritual thing. All the knights on the meadow stop to look at
> her and say, "Here comes the Lord God!")

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[21] For Gilson, the grail represents the grace of the Holy Spirit, for Hamilton, the Eucharist and for Pauphilet, a Cistercian manifestation of God. Gilson, "Mystique de la grâce," pp. 59-91; Hamilton, "L'interprétation mystique," *Neophilologus* 27.2 (1942): 94-100; and Pauphilet, *Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal*.

And yet, for all the commotion, the *dame-dieu* cannot be seen fully, as when Galehondis, the

new king of Sorelois, approaches her before the tournament: "son vis avoit si couvert et envolepé

pour le halle et pour le soleil que a painnes peüst on de li veoir fors que l'oeil tant seulement"

(her face was so covered and enveloped for the hall and for the sun that one could barely see her

except except for the eye)(V2 5.155). Equally, the full light of the grail is rarely seen, and if it is

seen, it is by a select few. And so, the most prominent feature of the grail is its covering.

> Enmi la cambre estoit la table d'argent et li Sains Vaissiaus, couvers
> mout ricement, ausi com li estoit a cel point que Joseph, li premiers
> evesques, i canta. (V2 9.109)
> (In the middle of the room was the silver table and the Holy Vessel,
> covered most preciously, as if it was at the point that Joseph, the first
> bishop, sang there.)

The *Tristan*, in this interpolation from the Vulgate *Queste*, adds Joseph of Arimathea singing

while omitting at the same time any reference to the *corpus domini* (255.22). Joseph's songs will

be discussed later; instead, what is important here is that this grail, though covered from view, is

filled with song, or more precicely, sung to as an object of veneration, as is Iseut in the

prosimetrum. Whether the Grail is "couvers d'un samit tout blanc" (covered with all white

silk)(V2 6.47 from *Lancelot* 5.98.45) or simply "couvers d'un blanc samit" (covered with white

silk)(V2 6.65 from *Lancelot* 6.106.43) when it appears to Perceval and Hector after "une clarté

mout grant qui sour aus descendi" (a very great luminosity descended onto them)(V2 6.65,

loosely based on *Lancelot* 6.106.43), both are reminiscent of Iseut with "son vis couvert" (her

face covered)(V2 5.187).

 The arrival of Iseut in Louveserp in some ways is reminiscent of the *cortège du graal*,

that mysterious procession in Corbenic with a dove swinging a censer, servants bearing tables,

and candle bearers preceding a *damoisele* carrying the "rice vaissel" (the precious vessel) (V2

6.33). In Iseut's procession to Louveserp, not only is she "tant richement apareillie et vestue"

(very richly prepared and dressed)(V2 5.187) but she is also accompanied by a *damoisele*. The effect is mysterious. She is not only a *merveille* like the grail, but also "une fine merveille" (a fine wonder)(V2 6.42), a description added to the interpolated passage from the *Lancelot* reminiscent of the fine or pure nature of true love or *fine amour*. By associating her beauty with the grail, Iseut takes on a spiritual dimension. Elevated, she becomes divine. At the same time, the transformation of the grail into an amorous object, as the personal manifestation of one lady, Iseut, renders it earthly or "terrestrial," to use the language of the *Queste*, and as a result, validates all poetic expressions of love as worthy.

Shielded from sight, both the Grail and Iseut then become the focus of an intense desire to see them *apartement*, that is without the obscurity that surrounds their coverings. During the tournament, there is great speculation about who she is.

> Quant cil ki en la praerie estoient voient venir madame Yseut si
> ricement que sembloit une merveille, «Diex, ce dist cascuns, ki puet
> ore estre ceste dame ki si noblemnt vient veoir ceste assamblee et puis
> est si couverte que nous ne le poom veoir? (V2 5.230)
> (When those in the meadow saw lady Iseut come so magnificently that
> it seemed a wonder. "God," each said, "Who could this lady be who
> so nobly comes to see this assembly and then is so covered that we
> cannot see her?")

In Corbenic or the grail castle, Lancelot, for example, is described as being "si ardans et si desirans de veoir (…) li Saint Vaissel apartement" (so ardant and desirous to see the Holy Grail openly)(V2 9.109). Similarly, Erec, sidetracked by the quest, arrives at Joyeuse Garde, Tristan's Corbenic, to declare:

> se je la dame ne veoie tout avant que je m'en departisse, je m'en
> tenroie a mort (...) Je li pri tant, conme cevaliers puet priier dame,
> qu'ele suefre que je le voie ne ne tiengne a mal, se je suis desirans de
> veoir le, car ensi vait des coses du monde que sont adés des plus
> desirees. (V2 7.41)
> (if I do not see the lady before I depart, I will die…I beg her so, as a
> knight can entreat a lady, that she allow me to see her and wish me no

ill, if I am desirous to see her, because thus go the things of the world that are always the most desired.)

Erec's intense worldly desire to see Iseut in the *Tristan* finds its echo in many other expressions of desire to see the grail openly. In Corbenic, after discovering the grail in a room filled with light, Lancelot exclaims, "Ha, Sire Diex, tant fust ore boineürés qui peüst veoir le Saintisme Vaissel qui laiens est enclos" (Oh, Lord God, now blessed are those able to see the Holy Vessel that within is enclosed)(V2 9.109). Likewise, King Arthur, desirous to see Iseut after her arrival at the tournament of Louveserp, declares that "le veïsse je trop volentiers vis descouvert" (I wish to see most willingly her face uncovered)(V2 5.226). To see Iseut uncovered would be a blessing, an almost divine experience like seeing God. The analogy is explicit in the *Tristan*. Think of the good fortune of a knight, thanking God or the god of love, as he enters the *dame-graal*'s enclosure and sees her *decouverte*, that is, disrobed and nude. Jean Frappier, in one of his many studies on the word *descovert*, notes that to see the grail openly, that is uncovered, is never a public act open to all but a private moment exclusive to one.[22] The same can be said of the *dame-graal*. To see your beloved nude is to be cured of the sexual wound that is central to the Tristan legend. Then, as the sick knight Lancelot watches next to the stone cross while in his catatonic state, one can truly cry, "je fui garis si tost que je vis le Saint Graal" (I was cured as soon as I saw the Holy Grail)(V2 8.7, based on *Queste* 59-60).

But seeing the grail covered is not only a powerful magnet for wonder but also an inspiration, as when Palamedes' strength suddenly increases in the tournament at Louveserp the more he looks upon her: "Quant il est laissés et si durement traveilliés k'il ne puet mis en avant et il regarde vers sa dame, tout maintenant recuevre pooir et hardement" (when he is tired and so greatly exhausted that he cannot go any further he looks towards his lady, immediately recovers

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[22] Frappier, *Autour du Graal*, p. 16.

his strength and boldness)(V2 5.236). Of course, the promise of actually seeing both the lady

and the grail uncovered is usually denied. This is the case when Lancelot, Hector and Gauvain

are verbally denied access to the grail in both the *Queste* and its interpolations in the *Tristan* and

when Iseut rebukes the lovesick Kahedin in the *Tristan* with her stinging lay "Folie n'est pas

vaselage" (V2 1.158). Later, angered by his treacherous attack on Tristan, Iseut refuses to look

upon Palamedes, that is, reciprocate his gaze: "ele n'a oeil dont ele puisse regarder Palamidés

sans felonnie" (she has no eye through which she can look upon Palamedes without

wickedness)(5.255). This withdrawl from sight, a movement similar to Hector's dream of the

waters withdrawing from Lancelot, causes Palamedes to naturally fall into another round of

depression.

The *Tristan* then not only eroticizes the grail and makes Iseult wonderous, it also

structures contact with the grail within *fine amour*'s conventional poles of hope and failure.

When we think of love songs—remembering that the topoi of love poetry are being

superimposed onto the grail—then the beloved's body is usually understood as both absent and

illusory.   This expression of absence within the context of the Tristan legend however is always

destructive. Not only does the quest to see and, by extension, to *know*, the grail leads to the

calamitous deaths of many grail knights, but also the same can be said about the *dame-graal*.

Just as Malory characterized Guinevere and the grail as destroyers of knights, to try and know

Iseut in its sexual sense also leads to death, as witnessed by the many corpses of suitors left in

her wake. The grail then can be conceived in this amorous context as the *belle dame sans merci*

who refrains from openly acknowledging the lover-poet, denying mercy and grace. She does not

respond to all suitors, as God does not respond to all grail knights. Her love is exclusive.

Although there are moments when the lady speaks—case in point, the songs Iseut composes and sings—those elected to see or *hear* the *dame-graal* are miniscule in number, like those elected to see the *saint graal*. Those elected share in a gaze that is defined as reciprocal and complete. In the *Tristan*, their love is characterized as self-contained and perfect: "ele regarde Tristan, et Tristan li; et tant se regardent en tele maniere que li uns conoist de l'autre la volenté et la pensee" (she gazes at Tristan, et Tristan her; and gaze so much at each other in such a way that each understands the other's wishes and thought)(C 2.447). This love, self-contained in all its perfection can only be described as divine, and is also determined by that legendary potion, that "vessel" (C 2.445) of love, the "boivre amorous" (the love drink)(C 2.446) given to Brangien by Iseut's mother. For the *Tristan*, this alternate vessel to the Vulgate's grail valorizes erotic, wordly love as ths closest we can to achieve the divine. And this divinity, with its possibility of curing all wounds, coded as sexual in both the verse romances and the prose *Tristan*, makes the body a saving illusion that nourishes a fervent hope to be seen and to know. But throughout the book, other knights will also be attracted to Iseut as the grail and get lost in their quest for love: not only Palamedes, Helies and Brunor, but also a string of suicidal knights beginning with Kahedins, are denied access to the *dame-graal*. Their reach for the love-grail fails because somehow their conception of love is neither complete nor fully true or pure. It is not *fin* enough.[23]

But the *Tristan en prose* makes Tristan and Iseut exceptions to a general rule of love that understands desire as perpetual and fulfillment impossible. This failure to achieve sexual

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[23] The Vulgate *Suite de Merlin* proposes an alternative understanding of the quest as an envious competition "por sauoir qui estoit li mieudres chevaliers" (to know who was the best knight). The rivals for the Iseut-Grail operate in a similar manner, each hoping "quil fust tenus por le millor" (that he is held the best). This competition also structures the *Tristan* with its repeated scorecards over who is the best knight, especially between Tristan and Lancelot. H. Oskar Sommer, ed. *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances: Edited from Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2 *Lestoire de Merlin* (Washington D.C.: Carnegoie Institution, 1908), p. 335.

satisfaction is equally understood as structural to love poetry. Unlike the verse romances where this impossibility is asserted forcefully with Tristan and Iseut dying separated to reinforce, the horrifying reality of love as a sexual union that cannot *achieve* or overcome the gap between two people; with the prosimetrum, the rules as they are understood in the poetry of *fine amour* are not observed. Like Galaad's own ability to *achieve* or end the marvels of Logres through the grail by mending the gap between the terrestrial and the spiritual in one moment, Tristan's achievement of unity with Iseut points to a closure of the gap for one brief moment. But for those outside the *dame-graal*'s mutual gaze, the most common reaction is a recognition of that impossible abyss resulting in a song. If the grail is the *dame sans merci,* who refrains from openly acknowledging the lover-poet, it is also the direct inspiration for songs to express this separation.

2. Grail Songs

For the *Tristan*, the choice of the grail as a metaphor for not only Iseult but for song brings love formally into existence and makes love not just the material for self-expression but also an enforming reality. Without the grail as song, without Iseut as the vessel, love does not exist. This is the fundamental difference beween the *Tristan en prose* and the Vulgate. Lancelot and Guinevere, "the model of the Romanesque summa in prose" as Adeline Richard aptly describes them, lose some prominence within the context of the *Tristan* because their love lacks any lyrical expression, even though their exemplary status as lovers is politely retained to harmonize the *Tristan* with the Vulgate.[24] In fact, outside the mentioning of two lays "de Lancelot," one by the same *demoiselle à la harpe* mentioned in the previous chapter, and another

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[24] Adeline Richard, *Amour et passe amour: Lancelot-Guenièvre, Tristan-Yseut dans le Lancelot en prose et le Tristan en prose* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 2007), p. 383.

by Breus sans Pitié's lady who claims to know "le lay de Lancelot du Lac, qu'il fist en Sorelois" (Lancelot du Lac's lay that he made in Sorelois)(V2 9.64), an event unattested in the Vulgate *Lancelot* where it would happen, Lancelot never sings, nor are his songs given a public airing.[25] This amounts to a wholesale critique and rewriting of the prose grail tradition through the prisim of the prosimetrum.

To be sure, the impetus for this idea of rewriting the grail from the perspective of love and song is found in the *Lancelot* itself, when Boors listens to the Roi Pescheor or Fisher King singing in Corbenic.

> Lors prant son plectron et conmance a acorder sa harpe; et quant il a la harpe acordee au mielz qu'il set, si conmance a noter .I. lai, et en ce qu'il notoit, si ploroit toz jorz. Et Boorz qui moult volentiers l'escoutoit antant que cil l'apeloit le Lai de Plor et en estoit li diz de Joseph d'Arimacie, ainsi conme il vint en la Grant Bretaingne, quant Nostre Sires l'i fist ariver par son voloir. (5.98.39)
> (Then he picks up his plectrum and begins to tune his harp; and when he had tuned the harp to the best of his abilities, he began to sing a lay and as he sang and played, he cried the whole time. And Boors, who very willingly listened to it, thereupon called it the *Lay of Tears* and it was made of the words of Joseph of Arimathea at the time when he came to Great Britain when Our Lord had him arrive by his will.)

The origins of the *Lai de Plor* is located at the moment when Joseph first arrived in Britain as recounted in the *Estoire del Saint Graal*, the first *branche* of the Vulgate. After hearing the song, Boors speculates that perhaps its origins are found in a "desputoison qui jadis avoit esté de Joseph d'Arimacie et de Orfeu l'anchanteor qui le Chastel des Anchantemenz fonda en la marche d'Escoce" (debate that once took place between Joseph of Arimathea and Orpheus the enchantor who founded the Castle of Enchantments in the marshes of Scotland)(5.98.39). As seen in the first chapter, lyrics found in the mixed genre tend to raise questions about their origins and the

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[25] Lancelot is ascribed a lay in the form of a letter, "A vous Tristran, biaus dous amis" (V2 4.169). Another lay is mentioned at the end of the book mourning the loss of Tristan.

personages involved. The lay's content, however, is a mystery since the *Lancelot* is not a prosimetrum, it does not include the song. As with many knights encountering anonymous songs, what Boors has to say is pure speculation.

Still, the identification of the song with the original grail keeper reflects a bibliographical tendency towards lyric in the mixed genre. What is surprising is the debate Joseph and Orpheus. Is Joseph's song then similar to a *débat amoureux* or Occitan *tenso*, that venerable genre grounded in questions to be debated, rather than the complaint implied by Boor's new title? And yet there are tears. But one must wonder whether they come from Joseph's Christian perspective or from Orpheus' pagan one. Did Joseph fail to convert Orpheus of his amorous obsession as he fails with Tristan's ancestors? The *Tristan en prose* does not include this detail but instead mentions "les lais de Joseph d'Arimacie" (the lays of Joseph of Arimathea)(V2 6.45), as if multiple songs were invented out of the *disputatio* between Orpheus and Joseph. Unfortunately, nowhere else in the *Estoire del saint graal* do we find an account of this meeting though we do find mentioned in the *Lancelot* King Baudemagu's "harpeor qui li notoit le lai d'Orfei; si plaisoit tant al roi a escoter qu'il avoit nul qui osast mot dire" (harpist who played for him the *lay of Orpheus*; it pleased the king so much to listen that there was no one who dared say a word)(2.50.34). The intense pleasure of listening to a lay, experiencing indirectly the personal expression of loss—in this case, Orpheus' loss of his wife Eurydice—has already been discussed in the previous chapter. This pleasure of sweet sadness is intensified by the grotesque figure of the wounded king singing Joseph of Arimathea's song. In the *Tristan* version, there seems to be a subtle confluence of two traditions played out in Corbenic between the original grail narrations and Orpheus' heir, Tristan the singer. The *lay de Joseph* is not only the prose *Lancelot*'s nod to Robert de Boron's original verse *Joseph d'Aramathia*, but it is also, once it reappears as

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interpolation in the *Tristan*, a musical reframing of a dispute between two cultures, a *débat amoureux* about the nature of love between the pagan, associated with obsession and near idolatry, and the Christian, associated with the attempt to impose rational limits. Finally, we can assume this amorous content because in the *Tristan*, a lay almost always refers to a love song often associated with the grail as *dame*. This is pertinent because in the *Tristan*, the grail castle itself, Corbenic, is also given an alternative history, one associated with a jealous magician named Tanabur—a wonderfully Arabic sounding name reminiscent of the tambour, a percussion instrument—who builds this magical enclosure to imprison his grail—that is, his wife—from the eyes and embraces of a wandering knight.

The connection between the lady, the grail and song is also found in a startling rewriting of King Solomon's boat. In combining the solemnity of the grail boat found in both the *Estoire* and the *Queste* with the legendary ship that first carried Tristan and Iseut from Ireland to Cornwall, the shorter V1 version of the *Tristan* includes a *Nef de Joie*, a boat of Joy constructed by Merlin the magician and sent by Mabon, another enchanter, to take the lovers to Corbenic. There, they float past the Fisher King/Maimed King as he fishes from another boat before sailing off to Camelot where Arthur gets on board.[26] Like the Vulgate's *Nef de Solomon*, a bed holds central place; but unlike the grail boat, the *Nef de Joie*'s bed, like Joyous Garde's erotic rewriting of Corbenic's *lit merveilleux*, emphasizes more sexual connotations. Furthermore, the lovers discover musical instruments and arms on board: "il trouvent desus le lit une harpe et une rote et une gigue, et aux piéz du lit avoit totes les armes a un chevaliers, si fornies que il n'i failloit riens du monde" (they find under the bed a harp and a rote and a gigue, and at the foot of the bed were

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[26] For a discussion of the V1's composite *Roi Pescheor* and *Roi Mahaignié* see Mario Botero Garcia, "Les rois du Graal dans le *Tristan* en prose" in Laurence Harf-Lancner, Laurence Mathey-Maille, Bénédicte Milland-Bove and Michelle Szkilinik, *Des Tristan en vers au Tristan en prose: Hommage à Emmanuèle Baumgartner* (Paris: Champion, 2013) pp. 119-30.

all the arms of a knight, so complete that nothing was lacking)(V1 2.138). What better

expressions for the values of knight-poets than a place to make love, musical instruments to play

and arms to fight within the milieu of the grail, on the journey to Corbenic with the Iseut-Grail in

Tristan's presence.

The most important association between love songs and the grail is found when Iseut,

frustrated by Tristan's absence on the grail quest, places a song inside a *vessel*, transforming the

idea of the grail into a vessel of song.

> Et quant ele a pensé tant qu'ele a som brief mené a fin et de dit et de
> chant, ele l'escrit de sa propre main pour l'amor de ce que mesire
> Tristans le connoisse. Et quant ele l'a tout parfait, si le met dedens un
> petit vaissel d'or que mesire Tristans li avoit donné; et chel vaissel
> avoit la roïne Genievre donné a monsigneur Tristran. (V2 7.1)
> (And when she had thought so much that she had finished her letter,
> her words and her melody, she wrote to him in her own hand for the
> love that sir Tristan knew. And when she had perfected all of it, she
> put it inside a little vessel of gold that sir Tristan had given to her.
> Queen Guinevere had given this vessel to sir Tristan.)

Iseut's *lettre en vers* composed of a *dit*, lyrics, and *chant*, in other words a song, is written not

through dictations given to a clerk but by her own hand and placed inside a gold *vessel*. Like

Corbenic, the vessel is a secret place, understood as both spiritual and sexual, but in this case, it

also stands in for the *locus* of writing. Her handwriting does not simply reinforce her obvious

literacy but rather highlights the privacy of her message.

This private writing is reminiscent of Marie de France's *Chevrefeuil* when Tristan, to

assure her recognition of his song, writes his *non* (54), not just his name but perhaps also a word,

with a knife on a *bastun* (53), a stick or stake.[27] Though cut into a stick, the reader cannot help

but think of the sexual wound that dominates the verse romances. And even though Iseut

recognizes the message, the nature of the writing on the *bastun* is unclear. Its precise content is

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[27] Jean Rychner, ed. *Les Lais de Marie de France* (Paris: Champion, 1969, rpt 1983).

not given by Marie. It remains a private message only for her even though we as readers are privy to knowing the circumstances of its writing, her reception, and the lay Tristan composed afterwards. Following the medieval pattern already identified in the first chapter with the mixed genre, individual songs not only express an identifiable person but also express a "verité" (117) that will define the song and make it recognizable. Once perfected Iseut's own song will also be easy for Tristan to recognize. Its placement in the gold vessel also associates her song with the mysteries of the grail. Mindful of Edina Bozóky's comment that the word *vessel* "designates often a sacred receptacle," we are guided by the text to ascribe to Iseut's vessel the same divinity represented in the Vulgate working through the grail. [28] In a way, Iseut is also working through the grail. The problem, as found in other grail narratives, is comprehending the interiority of that *vessel*. The meaning of the grail always remains a mystery.

The vessel in which Iseut places her song leads to another problem already familiar to readers of the grail quest: not all knights desiring to see the grail are worthy of that sight, just as not all lovers are worthy of being *seen* by their ladies. Iseut's vessel has changed hands before: from Guinevere to Tristan and then to Iseut. It would be tempting then to read the grail as a kind of "purloined letter." If a letter always finds its destination, as the saying goes, then the vessel logically ends up back in Tristan's hands to generate more songs. This is important because if song structures love, then the movement away from the orbit of the *Lancelot en prose* is complete. The vessel Guinevere sent out was not destined for Lancelot, as it should have been, to generate the songs needed to add even more prestige to both the *Lancelot* and their love. Instead, the path of the Guinevere-Grail was diverted. For Guinevere and Lancelot, "courtly

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[28] Edina Bozóky, "La « bête glatissant » et le graal," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 185.2 (1974): 127-48 (qt. 133).

heroes associated with prose," it was merely a cup that Tristan and Iseut would later fill with amorous, musical meaning.[29]

On the other hand, because the destination of a letter is never fixed, nobody can determine its path, nor possess it outright. The same can be said about Iseut's song, and indeed about Iseut herself. No one can possess her…except Tristan. This is an important exception because it parallels another feature of the grail. Guinevere and Lancelot, and for that matter Arthur too, fail to acknowledge the central order of love and as a result, fall victim to it it. The recognition of love's power is a topos easily recognizable but from the perspective of the grail, it is also represented as an alien presence meant to destroy what precarious love is shared together. But in the *Tristan*, once the vessel is filled with Iseut's love—with love being a synonym for song in troubadour and trouvère lyrics—and then found in Tristan's hands its true significance is understood.[30] Unlike the message in *Chevrefeuil*, the content of the song in the vessel is known: "S'onques fustes d'amours penés/ Ne me mandés riens, mais venés" (If you were ever pained by love, don't send me anything but come) (V2 7.4, vv. 39-40). And yet, at the same time, Iseut knows that it is quite possible that a song will be sent back to her instead, most probably in the same vessel, because that is the way love works. For Tristan, the grail song calls upon him to come back to her, to meet both her love and their end together in the same way Galaad will meet his own end once he finds the grail in Sarras. Both deaths cannot be read as tragic in the same way the grail knights and Tristan's rivals die. Death as it is connected to love is inevitable, the only means by which the impossible can be achieved.

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[29] Richard, *Amour et passe amour*, p. 67.

[30] For the *aimer-chanter* coupling see Paul Zumthor, "De la circularité du chant (à propos des trovères des XIIe et XIIIe siècles)" *Poétique* 2 (1970): 129-40 and *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 215-16 as well as Amelia E. Van Vleck, *Memory and Re-Creation in Troubadour Lyric* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), pp. 19-25.

But what does it mean then to place a song inside a vessel? Leupin has shown that the

grail can be recognized as a kind of metaphor for the generation of tales written in the "l'encre

purpine" (imperial purple ink) of Christ, an extension of Ernst Curtius' idea of blood writing.[31]

This is not at all odd considering the authorship of the *Estoire* is attributed to Christ himself and

the text, an example of "autre escriture faite de sa propre main" (other writing composed with his

own hand) (1.416) but written *after* the Resurrection. For the *Tristan*, the Iseut-Grail is the

source not only of new tales but more and more songs. Song is *the* defining element that the

Tristan wishes to restore in its rewriting of the prose Vulgate. However, unlike other prosimetra

or mixed works where each song is marked by a particular circumstance in the dramatic life of

its authors, the *Tristan* tends to limit the *environmental* causes of a song—say, a particular

narrative circumstance—and instead replicates, if you will, one essential cause: the obsessive

interior struggle with a love that can be heard elsewhere, that alien disembodied voice associated

with Iseut and the grail, that is in turn overheard by others. We have already described the

scenario: out in the woods, usually besides a *fontainne* or pool of water, love-sick knights are left

only with their thoughts (*pensers*). It is at these moments that love comes upon them like a

compelling *force* or *pooir* (power)(V2 6.135), as Helies describe it, or as Brunor explains to

Tristan, "Amours m'aprent a trouver lays et canchions" (Love teaches me to compose lays and

songs)(V2 7.212). In the *Tristan*, when Tristan receives Iseut's song inside the vessel, he is at

first asleep besides a *fontaine* in the woods. In a way, he is awakened by a song and likewise,

proceeds to sing its words. Of course, the verb used to describe this singing is *lire*, to read—"il a

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[31] Leupin, *Le graal*, p. 131. Curtius describes images of bleeding associated with sign making, especially in hagiographies, as blood writing. Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1990), pp. 312, 342-47.

les letres leües de cief en cief" (he read the words from beginning to end)(V2 7.5)—but reading as noted in Deschamps' *Art de Dictier* covers the act of performing songs as well.[32]

If love is its expression in song, then for the *Tristan*, the grail is its generating source. In the *Tristan*, the model for love as a force that inspires individual expression is drawn from the first branch of the Vulgate Lancelot-Grail, the *Estoire del Saint Graal*'s representation of language. Iseut's placing the song into a vessel reminds us of Joseph of Arimathea's worries about his own ability to preach to the pagans of Sarras in the *Estoire* until God tells him, "Ne t'esmaie mie de che, car tu ne feras ke la bouche ouvrir, et je metrai dedens grant plenté de paroles" (Don't worry at all about this, because you will only have to open your mouth and I will put inside a great quantity of words)(1.63). His open mouth filled with words is not only reminiscent of Iseut and the open vessel but also the *dame-dieu* filling her suitors with song. The *Estoire*'s Christian variation of inspiration is further represented by the narrator's anxiety over his ability to transcribe Christ's spiritual writing: "la bouche ne peut encore avoir la forche de dire chou dont les pekeresses langues serroient encombrees" (the mouth still does not have the strength to speak because the sinful languages would be burdened) (1.5). But when the *Maistre* blows into his face, "je sentoie dedens ma bouche une grant merveille de langues" (I felt in my mouth a great marvel of speech)(1.5). This *merveille* is evidently connected to the Holy Spirit, the person in the trinity associated with language, as in this moment evocative of the Pentecost when Josephé and his followers leave Sarras to convert other pagans: "mais il n'i avoit nul d'aus en qui li Sains Espris ne fust si apertement ke il parloient tous les langues et prophetisoient tot"

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[32] In discussing *musique naturele*, Deschamps remarks that "toutesvoies est appellee musique ceste science naturele pour ce que les diz et chancons par eulx faiz ou les livres metrifiez se lisent de bouche, et proferent par voix non chantable" (nevertheless this natural knowledge is called music because dits, songs and books in verse made by them are read aloud by a voice that cannot sing)(395b-c) and furthermore, he describes possible contexts for reciting songs, including "entre seigneurs et dames estans a leur prive et secretement" (between lords and ladies being in private and secretly) as well as "par un home seul" (by a man by himself)(395c). Deborah Sinnreich-Levi, ed. *Eustache Deschamps: L'Art de dictier* (East Lansing: Colleagues, 1994).

(but there were none of them in whom the Holy Spirit was not so openly apparent that they spoke all the languages and prophesized readily)(1.250). The "Esperite de ma bouche" (Spirit de my mouth)(1.216) is a fitting reminder of why the grail quest begins on Pentecost. Since religious metaphors or topics always take on amorous connotations in the *Tristan*, the Holy Spirit then inspires true lovers with song in order to convert those outside love's law.

Palamedes' lay "D'Amours viennent li dous penser" (From love comes sweet thoughts) not only replicates this "spiritual" form of inspiration but also evokes the *Queste*'s iconographic image of Holy Spirit as a dove with a sensor in its beak, filling the grail chamber with "toutes les boines odours du monde" (with all the good aromas of the world)(V2 6.32). In the song, Palamedes sings, "Douche amours souef odourant/ Plus que basme, a vos vois courant" (Sweet, gentle love, more aromatic than balm, to you I go running)(V2 6.24, vv. 17-8). The sweet smell of love, evocative of the grail and the fragrances that accompany it throughout the grail books, inspires him to run towards love's voice, which is Iseut's voice, as the grail song. The result of this experience of being in the presence of the Iseut-Grail while staying at Joyeus Garde is song: "Tout si cant conmencent d'Iseut, et d'Yseut fenissent tous. Boins cans trueve, et gais et envoisiés et delitables a canter, boins dis treuve, et soutis. Onques mesire Tristrans ne trouva mies!" (Everything he sings begins from Iseut, and everything finishes with Iseut. Good melodies he composes, both happy, joyful and delightful to sing, good words he composes, and subtle. Sir Tristan never composed at all like that!)(V2 6.21). Even Tristan recognizes the effect of this inspiration in Palamedes when he remarks, "onques a jour de sa vie il n'oï cevalier ausi bien parler" (never in all his life had he heard a knight as well spoken)(V2 7.32). Finally for another knight, Brunor, as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the father so the song proceeds from love as he attests in his song about Iseut: "D'amors muet mon chant et ma joie" (From love puts

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into motion my song and my joy)(V1 5.20, v. 5). For the *Tristan* then, Iseut's vessel filled with

song initiates more songs.

The Vulgate's correlation between God and language explains why so much poetry in the

Tristan is associated with the grail. And the songs sung, compelled by the god of love and

inspired by Iseut's presence, focus not on the conversion of pagans, as we find in the *Estoire*, but

on expressing each singer's experience with earthly love and marking its value. For example,

visiting Joyeus Garde, his grail castle, for three months in Iseut's presence, Palamedes, to be

discreet, rides out into the woods to think and sing:

> D'Amours viennent li dous penser
> Qui me font loiaument amer,
> Boins dis et boins cans pourpenser;
> D'autre art ne me puis apenser. (V2 6.24, vv. 1-4)
> (From Love come sweet thoughts that make me love loyally and bring
> about good lyrics and melodies. I cannot reflect on any other art.)

Even Brunor associates love's compelling force and the words it inspires by praising the god

before moving onto his lady, Iseut: "Por vous chant et por vous m'esforce/ En biax diz tote met

ma force (For you I sing and for you I become stronger, in beautiful words, I set all my

power)(V1 5.20, vv. 33-34). In this model of inspiration, one cannot help but note how

miraculously songs appear as if the god fills singers with amorous content. Unlike the later

French and English *dits amoureux* by Machaut, Froissart, Chaucer and Gower, this divine

inspiration conceals both the workmanship of composition and the beloved's or the god's role as

patron of the songs produced.[33] The rhetorical language associated with later mixed work is not

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[33] Whereas inspiration as a topos is classical in origins, Kelly notes that there is "little evidence in the treatises or in the Middle Ages in general for composition undertaken other than as a response to a perceived order or request or in anticipation of a potential benefactor." Douglas Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), p. 96. For inspiration in general, see Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 85 and Dragonetti, *Technique*, pp. 143-49, 187.

present. Instead, as if by a miracle, grail songs suddenly arrive and knights become the vessel for their singing.

Iseut's song conditions then, by its very perfection as song, all other songs. It musters them up, as noted earlier with Palamides when he sings after the Louveserp tournament "canchonnetes et lais, et tout est de madame Yseut" (little dance songs and lays and everything is about Iseut) (V2 6.22). Every song then is for Iseut, every song is about Iseut and every song preceeds from Iseut. But like God in the grail texts, the Iseut-Grail also is reticent; her attention is exclusive to one. This is its tragic dimension, ike the *belle dame sans merci*, she does not respond to all suitors, as God does not respond to all grail knights. Her love is exclusive. Though Tristan, like Galaad, is chosen to achieve—*achever* or *mener a fin*—the Iseut-Grail and like Galaad die for it, singing about all that is Iseut, the totality that is Iseut, can function like a kind of momentary cure. In regards to Palamedes, the book says, "Et tant cante celui jour en tel maniere que mout s'en vait reconfortant et mout a son cuer en joie" (and he sang much that day in that manner he goes comforting himself much and his heart is filled with much joy)(V2 6.22). The emanating song then is, at least for a moment, for those unworthy knights, a comforting song.

On the other hand, the grail as a *source* of songs implies equally a paradox: the grail's imposing limits on speech. After Galaad in the *Queste* witnesses a spiritual "messe de la glorieuse Mere Dieu" (mass for the glorious Mother of God)(277), he is asked to approach the grail to see what he has "tant desirré a veoir" (desired so much to see)(277). Once he "regarde dedenz le saint Vessel" (looks into the holy Vessel)(277), he remarks, "ore voi ge tout apertement ce que langue ne porroit descrire ne cuer penser" (now I see quite openly what language could not describe nor heart think) (278). The implication is that this writing initiated

by the grail is itself so utterly alien, so radical in its alterity, that it can only be met with silence. In the *Tristan*, after the same mass, this time dedicated to "la Glorieuse Dame" (the Glorious Lady)(V2 9.137), Galaad remarks, "or voi je tout apertement ce que langhe mortel ne porroit descouvrir ne cuer penser" (now I see quite openly what mortal language would not be able to uncover nor heart think)(V2 9.137). If we take into account the amorous understanding of the quest in the *Tristan* then human language not only cannot "discover," that is, make sense of what is revealed but equally cannot compose a reaction. It also cannot "uncover" the veil that is paradoxically opened for the first time when we can finally see her face and her body.

Those knights, in the presence of the Iseut-Grail, equally discover the limits of language. Iseut becomes a figure difficult to describe with any accuracy. Their songs, though reflecting the grail song, reveal "mortal language" falling into conventions. She becomes a series of hyperbolic images that are Marian in origin: for Helies, the Saxon knight, she is "la rose et le lis et la biauté de tout le monde" (the rose, the lily and the beauty of all the world)(V2 6.138) and for Brunor, she is "la fleur, c'est la rose, ce est la lune entre les estoiles, c'est la dame de toutes les dames del monde" (the flower, the rose, the moon among the stars, the lady of all the ladies of the world)(V2 7.213). Palamedes also uses a biblical formula when describing Iseut. She is "la plus bele dame qui omques fust veüe! Roïne des roïnes et dame des dames!" (the most beautiful lady who ever was seen! Queen of queens and lady of ladies!) (V2 8.138). Conventional language is simply incapable of describing accurately her beauty and yet her effect can be felt. She generates texts that paradoxically express each knight's inability to fully describe her. In fact, both Kahedins and Palamedes sing the same identical lines in different lays to describe her beauty with no indication that either has ever heard the other's song: "Douche Yseut, des roïnes dame,/ Biautés du siecle, estoile et game" (Sweet Iseut, lady of queens, beauty

of the world, star, gem)(V2 1.163, vv. 33 and V2 7.24, vv. 53-4), they both sing. For a book so

aware of the art of abundant *interpolatio*, this repetition can only suggest a paucity of words, a

limit in terms of conventional expression. The *Tristan* then represents the way in which sexual

union is impossible and expression limited. And yet, while language cannot describe her, her

effects are discernable. She is real. The song that emanates from the vessel reveals that

presence. Any failure to connect with her as listener—for everyone except Tristan she is absent

while being present, the true position of the *dame sans merci* as Gower will describe it—reflects

a profound disjunction.

Still, the disjunction that ties love to an inadequate outpouring of song also reflects a

paradox that is found in the *matiere* that makes up the untranslated portions of the imagined

source of all Arthurian prose fiction, the Latin grail book found in Salisbury from which both the

Vulgate and the *Tristan* fictionally find their literary origins. If the grail generates a string of

quests whose failures produce that remarkable Latin book at Salsbury whose translations are

perpetually incomplete in the telling, then the Iseut-Grail equally generates an extraordinary

amount of literary and musical material that documents the impossible conditions for love's

perfection. The quest for the Holy Grail, within the context of the *Tristan*, can only be described

as a narrative event used to separate lovers, as Iseut complains when she denounces the "male

queste del Saint Graal" (the evil quest of the Holy Grail)(V2 7.40) for causing "grant damage a

moi et a maintes autres dames" (great loss to me and many other ladies)(V2 7.40). Iseut as the

grail is Iseut as the beloved separated, or more importantly, absent except for a voice always

reminding the lover of that absence. It is also, as we find in the song she places in the vessel, the

acknowledgement that something is lost, a *perte de joie*, an expulsion from *paradis* (V2 7.31) as

Palamedes describes it. With the overwhelming examples of dissatisfaction and sorrow that

structure the book, song in the *Tristan en prose* can be read as hope for overcoming that

structuring loss. The definition of a "droite queste" (right quest)(V2 7.102), according to the

book, is the attempt to recover what is lost "par defaute de cuer" (for failure of heart)(V2 7.102).

A song then is the same thing. It is initiated by loss but a loss that can be resolved through some

kind of hope expressed in the *dit* of the song. This can be heard when Tristan sings to the

demoiselle à la harpe who asks for a song:

> D'amours vient mon chant et mon plour,
> D'illuec prennent naissement.
> Ce fait ce que orendroit plour
> Et crie tres dolentement.
> Et quant je voy appertement
> Qu'elle me maine si a son tour
> Que je sui serfs, elle seigneur,
> Et en lui ay mon sauvement,
> Car je n'ay autre sauveour (V2 9.65 var, vv.1-9)
> (From love comes my song and my tears, from there they come to
> birth. This deed that I weep and cry very sweetly; and when I see
> openly that she summons me in turn then I am her servant, she my
> lord, and through her my salvation because I have no other saviour.)

Tristan's song takes an interesting turn in its shift from feudal terminology (*serf* and *seigneur*) to

the religious (*sers, seigneur*, *sauvement*, *sauveour*), pinning all his hope on his divine lady while

identifying in his love for her the origin of his song. Afterwards, the *Tristan* tells us, he proceeds

to sing the legendary *lay del Chevrefuel*, a song, according to Marie de France, he composed

"pur les paroles remembrer" (in order to remember her words)(111). Marie reveals that behind

the task of composing a song is the attempt to preserve one moment when their love was as

strong as the honeysuckle and the hazel tree to set apart the fear of not only forgetting but the

fear as well of being forgotten once separated.

Perfected union is associated with Iseut's grail song. That perfection is naturally one of

the religious terms used by the *Tristan* to validate a hermeneutical understanding of the grail

song. It refers to that exterior source present inside the vessel. If we can acknowledge a radical

exteriority that is represented within the grail books as either God or Iseut then we can

understand in a clearer fashion how the *Tristan* understands song. If we can compare all the

mysterious voices heard throughout the Vulgate once a knight is in the presence of the grail, then

we can understand how the *Queste*'s representation of God's disembodied voice outside of

human language is replicated, in the *Tristan*, again as Iseut's voice found deep in the interior of

her perfect song, a song most worthy knights will hear and respond to in kind with further songs.

They listen and hear a voice that gives voice to their own songs.

The song he hears from the vessel, however, is very different from the voice heard by the

grail knights who may hear her song and follow, desirous to see and know, but ultimately failing.

The fact that Tristan can have Iseut functions as a consoling fiction, an exception to the tragic

ethos of *fine amour*, the possibility of love's perfection, a possibility that the lyrical inserts, while

asserting the opposite, cannot deny: that love can be fulfilled, or to use the language of the grail,

achieved. This is why Robert de Boron described the grail as a slippery fish. Once the singer

takes hold of one idea—the grail as a song of hope—another appears that contradicts it. Indeed,

the *Tristan*, despite its insertion of songs, begins the grail quest with an overtly negative position

in regards to lyrical efficacy. After its interpolation of marvels from the *Queste*—the revelation

of the *siege perilleuse* and the floating stone with the sword—the *Tristan* then introduces an

anonymous *chevalier à la harpe* who suddenly appears in the court. The knight first reads a

lettre en vers addressed to Arthur warning him of his court's future destruction then he takes up a

harp to sing a lay on love and death. The opening lines vary depending on the version, whether

"Riens n'est qui ne viengne a sa fin" (There is nothing that does not come to its end)(V2 6.99) or

"N'est joie qi ne viengne a fin" (There is no joy that does not come to an end)(V1 4.101), the

latter spelling out overtly the end of any sexual union. If we set aside for a moment the fiction of

the *Tristan*, that there is one exceptional and symmetrical love defined *positively* through death–

the lovers do die "bras a bras et bouce a bouce" (arm in arm and mouth to mouth)(V2 9.83)—and

instead return to the desperation of the verse romances where death is a response to love's

dissymmetry, then for Tristan too, Iseut as grail may escape like Robert de Boron's fish. This

sobering possibility that his narrative success in the *Tristan en prose* really covers for a failure

narrated in the Post-Vulgate *Queste* or Iberic *Demandas*, prose romances, like the Vulgate,

without lyrics. There, Mark's abduction of Iseut from Joyeuse Garde is not answered as it is

done by the *Tristan*. Instead, the Post-Vulgate ends with Iseut alone in Cornwall and Tristan

lying in bed, dying from wounds received earlier. The Post-Vulgate *Queste* and the *Demandas*

return to the *Tristan*'s original verse sources, to a more harrowing experience of love as

seperation. In other words, they deny lyric's projection of comfort and hope.

3. Galaad and the Remedy of Song

That song can never fully resolve the fundamental catastrophe that is love is comparable

to the catastrophe of the grail. Many knights are destroyed by both. When thinking of the grail

as love, one cannot help but reflect on the number of deaths and suicides associated with that

quest. This contamination of the Vulgate's grail quest by the *Tristan*'s material alters the typical

understanding of Galaad as the *celestial* knight, a charcterization often absent from the *Queste*

interpolations. With further material added to the Vulgate interpolations, much of it new

adventures for Galaad, his role is less about the completion of a "spiritual" quest than the

resolution of the problem of love and song as it is formulated in the prosimetrum. Just as the

marvels of Logres disappear with the achievement of the grail, so does the power of song once

Tristan and Iseut achieve love together. There are no love lays after their death, only fractured, unmetrical songs of sorrow.[34] Galaad's role after her death will function as a kind of *remedia amoris* for those left behind, a cure for love's power.

When Galaad first arrives in the *Tristan*, there is a large amount of new anti-Quest and anti-Galaad material added in the middle of a *Queste* interpolation between the moment after Gauvain leaves Nasciens the hermit and before Galaad enters the *Foret Gaste* (56.3). Between these transitional scenes are 66 folios or 674 pages in the modern edition (V2 6.133-8.10) where Galaad's stature as the celestial knight of Christlike properties is systematically undermined. Not only is he confused with Tristan, he is also defeated by the worst knight, rides with the most violent, is accused multiple times of cowardice and is seemingly sidetracked into petty acts of vengeance that are associated with his kin group. He is also seduced by a song.

> Il escouta et oï prés de lui une damoisele chanter si doucement que
> c'estoit melodie a oiir. Il s'arresta au chant a la damoisele, car savoir
> vaura qui ele estoit et pour coi ele estoit arrestee en la forest pour
> chanter. En ce qu'il escoutoit encore et voloit aler cele part, il oï
> d'autre part une damoisele qui crioit forment a haut cri (…) si laira
> cele qui chante pour cele qui cri car bien crie conme cel qui a besoing.
> (V2 8.1)
> (He listened and heard near him a young lady singing so sweetly that it
> was a melody to listen to. He stopped for the young lady's song,
> because he will want to know who she was and why she stopped in the
> forest to sing. Even as he still listened and wanted to go in that
> direction, he heard elsewhere a young lady who screamed loudly with
> a high voice … so he will leave the one who sings for the one who

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[34] The *Tristan* does mention a flurry of poetic activity to describe each surviving character's response to the loss of Tristan at the end of the quest: "Et saichés que li roy Artu en fist ung grant lay, qui fut appellee Lay Royal, et monseignour Lancelot en fist ung autre, et mains autres cevaliers en firent autresi. Mesmement la roïne Genieuvre en fist ung et si saichez que chascun jour qu'ilz faisoient le dueil de monseignour Tristran, y estoient les laiz recordez" (And know that King Arthur made a great lay that was called the Royal Lay, and sir Lancelot made another and many other knights mide some. Even Queen Guinevere made one and know that each day they mourned sir Tristan, thereupon the lays were written down)(V2 9.141). Unfortunately, like Malory, the *Tristan* does not include them. However, later continuations seem to transcribe the songs, many out of meter, such as lays written by Dinadans, Mark and his court over Tristan's death. Richard Trachsler, ed., *La Suite du Tristan en prose du Ms f. fr. 24400 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* (Geneva: Droz, forthcoming) as well as his study *Clôtures du cycle arthurien: Etude et textes* (Geneva: Droz, 1996), pp. 195-236. See also Eilert Löseth, *Le Roman de Tristan, le Roman de Palamède et la Compilation de Rusticien de Pise: Analyse critique d'après les manuscrits de Paris* (Paris: Emile Bouillon, 1891), pp. 411-15.

> screams because she screams very much like one who is in need of
> help.)

This desire to know the origins of a song has already been described; a song has a biography that frames lyric and calls into existence what I have described as a contextual subject. That subjectivity comes about in the prosimetrum's mixing of narrative action and lyrical self-expression. Here, the book explicitly contrasts the two genres as voices: one a love song from the trouvère *grand chant courtois*, as Dragonetti called it, and the other a cry for help from romance. These represent the two genres competing for importance in the book: one verse and the other prose. The passage is a turning point in understanding how the *Tristan* will resolve its use of the Vulgate within the context of lyric insertions and the disappearance of the Iseut-Grail. Galaad, like every other knight, is entranced at first overhearing the song, before the screams of another woman spoil the melody. When Galaad stops listening to rescue the helpless lady, the prosimetrum for the first time prioritizes chivalric action over lyric complaint.

Still, song has the power to derail any chivalric quest. But as the work proceeds, those who are driven towards song are also driven towards greater and greater irrational and violent acts. As the *Tristan* inches closer to its finale, the anti-Grail material runs into conflict with some deeply ambivalent material regarding Tristan himself and his love for Iseut which can only be described as anti-Tristan in nature. Tristan, for example, thinking Habes is Palamides, kills him in cold blood "por l'amour de ma dame la roïne Yseut que tu aimmes" (for the love of my lady Queen Iseut whom you love)(V2 8.142). The most explicit critique is found in the V1 version of the quest, when the lovers are on board the *Nef de Joie* floating along a little river outside Corbenic. The Fisher King/Maimed King stops fishing to condemn Tristan:

> vos estes des bons chevaliers du monde, et por vostre bonne chevalerie
> et por vostre grant prouesce fuissiéz vos a loer sor toz les chevaliers
> erranz que je oucques ve veïsse, se ne fust solement ce que vos etes

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desloiaus envers vostre oncle roi Marc. Icelui fet vos avile et abesse
vostre lox et vostre pris durement. (V1 2.168)
(you are among the best knights of the world, and for your good
chivalry and for your great bravery you are praised over all the errant
knights that I have ever seen, if it wasn't solely for the fact that you are
disloyal towards your uncle King Mark. That act cheapens you and
lowers your fame and your worth severely.)

In this blistering critique, Tristan's reputation receives a black mark equal to Lancelot's. Tristan

is *desloiaus* to his lord in the same way Lancelot is "desloiaus" (V2 9.48) to Arthur.

Love takes on a darker hue as the prosimetrum procedes, a hue present all along but

masked by the proliferation of ornate songs and complaints. At one point Galaad accompanies

Tristan on the quest until he abandons his company when Tristan, to Galaad's horror, plans on

murdering Palamedes. This becomes a pattern. As Tristan becomes associated with a murderous

zeal inspired by the *dame-graal*—at one point he even rides with Gauvain, the knight who

initiated the quest and in its wake murders numerous knights—Galaad becomes more and more

attentive to the qualities of good chivalry. His pointed critiques are reinforced by a series of new

miracles added to the *Queste* interpolations. On the surface, these miracles not only end or

achieve the marvels of Logres but also appear to reinforce the same Christ-like qualities

described in the *Queste*. But like any interpolation from the *Queste*, these miracles need to be

read within the *Tristan*'s commitment to love and song as a prosimetrum.[35] But how does one

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[35] These new miracles are also found in the Post-Vulgate Quest. Bogdanow argued that the miracles come from the Post-Vulgate *Queste* and that the *Tristan* Quest interpolated material from both the Vulgate and Post-Vulgate versions. But a definitive dating of the two works is still far from settled. If we assume the miracles are original to the *Tristan*, then its author is working on two registers simultaneously: the monastic influence of the Vulgate *Queste* and a new Tristanian understanding of that material. If the miracle's origins are found in the Post-Vulgate Quest then they would seem to follow the same darker pattern already established with the Post-Vulgate's use of similar material from the *Lancelot* and the *Queste* but with a stronger commitment to lyric as prosimetrum. Unfortunately, the Post-Vulgate Quest is neither a tour de force, nor a radical reappraisal of the grail. Instead it harmonizes the meditations on sin in the Vulgate *Queste* with the cynicism of the Vulgate *Mort Artu* and the idea of love as a destructive force found perhaps in a hypothetical non-cyclical, pre-grail *Tristan*. Fanni Bogdanow, "Intertextuality and the Problem of the Relationship of the First and Second Versions of the Prose *Tristan* to the Post-Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*, Third Part of the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*" *Arthuriana* 12.2 (2002): 32-68 as well as "Un Nouvel examen des rapports entre la *Queste* post-vulgate et la *Queste* incorporée dans la deuxième version du *Tristan en prose*," *Romania* 118.1-2 (2000): 1-32 and "L'Invention du texte, intertextualité et le problème de la

achieve or bring to an end (*mener a fin*) love? The verse romances consider death as the brutal

consequence of believing in love's possibilities. But in the context of the *dame-graal*, Tristan

can achieve love and brings its dangerous motion to an end in Logres—and by extension, for us

all—with his own death and murder of Iseut when, in embracing her, he kills her in his death

grip. There will be no more love as it was loved by Tristan. We can attest to that fact when

reading the sordid conclusion of the Lancelot and Guinevere affair that encompasses the *Mort

Artu*. But within the context of the new grail, Galaad's miracles function as a kind of *remedia

amoris* or remedy of love. He cures all those left behind in Tristan and Iseut's wake. And he

does this by bringing song to an end.

The miracles as cures, however, begin before the Iseut-Grail leaves the scene. As Galaad

rides through the Forest Gaste in a scene created out of the *Queste*'s silence over other

adventures "qu'il mist a fin, dont li contes ne fet mie mencion" (that he brought to an end of

which the tale makes no mention)(195.22-23)—an explicit opening for the *Tristan* to create new

scenes out of the book's fictitious Latin "source"—he comes upon "la fontainne ki bouloit" (the

pool that boils)(V2 8.129), a *source* that boils because the head of Lancelot's grandfather is deep

below. The connotations of such burning are easy to grasp: Lancelot's furious love for

Guinevere, a love amplified into a horrifying dream of hell in the Post-Vulgate. But the

fontainne, as we saw in our discussion of *The Knight's Tale*, is also the defining location for

finding of songs in the *Tristan en prose*, not the traditional *locus amoenus* so prevalent in love

lyric.[36] Iseut is herself associated with with this boiling place as the "Fontainne et mireours de

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transmission et de la classification de manuscrits: Le Cas des versions de la *Queste del saint-Graal* post-Vulgate et du *Tristan en prose*," *Romania* 111.1-2 (1990): 121-40.

[36] Anne Berthelot, "Lyrisme et narrativité dans le *Tristan en prose*," in *Tristan-Studien: Die Tristan-Rezeption in der europäischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* (Reineke-Verlagi: Greifswald, 1993), pp. 7-14 and Marie-Luce Chénerie, "Le motif de la *fontaine* dans les romans arthuriens en vers des XIIe et XIIIe siècles" in *Mélange de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Monsieur Charles Foulon*, vol. 1 (Rennes: Université de Hauter Bretagne, 1980), pp 99-104, where she describes la *fontaine* as "une obsession" (104) in the

biauté" (source and mirror of all beauty)(V2 8.138) as Palamedes will praise her later. More

importantly, he tempers and refocuses the same fire associated with the *Tristan*'s reinterpretation

of the Holy Spirit as an inspiring poetic language that "escaufe les cuers de ciaus qui ont sa

parole" (burns the hearts of those who have his word)(V2 8.21); that is, he creates a poetic loop

which inspires those who are receptive to lyric's amorous conventions and produce new—

repetitive—songs for her, songs incapable of fully articulating her. After the miracle is achieved

and the boiling waters are both calmned and cooled, an old man appears to him and "canta messe

du Saint Esprit" (sang the mass of the Holy Spirit)(V2 8.130). But the man sings a different kind

of song, a mass, a song similar to Lancelot's at the end of the *Mort Artu* when "il chantoit

chascun jor messe" (201.30) or as the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* describes it: "Launcelot was prest

and mass song" (3827).[37] But the reader of the *Tristan* should be wary of such an obvious

religious intrusion into a decidedly secular work but here, this mass song seems less ironic and

more pointed. It is an alternative song to the one associated with lyric and its burning source.

Even Palamedes, after Tristan and Iseut's death, abandons his religion and his quest for

the *bête glatissant* or Questing Beast as Malory calls this alternative quest associated with Iseut,

and accompanies Galaad to Corbenic. Though there is already an amorous coloring to the grail

castle with Iseut dead and the *dame-graal* achieved, her beauty absent from the world, new

patterns emerge. In both the *Queste* and the *Tristan*, Galaad cures the *Roi Mehaingnié* or the

Maimed King by touching "ses gambes et ses quisses" (his legs and his thighs)(V2 9.120), body

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Tristan en prose. Francine Mora describes the rewriting of the space around the *fontaine* in the *Tristan* as a "sacred place consecrated to the god of Love's cult" in "Un *locus amoenus* revisité: La fontaine des chevaliers dans le *Tristan en prose*" in Francis Gingras, Françoise Laurent, Frédérique Le Nan and Jean-René Valette, eds. *« Furent les merveilles pruvees et les aventures truvees »: Hommage à Francis Dubost* (Paris: Champion, 2005), pp. 465-79 (qt. 478).

[37] Jean Frappier, ed. *La Mort le roi Artu: Roman du XIIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1996) and Larry D. Benson and Edward E. Forester, eds. *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1994).

parts associated with sexual wounds. Cured, the King shows Galaad a broken sword "qui se brisa en la quisse de Joseph Barimachie" (that was broken in the thigh of Joseph of Arimathea)(V2 9.121), a sexual wound that not only implicates Joseph of Arimathea but also explains the origins of his lays. Galaad takes the sword "et le joint ensamble" (and joins it together)(V2 9.121). By taking what is broken and bringing it together, the sexual connotations of Galaad's miracle is again not difficult to understand. We know from the *Tristan* that the true law or custom of Corbenic is the rule of sexual disjunction, that what is desired will never be achieved no matter how melodic the enchantments. That is what the magician Tanaburs discovers after he builds the grail castle and then loses his wife and what King Pelles' daughter Helaynne learns when she recognizes that she "n'avra jamais joie" (will never have joy)(V2 9.110) after Lancelot leaves her pregnant with a son, Galaad, then dies. Galaad's miracle is that the reality of love as incomplete, split in two, castrated, as the traditional image of the wound implies, is resolved by his miraculous gestures. And the result? As with the burning water, the prosimetrum finishes Galaad's achievements with a new song.

> Si oient plusieurs vois qui cantoient mout doucement, ne il n'est nus estrumens, ne harpe ne rote ne viele ne melodie ne gigue ne champenelles, ne nus estrumens qui sambler li peüst, que tous ne fust riens a oiir envers ches cans que cele vois cantoient. (V2 9.122)
> (Then they hear several voices that sing most sweetly. There is no instruments, no harp, nor rote, nor fiddle, nor organ, nor gigue, nor small bells, nor any instruments that can be imagined, that in all there was nothing to hear in the service of this song than the voices singing.)

What is most striking in this description of music without "terrestrial" accompaniment, this "spiritual" music without music, if you will, is the exclusion of the harp, an instrument associated with love songs; the same harp that Tristan first played in the beginning of the book when dying of that "plaie si estrange" (wound so unusual), that "merveilleuse bleceüre" (wonderous hurt)(C 1.310) that sent him in search of Iseut on the legendary boat to Ireland and

began to "harper si doucement que nus ne l'oïst qui volentiers ne l'escotast" (play the harp so sweetly that no one who heard it did not willingly listen to it)(C 1.311). From the book we know others do overhear songs and that often those songs act as temporary balms for the reality of love's horrifying destructiveness. But here, the old singer— remember it is the Maimed King who sings the *lay de Joseph d'Aramathie* earlier—is cured.

One could argue that the *Tristan* creates a fantastic solution to love once its heroes have left behind any and all possibilities for love's achievement; that the song of hope sung by Iseut's suitors can turn into a remedy once she is dead and the grail dissappears. But Palamedes' song also ends in death despite Galaad's spiritual music and Lancelot's liturgical chants. In a final disturbing image of the vessel, Palamedes dies with his mouth full of blood, the final victim of Gauvain's murderous rampage. Perhaps this is why Malory is silent about songs. His book makes mention of them, as when Sir Kehydius, in love with Isolde, "pryvaly wrote unto her lettirs and baladis of the most goodlyeste that were used in tho dayes" (9.17) but the quality of these *ballades*—a nice fifteenth-century revision of the thirteenth-century *lay*—are left unrecorded. No *dit* or lyrics are supplied, perhaps because Malory, unlike Chaucer in his rewriting the Petrarchan sonnet, had no desire to translate the *Tristan*'s lays into the *formes fixes* fashionable at his time. Or perhaps, Malory, as a Post-Vulgate writer, found something terrible about the promises songs tend to offer; perhaps he judged that they were better left mentioned but untranslated, as he leaves untranslated the *Tristan* Quest for the more harmless Vulgate *Queste*.

Instead of facing love's unfulfilling, destructive reality, song opens another: the hope that love can in fact achieve union. But with Galaad, the consoling nature of song is transformed into the idea of a miraculous song, a music that is not music, a music not associated with the wound

of love, and as such, a music that can resolve once and for all the fatal qualities of that love. When Palamedes is dying in that horrifying embodiment of the grail, his final words are a strange consolation for the book, a restoration of the Vulgate's seeming orthodoxy. Instead of crying for Iseut, Palamedes calls for "Jhesucrist, fontainne de pitié" (Jesus Christ, source of pity)(V2 9.132), the same "Fonainnes des fontainnes" (source of sources)(V2 8.129) Galaad prays for at the boiling waters.

This music that undoes the death associated with the *dame-graal* is finally heard after Galaad's own death. In the *Queste*, Boors and Perceval watch a hand reach down and seize the vessel and the lance and carry them away "tot amont vers le ciel" (right up towards the sky)(279.5). The *Tristan* includes a telling addition:

> les compaignons virent une grant main qui saisi le Saint Vaissel et la
> lance et les emporta, voyant tous ceulx qui la estoient, en autre monde,
> a moult joie et melodie. (V2 9.137)
> (the companions saw a great hand that seized the Holy Vessel and the
> lance and carried them, all those who were there seeing, to another
> world, with great joy and melody.)

The grail quest in the *Tristan* ends with music but a music indicating another world, a world quite distinct from the lyrical one Tristan and Iseut's death celebrates after Tristan is mortally wounded by Mark while singing to her. This new song, almost spiritual in nature—as the *dame-graal* was also *almost* spiritual in nature—is described in the Post-Vulgate as a "grant chant" (a great song), a "merveille d'oïr, et la plus douce chose du monde" (a wonder to hear, and the sweetest thing in the world)(3.623)[38] Like the grail song, it is the privilege of a select few capable of hearing a song or melody without the accompaniment of the harp, that is without any sexual burden. The harp is always an erotic instrument as when Iseut and Tristan fall asleep

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[38] Fanni Bogdanow, ed. *La version post-vulgate de la Queste del Saint Graal et de la Mort Artu*, 5 vols. (Paris: Picard, "Société des anciens textes français," 1991-2001).

together in their *Nef de Joie*, "en la douçour et en la melodie du lay et du son de la harpe" (in the sweetness and melody of the lay and the sound of the harp)(V1 2.141); the same manner in which they will die.   Such music is also limited to only a few.

The nine liturgically inspired songs that make up the Middle English *Lover's Mass*, beginning with the lovers entry "Tofore the famous riche auter/ Of the myghty God of Love" (2-3) in its *Introibo* to the collective prayer or *Oryson*, hope otherwise. Like the Tristan's lays, they promise much *servyse* in "Love Court" (31) in exchange for mercy, joy, pity and peace as a release from the "hoote fyrs" (109) that "brenneth" (110) each lover's heart. But the prose *Epistle* reveals lyrical futility. The "secre trouthe of Trystram and Ysoude" (184-85), its private intimacy bespeaks a reality, a truth kept out of commonly shared knowledge, that love in general offers "smale gerdouns" (185) or rewards as Palamedes discovered, instead of the "grant guerredon" (V2 8.20 from *Queste* 63.13) promised for those worthy of the god. This is why the *Lover's Mass* abruptly ends in a prosaic realization, that the lover "seemeth amonges all…the most forsake, and ferthest set behynde of grace" (186-87). That's why the work can go no further: no good news, no *offertorium*, and therefore no *secreta*, because the grail figured as love's eucharist is not there. Still, its absence generates at least the beginnings of a liturgy of song, but it would have to be a Galaad, cognizant of the grail's exclusivity, who could alter the *Mass*' dejected lover through a new song. And as in the *Tristan*, it is in prose that an overarching theory of song is ultimately formulated and lyric's limits expressed.

CHAPTER THREE

LYRICAL GOWER AND THE *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*

A "lyrical Gower" seems incongruous with the way Gower has traditionally been

approached. While much has been written on Gower as the moral, ethical and political author of

a variety of didactic books written in the three languages of England, very little has been written

on Gower as a writer invested in the lyric tradition, even though his *Confessio Amantis* shows

clear signs of the influence of Machaut and the *dits amoureux*, those "long French love poem

with intercalated lyrics" to quote James Wimsatt.[1] To be sure, C.S. Lewis and John Fisher both

situated Gower within that tradition.   Lewis could hear snatches of songs in Gower, whether in a

random couplet or in the *alba* sung by Cephalous in book 4. However, he attributed this musical

effect to Gower's conscious use of the simple style as opposed to Chaucer's "high poetical

language" clearly inspired by French poetry.[2] Fisher equally recognized a lyrical tradition at

work in Gower but saw it subordinate to his narrative concerns. While Fisher can identify clear

allusions to poems by Machaut, Grandson and Froissart in Gower's ballade sequences, he

nevertheless describes these writings as early forays emerging not from within the French lyric

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[1] James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993), p. 53.
[2] C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1936), pp. 201-205 (qt. 201).

tradition that inspired Chaucer but from the London *puy* of the merchant class.[3] Scholars now

doubt whether such English societies organized around the crowning of a prince for the best

chaunsoun reale, that is, a song set to music, survived into the 14th Century.[4] Furthermore,

while recognizing the obvious influence of Machaut's transformation of the *Roman de la rose*

tradition on the *Confessio Amantis*, Fisher argues the book shows a decisive turning away from

the "sterile" *dits amoureux*, in favor of more important social themes in continuity with the more

serious *Vox Clamantis* and *Mirour de l'Omme*.[5] Even R. F. Yeager, who like a growing number

of scholars recognize that Gower's *Confessio* must be read as responding to the French *dits*, still

insists that Gower's book be read as a repudiation of the "dangerous writing of the courtly lyric"

by "irresponsible lyricists" like Machaut and Deschamps.[6] And on a certain level, the *Traitié de*

Mariage, a ballade cycle that follows the *Confessio* in many manuscripts and even describes the

book as a "dit" written "en Englois," seems to valorize this argument.[7] A fixed form associated

with French love poetry, the *Traitié*'s ballades present a poetic treatise not on *amours* but on

faithful marriage.

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[3] John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University, 1964), pp. 74-83.

[4] Anne F. Sutton, "Merchants, Music and Social Harmony: the London Puy and its French and London Contexts, circa 1300," *London Journal* 17.1 (1992): 1-17. For surviving documents from the thirteenth-century London puy see Henry Thomas Riley, ed. *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum et Liber Horn*, vol. 2, part 1 (London: Longman, 1860).

[5] Fisher, *John Gower*, pp. 188-91, 208, 214, 241-43.

[6] For the influence of the *dits* on the *Confessio* see John Burrow, *Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland and the "Gawain" Poet* (London: Penguin, 1971) and "The Portrayal of Amans in the *Confessio Amantis*" in A. J. Minnis, ed. *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), pp. 5-24; William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1994), pp. 387-88, 395-98; Nicolette Zeeman, "The Verse of Courtly Love in the Framing Narrative of the *Confessio Amantis*," *Medium Aevum* 90.2 (1990): 222-40; Kurt Olsson, *John Gower and the Structures of Conversion: A Reading of the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), pp. 38-39, 243-46; Ardis Butterfield, "*Confessio Amantis* and the French Tradition" in Siân Echard, ed. *A Companion to Gower* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 165-80; R. F. Yeager, "John Gower's Audience: The Ballades," *Chaucer Review* 40.1 (2005): 81-105; and Peter Nicholson, *Love and Ethics in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005), pp. 9-46. Quotes from R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 101, 112.

[7] R. F. Yeager, ed. *John Gower: The French Ballades* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2011).

The idea of a socially-serious Gower contributes to an English literary history that presupposes a lightness in French literature, especially coming from Machaut and his followers, followed by more serious poetry made possible by more important influences—in Gower's case, theology and the ancients, and in Chaucer's case, the Italians.[8] Such chronologies appeal to a notion of progress but do not explain Gower's—and for that matter, Chaucer's—ongoing engagement with French forms. Instead, a variety of explanations are given to preserve English writers from the charge of frivolity still attached to the Middle French poets in Middle English studies despite at least twenty years of serious revisionary work in French and musicology. John Bowers, for example, vividly describes Chaucer's potentially terrifying experiences as a French prisoner of war then has Chaucer using French literary models under cultural "duress" and treating them as hostages in his own English literary prison in order to "free himself from sterile literary conventions in a push toward greater psychological and colloquial realism."[9] Candace Barrington situates the writing of the *Confessio* within the context of Richard II's difficult rule and aesthetic preferences. Compelled to join in the "games" of Richard's court, Gower takes on the "disguise" of a "courtly versifier" to influence Richard to better rule.[10] But Gower may have ended his writing career contentedly writing French ballades, or writing French ballades while

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[8] For example, Spearing argues that Chaucer, in writing romance, rejects the sprawling French "polyphonic" structure for an Italian elegance and simplicity, an argument difficult to believe when faced with Chaucer's persistent use of *digressio*. A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985). However, there has been some push back. Butterfield, for example, points out that Boccaccio and his Neopolitan context was deeply inspired by French models. Even Dante has been connected with a sonnet sequence based on the *Roman de la rose*, the *Fiore*. Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 296-98 and Santa Casciani and Christopher Kleinhenz, eds. *The Fiore and the Detto d'Amore: A Late 13th-Century Italian Translation of the Roman de la Rose Attributable to Dante* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2000). See as well Kathryn L. Lynch's discussion of the "problem of chronology" in "Dating Chaucer," *Chaucer Review* 42.1 (2007): 1-22.

[9] John W. Bowers, "Chaucer after Retters: The Wartime Origins of English Literature" in Denise N. Baker, ed. *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War in French and English Cultures* (Albany: State University of New York, 2000), pp. 91-125 (qts 98, 101).

[10] Candace Barrington, "Personas and Performance in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Chaucer Review* 48.4 (2014): 414-43.

composing his English book, complicating arguments for Gower's evolving seriousness of purpose.

Since Fisher's literary biography, there has been a noticeable push back against the imposition of a serious or "moral Gower" onto the *Confessio Amantis*.[11] Not only is this received tradition anachronistic, since Chaucer's commendation in the *Troilus* was written in 1386 *before* Gower even began composing the *Confessio* in 1387; but the book's very frame, comical in nature, seems to undermine any integrity between Genius' *exempla* and his moral interpretations.[12] Character studies of Genius also reveal that much of the moral framework found in the *Miraur de l'Omme*, for example, becomes suspect once re-framed in the *Confessio*.[13] In the most complete critique, James Simpson, by situating Gower in the same tradition as Ovid, the *Roman de la rose* and Alain de Lille, finds contradictions and disunity fundamental to the very structure of the *Confessio*.[14] As for the epithet "moral Gower," Elizabeth Allen argues that it has to be read first within the context of the *Troilus* itself, that Gower's morality acts as a rhetorical foil for an "insistently ambiguous poem," and then later as

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[11] *Troilus* 5.1856. Larry D. Benson, ed. *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Minnis describes Chaucer's epitaph as "a stick with which to beat its author." Alistair Minnis, "'Moral Gower' and Medieval Literary Theory" in Minnis, ed. *Gower's Confessio Amantis*, pp. 50-78.

[12] Rosemary Woolf, "Moral Chaucer and Kindly Gower" in Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell, eds. *J.R.R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller: Essays in Memoriam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 221-45 and Anthony E. Farnham, "The Art of High Prosaic Seriousness: John Gower as Didactic Raconteur" in Larry D. Benson, ed. *The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 161-73 as well as Burrow, *Ricardian Poetry*; Winthrop Wetherbee, "Genius and Interpretation in the *Confessio Amantis*" in Arthur Groos, ed. *Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Keske* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), pp. 241-60; and Calin, *The French Tradition*, pp. 386-98.

[13] Winthrop Wetherbee, "Classical and Boethian Tradition in the *Confessio Amantis*" in Echard, *Companion to Gower*, pp. 181-96; Georgiana Donavin, "Rhetorical Gower: Aristotelianism in the *Confessio Amantis*'s Treatment of 'Rethorique'" in Malte Urban, ed. *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), pp. 155-73; Matthew W. Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower: Politics and Personae in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014). However, there is a critical tradition of recouping the idea of a moral Gower within the framework of Genius' problematic exempla. See for example, Charles Runacres, "Art and Ethics in the 'Exempla' of 'Confessio Amantis'" in Minnis, *Gower's Confessio Amantis*, pp. 106-34 and Olsson, *John Gower*.

[14] James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alain of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

an example of poetry that rebukes the kind of flat, "lawyer-like" didactic and moralistic interpretations rehearsed by the *Canterbury Tales*' Man of Law.[15] "Moral Gower" she argues, evokes a complex relationship between reader and text where moral predictability in a tale turns upon the reader's own desire for predictable readings, implicating readerly habits and generic expectations. Finally, Eleanor Johnson connects Gower's decision to write a prosimetrum with its mixture of English and Latin verse with Latin prose glosses, a genre she considers essentially Boethian in origin and protreptic in character, with a pointed critique of the very ethical or didactic literature the genre demands.[16] Despite such necessary and subtle correctives, "moral Gower" persists as a powerful point of reference for the book, obscuring the traditional category of lyric found there as well.[17]

Reading the *Confessio Amantis* from the perspective of love poetry changes one's orientation. The English book reveals much when read not only within the context of the mixed genre, but more specifically, as William Calin argues, as a sophisticated critique of love

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[15] Elizabeth Allen, "Chaucer Answers Gower: Constance and the Trouble with Reading," *ELH* 64.3 (Fall 1997): 627-55 (qts. 628, 641).

[16] Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[17] Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower: Language, Sex, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004) and "Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Natural Morality and Vernacular Ethics" in Urban, *John Gower*, pp. 135-53; Hilary E. Fox, "'Min Herte is Growen into Ston': Ethics and Activity in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Comitatus* 36 (2005): 15-40; Misty Schieberle, " 'Thing which Man mai noght Areche': Women and Counsel in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Chaucer Review* 42.1 (2007): 91-109; Peter Nicholson, "Irony v. Paradox in the Confessio Amantis" in Elisabeth Dutton, John Hines and R. F. Yeager, eds. *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Translation and Tradition* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 206-16; Ellen S. Bakalian, "Using Reason to Change their Worlds: The Tale of Rosiphelee and the Tale of Alceone in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*" in Kathleen A. Bishop, ed. *Standing in the Shadow of the Master?: Chaucerian Influences and Interpretations* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), pp. 82-112 and T. Matthew N. McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue: Ovid, Lay Religion and English Poetry in the Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011); Leonard Koff, "Gower before Chaucer: Narrative and Ethics in 'The Tale of Tereus'" in R. F. Yeager and Brian W. Gastle, eds. *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry of John Gower* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2011), pp. 83-90; Carol Jamison, "John Gower's Shaping of 'The Tale of Constance' as an Exemplum contra Envy" in Richard G. Newhauser and Susan Ridyard, eds. *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins* (Woodbridge, England: York Medieval, 2012), pp. 239-59; Lynn Shutters, "Confronting Venus: Classical Pagans and Christian Readers in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Chaucer Review* 48.1 (2013): 38-65.

language *within* that tradition, not without.[18] The problem with reading Gower as ethical or moral, or even as parody of the *Consolatio* tradition as Johnson suggests, is the orientation one is compelled to assume when reading him. The reader's position, instead of the poet's, becomes paramount when personal conversion or political reform is the expectation. Allen's comments about Book 7, the most public sequence in the *Confessio* because it evokes the political *speculum principum* or Mirror of Princes, are worth considering: Genius' exempla, she writes, "are embedded in a courtly context that mediates their exemplary application to the public world evoked in the book's Prologue."[19] This amatory discourse not only colors our understanding of Genius' use of exempla but also prevents us from reading the *Confessio* as purely didactic. The *Confessio Amantis* then must be read from within an amatory tradition that includes not only the lover's confessions—it is Genius himself who demands that all true lovers confess in the *Roman de la rose*—but also elaborate complaints and songs.[20] Even the mirror that forms the conceptual basis for Book 7, the most political of the *Confessio*'s books, is found as well in Guillaume de Machaut's most private *Voir Dit*, a prosimetrum known to Gower, composed of narrative verse, prose letters and love songs about an old writer, Guillaume, in love with his young admirer Toute Belle.[21] In using the Mirror of Princes genre, Gower reflects not necessarily a public discourse but rather Machaut's own meditation on aging and writing. In doing so, Gower presents himself as a poet struggling not so much with moral questions as literary ones, interrogating the very conventions that make up amorous poetry.

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[18] Calin, *The French Tradition*, p. 388.

[19] Elizabeth Allen, *False Fables and Exemplary Truth in Later Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 67.

[20] Nature offers a "pardon plenier" (19400) for all in Love's service who "bien confesser se savront" (194002) by sending them Genius. And before revealing Nature's mirror, Genius advises all lovers, "pensez de vous bien confessier" (19897). Armand Strubel, ed. *Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun: Le Roman de la rose: Edition d'après les manuscrits BN 12786 et BN 378* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1992).

[21] Butterfield has found allusions to the *Voir Dit* in Gower's *Cinkante Balades*. See *Familiar Enemy*, pp. 247-61 and "Afterwards: Forms of Death." *Exemplaria* 27.1-2 (Spring/Summer 2015): 167-82.

1. The Political as Amorous

Though an amorous and literary argument can be made confidently about the *Confessio*, Book 7 presents a problem. As an important philosophical and political digression, it demands attention because it seems to lie outside the dominion of Venus' law. With the lyric tradition that supports the *dits amoureux* momentarily suspended, moral readers of Gower have found in Genius' *speculum principum* a way to harmonize the *Confessio* with the Gower's previous didactic works. And yet, like the inclusion of religious material in the *Tristan en prose*, the inclusion of public material inside an English *dit* cannot be taken at face value, especially when love poetry and poetry anthologies can include the *colors* of politics and philosophy. In other words, love is quite adept at exploiting the language of politics.

In Machaut's *Voir Dit*, politics is equally framed by an amorous discourse. In that prosimetrum, the *speculum principum* is transformed into a game called "Le roy qui ne ment." In this medieval variation of our own "truth or dare," a game with an equally flirtatious component, one player is designated the king whose only duty is to answer truthfully any playful question posed by the other players.[22] In Machaut, the "king who does not lie" functions as a playful warrant for the veridical quality of his book of truth or *Voir Dit*. Late medieval French and English collections of the *demandes d'amours* or question and answer games on the topic of love give us an idea of how much Machaut alters both the *speculum* and the *Roy qui ne ment* and how fully Gower absorbs his alterations.

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[22] Green argues that games like "le roy qui ne mente" and "Truth or Dare" provide "an acceptable vehicle for bringing young people of both sexes together and allowing them a degree of social, even sexual, intimacy," especially within "periods of moral restraint when all communication between the sexes was heavily chaperoned" (213). Richard Firth Green, "*Le Roi qui ne ment* and Aristocratic Courtship" in Keith Busby and Erik Kooper, eds. *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), p. 211-225. For a survey of the game in French literature and possibly in one ecclesiastical injunction in England, see Ernest Langlois, "Le jeu du Roi qui ne ment et le jeu du Roi et de la Reine" in *Mélanges Chabaneau: Volume offert à Camille Chabaneau à l'occasion du 75e anniversaire de sa naissance (4 mars 1906) par ses élèves, ses amis et ses admirateurs* (Erlangen: F. Junge, 1907), pp. 163-73.

Often in the collections, questions are first framed by conventional addressee clauses,

such as the widespread "Beau Sire, je vous demande" or the English "Fayre Sir, I aske you." [23]

There is also a more elaborate but rare address that focuses specifically on the *Roy qui ne ment*:

"Dame, je vous require et prye moult amyablement par la force du jeu et par la foy que vous

devez au Roy qui ne ment," rendered in English as "Madame louyngly I pray you and require

you be the strengthe of the game, and be the feythe that ye owe to the kinge that fayleth not, that

ye wylle telle me." Instead of opening with one of these conventional formulas, Guillaume

opens with an address to the king that is more in keeping with the advice of a *speculum*

principium.

> Roys tu dois ester veritables
> Justes loiaus et charitables
> Et bien amer tes bons amis
> Et fort hair tes annemis
> Car trop fait blasmer li homs
> Qui est crueus comme lioms
> En temps de pais a son amy
> Et courtois a son anemy
> Meesmement en temps de guerre (5317-25)[24]
>
> (King, you must be truthful, just loyal and charitable, and love well
> your good friends and strongly hate your enemies because man does
> wrong who is cruel like a lion to his friend in times of peace, and
> courteous to his enemy even in times of war)

Guillaume then goes on to advise the king on the importance of truth, honor and justice as

opposed to anger, favor, pity and even love, when weighing a decision. He also extols the use of

just power, generosity, honoring women, honest living, a good conscience, the love of God and

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[23] Leslie C. Brook, ed. *Two Late Medieval Love Treatises: Heloise's Art d'Amour and a Collection of Demandes d'Amour* (Exeter: Oxbow Books, 1993), p. 91; James Woodrow Hassell, Jr., ed. *Amorous Games: A Critical Edition of Les Adevineaux Amoureux* (Austin: University of Texas, 1974), p. 157; Margaret Felberg Levitt, ed. *Les demandes d'amour: Edition critique* (Montreal: CERES, 1995), p. 275 and W. L. Braekman, ed. *The "Demaundes off Love": A Middle English Prose Version (1487) of the French Game 'au roy qui ne ment"* (Brussels: OMIREL, Scripta, 1982), pp. 23-49, 71.

[24] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ed. *Guillaume de Machaut: Le Livre dou Voir Dit (The Book of the True Poem)* (New York: Garland, 1998).

of chivalry, the defense of country, good companionship, virtuous counselors, and an open door policy for all his subjects, especially those "qui te feront demande" (who will make you requests)(5376), as well as the avoidance of avarice, liars, and liegeman whose loyalty is bought by silver. Finally, his *demande* is prefaced by a complaint that reflects the contemporary concerns also found in Gower's prologue: taxation, the scarcity of wheat and wine, the war with England, pillaging, brigands, disease and an unfavorably cold winter.

Machaut's politicization of the *demande* genre paves the way for Gower. In the *Voir Dit*, we soon recognize that these contemporary political concerns actually refer to Guillaume's own fears of visiting his love Toute Belle in person because of the said plague, the weather and marauding troops. Calin has made much of Machaut's parody of romance as he turns the brave young lover into an old coward.[25] The result is recognizably funny, not just because the king laughs at the old lover's ultimate request that he finally be able to see Toute Belle, but because the request is inherently inappropriate to the game by virtue of its mixture of the political and the personal. When Guillaume apologizes for how long he has been talking, he notes quickly that "Mon songe excuse ma parole" (5450) (My dream excuses my speech). The king's response is equally long – though he promises to be brief – including exempla from the Bible and Ovid as well as a history of some of the same branches of knowledge we find in Gower. Love and the dream vision make such political digressions possible.

This mixture of love and the *speculum*, making love public and the political amorous, can also be found in a unique collection of Gower's shorter work, the Trentham manuscript or London, BL Additional MS 59495. Copied under his own supervision, this early English

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[25] William Calin, *A Poet at the Fountain: Essays on the Narrative Verse of Guillaume de Machaut* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1974), pp. 181-82.

example of a single-author anthology in the style of Machaut, is made up of a mixture of Latin verse dedications and benedictions, an English *speculum* in *septains* or rhyme royal advising the king to choose peace over war and two French ballade sequences, the *Cinkante balades*, a poetic cycle describing a love affair in fifty ballades and one chant royal, and the *Traitié*, a ballade sequence dedicated to faithful marriage.[26] Between the two is an Ovidian inspired tribute in Latin to another kind of king, Cupid, whose assaults on lovers bring no peace. The manuscript ends with two short Latin poems: one, an oxymoronic description of love in the tradition of Alain de Lille and the *Roman de la rose* and the other, a blind Gower's farewell to writing. What is most surprising is the way Trentham seems to respond to Henry IV's first tumultuous year with an outburst of love poetry. Reflective perhaps of what Paul Strohm has described as a "'Lancastrian' style of advice," self-protective admonitions that never openly acknowledge usurpation, regicide, domestic rebellion and violent reactions, love becomes a metaphor to describe the state of the realm with love poetry becoming the vehicle.[27]

As a whole, the manuscript frames Henry as a lover, first pleading for England's approving reception to his claims, then railing against the "fals jangle et le tresfals conspire/ De mesdisantz" (the false chatter and the thoroughly false conspiracy of slanderers)(25.3-4) while parrying direct accusations of illegitimacy voiced by the lady.[28] Her accusation, "O tu, mirour des mutabilitées,/Des fals amantz en toi l'image est peinte" (Oh, you mirror of mutabilities. In

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[26] Sobecki describes the manuscript as a "rushed presentation copy," begun after Henry IV's coronation with the intention of convincing the new king to extend Richard II's truce with France. But when Henry unexpectedly confirmed the treaty in May 1400, the idea of a luxurious presentation copy suddenly lost its purpose. Sebastian Sobecki, "*Ecce patet tensus*: The Trentham Manuscript, *In Praise of Peace*, and John Gower's Autograph Hand," *Speculum* 90.4 (October 2015): 925-59.

[27] Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1998, 2nd ed. 2006), p. 174

[28] For a similar approach to Trentham, see Arthur Bahr, "Reading Codicological Form in John Gower's Trentham Manuscript," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 33 (2011): 219-62 as well as its revision in *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2013), pp. 209-54.

you is painted the image of false lovers)(42.17-18) cuts to the royal bone if we hear, as in the

Tristan, one register, the amorous, overlapping with another, the political.[29] Cupid as king is not

a comforting image of stability. Luckily, the mirror the lady holds up to the king transforms into

another, the mirror of princes, while the faithful marriage exhorted in the *Traitié* becomes

faithfulness to his people.[30] Throughout the mansucript, love, glossed as "pax bellica" (warlike

peace)(3.1) in the short poem "Amor est" is contrasted with "charité, withouten whos assent/ The

worldes pes mai never wel be tried" (180-81) in "In Praise of Peace" which opens Trentham.

Here, love, whether *amor* or *caritas*, seems to shield the political and a potential over-reaction

from the king himself. Unfortunately, the manuscript's ending with a tired and blind Gower

setting aside his pen with hopes that the kingdom will prosper bolsters readings of a "moral

Gower." The arrangement of the Trentham manuscript then seems, on the surface, to strengthen

political readings of the *Confessio*.[31] Any love poetry contained within loses its specificity for a

larger public good.

But we are trying to clear a space for a "lyric Gower," where love poetry transforms the

political, and public poetry becomes intimate in the same way the sacred is rewritten as the

amorous in the *Tristan en prose*, a book Gower also knew. In British Library Royal MS 16 II, an

English manuscript compiled for Arthur, the young Prince of Wales, we find such an example.

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[29] All quotations from Trentham come from R. F. Yeager, ed. *John Gower: The Minor Latin Works* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2005) and *The French Balades*. See Candace Barrington's comments on how the manuscript has been mutilated by editions in "The Trentham Manuscript as Broken Prosthesis: Wholeness and Disability in Lancastrian England," *Accessus* 1.1 (2013): 1-33.

[30] Sobecki argues that the marriage is between England and France since peace before Henry's usurpation was dependent on the marriage of Richard II and the very young Isabelle of Valois. Sobecki, "*Ecce patet tensus*," pp. 948-49.

[31] Russell A. Peck, "The Politics and Psychology of Governance in Gower: Ideas of Kingship and Real Kings," in Siân Echard, ed. *A Companion to Gower* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 215-38; Yoshiko Kobayashi, "Principis Umbra: Kingship, Justice and Pity in John Gower's Poetry" in R. F. Yeager, ed. *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2007), pp. 71-103; and Andrea Boboc, "Se-duction and Sovereign Power in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Book V" in Dutton, *Trilingual Poet*, pp. 126-38.

There, love seems to find its private expression through political metaphor similar in the way

trouvère poetry makes use of feudal relations to describe amorous aspirations.[32] Inside this

compilatio, we find a new arrangement of Charles of Orleans' mixed French book; a French

translation of the first book of Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* but attributed here to Abelard's

Heloise who is instructing a young male "disciple, qui Gaultier ot nom"; a collection of

demandes d'amour in both prose and verse; and finally another prosimetrum, a mirror of princes,

called the *Grace Entiere sur le fait du gouvernement d'un prince*.[33] This amorous environment

cannot but contribute to a private, rather than public, reading of the mirror of princes, especially

when Heloise herself is concerned with how to "maintenir et gouverner entre les vrays amans

(…) sans ester blecié des darts d'Amours" (maintain and govern among true lovers…without

being wounded by the darts of Love).[34] The potential for rational self-government in following

the precepts of an *ars amoris* is parallel to that of the mirror of princes.   And yet hope and

despair, as represented in Charles' own mixed book, and the witty calculations seen in the

demandes, bookend Heloise's own conflicting doctrines. Finally, the collection of *demandes*

evokes love as a kingdom with a responsive monarch.[35]

      Kingship's role in questions of love finds its parallel in the *Confessio*. As in Machaut,

the *Confessio*'s seventh book also seems to be a digression "not in the register/ Of Venus" (7.19-

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[32] For examples of feudal colors see Roger Dragonetti, *La technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise: Contribution à l'étude de la rhétorique médiévale* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), pp. 61-77, 324-25. For a discussion of the lady as feudal lord see as well Peter Haidu, "Text and History: The Semiosis of Twelfth-Century Lyric as Sociohistorical Phenomenon (Chrétien de Troyes: 'D'Amors qui m'a tolu')" *Semiotica* 33.1-2 (1981): 1-62.

[33] For a discussion of the manuscript see Timothy Hobbs, "Prosimetrum in *Le Livre dit Grace Entiere sur le fait du gouvernement d'un Prince*, the Governance of a Prince treatise in British Library MS Royal 16 F ii" in D. A. Trotter, *Littera et Sensus: Essays on Form and Meaning in Medieval French Literature Presented to John Fox* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1989), pp, 49-62 as well as Brook, *Love Treatises* (quote, p. 35), Felberg-Levitt, *Demandes d'amour*, pp. 41-43, and John Fox, ed. *Charles d'Orléans: Choix de poésies: Editées d'après le ms Royal 16 F II du British Museum* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1973), pp. viii-xxiii.

[34] Brook, *Love Treatises*, p. 35.

[35] "Dame, je vous demande et prye par la force de jeu et du royaulme ou nul ne nulle ne doit mentir, dittes moy verité" etc. Brook, *Love Treatises*, pp. 84-5 and Felberg-Levitt, *Demandes d'amour*, p. 358.

20) as Genius notes, but on the "Pratique" (7.41) of good kingship.[36] The fact that this digression, this *speculum principum*, is placed within the context of a lover's confession about his sufferings under his lady highlights the fact that Aristotle, the source or authority for this political digression, mirrors Amans' situation as lover. Given in Book 6 as an example of men "put under" (6.99) by love, Aristotle is exemplary not only for his foolishness—Alexander's lady famously rides him like a horse—but also for his old age. In another poem, the thirteenth-century mixed-verse *Lai d'Aristote*, Alexander's "mestre chanu et pale" (old and pale master) (176) is in fact shocked to discover that he is falling in love, that all his scholarship is immune to *her* voice as she prances outside his study, in a garden, singing songs to seduce him. "Qu'est mes cuers devenuz?/ Je sui toz viex et toz chenuz" (What has become of my heart? I am all old and grey) (257-58), he asks himself. [37] In the *Confessio*, Amans sees Aristotle in Venus' court among old lovers softly dancing to muted instruments. He notes that after Aristotle was "bridled" (7.2707) by Alexander's "queene of Grece" (7.2706), "Sche made him such a silogime/ That he forgat al his logique;/ Ther was non art of his pratique" (7.2709-10). All the vaunted categories of theory and practice, learning and policy associated with the seventh book, were forgotten with the intrusion of love. How do we respond then to this idea of governance when Alexander's trick is to show Aristotle that even he, a philosopher, can be subject to the power of love?

Gower's exemplum of Aristotle allows us then to understand the seventh book as an amorous allegory for the misgovernance of the lady towards her lover, a change of angle from the perspective of Amans complaints to the lady as lord. Such a shift is not only conventional, as

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[36] Quotes from Russell A. Peck, ed. *John Gower: Confessio Amantis*, vols. 1-3 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2000-2004).

[37] Leslie C. Brook and Glyn S. Burgess, eds. *Henri de Valenciennes: The Lay of Aristote* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2011).

seen in the pairing of love with mirror of princes in Machaut's *Voir Dit*, Trentham and Royal 16,

but it completes the larger lyrical structure to include not only the lover's despair and Genius as

his counseling Ami but also the dreaded *dame sans merci* before the book ends with the

revelation of Amans' *folie amor*. If, for example, "every governance is due/ To Pité" (7.4195-

96) and that pity makes a "kings regne"–and by extension, love–"stable" (7.4202) as well as

"courteis" (7.3120), then the lady's worthiness as a ruler is questionable in the marrying of

political and amorous metaphors. This enfolding of the political into the amorous is registered

most overtly when Amans argues that Danger, "mi ladi consailer" (3.1538), should be named

"Sanz Pité" (3.1550). In the series of complaints scattered throughout the *Confessio*, we find that

same preoccupation with his lady's lack of mercy. For example, when Amans enters the woods

one May, "Nought for to singe with the briddes" (1.109) but to complain, we hear:

> O thou Cupide, O thou Venus
> Thow god of love and thou goddesse,
> Wher is pity? Wher is meknesse? (1.124-26)

Not to sing with the birds is not to be fully enveloped in the joy that the *locus amoenus*, as the

traditional *encomium*, or introductory material for a poem promises for a love song.[38] This

divorce from the *locus amoenus* and by extension, poetry, will reveal unsettling generic

problems. But what is worth stressing here is Gower's allowance for a reading of the *Confessio*

that is not entirely didactic, political, exemplary or penitential but utterly conventional in the

context of amorous genres, whether song or *dits*. The "roy qui ne mente" and the *demandes*

d'amour help us to think more globally about the play involved in Gower's book and to

recognize the ways Gower positioned his book "between ernest and game" (8.3109). Just as

Machaut fails to receive a concrete answer about seeing Toute Belle, so too will Amans fail to

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[38] For the locus amoenus, see Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 195-200 and Roger Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 163-78.

receive an answer from his lord, the lady when he "axe of love som demande" (4.2793). Further study could reveal how whole lines of questioning found in the playful *demandes* are reconfigured in the *Confessio* through that very conceit of the confession compelled by Nature and Genius in the *Roman de la rose* to discern true lovers.[39]

Instead of interrogating a life, Gower is interrogating a genre. Through the *Confessio*, Gower is able to examine the building blocks, the very topoi or conventions that make up lyric poetry, making it reveal its features through a sort of literary confession in the same way Chartier and Roos interrogate the conventions of love poetry through the conversation between a desperate lover and a cool lady in the *Belle dame sans mercy*.[40] By focusing on a tradition of *dits amoureux* that directly link Gower's *Confessio* to Machaut's *Voir Dit* and Jean Froissart's *Joli buisson de jeunesse*, mixed *dits* conscientiously exploring the appropriateness of older poets writing love songs, we can turn our attention away from that of the reader and his expectation for moral reform towards that of the poet in a struggle with the conventions of writing, including a medieval rhetorical theory that conceptualized style with social standing. In other words, by playing with the topos of the old poet in love, Gower can reflect upon a poetic genre always associated with love, youth and spring, what we call conveniently the lyric or song.

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[39] For a quick survey of the *demandes* in Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate, see Felberg-Levitt, *Demandes d'amour*, pp. 34-5.

[40] T. Matthew N. McCabe makes an intriguing comparison between Chartier's public appropriation of amorous language, the "inflection of public themes as private, affective, and thus recognizably poetic" and Gower in "Al université de tout le monde," pp. 261-78 (qt. 275). Unfortunately, his reading of Gower's *Traitié* sounds more like the "moral Gower" of the received English tradition than his suggestive idea of a larger international public poetry invested in amorous imagery.

2. The Suitability of Style

Burrow makes much of the classical figure of the *senex amans*, the old man who, falling in love with a younger woman, becomes a ridiculous affront to the dignity of age.[41] But Gower, taking his cue from Machaut and Froissart, transforms the old man of literary convention into a poet, in line with fourteenth-century mixed genre works that comically play with an author's writer persona. [42] However, whereas Machaut and Froissart overtly play with their authorial identities, Gower conceals his from the reader until the end. Furthermore, unlike Machaut and Froissart whose mixed-verse *dits* are filled with complete songs in the *formes fixes*, what songs we do hear in Gower are mostly fragmentary, making more acute the very problem of love, age and writing Gower is probing. That Gower would be interested in discussing the fit between poetry and age places him well within a literary as well as rhetorical discussion concerned with the appropriate correspondence or decorum of style with character and situation.

The problem of the three styles or *genera*—high, medium and low—is a fruitful way of approaching the *Confessio* from a poetic standpoint, not just because Lewis famously praised Gower's use of the simple style and Calin saw in Gower's "middle weie" (Pro. 17) the *genus medium*, but rather because the grand eloquence of love song was as firmly fixed in medieval poetics as were other compositional questions, from the choice of poetic forms, such as the ballade or rondeau, to the organization of the material, and the use of ornamentation and commonplaces.[43] Previously in classical rhetoric, as seen in Cicero, the choice of style was always at the discretion of the orator, but by the Middle Ages, style became associated first with

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[41] Burrow, "The Portrayal of Amans," pp. 14-18 and *Ricardian Poetry*, pp. 117-18.

[42] Laurence de Looze, *Pseudo-Autobiography in the Fourteenth Century: Juan Ruiz, Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart and Geoffrey Chaucer* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 1997).

[43] Calin, *The French Tradition*, pp. 388-89.

the subject matter of the discourse and then with the social status of the speaker as well.[44] This

suitability or *convenientia* as Dante calls it, makes the poet not only worthy of his subject,

singing the praise of his lady or lamenting his state as a lover, but also worthy of the

ornamentation he intends to use. The use of a style associated with poetic expression of love

really becomes a problem when the poet is identified as a *senex amans*.

From the beginning of the book before we know his age, Amans' song seems on the

surface to adhere to this theory of a socially suitable style, as when he responds to the question of

vanity.

> Mi fader, as touchinge of al
> I may noght wel ne noght ne schal
> Of veine gloire excuse me,
> That I ne have for love be
> The betre adresced and arraied;
> And also I have ofte assaied
> Rondeal, balade and virelai
> For hire on whom myn herte lai
> To make, and also for to peinte
> Caroles with my wordes qweinte,
> To sette my pourpos alofte; (1.2721-31)

On the surface Amans' apology for vanity is justified by the very purpose of his poetry: to make

vivid, or better yet, represent the authenticity of his love, as addressed to his lady, and organized

or "arrayed" in a convincing and ornate manner through lyric poems written in the *formes fixes*.

Amans "sets" his music aloft, that is, gives his poems a musical setting in the same way Machaut

includes musical settings for the ballades and rondeaux he sends to the younger Toute Belle or

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[44] To recognize this change, compare *Ad Herennium* 4.8.11-4.10.14 (style at the orator's discretion), Isidore's comments in *Etymologies* 2.17.1-3 (style conforming to the quality of the subject matter) and finally to Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* 2.1.1-2.2.6 (style as it relates to both the speaker and the subject matter of a poem). Edmond Faral, ed. *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1962), pp. 86-87; Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 15-17; and Douglas Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), pp. 71-81.

the virelays sung by an older Froissart in the *Joli Buisson*. In other words, Amans sings his

pieces to her.

> And thus I sang hem forth ful ofte
> In halle and ek in chambre aboute,
> And made merie among the route,
> Bot yit ne ferde I noght the bet.
> Thus was my gloire in vein beset
> Of al the joie that I made;
> For whanne I wolde with hire glade,
> And of hire love songes make,
> Sche saide it was noght for hir sake,
> And liste noght my songes hiere
> Ne witen what the wordes were. (1.2732-42)

Imagine the desperation of his songs and, as we have explored with Arcite's rondeau, their

length. Furthermore, it is a mystery to Amans why she would reject his songs as being written

"not for her sake" and turn her ear away both to the melody and the words. One could blame

Danger as he often does, or one could blame the conventional nature of poetic language, since

the world of Amans seems to exist only within the same space Zumthor described as a book that

opens into a garden. However, Amans does not inhabit a joyful book garden the *Confessio* opens

in May but without the song of birds. In attempting to "peinte/ Caroles with my wordes

qweinte" (1.2730-31) in order to reveal, or better, *sette*, the lady on whom his "herte lai"

(1.2728), Amans tries to sing over many nagging doubts—doubts that will later be connected to

the inherent unsuitability of an old man singing love songs to a young woman. Genius implies

this when he critiques Amans' insatiable desire for novelty as an example of vanity:

> For al his lust is to delite
> In newe thinges, proude and veine,
> Als ferforth as he mai atteigne.
> I trowe, if that he myhte make
> His body newe, he wolde take
> A newe forme and leve his olde! (1.2688-93)

This transformation of the body, so reminiscent of the Ovidian shape shifting we find in many of the exempla, suggests a conscious rejection of age for youth. But if we look at this change as a transfiguration of the poet, then we recognize that love poetry in all its formal qualities can bestow perpetual youth or at least the perception of youthful permanency.

Love poetry can freeze time within the poetic place. But this place is not necessarily the most famous of locales of medieval poetry, the *locus amoenus*, the place from which Amans feels excluded while simultaneously defined in relation to it, or even love's court, mentioned numerous times in the *Confessio*. Instead, this place that stops time's progress is identified more concretely with the *loci communes*, the literary commonplaces Amans uses to define his relation with his lady: love's service and the commandments of love, hope, fear, flatterers and rivals, Danger, her silence, her "nay," all the conventions of love poetry that have failed him and have become the focus of his narrative reassessment. The very *virtuality* of these conventions, as Dragonetti insisted, implies the creating of an environment from a choice of elements, as if poetry can be plucked from the clouds and used to dress a space we call the poem.[45]

In Amans' formulation, poetry can be described as a literary environment where conventions occupy a space and a speaker's unsuitability can be papered over by the expectation of youth. In Froissart's *Joli Buisson*, for example, an old poet exhausted by his age and lack of poetic material rediscovers his literary vocation when Philosophy suggests new material: his memories. Finding an image of the lady he once loved, packed away long ago in an old chest, "un penser fresc et nouviel" (a fresh and new thought) (559) overcomes him and spontaneously he sings a new virelay.[46] Afterwards, in a dream, Venus appears and Froissart—again, most *dits*

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[45] Roger Dragonetti, "Trois motifs de la lyrique courtoise confrontés avec les Arts d'aimer" *Romanica Gandensia* 7 (1959): 5-48, reprinted in *"La musique et les lettres": Etudes de littérature médiévale* (Geneva: Droz, 1986), pp. 125-68.

[46] Anthime Fourrier, ed. *Jean Froissart: Le joli Buisson de jonece* (Geneva: Droz, 1975).

have the comical veneer of autobiography—suddenly finds himself young again, and sees his

past love as beautiful as she once was, as he remembers her from the image or, to describe the

effect of this dream more accurately, as beautiful as she *is*. What happens to Froissart is more

than old saws like "love makes us young again" or even "love makes you blind." What happens

in love's place is a perpetual present. Once memory is accepted as the material of poetry,

Froissart enters a stable present in the past. Love then appears fixed "en .I. point" (in one point)

(2185) without temporal development or change. Unlike Amans, Froissart struggles overtly with

the reality of his age and the suitability of writing love poetry, even as he gives into the process

of reliving, if you will, his youth, the onset of desire and the creation of poetry. The "douls

semblant" (sweet semblance) of the *locus amoenus* accessed through his memories offers new

material that appears to replicate–no, rejuvenate, to evoke Geoffrey of Vinsauf–his love poetry.[47]

> Tu os le rosegnol joli
> Suelement pour l'amour de li
> Te deverois esvigurer
> Et dedens ton coer figurer
> Le maniere de son douls chants (970-74)
> (You hear the fair nightingale, only for the love of him. You should
> gather your energy and in your heart figure the manner of your sweet
> song)

Froissart makes us aware that that creative present, the perpetual state of poetry and youth, is

little more than a wish: Sweet Semblance's poetic *souhet* or wish towards the end of the *dit* is

that winter will never chill the *locus amoenus*. Still, if we understand this poetic place as

temporally suspended, we can get to the heart of poetry and its ability to transform time once a

person enters into its rhetorical domain. Then we can see how an old poet named John Gower

can allegorize himself into an *amant*, or better, become Amans and be *enformed*, to use

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[47] On taking old words and making them new see *Poetria Nova* 762-69.

Simpson's term, by a poetic figure of the *locus*. After Froissart sings another virelay, its "matere

lie et nouvelle" (matter joyful and new) (1802) capable of rejuvenating his heart, which is the

core of love poetry, Youth asks,

> Savés vous riens plus pourfitable
> Ne qui mieuls vous viegne a plaisir?
> Volés vous point de chi issir
> Et aultres aventures querre? (1819-22)
> (Do you know anything more profitable or better that brings you
> pleasure? Do you ever want to leave here and search for other
> adventures?)

In other words, do you wish to stay here in song's space or take your chances in the long

unstable path of romance? Froissart's answer evokes that temporal present where poetry exists:

> Compains, ja li jours ne m'ajourne
> Ne la nuit ensieuant ne viegne
> Que de chi partir me couviegne (1827-29)
> (Never will the day dawn on me, nor the night following come, that
> leaving here would suit me)

The fantasy of love lyric is that night never falls on a love song and when dawn arrives, as heard

in dawn songs or *albas*, light is asked to wait a little longer to prolong the time of love. Amans

would answer Youth's question in the same affirmative manner: "Him thenkth his joie is

endless" (1.2717). If he remains in love's place, that eternal spring song promises will remain

and be generative of more and more songs as he exclaims at the beginning of the book.

> Mor jolif than the brid in Maii
> He makth him evere freissh and gay,
> And doth al his array desguise,
> So that of him the newe guise
> Of lusti folk alle othre take;
> And ek he can carolles make,
> Rondeal, balade and virelai. (1.2703-2709)

By calling on the *locus amoenus* to dress him in a "newe guise," Amans can be assured that the

making of songs will still be possible. But as "desguise," his poetry really lives on the other side

of the spectrum, where poetry falls into complaint and despair, ever pleading to be heard and

recognized. This despair perhaps explains Gower's most interesting feature for an English

variation of the *dits*: Amans' lack of productivity. We never get to hear the "Rondeal, balade

and virelai" he supposedly composes. Instead, as the *Confessio* begins, we hear fractured

complaints, unharmonious and discordant, reminiscent of the lays that dominate the music of the

Tristan, not the elegant *formes fixes* of the 14th century *dits amoureux*.

    This failure to produce harmonious poetry is first presented in the book as an acceptable

response to his lady's astonishing beauty. The entry of the inexpressibility topos will act as a

cover for problems along the lines established by Ciceronian rhetoric adapted in the Middle Ages

to describe the orderly composition of both prose and verse discourses, including love poetry.[48]

> To speke unto hire I ne myhte
> As for the time, thogh I wolde.
> For I ne mai my wit unfolde
> To finde o word of that I mene,
> Bot al it is forgete clene;
> And thogh I stonde there a myle,
> Al is forgete for the while:
> A tunge I have and wordes none.
> …………………………………
> I can noght thanne a note singe,
> Bot al is out of knowlechinge. (4.684-700)

If we suspend for a moment the dynamic Amans is describing, that her beauty renders the singer

astonished and dumb, and instead focus on Amans' inability to compose and perform a song

within the Ciceronian framework, then we can arrive closer at understanding *formally* why

Amans' songs fail on all points: *inventio*, because he cannot "find" material to compose his song;

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[48] For the inexpressibility topos, see Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 159-62. For the poetic adoption of the five
"parts" of rhetoric attributed to Cicero in *De inventione* 1.7.9 and *Ad Herennium* 1.2.3, see the opening of Geoffrey
of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* as well as Brunetto Latini's *Livres dou Tresor* 3.1-6. Genius evokes this tradition
explicitly when he describes "Hou Tullius his Rethorique/Componeth (7.1589-90): the picking of a topic, setting it
to words and knitting it into a larger discourse (*inventio* and *dispositio*) as well as its delivery (*pronunciatio*) and its
style (*elocutio*) described a "plein withoute frounce" (7.1594), that is, the simple style. The only thing missing is
memoria but memory is fundamentally the problem.

memoria, because he cannot remember what if anything he has written, which happens to be the

sin he is confessing, as well as his age; and *pronunciatio*, because he can neither speak nor sing

the words. The only stages not described explicitly are *elocutio*, the grand style of love poetry

already described as unsuitable for an old man, and *dispositio*, the arrangement of the song,

which will be seen to be like his heart "Al out of reule and out of space" (4.679).

The differences then between the French *dits* and Gower's are fundamental. Froissart

enters a harmonious poetic space where all his desires find equilibrium; love, once again revived,

is a possibility; and age can be set aside for one more foray into the musical space of love.

Amans, on the other hand, is burdened by a rhetorical critique concerning the fundamental

unsuitability about the singer, his emotions and the receiver of his songs. The horrifying climax

of the *Confessio*, when the true mirror is turned onto Amans, reveals his folly and clarifies his

lady's disgust: the realization that outside this poetic space where John Gower becomes Amans

lies another space, where an old man—whether lawyer, councilor or judge, as both his life

records and the fiction of his playful autobiographical naming indicate—has fallen in love to the

dismay of a beautiful young woman.[49] This is why Genius registers concern about Amans'

matere nouvelle at the beginning of the book. Amans is

> Lich unto the camelion,
> Which upon every sondri hewe
> That he beholt he moste newe
> His colour, and thus unavised
> Ful ofte time he stant desguised.
> Mor jolif than the brid in Maii (1.2698-2703)

The chameleon is the image of a rhetoric prolific in its adjustments to new circumstances. As the

chameleon changes his color, so does Amans change or make new the colors of his poetry in

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[49] Fisher, *John Gower*, pp. 57-58.

order to conceal the true nature of his songs and by extension—since we are describing a contextual subjectivity at work in the mixed genre—his self. The reactive *colours* of the chameleon's fearful eloquence can be described as less a response to the *Dame sans merci*'s general indifference, encoded as her conventional misgovernance as lord over his heart, than as an appropriate response on her part to the unsuitability of his poetic discourse.

What Gower has done is striking. The *Confessio Amantis* does not begin with an old man as Machaut and Froissart do, but with a guise, that is, the old man's image of himself as an allegorical figure: the *Amant*. Unlike Machaut and Froissart's aged personas, John Gower's persona willfully inhabits a space unsuited to him. These changes destabilize what can only be described as a youthful poetic space and upend the nature of the topoi that inhabit it. The songs he sings are naturally discordant.

3. Song out of Rule

The inappropriateness of Amans' love is expressed throughout the *Confessio* in songs ill-suited to the poem's meter. Since the *Confessio Amantis* is in the tradition of the mixed genre *dits*, we do get to hear snatches of his disordered songs. These songs, while expressive in the grand style, fail fundamentally in their arrangement. They are "gretly descordant" (7.2316) and unreasonable.   For example, to counter Genius' presumption of idleness, Amans offers an example of a song sung as he rides alongside her carriage.

> And otherwhile I singe a song,
> Which Ovide in his bokes made,
> And seide, "O whiche sorwes glade,
> O which wofull prosperité
> Belongeth to the propreté
> Of love, whoso wole him serve!
> And yit therfro mai no man swerve,
> That he ne mot his lawe obeie." (4.1210-17)

Amans' allusion to an Ovidian song found in "his bokes" is a perfect illustration of what

Dragonetti called the "mirage of sources," a medieval recourse to fictional antecedents in order

to authenticate a text's original ideas.[50] Love as a form of labor can be found in the *Ars*

amatoria, but a perusal of Ovid finds no examples anywhere of such a song, including the

snatches heard in the *Metamorphoses* or the complaints of the *Heroides*, *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*,

books all known to Gower.[51] Perhaps, the song is found deep in the *Ovide moralisé*. Even

though it may sound Ovidian, we have to be cautious then about attributing everything to Ovid.

Allusions to *auctores* can often be ornamental in order to either guarantee the maximum prestige

for a work or conceal acts of originality. I cannot recall anywhere in Ovid's work such a rich

proliferation of oxymorons to describe both his productivity with its concurrent uselessness

("woeful prosperity") and his experience of that recurring failure to achieve anything akin to

amorous success ("sorrows glad").[52] However, in both Richard de Fournival's *De vetula* and

Jean Le Fèvre's amplified French version, *La vieille*, two encyclopedic prosimetra on Ovid's

humiliating pursuit of a young woman and the resulting reaction to his own aging, the same

contrary feelings of love can be heard in his complaints but without Gower's pointed formal

concision. Instead, especially, in Fournival, any oxymoron seems closer to Lausberg's

description of *correctio*, where antithesis is used more as a corrective in the definition of one

dominant emotion.[53] In that way, Amans' "sorrows glad" seems a translation of both Nature and

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[50] Roger Dragonetti, *Le mirage des source: L'art du faux dans le roman médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp. 17-54.
[51] Kathryn L. McKinley, "Gower and Chaucer: Readings of Ovid in Late Medieval England" in James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson and Kathryn L. McKinley, eds. *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011), pp. 197-230.
[52] Unlike antiphrasis and antithesis, which define one position through its contradiction, oxymoron, as Lausberg writes, is "a closely tightened syntactic linking of contradicting terms into a unity which acquires a strong contradictive tension." Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 358.
[53] "Hec est summa quidem, quod grates debeo mixtas:/ Nec bona, nec mala sint sibi longa sed abbrevientur;/ Si mala sint, placeant quo si bona, displiceant quo/ Non sic tristetur quod sit penitus sine risu,/ Nec sic letetur quod sit

Reason's similar use of *definitio* of love in the *Roman de la rose* and Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae*: "C'est tristeur liee" (it is happy sadness) (4308) or "tristities laeta" (happy sadness)(10.6).[54] However, in Gower, it is not Genius who teaches this knowledge—though he does correct through antithesis when describing the drunk who "In joie he wepth, in sorwe he singeth" (6.68)—but Amans himself describing love's contraries as a precarious balance between two opposing feelings in order to describe his disordered and fragile state. For Amans, these contradictions are intensely destabilizing. They also have a distinctly Petrarchan air though Gower's access to Petrarch is not entirely established.[55] Any "joie wo" (5.5989) or "sorwe merthe" (5.5990) or even "wofull blisse" (5.5993), to evoke Genius' depiction of Philomena's song, "makth diverse melodie" (5.5992), that is, a bitter melody of contrary states.

penitus sine fletu" (2.696-700). Ovid, in Jean Le Fèvre's version describes this imbalance as "Desir et desperacion/ Font en moy operacion;/ Mais je n'y puis trouver constance,/ Entr'eulx n'a point de concordance" (2.3671-74). Dorothy M. Robathan, ed. *The Pseudo-Ovidian De Vetula* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1968) and Hippolyte Cocheris, ed. *La Vieille ou Les dernières amours d'Ovide: Poème du XIV siècle traduit du Latin de Richard de Fournival* (Paris: Auguste Aubry, 1861). For Lausberg's reading of *correctio* in relation to antitheton, see *Handbook*, pp. 349-51. For antithesis as a lyrical figure see Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 55-59.

[54] Armand Strubel, ed. *Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun: Le roman de la rose: Edition d'après les manuscrits BN 12786 et BN 378* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1992); Winthrop Wetherbee, ed. *Alain of Lille: Literary Works* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) and James J. Sheridan, trans. *Alan of Lille: Plaint of Nature* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1980). Simpson, on the other hand, characterizes such moments as exclusively Ovidian without taking into account other more contemporary influences which could only be described as tangentially Ovidian. And yet, the opening line of Gower's Latin *carmen* "Est amor" in the Trentham manuscript, "Est amor in glosa pax bellica, lis pietosa" (Love is when glossed warlike peace, merciful lawsuit)(3.1), clearly alludes to the opening of Nature's song in *De planctu*, "Pax odio, fraudique fides, spes iuncta timori/ Est amor" (Love is hateful peace, deceitful loyalty, fearful hope) (10.1-2). Finally, curiously, Simpson's reading of Ovid as the self, disintegrating and divided, "under threat of demolition," has a distinctly Petrarchan flavor. On the other hand, Maura Nolan is more cautious in describing every antithesis in Lydgate, for example, as a strictly Ovidian influence. James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), pp. 121, 130-31 and Maura Nolan, "'Now Wo, Now Gladnesse': Ovidianism in the *Fall of Princes*," *ELH* 71.3 (Fall 2004): 531-58.

[55] The work done to link Chaucer to copies of the *Canzoniere* carried by Italian merchants, bankers or diplomats to London could equally be done with Gower. Ernest H. Wilkins, "Cantus Troili," *ELH* 16.3 (September 1949): 167-73. Wendy Childs, "Anglo-Italian Contacts in the Fourteenth Century" in Piero Boitani, ed. *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983), pp. 65-88; Michael Hanly, "Courtiers and Poets: An International System of Literary Exchange in Late Fourteenth-Century Italy, France and England," *Viator* 28 (1997): 305-32; "Nick Havely, "Britain and Italy: Trade, Travel, Translation" in Peter Brown, ed. *A Companion to Medieval Literature and Culture, c. 1350-c.1500* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 215-30; and William T. Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010). Note finally that Audiau also noted a probable Petrarchan influence on Gower. Jean Audiau, *Les troubadours et l'Angleterre: Contribution à l'étude des poètes anglais de l'amour au Moyen Age (XIIIe et XIVe siècles)* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1927).

How harmonious can such a song be? Genius recognizes elsewhere that the sweet words of poetry can conceal discordant melodies but in the hands of Amans, this discord is manifest. If Gower's poetry is metrically both accentual and isosyllabic, that is, line regularity is measured by alternating stress and syllabic counts, then Amans' song "O whiche sorwes glade" is clearly out of measure.[56] However, on the surface, there is no irregularity. Gower is clearly comfortable with octosyllabics, the traditional French meter for narratives. We can hear a natural fluidity in his use of alternating stress, natural to a tonic language like Middle English, caesura on the fourth and sometimes the second syllable, enjambments and rhymes.[57] Though one gets the impression reading late medieval poetry in English and French that the decasyllabic line had become the fashionable meter, as can be seen in Amans' petition to Venus in Book 8, octosyllabic songs and poems were a perfectly acceptable alternative even in French.[58]

The problem with Amans' song, the sign of its harmonic disorder, is not in the overall line lengths but in the transition from narrative to song, that is, the very moment in which the song is both announced and begun. If we lift Amans' "Ovidian" song from its narrative frame—as can be done with the mixed genre since many lyrics from the *dits amoureuex* also have an independent existence outside their narrative contexts—the song's opening line, "O which sorwes glade," is clearly missing two syllables, while the rest of the song is octosyllabic. That a song can have a mixed variety of line lengths in the Middle Ages is not the problem since mixed

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[56] For a brief discussion of Gower's octosyllabic "stress syllabic verse" see Martin J. Duffell and Dominique Billy, "From Decasyllable to Pentameter: Gower's Contribution to English Metrics," *Chaucer Review* 38.4 (2004): 383-400.

[57] For a discussion of Gower's octosyllabic line and "run-on lines," see Charles A. Owen, Jr. "Notes on Gower's Prosody," *Chaucer Review* 28.4 (1994): 405-413. For a discussion of the caesura in octosyllabic verse see Steven R. Guthrie, "Machaut and the *Octosyllabe*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 20.1 (Spring 1987): 55-75, reprinted in R. Barton Palmer, ed. *Chaucer's French Contemporaries: The Poetry/Poetics of Self and Tradition* (New York: AMS, 1999), pp. 111-36.

[58] See Poiron's tables comparing stanza length and meter in a variety of fixed forms. The preference for octosyllabic or decasyllabic seems to be that of preference. Daniel Poiron, *Le poète et le prince: L'évolution du lyricism courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Puf, 1965), pp. 325, 350, 352, 374-75.

meter songs can be found as far back as the trouvères and troubadours as well as the *formes fixes* poems. Here, the two missing syllables are clearly located in the line's discourse marker or tag, "And seid," or more literally, "I sang the following words," which announces the end of the narrative portion of the mixed genre for the beginning of a lyric insert. In the prosimetrum *Tristan en prose*, Kahedin, whose love for Iseut is equally out of measure, also announces in his lay "En morant de si douche mort" a separation between the narrative and the song when he declares *in* his lay that "Je laisse la prosse pour vers" (I set aside prose for verse) (V2 1.163).[59] Such a declaration makes the reader aware that there are two linguistic registers, one for narrative action, prose, and the other for self-expression, verse, but that differentiation is usually expressed in a formal seperation. Throughout the tradition, the transition from narration to verse is clear with both retaining their independent properties: prose or narrative verse to announce its end, lyric verse for song itself. In the *dits amoureux*, such transitions from narrative verse to musical or poetic set piece are even more explicit. In both the *Voir Dit* and the *Joli Buisson*, for example, rubrics to identify a poem's form, such as "Rondel" or "Lay," are placed above a poem to separate the narrative section in verse from the lyric in one of the *formes fixes*. Gower's "Ovidian" song, in contrast, shares the same line for narrative and lyrical responsibilities.

Gower's example of a song then is a formal problem. And the effect is cumulative. Instead of admiring Gower's use of enjambments, we hear in Amans' song a definitive lack of control over his measure. Charles Owen has discussed the way Gower uses "run-on lines" to

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[59] Phillipe Ménard, ed. *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, vol. 1 (Geneva: Droz, 1987). One unique manuscript of the *Tristan en prose* includes sorrowful songs sung by King Mark and court of Cornwall over Tristan's death. All are written out of measure, going over the bounds of octosyllabic meter. See Richard Trachsler's forthcoming edition of *La Suite du Tristan en prose du Ms f. fr. 24400 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* (Geneva: Droz).

evoke certain precarious ideas, like the stretching of his talent in one "impossible stretch" found

at the opening lines of Book 1.[60]

> I may noght strecche up to the hevene
> Min hand, ne setten al in evene
> This world, which evere is in balance:
> It stant noght in my sufficance
> So grete thinges to compasse,
> Bot I mot lete it overpasse
> And treten upon othre thinges.
> Forthi the stile of my writinges
> Fro this day forth I thenke change (1.1-9)

These enjambed lines seem to find resolution in the "balance" of God's creation, as Owen

suggests, but they also imply that "evenness" may be impossible in this world. While Gower

sets aside this fundamental problem to adopt a "stile" inappropriate for his "writinges," the

unevenness of the world seems to be reflected in Amans' uneven meter. Because "loves law is

out of reule" (1.18), he cannot "tempre the measure" (1.23). The effect is startling.

> O whiche sorwes glade,
> O which wofull prosperité
> Belongeth to the propreté
> Of love, whoso wole him serve!
> And yit therfro mai no man swerve,
> That he ne mot his lawe obeie. (4.1212-17)

When we separate the tag "And seid" from the rest of the song, the song appears to be orderly.

For example, it opens with an anaphor ("O which/O which") that seems to give balance to the

lines. Yet the opening lines do not share the same rhyme—in fact, the first line has no rhyme—

nor are they metrically the same. In principle, the song is written in rhymed couplets; but the

effect of the lost syllables and rhyme seems to produce enjambments that make the song

"swerve" until it comes to rest with another unresolved rhyme. The effect seems to complement

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[60] Owen, "Gower's Prosody," p. 410.

its moral: that in obeying the law of love, "I swerve/ And suffre such a passion" (6.168-9) that

any sweet discourse will be simultaneously contradicted by unharmonious underpinnings,

becoming "Al out of reule and out of space" (4.679). Amans blames this disharmony on his

lady:

> For al that evere I skile may,
> I am concluded with a nay.
> That o sillable hath overthrowe
> A thousand wordes on a rowe
> Of suche as I best speke can. (8.2047-51)

No matter the poetic "skile" of his art, her single "no" acts as a disruptive syllable that alters the

very meter of his love and undoes the elegance of his verse.

 We can observe the same discordant phenomenon in another Ovidian song, Philomena's

"diverse melodie" (5.5992) in Book 5, which is not only strange and marvelous, appropriate to

the raped girl's metamorphosis into a songbird, but also divergent in direction and discordant

because, as we have heard, "medleth sche with joie wo" (5.5989).

> And in hir song al openly
> Sche makth hir pleignte and seith, "O why,
> O why ne were I yit a maide?" (5.5977-79)

And again:

> And seith,"Ha, nou I am a brid,
> Ha, nou mi face mai ben hid.
> Thogh I have lost mi maidenhede,
> Schal no man se my chekes rede." (5.5985-88)

In both passages, her cascading notes amplify the *Ovide Moralisé*'s representation of "Oci! Oci!"

(6.3683), her sweet death song, as meter falls apart.[61] These are songs out of rule, though their

disorder is given the semblance of metrical regularity in the use of anaphors ("O why/O why"

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[61] Cornelis de Boer, ed. *Ovide Moralisé: Poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle*, vol. 2, *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 2nd Series, 21 (1920): 366.

and "Ha, now/Ha now"). Though the preponderance of monosyllabic words creates the effect of

a bird chirping, it is hardly melodious. The fact that this song is also a complaint reminds us of

one of Amans' complaints in Book 4 that also begins on a set of missing syllables: "I seie, 'O fol

of alle foles" (4.625). There is no better example of being toppled over by thought or "overcome

so,/ and torned fro myself so clene,/ That ofte I wot noght what I mene" (6.118-20) than these.

However, in anticipation of Amans' petition to Venus, Philomena's "O why,/O why ne were I yit

a maide" could also be read not as an anaphor begun on a highly distorted octosyllabic line—its

caesura after the sixth syllable!—but a stretched decasyllabic line opening with the emphatic

figure of epizeuexis ("O why, O why"). In either case, this example of *conduplicatio*, a

Ciceronian figure of thought that employs repetition to invite great pity or compassion in the

listener suggests that narrative context affects singers and songs in the mixed genre.[62] Poetry

then reveals a subject founded in disordered emotions and real or imagined victimization. No

wonder his musical settings are rejected by the lady. The destabilizing features of Amans' style

reflect his fundamental unsuitableness for love. Unlike the optimistic elegance of the French *dits*

amoureux featuring aged poets, Gower's songs reveal an embattled poet, unknown even to

himself, inappropriately expecting success in love where none can be.

4. Reforming Poetry

Amans' failure to "set" his song in a pleasant enough manner for his lady and bring

aesthetic order to the reigning disorder in his mind allows Gower to scrutinize the mixed genre's

claims for subjective expression as inherently truthful, a feature hinted at in Machaut's messy

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[62] *Ad Herennium* 4.28.38. Daniels also discusses this figure in Gower's English poem "To King Henry IV." R. Balfour Daniels, "Rhetoric in Gower's *To King Henry the Fourth, In Praise of Peace*," *Studies in Philology* 32.1 (January 1935): 62-73.

exploration of the veridical capabilities of language in the *Voir Dit*. Gower's redirection of the *dit*, an inherently self-reflexive genre because of its attention to the composition and singing of songs, allows him to turn his mirror onto conventional writing itself by revealing the "sins," if you will, in Amans' own songs. Crucial to that analysis is Genius' council in Book 7—the same book that offers "political," that is, amorous council in the form of the *speculum principum*—that Amans correct his language and adopt a more suitable literary style, the simple or plain style, as an antidote to his unsuccessful poetic enterprise. Finding fault then in Amans' self-expression, his inability to "schewe" (7.1511) or make evident in speech—or song—"The hertes thoght which is withinne" (7.1512), brings to the forefront new claims for reason and truth within a conception of language Genius identifies with a Ciceronian theory of language (rhetoric, grammar, logic) and the "reule of eloquence" (7.1544).[63]

Throughout the *Confessio*, and especially in Book 7, Genius repeatedly espouses one style suitable for a poet's truthful *elocutio* to resolve language's potentially deceiving and self-deluding nature: the plain style. The problem with Amans' compositions is that because of his disordered love everything is out of rule, "the word to the conceipte/ Descordeth in so double a wise" (7.1554-55) that antithesis becomes the dominant figure before it is corrected by the "lore" (7.1588) of Cicero and his "Rhetorique," whether the *Rhetorica vetus*, that is, *De inventione*, or the *Rhetorica nova* or *secunda*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.

> The wordes ben of sondri sectes,
> Of evele and eke of goode also;
> The wordes maken frend of fo,

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[63] Though Genius notes that "Aristotle hath also founde,/ And techeth hou to speke faire" (8.1502-3), the description that follows is Ciceronian in origins, drawing from Cicero's *De inventione*, the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Brunetto Latini's *Livre dou Tresor*. As Murphy notes, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was never compiled with other rhetorical treatise because it had no influence on medieval rhetoric. Instead, it was read as moral philosophy. It is for that reason, Gower's mentioning of Aristotle's contribution to this branch of *Philosophie* is treated then only in passing. James J. Murphy*, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of the Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), pp. 90-101.

> And fo of frend, and pes of werre,
> And werre of pes (7.1572-76)

This is why he cannot successfully set his verbal intentions to music. To some degree, we are made to think this is the function of the very conventionality of poetic language, that its imagery and compositional patterns can be shared successfully by true lovers and lying *faitours* (1.174), as Venus points out at the very beginning, thus undermining any claims even for Machaut's true poetry.[64] To "Tell pleinliche" (1.211), on the other hand, is the language of confession, which reveals one's faults—or in the case of Amans, his "siknesse" (1.185)—unadorned (*planus*), yet fully (*planus*), with no *conduplicatio* to achieve pathetic ends.[65] The plain style then, in its simplicity, is associated with truth, as when Aristotle advises Alexander "that his word be trewe and plein" (7.1731). Genius also associates the simple style with reason, as when he defines true rhetoric as "Appropred to the reverence/ Of wordes that ben resonable" (7.1524-25), so different from the ornamental use of figures in poetry to achieve other ends.[66] When Genius exhorts Amans to write his petition to Venus "With pleine wordes and expresse" (8.2185), or instructs him to "Tell out and let it noght be glosed" (1.1254), he is endeavoring to exclude any obscure

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[64] For blaming the *losengier* or *jonglere* as a lyrical topos, see Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 272-78.

[65] When Allen argues, in her discussion of Gower's tale of Virginia, that the Middle English adjective "plein" derives from both Latin *planus*, "flat," and *plenus*, "full," she is describing a morphological confusion between two distinct words found not only in the Middle English but also in Old French and Anglo-French because of variations in spelling: ME/OF/AF *plain/plein*, from Latin *planus*, understood as unadorned and explicit, unmistakably clear speech (the simple style); and ME/OF/AF *plein/plain*, from Latin *plenus*, referring to a full and complete description of the whole, whether power, justice, or a discourse. Isidore of Seville confirms the poetic possibilities of mixing the two when showing that a word's surface contains multiple resonances based on shared linguistic appearances. Though Genius is unquestionably speaking of plainness in its rhetorical sense, Allen is correct in arguing that plainness' other valent, plenitude, is equally at work in Gower because of the open nature of poetic meaning. That is how Genius' claims for clear moral readings are undermined by the poetic plenitude of his texts. Allen, *False Fables*, p. 68.

[66] John P. Bequette, *Rhetoric in the Monastic Tradition: A Textual Study* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 1 and Murphy, "John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," p. 404. Note, for example, the opening of Cicero's *De inventione* 1.1.1-4.1, as well as Brunetto Latini's *Livre dou Tresor* 3.1-2, where honorable, rational, truthful eloquence can resolve misrule.

language that undermines his claims as a lover through the need of a supplementary commentary to interpret at best or confuse at worst its words.

This impulse to reform language, especially language tainted by amorous corruption, is a traditional feature of Genius and explains why Gower chose him to be Amans' confessor. In Alain of Lille's prosimetrum *De planctu naturae*, for example, Nature calls upon the priestly Genius, her creative alternate, to correct sexual aberrations among men, aberrations identified as Venetian in origin and described in grammatical and rhetorical terms as figures of vice.[67] In Alain, the understanding of *genius* as a sexually generative power, both dependent on and independent of Nature, with a potential moral and rational capacity, is set against an irrational, sexual excess associated with poetic embellishment, a crazed deformation of orthography and ordered composition, what Nature calls *falsigraphia* or false-writing (8.8, 10.2).[68] The effect of this *falsigraphia* is present at the very beginning of the prosimetrum when the dreamer acknowledges that he may in fact be composing his poems in suspect meters, very different from Amans who is seemingly unaware that he is writing songs out of rule.[69] When Genius arrives to the triumph of music, wielding his pen, he is meant to correct the same errant writing Amans uses in the *Confessio*. Likewise, in the *Roman de la rose*, when Nature tries to limit the number of amorous combatants converging on the rose, she sends her secretary and priest Genius, "li bien enpallez" (19339) (the good speaker), to exhort all true lovers to confess any "vices"

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[67] For example, confusion of gender (10.3-4) identified as barbarisms (8.8), problems of conjugation (10.5), solecisms (8.3), metaplasms (8.8), poetic elements like metonymy (10. 9) as well as issues of logic, such as ill-fitting syllogisms (10.7) or excessive use of analogies (10.8), a poetic effect. See Jan Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex: The Meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth-Century Intellectual* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Medieval Academy of America, 1985) and Alexandre Leupin, "The Hermaphrodite: Alain of Lille's *De planctu Naturae*" in *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1989), pp. 59-78. For Genius as an alternate creative self, garbed in priestly vestments, see *De planctu* 16.25, 18.16.

[68] For a rich survey of Genius' appearance in classical and medieval literature see Jane Chance Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Colombia University, 1975).

[69] *De planctu naturae* 1.31-2. For a discussion of deformed meter see Ziolkowski, *Grammar of Sex*, pp. 22-27.

(19394), that is, any defects that can mar their writing or love poetry. Genius also offers a promise to all writers: "Greffes avez, pensez d'escrire!" (you have pens, think of writing)(19798). And if all lover-poets do attend to good writing, a reference to all the possibilities of *elocutio*, they can enter into the "parc dou champ joli" (park with the joyful field)(19939), a place permanently situated "en .i. point estable" (in one stable point)(20033) with a source or spring "de stable permanence" (of stable permanence)(20030). In other words, Genius promises in the *Roman de la rose* the same literary *locus* described in Froissart's *Joli Buisson* where the lover can continuously find new material for his poetry. The enclosed *parc* with its *well*, the place of poetry already recognizable in the *Tristan*, then is the opposite of the perilous garden and the pool of Narcissus where Amans in the *Confessio* seems to be gazing. Genius' espousal of Ciceronian rhetoric in the *speculum* of Book 7 and the simple style throughout the *Confessio Amantis* complements his traditional responsibilities as a reformer of language.

But paradoxically, Genius in the Latin tradition is also associated with the errant language he is called upon to reform, a contradiction at play as well in the *Confessio*. In Alain, Genius' antithesis, Anti-Genius, is blamed for sleeping with Venus resulting in her deformed, poetic writing, antithetical to the rational writing espoused by Nature and Genius. Their coupling results not only in the destruction of Grammar and Logic, but also the dis-coloring of discourse through the same rhetorical colors once used to rationally embellish language ("rethoricis coloribus decolorans," 10.12). The result is a new art, recognized in Gower's *Confessio* as a "diverse melodie" (5.5992). In fact, Gower presents Genius' counterpart in the *Vox Clamantis* where a linguistically disruptive Genius purposefully leads nuns into wayward interpretations of

scripture based on the plenitude of the word, not on its simplicity.[70] This to and fro between the ideal of plain speech and the need for poetic fecundity and obscurity is likewise played out in Alain of Lille's description of a Genius unable to control his own writing. His pen, once obedient in his right hand, is now shifted to his left hand, where the work of clarifying *orthographia* becomes a willfully obscure *falsigraphia*. Genius' right-handed portraits of Plato, Cicero and Aristotle, thinkers who in their very simplicity produce rich obscurities, become left-handed literary ones: Paris breaking oaths, Pacuvious writing confusing narratives with their perplexing use of time and, most importantly for Gower, Ennius composing songs in broken meters. Watching over Genius' shoulders as he works are *Veritas* and *Falsitas* (18.10-11). Alain in one stroke has shown both the ambitions of our own writing and its precarious realities. Gower's Genius in the *Confessio* works in the same manner. Though Gower's priest of Venus seems to promote a rhetoric privileging simplicity to reform Amans' disordered love poetry, Book 7's move towards such a reform ironically reveals more fully his counterpart or antithesis in the *Vox*, that sensually poetic anti-Genius whose language is more open and creative.

Once Genius is understood in the *Confessio* as a manifestation of his antithesis, Anti-Genius, the contradictions many scholars have noted in his use and interpretation of exempla, the way he seems to undo the implicit promise of the simple style he espouses, becomes clearer.[71] Even in Cicero's *De inventione*, rhetoric, that "techer of vertus" (7.1520) as Genius describes it, is not immune to the contradictory effects of language. In his analysis of topics, any aspirations for a virtuous rhetoric against despotic and tyrannical uses of language with the unity of reason and eloquence give way to persuasion and its more immediate purposes. Rhetoric then returns to

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[70] See Matthew Irvin, "Genius and Sensual Reading in the *Vox Clementis*" in Dutton, *Trilingual Poet*, pp. 196-205.
[71] Mitchell, for example, analyzes rhetoric in the *Confessio* through Genius. J. Allan Mitchell, "John Gower and John Lydgate: Forms and Norms of Rhetorical Culture" in Brown, *Companion to Medieval Literature*, pp. 569-84.

its situational struggle between lords and subjects, advocates and juries, lovers and their

beloveds, with truth substituted by plausibility or believability, verisimilitude or semblance, all

for the benefit of an argument or in the case of poetry, for pleasure and beauty.[72] Even Genius

cannot deny the potential misuse of rhetoric, when "wordes semen goode/And ben wel spoke at

mannes ear,/ Whan that ther is no trouthe there" (7.1550-52). But by papering over this problem

in Cicero, Gower complicates Genius' idealization of the plain style by making the reader aware

that this valorized style can never quite be perfectly truthful. "Plein" speech is not simply plain

then but also plentiful, full of ambiguities and color essential to good poetry. This is perhaps the

reason why Amans is as incapable of jettisoning the poetic language that obscures his identity in

the same way Genius is incapable of harmonizing the contradictory commentaries for his own

narrative exempla. It also explains, if we can step away from this tradition of a "moral Gower,"

how for all of its ethical and didactic intentions, neither Genius' council in Book 7, nor his

commitment to exemplary narratives and their commentary, correct Amans' lyric disorder. As

Venus' priest, Genius even suggests that he compose the elaborate double *chant royal* at the end

of the book and carry it to Venus. What corrects Amans' errant rhetoric is rather the utter

plainness of Venus' own "wonder mirour" (8.2821), which brings the poet back to himself,

restores his identity and calms "loves rage" (8.2863). This revelation, or more precisely,

"remembrance" (8.2834), allows Reason to appear, the same Reason called on to aid the lover in

the *Roman de la rose*, and remove the "unwise fantasie" (8.2866) that has plagued Amans, I

mean, "John Gower" (8.2321).

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[72] See, for example, Cicero's discussion of *narratio* where verisimilitude, dignity and plausibility all coincide to create the believability of a telling of events in an argument. Cicero, *De inventione* 1.21.29.   See also Latini's discussion of "voiresenblables argumens" in the *Livres dou tresor* 3.56.1-7.

The tension in writing then is not between narrative and lyric as would be expected but between disciplined elegance and the fullness of poetic imagination. And at the center of Gower's exploration of poetry's language and the worthiness of the poet is another consideration, the investigation not into the writer's soul but his own *ingenium*, his little genius. In reading the *Confessio* against Alain's *Anticlaudianus*, Simpson focuses on *ingenium* as the imagination, that faculty between sense and reason, but misses a potential rhetorical and sexual understanding of the word that brings the *Confessio* into the orbit of not only the *De planctu* but also the *dits amoureux*. In the *Voir Dit*, Machaut's older poet as lover describes in a prose letter to his young admirer not only the revival of his body and mind but also "mon petit engien" (L2), that is, his little genius or talent for writing and composing music that seemed to have gone dormant before her arrival.[73] This *ingenium* as talent is equally evoked in Alain's *De planctu* when Genius composes a portrait of Plato glowing with genius: "Plato ingenii splendore rutilibat sidereo" (18.8) (Plato glowed with the shining star of genius"). But there is also a sexual joke imbedded in Machaut's letter to Toute Belle that ties his newly potent *ingenium* to Alain's sexually aberrant Anti-Genius. That ingenuity for creating poetry as prompted by desire can also be heard in Toute Belle's response when she sends him one of her own compositions. In apologizing for her abilities, "car iay trop petit engine pour bien faire" (L3) (because I have little talent for making/composing well), she also speaks coyly of her own desires.

The poet's desire and ability or talent, his genius, transforms Genius' idealization of Ciceronian rhetoric as the will—to use a term alive in the *Confessio*—to revise and resolve the oxymoron connected to Amans' own disordered poetry, make permanent *orthographia* and

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[73] The word *engin* is also a key term in *Les Douze dames de rhétorique* where it is associated with the ability and talent to compose eloquent and learned poetry. David Cowling, ed. *George Chastelain, Jean Robertet and Jean de Montferrant: Les Douze dames de réhtorique* (Geneva: Droz, 2002).

clarify the poet's identity and intent. And yet, as has been seen with Genius in Alain of Lille, there is never clear guidance. For one thing, Alain's book is not a prose treatise but a prosimetrum, written under the influence of two Geniuses, one working to the best of his natural abilities with Nature, and the other with Venus—Anti-Genius is clearly the origin of Gower's own Genius as Venus' priest.[74] The *Traitié selonc les auctours pour essampler les amantz marietz*, Gower's ballade sequence associated with the *Confessio* and dedicated to matrimonial fidelity, reflects this same conflict. Opening with a prose introduction in French, announcing its status as a treatise with the use of exempla from "les auctores," it ends definitively with a "Carmen de variis in amore passionibus breuiter compilatum," that is, a Latin song where love is defined "in glosa" (1), an allusion to exegetical techniques in prose. Inside the *Carmen*—also known as "Amor est"—*doctrina* is clarified through a kind of poetic *definitio* built out of contraries: from love's statutes (*lex capitosa* or "irregular law") to its mental and emotional effects (*ira iocosa*, "happy anger," or *mens furiosa*, "furious thought") as well as the traditional oxymora we have discussed already such as a "fel dulce" (sweet bitterness) or "mors leta" (joyful death).[75] Such an attempt for rational *orthographia* to curb, or better define, the poetic plenitude of *falsigraphia* is made possible, according to the John Gower of the *Traitié*, through a poetry attentive to moral material and *auctores* while at the same time borrowing from love's fixed forms, in this case, the ballade. With "Johan Gower" as the named author, the *Traitié* is conceived, because of its general placement after the *Confessio Amantis* in most manuscripts that include the French ballade sequences, as the only poetry possible once Gower sheds all amorous

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[74] However, we should note that in both Alain and in Gower there seems to be two contrasting figures of Venus, one good, aligned with Nature and the other bad, aligned with an uncontrollable desire. See George D. Economou, "The Two Venuses and Courtly Love" in Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou, eds. *In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1975), pp. 17-50.

[75] G. C. Macaulay, ed. *The Complete Works of John Gower: The French Work* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1899), p. 392. This poem is strangely not included in Yeager's edition of the *Traitié* but instead in *The Minor Latin Works*, pp. 32-33 with a different colophon naming "Iohannes Gower."

conventions associated with Amans and takes upon himself the stated ideals of Ciceronian rhetoric. On the surface, in its simplicity, it seems to represent a rehabilitated poetry following the rational Genius associated with Nature. But is it satisfying poetry?

I am not convinced such a poetry offers an adequate response to amorous questions. If we take Genius' role seriously then Arion *is* the ideal poet as Yeager suggests.[76] According to the "John Gower" who writes the prologue—we will discuss later the many "signatures" of Gower in and around the book—Arion's song is "of such temprure" (Pro. 1055) and "good measure" (Pro. 1056) that it brings "alle in good acord" (Pro. 1065). Arion's music, though political in nature because it brings into accord both a lord and his—or her—subjects, can "putte awey malencolie" (Pro. 1069), or love sickness, and resolve contradictions or "debate" (Pro. 1076) in *débats amoureux*.[77] It seems to reflect Genius' vision of a harmonious rhetoric which makes possible "lusti melodie" (Pro. 1070) but it also speaks of an amorous intrusion into political metaphors that makes love poetry equally possible. That is why the motif of confession is so important. Amans must interrogate his own writing, think deeply about the conventions he is disposed to use: not only the plethora of topoi drawn from love poetry, including the *locus amoenus* and the lady, but also his own self-invention as an allegorical figure drawn from the *Roman de la rose* and *dits* tradition, that of the *amant*. The *Belle dame sans mercy* also gives us ample examples of the debilitating effects of this poetic discourse, how in *l'amant*'s language, thick with conventions of medieval love poetry, a young woman, yearning for freedom, finds herself imprisoned by an anonymous poetic designation: *la dame*. What should be kept in mind then is that Amans' own genius—or better, John Gower's own genius, since it is Gower who has

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[76] Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, pp. 237-42.
[77] For a discussion of love sickness in the *Confessio*, see Ellen Shaw Bakalian, *Aspects of Love in John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 123-52.

effaced both his own identity and corporeal reality to become a figure within the *locus* or place

of poetry—is being asked to assess the very rhetoric he is using.

5. Textual Identity and the Poetic Signature

The tension between poetic identity and the poet's ingenuity steers the *Confessio* in

another direction with the introduction of Amans' petition to Venus, that "lettre" (8.2216) or

"bille" (8.2324) that ends the book. This example of a *lettres en vers*, a genre found as well in

the *Tristan en prose* and Charles of Orleans, is unique to the book because it is the only inserted

lyric that is formally distinct from the narrative frame surrounding it. However, unlike other

examples of the mixed genre where love poetry has a way of accruing identity for their speakers

with the addition of a frame, here, the frame and the lyric will conspire together to conceal

Amans' true identity. But identity, including authorial identities, is hardly stable in the

Confessio and its companion, the *Traitié*. Gower's self-naming will become an identity as

slippery as that of the poet's creation, Amans. Like the ironic personas of the Middle French

poets, "John Gower" does not seem to authorize any emergence of "moral Gower," except solely

within the context of a narrative frame that replaces Amans with a *senex amans*, the supposed

author, and then a reformed husband.

As an epistolary poem, Amans' formal petition to Venus to resolve his discordant love is

hardly an example of the document-like poems inspired by what Ethan Knapp calls the

"bureaucratic muse" and made famous by Hoccleve and Charles of Orleans.[78] Martin Camargo

has pointed out that Amans' "supplicacion" (8.2301, 2184) lacks all of the characteristic features

of letter writing inspired by Cicero, Genius' exemplar of good rhetoric, and developed in the *ars*

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[78] Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2001).

dictaminis: there is no *salutatio* or address to his queen Venus, and its abrupt *exordium* made up

of a *proverbium*, whose general truth on the "woefull peine of loves maladie" (8.2217) quickly

particularizes into nine stanzas of complaint or *narratio*. The letter ends with a three stanzas

petito in which to "beseche,/That thou mi love aquite as I deserve" (8.2298-99), a formula

usually found after the address. It has no *conclusio* or *benedictio*, a parting prayer.[79]

Gower invites us to read the petition as both a rhetorical act of persuasion and a lyric

complaint, the two modes of language set at odds by the *Confessio*. In a sense, the petition

encapsulates the tension between lyric and persuasion, between allegorical self-expression and

the entire narrative and commentary mode that makes up most of the book. If we read the

petition as rhetorical persuasion, then we can test the petition's truthfulness, the criterion of

Genius' vision of a "plain" rhetoric. However, because most of its terms or conventions have

already been "confessed," that is, analyzed, and have been shown to be lacking, the reader is

struck by how poetry's plenitude is still the dominant feature. Conventional repetition, licensed

by an amorous tradition at odds with Genius' aspirations and yet expressive of Genius' other,

more unruly, sexual side, proves irresistible. And so, instead of penitential self-analysis

grounded in the Christian idea of simplicity, a language associated with Cicero, we hear instead

music, a metrical language, organized by amplifying one of the *formes fixes*.[80] Amans is

"bewhaped with sotie" (8.2219) or struck dumb and bewildered by his own foolish pursuits of

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[79] Martin Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), pp. 90-97. For the *proverbium* as integral to the *exordium*, see Murphy*, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, pp. 234-35. For the particulars of the petitionary form see John H. Fisher, Malcolm Richardson and Jane L. Fisher, eds. *An Anthology of Chancery English* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1984), p. 21.

[80] For the adoption of Ciceronian virtue and Bible's simple style for a new Christian rhetoric dependant upon Scriptural citation and commentary see Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1953, 2003), pp. 70-75, 89-95; Jean Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1957), p. 120, 244-49; and Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: Boccard, 1983), pp. 524-40.

his lady that even Reason is incapable of defending him. He first complains to Nature, a complaint that fails to overturn Nature's own complaint in Alain's *De planctu* and *Anticlaudianus* but instead confirms it. Amans, like all men pushed along by Venus and desire, finds himself "between the tweie" (8.2234) or "overcome" (8.2240) or "overthrowe" (8.2244). But Amans' attempt to blame Nature for his predicament displays not only a lack of honesty but a rhetorical cunning emanating from a Ciceronian strategy for molding the *narratio* portion of an argument when facing a jury; his language suggests that the narration of the facts of a particular case need not be grounded entirely in the truth but rather on the plausibility or worse, believability, of what might have happened ("rerum gestarum aut ut gestarum").[81] Finally, to Venus and Cupid, love and desire, Amans demands not a withdrawal from love's service, as will be found in Charles of Orleans, but some benefit for the services he has rendered, "services," he notes, "in thi court withouten hyre" (8.2291).[82] That is, services not for payment, as was the most famous condition for late medieval "bastard feudalism," but grounded in the old ideal of feudal obligations, still alive when thinking of love's retinue, where service and benefits were shared mutually. Love retains men in return for the pleasures of their amorous relations.[83] With no benefit in sight, Amans' solution in the *petitio* is jarring: that Venus "mi love aquite as I deserve/ Or ells do me pleinly for to sterve" (8.2299-300). In other words, make amends and repay me for my service or act plainly and kill me. Venus, instead, will respond in a different manner.

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[81] *De inventione* 1.19.27. Cicero, *De inventione, De optimo genere oratorum, Topica* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1949).

[82] Burrow, Pearsall and Yeager all note the *Confessio*'s strong influence on Charles of Orleans. Burrow, "The Portrayal of Amans," pp. 19-20, Derek Pearsall, "The Gower Tradition" in Minnis, *Gower's Confessio Amantis*, p. 187 and Yeager, "The Ballades," p. 89.

[83] For a study of "service allegory" in the *Confessio*, see Elliot Kendall, *Lordship and Literature: John Gower and the Politics of the Great Household* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2008).

At the same time, this "bill" or "supplication" can be read as a lyrical poem. The petition's formal elegance cannot be denied. Made up of twelve stanzas *sans refrain*, including two envoys addressed to Venus and Cupid, clarifies its form as a double chant royal with its rhyme scheme in Machaut's "sevens."[84] The inserted lyric's decasyllabic meter, with its alternating stress, what was later called iambic pentameter, also includes beautiful trochaic inversions along with those string of light, unpromoted stresses following the caesura that rise to that obligatory stress on the final syllable associated with Machaut.[85] It is also formally distinct from the octosyllabic, rhymed couplets that make up the narrative verse that surrounds it, similar to the way the French *dits amoureux* include formally distinct songs; though unlike the French, there is no rubric above the poem to identify the song's form.[86] What is most apparent, when comparing the petition to Amans' other Ovidian songs embedded in the narrative verse, is the lack of enjambment. Here, there are definitive end-stopped lines. There is one exception when Amans accuses Nature, who "techeth me the weie" (8.2232), which in principle is correct until we discover it is an incomplete thought, "To love" (8.2233), an accusation without merit since it is Venus, not Nature, who has led him into love's irrational desire and poetic self-expression. Enjambments then reveal distortions of thought within a well-ordered discourse. This is the

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[84] The chant royal, a form addressed traditionally to royalty, or more specifically, the prince of the Puy, is half that length: five stanzas without refrains and an envoy. The double chant royal can also be found in Hoccleve's petitionary *balade* to Sir Henry Sommer without envoys and Lydgate's "Ballade on a New Year's Gift" for Henry VI with one envoy. "Doubling" fixed form poems can be found in the French treatises. Deschamps in the *Art de dictier*, for example, includes a "Rondel double" (398d), the doubling of the traditional 8-line *rondeau simple*, resulting in a sixteen-line *rondeau quatrain*. For the chant royal see Poiron, *Le poète et le prince*, pp. 361-66, 369-74, 382-91.

[85] Steven R. Guthrie, "Prosody and the Study of Chaucer: A Generative Reply to Halle & Keyser," *Chaucer Review* 23.1 (Summer 1988): 30-49, reprinted in Alan T. Gaylord, ed. *Essays on the Art of Chaucer's Verse* (New York: Rutledge, 2001), pp. 145-61.

[86] For the differences in meter between narrative and lyric poetry in Machaut and Chaucer's mixed verse *dits*, Guthrie notes that "The ultimate conclusion drawn is that verse rhythm is affected directly by a poet's intuitive sense of the genre he is working in" (72). Steven R. Guthrie, "Meter and Performance in Machaut and Chaucer" in Rebecca A. Baltzer, Thomas Cable and James I. Wimsatt, eds. *The Union of Words and Music in Medieval Poetry* (Austin: University of Texas, 1991), pp. 72-100.

mark of his Ovidian songs. In fact, "the grete clerc Ovide" (8.2266) also makes an appearance

twice in the double chant royal—its doubling, a mark of its excess—once, as an authority, when

he places ultimate responsibility for love's favor in the hands of Cupid and Venus and more

importantly, when he describes the drafting of his letter:

> And I sat doun upon the grene
> Fulfilt of loves fantasie,
> And with the teres of myn ye
> In stede of enke I gan to wryte
> The wordes whiche I wolde endite
> Unto Cupide and to Venus. (8.2210-15)

Comparing ink to tears is an allusion to Ovid's own tears blurring the fresh ink of the written

page when writing from his exile in the *Tristia* and the *Ex Ponto*, or to Briseis' tears in the

Heroides when she beseeches Achilles to take her back or kill her, a request similar to Amans' in

the petition.[87] The complaint as a literary genre is active too in the passage, as well as its setting.

The green as a grassy clearing, so evocative of the *locus amoenus* in later medieval works, is

where Charles will meet his new lady playing "Post and Pillar" with a company of knights and

ladies or where the "world of ladies" (137) will emerge from a grove singing and dancing in *The

Floure and the Leaf*.[88] Finally, the poem, if anything, smoothes over any "debat" between

Genius and Amans, or between the poet as lover and as writer, with his "wordes debonaire"

(8.2200), words elsewhere in the *Confessio* that promise success. In a way, the letter's orderly

elegance conceals the disorder we heard in his other song and complaints. The letter then

becomes a specimen of *falsigraphia* as lyric.   Nevertheless, its expressive language uses the

grand style of love poetry, with its complex syntax and love conventions, to elaborate on a

singular subjectivity. This is the irony of the prosimetrum and mixed verse genre, that once

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[87] *Tristia* 3.1, *Ex Ponto* 1.98 and *Heroides* 3.3.
[88] D. A. Pearsall, ed. *The Floure and the Leaf and the Assembly of Ladies* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962).

framed, conventions reveal not just their own playful artistry, but also the workings of a single heart in love, that is, a singular fear of the beloved and her potential rejection.[89]

And yet, the problem we run into over and over again, especially in view of a lyrical Gower participating in a tradition of conscious literary questions about love language, is whether love language can even be reformed. The failure of any love petition—are there any literary examples where there is satisfaction and love is achieved?—is generic. Instead of describing a failure of rhetorical persuasion, it allows for a love poem to flourish. Failure then provides the very resistance needed to compel a lover to sing. In this context, attaching the *Traitié,* Gower's French ballade sequence in praise of faithful marriage, to the *Confessio*, as we find in numerous manuscripts, seems a strange solution to the problem of love and poetry. A marriage of convenience between a genre, the ballade, dedicated to love as we conventionally understand it and a moral treatise dedicated to denouncing adulterous love as false and marriage as true, feels somehow inadequate. Writing marital poetry in the same stanzaic form as Amans' petition to Venus does not seem to reform poetry. Nor is the *Traitié*'s kind of love language a language worth listening to. Marriage, clearly a clerical solution, does not seem to resolve the problem of disruptive desire and its resulting poetic productivity. Those wedded to a moral Gower will undoubtedly agree that they can.[90] But I cannot help but think of Deschamps' gentle rebuke in the *Art de dictier* against writing religious *sirventes*, a religious variation of the chant royal dedicated to Mary: "nobles homes n'ont pas acoustume de ce faire" (noble men are not accustomed to write this [genre])(398a). If the poem is an "ouvrage qui se porte au puis

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[89] For love as fear see *Heroides* 1.12 and Andreas Capellanus, *De Amore* 1.1 and 3.1 where the *Heroides* is quoted.
[90] Emma Lipton, "Exemplary Cases: Marriage as Legal Principle in Gower's *Traitié pour essampler les amantz marietz*," *Chaucer Review* 48.4 (2014): 480-501.

d'amour" (work which belongs to the Puys d'Amours)(398a), making it religious and marital

seems the diminishment of a once "noble" art.

But on the other hand, it is Froissart who ends his *Joli Buisson* with twelve lays "de

nouviel sentiment" (5195) dedicated to the Virgin. Even the Pseudo-Ovidian *De vetula* and *La*

vieille end with Ovid, the reformed lover, wiser with age, closing his book with a prayer to

Mary. Love becomes *caritas*. That is also how the *Confessi*o is resolved. Like Froissart and

Ovid both, "feble and impotent" (8.3127), lacking the necessary sexual energy to animate

amorous poetry and the experience of a Petrarchan "debat/ Withinne himself" (8.3150-51) that

is essential to a love whose "nature is so divers" (8.3157), Gower takes leave for new

"governance" (8.3136), for a love "which that is/ Withinne a manes herte affirmed,/And stant of

charité confermed," (8.3162-64). Such a love *can* be confirmed because it is not dependent on

another to acknowledge it. Andreas Capellanus affirms this concept of love in his version of

Ovid's *Remedia* when love's horrifyingly singular experience, its dissymmetry and inequality,

experiences that also belong to Amans as he tries to get his lady to look upon him and

acknowledge his presence, gives way in the final book of *De amore* to the acknowledging

bridegroom of the *Canticus*. Gower's affirmation of a moral conclusion for the *Confessio* in

caritas and not *amor* can be understood then as generic. Holly Barbaccia has shown, when

discussing the final ballade to Mary that ends the *Cinkante Balades*, how both notions of love

seem to converge with the Virgin taking on the features of his *dame*.[91] The moral reading

becomes dependent on the conventions of the amorous.

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[91] Holly Barbaccia "The Woman's Respose in John Gower's *Cinkante Balades*" in Dutton, *Trilingual Poet*, pp. 230-38. For a general discussion of secular lyric models for sacred songs, see Yolanda Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), pp. 164-67.

What makes the *Traitié* so important for our reading of a lyric Gower is that it ends with

an envoy in Machaut's *septains*.

> Al universiteé de tout le monde
> Johan Gower ceste Balade envoie;
> Et si jeo n'ai de François la faconde,
> Pardonetz moi qe jeo de ceo forsvoie:
> Jeo sui Englois, si quier par tiele voie
> Estre excusé; mais quoique nulls en die,
> L'amour parfit en dieu se justifie.
> (To everyone in the whole world, John Gower this ballade sends. And
> if I have no eloquence in French, forgive me when I get off track. I am
> English and want by such reasons to be excused. But whatever one
> says, perfect love in God is justified.)

This envoy has to be read against a tradition. [92] It is not, as it is sometimes edited, attached to the

final ballade. Unlike the *Cinkante Balades*, the *Traitié* does not reproduce an innovation

identified by Deschamps as an influence coming from the chant royal and the Puys: ballades that

include envoys "qui se commencent par 'princes'" (397c)(that begin with "Princes"). The

Traitié's ballades *sans envoy* reflects then an older fashion, associated with Deschamps' master,

Machaut, as well as Oton de Grandson. Though Fisher comments that by the middle of the

fourteenth century, "the ballade was still in flux as to meter, stanza form, and the presence or

absence of the envoy," Yeager ingeniously dates both the *Cinkante Balades*, which include

envoys, and the *Traitié*, which does not, in relation to Deschamps' 1392 treatise, bringing both

ballade sequences in close proximity to the *Confessio*'s 1390 dating.[93]

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[92] As with the *Confessio Amantis*, Latin marginalia, seemingly clarifies any personable poetry with disembodied prose. In this case, apologizes for his Anglo-French: "Hic in fine Gower qui Anglicus est sua verba Gallica si que incongrua excusat," an apology we have also seen with the English knight Luce del Gat in the prologue to the *Tristan en prose*.

[93] Fisher, *John Gower*, p. 75, Yeager, "The Ballades," pp. 82-7, 91-2 and "John Gower's French and his Readers" in Dutton, *Trilingual Poet*, pp. 304-14 (esp. 309-11). However, following Yeager, Hume argues that the *Traitié* was probably composed in 1370s for a specific royal reader, Edward III. Cathy Hume, "Why did Gower Write the *Traitié*" also in *Trilingual Poet*, pp. 263-75.

By accepting Yeagar's dating, there is no longer a reason to read the *Cinkante Balades* as the expressions of "idealistic, youthful emotion," but the work of a serious poet in the French mode, exploring in a strictly lyrical manner themes found in the *Confessio*.[94] And like Froissart and Ovid, Gower ends the sequence properly with an extra ballade dedicated to the Virgin. As for the *Traitié,* by "unhooking" the dating of the sequence from his marriage and pushing it closer to both the *Cinkante Balades* and the *Confessio Amantis*, the *Traitié* becomes a conscious "continuation," to use a term found in the French prose tradition, of the *Confessio Amantis*. For those who aspire to see a lyric Gower, the existence of two ballade sequences so close to each other and marked by contradictory ends thwart any moral growth in the poet and turns such growth into fiction. This benefits not only Gower but also the *Confessio Amantis* by having two works, seemingly contradictory, yet revolving around its axis with a clearly lyrical agenda.

However, Yeager's reluctance to make the *Traitié* and the *Cinkante Balades* contemporaneous—because he sees in the *Traitié*'s lack of envoys a sign of its age—may not in itself be completely decisive for dating ballades. Some fifteenth-century sequences can also be found including ballades without envoys. For example, the ballades in Christine de Pisan's *Cent Ballades*, dated around 1402, lack envoys—it too ends with a turn to God—as do most of Charles of Orleans' French ballades dated before 1440, though his English ballades include envoys. Indeed, it is possible to argue the lack of envoys was an option for sequence making after 1392, if we use Deschamnps' *ars* as a terminus, while recognizing that it may not be an entirely reliable method for dating a work as earlier.

On the other hand, Gower's use of an envoy and not a colophon to conclude his sequence on matrimony may in fact reveal Gower's cognizance of a change in fashion for the composition

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[94] Fisher, *John Gower*, p. 73.

of ballades. If ballades now have envoys, the fact that the ballades are without them, though the entirety of the *Traitié*'s ballade sequence ends with an envoy, is even more revealing. It speaks of a conscious innovation, of Gower thinking about lyric forms after the *Confessio*. Not only does Gower announce in his single envoy his authorship of the sequence, but he also changes the quality of the addressee, from Deschamps' exclusive "Princes" of the Puys or his *dame* in the *Cinkante Balades*, to a larger world in need of persuasion. If, as Deschamps implies, the envoy reflects a new amorous mode, then the *Traitié*'s refusal to include them marks the sequence as a clerical reaction to notions of love inherited from French poetry. It also seems to revive the specter of the moral Gower that the lyrical Amans so thoroughly complicates. But the fact that the *Traitié* can be read in conjunction with the *Confessio*—of thirteen known manuscripts, nine include Gower's English book—provokes another reading, that the *Traitié* instead marks not the moral or ethical growth of John Gower, but the fictional growth of an old poet named "Johan Gower," who has recently discovered that "en dieu," and not in Venus, he can finally find "L'amour parfit."

Indeed, the *Traitié* and the *Confessio Amantis* form a continuous unity around the kind of poetic identity that the *dits amoureux* adopt, a poetics of persona that is more multiplicitous than that of the fictional subjects discovered through the framing of songs in works like the *Knight's Tale* or the *Tristan en prose*. The convention of identifying the personas of the *dits*, whether French or English, with their authors, what Anne Middleton calls, "open referential self-naming," is a product of the *dit*'s employment of the "lyric I" in a narrative context, an innovation inspired by the *Roman de la rose*.[95] In the case of the *Traitié*, it is only at the very

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[95] Anne Middleton, "William Langland's 'Kynde Name': Authorial Signature and Social Identity in Late Fourteenth-Century England" in Lee Paterson, ed. *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380-1530* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), pp. 15-82 (qt. 31).

end, in the concluding envoy, with the line "Johan Gower ceste Balade envoie," that we become aware of this complex form of medieval signature. Distinct from colophons objectively identifying the author and his work, here, the poet's persona confirms, or at least appears to confirm, the intent of a particular literary work. We might usefully recall the indeterminacy of the double authorship of the *Roman de la rose* as an example of this literary phenomenon when affixing authorship to internal poetic naming. Its "internal signature," to use another term, "Guillaumes" (10565) and "Jehans Chopinel" (10569), appears in a retroactive prophecy uttered by the god of Love, a character who in turn tries to efface or double God by "authoring" a new amorous Bible with two testaments, all in a book which not only problematizes prophesy itself as the effect of dreams and deceptive language, but also plays with the idea of doubles as the reflections of a mirror.[96]

Gower's "signature" in the *Confessio* is equally disruptive. His self-naming occurs at a crucial moment at the end when his, or rather, Amans' petition—since the distinction is important—is received by Venus and she in turn, asks his name: "'Ma dame,' I seide, 'John Gower.'" (8.2321). After she utters her "Now, John" (8.2322), mixing seriousness with laughter due to the ridiculousness of Amans' request—a laughter reminiscent of the *roy qui ne ment*'s own laugh after Machaut's contorted request because his age like Amans/Gower's has turned poetic *amplificatio* into parody, or worse, vice—Venus turns her mirror upon him, in the same way Geoffrey of Vinsauf has poetry look upon itself "in hoc speculo" (49), and lets him see his

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[96] Ibid., p. 24. For a discussion of the *Roman de la rose*'s authorship, see Roger Dragonetti, "Pygmalion ou les pièges de la fiction dans le *Roman de la Rose*," in Georges Güntert, Marc-René Jung and Kurt Ringger, eds. *Orbis Mediaevalis: Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Reto Raduolf Bezzola à l'occasion de son quatre-vingtième anniversaire* (Berne: Francke, 1978), pp. 89-111, reprinted in *La Musique et les lettres*, pp. 345-68, and "*Le Roman de la Rose*: L'écriture antérieure" in *Le mirage des sources*, pp. 200-25; David Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First Roman de la Rose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986) and Alexandre Leupin, "L'hérésie littéraire: Paradigmes textuels dans le *Roman de la Rose*" in Catherine Bel and Herman Braet, eds. *De la Rose: Texte, image, fortune* (Louvin: Peeters, 2006), pp. 59-80.

face, all "deface" (8.2828) and nothing "plein" (8.2830).[97] What a horrifying image of poetry

beyond its use. What was once thought to be youthful and "debonaire" (8.2202) becomes a

wintery scene, where his "deduit of gras, of lef, of flour" (8.2847-48), that place of invention

already evoked in the *Knight's Tale*, gives way to a poetic space where the "grene lef is

overthrowe" (8.2854) and there is "no plesance" (8.2833). The mirror's plain rhetoric becomes

the solution when amorous eloquence associated with the pleasures of language is lacking. In

Gower's *Traitié* equally we can register this vacancy.

Poetry as that amorous place, identified with the *locus amoenus*, disappears from the

Confessio when Venus finally casts "Gower" out:

> "Lo," thus sche seide, "John Gower,
> Now thou art ate last cast.
> This have I for thin ese cast,
> That thou no more of love sieche." (8.2908-11)

Gower takes us back to Book 7 and Cicero's *Rhetorique*. To "seek" implies going "where one

should if possible search," as Lausberg notes in a discussion on *inventio*, that is, a rhetorical

place, the *locus amoenus*, to "find" material to write love poetry.[98] We have already described

how the *locus* of poetry is worked out in Froissart as stable and temporally present for the

contemplation of new material as memory. Gower's casting out from the *locus* coincides with

the casting out of his poetic identity as Amans. The new narrative frame Venus wields, which

includes all the potential memories produced by her true mirror, can particularize this desiring

subject and destroy any aspirations for a conventional, poetic timelessness. Since Amans can no

longer be figured in the place of poetry as allegory, there will be no need for him to continue

seeking within the realm of love poetry material to compose. Gower, likewise, is explicitly

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[97] Ernest A. Gallo, ed. *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).
[98] Lausberg, *Handbook*, p. 119.

excluding any possibility for memories of the lady as a viable subject of poetry as Froissart's old poet is offered when Venus leads him to a chest containing an image of his past love. What was once a perpetual and stable spring, if we can evoke Froissart, is now submitted to time. There is a poignant moment when Gower, the older poet, in full realization, does not so much transform himself as allow time to change him, recognizing that "time is schape/ To frost, to snow, to wind, to rein" (8.2851). In other words, the *locus amoenus* is now snowed over and "wynter wol no somer knowe" (8.2853).

Venus decides to relieve Gower of his duties as an *amans* and the "unsely jolif wo" (8.2360) he has experienced as lover, the only moment where the figure of oxymoron is condemned. It is at this moment, when Venus sends John Gower back to his old books where "vertu moral duelleth" (8.2925) that Amans truly disappears. But the Latin *carmina* in Book 1 implies a place for narrative memories, not love poems, the old man Gower describing how he effaced his own identity to enter the garden to become an *amans*:

> Me quibus ergo Venus, casus, laqueauit amantem,
> Orbis in exemplum scriber tendo palam (1.ii.7-8)
> (Those disasters by which Venus therefore ensnared me as a lover I
> exert myself to write as an exemplum for the world openly.)

Not only is his audience the same as that of the envoy for the *Traitié*, but what is fascinating is how the French styled *Amant* as allegorical figure becomes the Latin *amans* of an authoritative exemplary culture of old books. To understand the transition, one has to keep in mind the tension between these two traditions, one allegorical and the other exemplary, one French associated with love and the other Latin associated with exemplarity. Finally, if Latin is conceived as the *carmina* or music of doctrine and sensual experience, as his comment implies, Gower also describes the difficulty of writing in such an open and plain style (*palam*). The moralizing feature is equally at work in the Latin prose marginalia of the book, where John

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Gower's folly is transformed into authorial intent in the tradition of the *accessus ad auctores*, that literal feature of exegesis that situates the writer within a work.[99]

> Hic quasi in persona aliorum, quos amor alligat, fingens se auctor esse
> Amantem, varias eurum passions variis huius libri distincctionibus per
> singular scriber proponit. (1.59)
> (Here, as if in the persona of others, whom love binds, the author,
> fashioning himself to be the Lover, proposes to write about their
> various passions one by one in the various sections of this book.)

The sober reputation of *Iohannes*, the English poet mentioned in the *Confessio*'s Latin colophon at the end of the book, is preserved as an *auctor* now that love—that power that produces poetry once the poet gives into love and enters the *locus amoenus*—is repudiated and narrative prose takes center stage. To be a lover or *amans* in the Latin is to become a *persona* of one's own self-fashioning, but this fashioning is a *fingens* that can equally be understood as an insincere act, a feigning or pretending, on the part of Gower, to get at a larger point. That would make his personification already a moral judgment, authoritative and Latin, written outside of love's eternal present. It would be a clerical judgment on what goes on inside Love's enclosed garden. But it could also be read as revision. One has to keep in mind Venus' original doubts at the beginning of the *Confessio* about whether he was ever in her service; the confession's use as a way to ascertain the truth of his convictions and finally, the letter's rhetorical failure, the unpersuasive nature of his petition.

The *Traitié* then is less poetry as moral growth than poetry post-Amans, a poetry of exemplarity confirmed only within the fictional limits of the manuscripts that constitute the "continuations" of the *Confessio*—as the *Roman de la rose*'s authorship is confirmed within the

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[99] Coleman notes that this moment is one of the rare examples in the *Confessio* of a scholastic gloss in Latin. Joyce Coleman, "Lay Reader," p. 220. For the *accessus* see Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitude in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1988).

limits of a dream. In this case, the opening colophon to Gower's ballade sequence expounds in

Latinate French on its relation to the *Confessio Amantis*.

> Puisqu'il ad dit ci devant en Englois par voie d'essample la sotie de
> cellui qui par amours aime par especial, dirra ore apres en François a
> tout le monde en general un traitié selonc les auctours pour essampler
> les amantz marietz, au fin q'ils la foi de lour seintes espousailes
> pourront par fine loialté guarder, et al honour de dieu salvement tenir.
> (12)
> (Because the preceding *dit* in English was by way of example on the
> foolishness of those who love specifically through Love, now the
> following treatise in French will be for everyone in general according
> to the *auctores* to give *exempla* to married lovers, in order that they
> might be able to protect the promise of their holy nuptials through
> perfect loyalty, and safely hold to the honor of God.)

With Amans gone, the sober, old Gower is now on hand to write. And in the *Traitié* we can hear

that suitability of style, so lacking in Amans' poetry, in *Johan Gower*'s voice as *auctor*. This is

not the poetry of Youth, who in Love's court, Gower sees "so besy upon his lay" (8.2663)—not

studying the "law," as many glosses suggest, but drafting a poem, a lay, in the same way Youth

in Froissart's *Joli Buisson* would write poems worthy of eternal spring. The gravity of *Johan*

Gower's high French style with its seriousness of purpose—a treatise in verse, full of exempla on

the kind of love that leads to perfect matrimony—seems as cumulative and reflective as the Latin

comments of *Iohannes* found in the *Confessio*'s Latin apparatus until we remember, following

Yeager's lead, that we cannot confuse Gower's self-naming with the author who wrote two

French sequences on love, one in the tradition of *fine amour* and the other opposed to it; and an

English *dit* about an old poet in love who by the end takes on the physical state of an old poet

who happens to carry the name of "John Gower." Gower as writer then cannot be confused with

his own poetic device, that is, his many textual identities.

The *Confessio* and its surrounding work reveal competing visions not only of poetry but

also of authorship. It would be a poor and speculative reading then to turn the *Confessio Amantis*

and the *Traitié* into a reflection on Gower's own age.[100] *Johan Gower*'s "signing" of the *Traitié*

then must be enfolded within a literary trajectory of style as that style equally unfolds in

narrative time. In the progression of the narrative, the *Traitié* is the most fitting poetry: sober,

reflective, religious, moral, stylistically correct; and yet, its poetic form, the ballade, seems to

press against it. Unlike Machaut's decision to suspend his doubts about the young Toute Belle in

the *Voir Dit*, Gower's decision to begin the *Confessio* in a moral tone and conclude his *dit* "en

Englois" with marital poetry reflects the same choice Froissart makes when, awakening from his

dream, he decides it is time to think about his soul. Even Ovid, recognizing that this "viellart

raffole" (old man has become crazy)(3.3785), turns to a new "estude" (3.3787) or *studio* (3.12):

philosophy, that is, theology. Ovid's new doctrine is similar to Genius' ideal theory of language,

found "dedenz mon cuer enclose" (in my heart enclosed)(3.3791) and understood "sanz glose"

(without gloss)(3.3792). The *Traitié*'s Latin conclusion is more practical: "Hinc vetus annorum

Gower sub spe meritorum/ Ordine sponsorum tutus adhibo thorum" (Thus, old of age, I Gower,

in hopes of favor, safely approach the marriage bed in the order of husbands).[101] Less

philosophical, Gower has become conventional again as husband and *senex*. The Ciceronian

reform Genius promised in prose is already a generic turn preconditioned by the *dits amoureuex*

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[100] Schutz sees the *Confessio* as "a comment on his reading, a reflection of and on the texts that shaped his poetry, his way of thinking, and the hopes for his readers" (123) while for Meecham-Jones the book was a means for Gower "to attempt an examination of, and monument to, his literary aspirations" (16). Andrea Schultz, "Absent and Present Images: Mirrors and Mirroring in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Chaucer Review* 34.1 (1999): 107-24 and Simon Meecham-Jones, "Prologue: The Poet as Subject: Literary Self-Consciousness in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," in Henk Dragstra, Sheila Otway and Helen Wilcox, eds. *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 2000), pp. 14-30. On the French side, Machaut's *Voir Dit* and Froissart's *Joli Buisson* have also been defined as career changing moves, in their case, to political/historical works or religious occupations. Michelle A. Freeman, "Froissart's *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*: A Farewell to Poetry?" in Madeline Pelner Cosman and Bruce Chandler, eds. *Machaut's World: Science and Art in the Fourteenth Century* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1978), pp. 235-47; William W. Kibler, "*Le joli Buisson de Jonece*: Froissart's Midlife Crisis" in Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, *Froissart Across the Genres*, pp. 63-80 and Looze, *Pseudo-Autobiography*, p. 14.
[101] Macaulay, *The French Work*, p. 392.

we have been discussing where older poets must respond to a poetry associated with youth with an eventual retirement from active life.

The tangle of perspectives at the end of *Confessio* manuscripts conceals paradoxically any true perspective of the author. Instead we get glimpses of many potential authors. When Amans leaves the scene, one generic figure is substituted for another, the old man or husband for the lover. This is what makes the *Confessio* so unique. Unlike other prosimetra or mixed verse *dits*, the *Confessio* concludes with no true authorial figure emerging from the work. And yet, we can still glimpse a physical entity that inhabits the figure of Amans, not in the way Langland's allegories seem physical, but rather, in the way Amans' physicality can never be fully disincarnated into a pure figure of poetry.   We can make out a man fussing around the woman he loves but rationalizing that fussiness into a poetic gesture. The power of delusion transformed into an allegorical figure of much poetic prestige is clarified once we get a glance into the mirror. We see what she sees: an old man, probably in her father's service, fawning inappropriately over a very beautiful, young woman. And yet, as we have seen with the way Gower plays with authorial intent, the mixed genre conceals more than it reveals. In that way it is truly Ciceronian. Subjectivity becomes submerged into questions of genre—amorous, didactic, political, philosophical—with neither ceding ground to the other. The "middel wei" (Pro. 17) is the generic way set forth by the mixed *dits*, a genre always balanced between the "game" of love and "ernest" (8.3109) reflections on the meaning of love and its relation to poetry.

CHAPTER FOUR

LYRIC AND THE DOCUMENTARY SELF: CHARLES OF ORLEANS

In the previous chapters I have shown how the medieval song, understood as anonymous and conventional, can acquire a fictional subject—that is, an author—through its dramatic framing. We have called this literary phenomenon contextual subjectivity because of the way a text creates narrative instances of subjectivity by framing conventional songs as the product of a subject singing. If thirteenth-century works like the *Tristan* explicitly narrativize the song writing process, streamlining *inventio* for inspiration and identifying not only the object of so many love conventions but the motivations of their authors as well, by the fourteenth century, certain *dits amoureux*, following the example of the *Roman de la rose* with its narrative use of the "lyric I," broadened this impression of a textual subject by playfully identifying the narration and song with an ironic representation of the author.

Sometimes, that persona allows for a glimpse of the historical author, his namesake, working through the fiction of his own name. For example, in Machaut's *Voir Dit*, the archive-like collection of letters and anagram puzzles in the rondeaux concealing true names playfully bears witness to authorial realities behind Guillaume's persona of the hapless, older writer and Toute-Belle's allegorical concealment. The entire problem of "moral Gower" derives from the perception that Gower's foolish persona revealed by Venus gives ways to the author of the

Traitié and the first book of the *Confessio*, married, sober and contrite, opening his work to a biographical criticism that would be foreign to Chaucer or Froissart. However, similar to Machaut, Gower's role as poet-narrator is left uncertain because his persona seems to fragment into numerous signatures and identities formulated around question of love and its proper expression.

The mixed genre's ability to reveal the historic self behind the persona's textual subject seems to have been a powerful attraction for Charles of Orleans, a French prince held as a royal prisoner in England for 25 years. Indeed, we know so much about him that critics have shared in Charles' own attraction to the idea that one might read his poems according to his biography. As Claudio Galderisi notes, it is very difficult to dissociate "the subject or the metaphor of the prison" in Charles' work from what Barthes called *biographemes*, little details in a text that seem to connect to a lived life once dispersed by the "lyric I."[1] Charles seems to contradict Zumthor's assertion that conventional "themes are not individualized" but remain objective across "formes vides" within the poetic field.[2] When we try to limit these details in order to preserve the integrity of Charles' *prison amoureuse*, there is a sense that we have foreclosed an important feature of the work, because those details work to enhance and make real what is at first glance merely poetic. As this chapter will show, by recreating in poetry the kind of administrative prose documents that prolonged his long imprisonment in England, Charles consciously organizes his two books—his French "notebook" or "album" containing the beginnings of a mixed-verse *dit* and ending with a collection of poems, some written by others; and a complete mixed-verse *dit*

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[1] Claudio Galderisi, *En regardant vers le païs de France: Charles d'Orléans, une poésie des presents* (Orleans: Paradigme, 2007), p. 35. For the *biographeme* see Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), pp. 12-14.
[2] Paul Zumthor, *Langue et techniques poétiques à l'époque romane (XIe-XIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1963), pp. 195, 196.

in English—as a sort of latent prosimetrum with its abundant poetry contextualized by the larger frame of the English bureaucracy that kept him imprisoned. It is this administrative prosimetrum that makes possible the appearance of his historic self.[3] By working through the mixed-genre, Charles the duke seems to peek through his two books while at the same time playing with his more literary persona "Charles, duc d'Orlians" (Retenue 114) as both the grieving lover and the ironic authorial persona he inherited from Machaut, Deschamps, Froissart and Chaucer.[4]

1. The Document and the Book

Charles' use of the written matter of his surroundings is hardly original. Middle English literature is famous for an aesthetic stance associated with writers working in a variety of administrative duties, from Chaucer, one of the parliamentary "milites comitatus Kancie" or "knights of the shire" for Kent, as well as justice of the peace for the county, controller of customs in London and a clerk of the king's works; to Hoccleve, a clerk with a supervisory position in the office of the privy seal.[5] Though scattered examples of this documentary culture

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[3] Summers takes the opposite stance, finding that Charles is unique among "prison writers" in not having a political agenda, an identifiable readership, nor a carefully fashioned "self-presentation" as prisoner. On the other hand, Critton finds Charles deeply involved in politics and invested in self-representing himself under the influence of Hoccleve, "the greatest self-spinner of the fifteenth century" (361). Joanna Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004) and Rory G. Critten, "The Political Valence of Charles d'Orléans's English Poetry," *Modern Philology* 111.3 (February 2014): 339-64.

[4] All quotations from the French book from Pierre Champion, ed. *Charles D'Orléans: Poésies*, 2 vols. (Paris, Champion, 1923-27) while all quotations of the English book are from Mary-Jo Arn, ed. *Fortunes Stabilnes: Charles of Orleans's English Book of Love: A Critical Edition* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994). I have also consulted John Fox and Mary-Jo Arn, eds. *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and his Circle: A Critical Edition of BnF MS. fr. 25458, Charles d'Orléans's Personal Manuscript* (Tempe, Arizona: ACMRS and Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010) as well as Jean Marie Guichard, ed. *Poésies de Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1842), what Arn calls a "snapshot" of the French manuscript, and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, ed. *Ballades et Rondeaux: Edition du manuscrit 25458 du fonds français de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1992) for the manuscript's structure. Arn's study of the manuscript was also helpful. Mary-Jo Arn, *The Poet's Notebook: The Personal Manuscript of Charles d'Orléans (Paris BnF MS fr. 25458)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008). For the English book, I also consulted Robert Steele and Mabel Day, eds, *The English Poems of Charles of Orleans* (London: Early English Text Society, 1970, orig. 1941, 1946).

[5] Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, eds. *Chaucer Life-Records* (Austin: University of Texas, 1966), p. 367. For literature and governmental service see Thomas Frederick Tout, "Literature and Learning in the English Civil Service in the Fourteenth Century," *Speculum* 4.4 (October 1929): 365-89; Gwilym Dodd, "Changing Perspectives:

can be found in French poetry—for example, Deschamps' ballade with the refrain "Ancre, cire, pappier et parchemin" (Ink, wax, paper and parchment) to describe the daily necessity of legal *chartres* or Christine de Pisan's elaborate description of a sealed papal like "bulle" in the *Dit de la Rose*—English examples are more wide spread and integrated into many narratives.[6] Martin Camargo traces this literary phenomenon in England to Chaucer's influence in transforming both the Ovidian epistolary poem and the complaint into "legalistic love documents."[7] Ethan Knapp has famously described this administrative influence on English literature as a "Bureaucratic Muse," while Emily Steiner has argued that the English were "profoundly invested in the idea of a document culture," and as a result, "medieval English writers used legal documents to trace out the contours of their own writing."[8] Poetic documents then became a way for English writers to transform the inherent instrumentality of administrative paperwork into literature for other purposes, a way to make a public form of writing literary and private. The multiple petitions or "bills" found in English love poetry attest to this tradition.

With Charles of Orleans, not only do we find attention to this documentary aesthetic, but also a mass of documents relating to his imprisonment, a sort of "life records" of the poet. In fact, we have so many biographical details that it is difficult *not* to apply an historic life to his poems. Enid McLeod, for example, literally recreates a kind of troubadour *vida* and *razo* for Charles by affixing particular ballades and rondeaux found in his mixed "Livre de pensee" (R33)

Parliament, Poetry and the 'Civil Service' under Richard II and Henry IV," *Parliamentary History* 25.3 (2006): 299-322 and Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007).

[6] Jean-Patrice Boudet and Hélène Millet, eds. *Eustache Deschamps en son temps* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1997), pp. 92-93 and Maurice Roy, ed. *Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, vol. 2 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1891), p. 46.

[7] Martin Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), p. 94.

[8] Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2001) as well as "The Bureaucratic Identity and the Construction of the Self in Hoccleve's *Formulary* and *La mal regle*" *Speculum* 74.2 (April 1999): 357-76; Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 3.

to certain biographical details known from the documentary sources surrounding his

imprisonment.[9] This is an approach that is difficult to avoid when working with the duke, not

only because of the mass of English administrative rolls and letters surrounding his person but

more importantly because he organized the very frame of the two *dits* he wrote in England, one

French and the other English, with literary versions of that documentary mass, what Emily

Steiner describes as a "battery of versified missives, commissions, indentures, and pardons," to

supplement the narrative frame of his two books.[10] But by using *lettres en vers* to replicate the

bureaucratic prose surrounding his captivity, Charles the author puts pressure not only on the

traditional *formes fixes* that make up the bulk of his books but on the frame too. As will be seen,

Charles' documentary poetics seems to suggest to his readers, including his contemporary ones,

that what is being written on the page is not entirely above board; that a poet constrained by

medieval literary conventions and by the conditions of his imprisonment can fashion his work in

a way that allows for the author to emerge from out of both the context of that imprisonment.

But as Jean-Claude Mühlethaler has noted, expressions of subjectivity in Charles of Orleans

always implicate the way words are used both individually and socially.[11] Lyric as a poetic form

coded as subjective becomes social when designed around a writing associated with public

documents. Lyric then becomes the expression of a subject in the public eye.

 It is not simply the survival of documents that tempts the reader to biographical or

documentary "explanations" of his work but Charles himself. In an explicitly topical poem

found in his French book, "Des nouvelles d'Albion" (Some news from Albion)(B 89), Charles,

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[9] Enid McLeod, *Charles of Orleans: Prince and Poet* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969). Arn, in her edition of Charles' English book, remarks, "McLeod cites the duke's poetry throughout as though it were historical evidence." Arn, *Fortunes Stabilnes*, p. 25n.

[10] Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 31.

[11] Claude Mühlethaler, *Charles d'Orléans, un lyrisme entre Moyen Age et modernité* (Paris: Garnier, 2010), p. 87.

in his own hand, identifies the anonymous "lyric I" and its conventional addressee, "vous," in an

abbreviated annotation squeezed in to the right of the rubric identifying the piece as a ballade:

"Orlians a Bourgogne," that is, Charles to his new political ally, Phillip the Good, the duke of

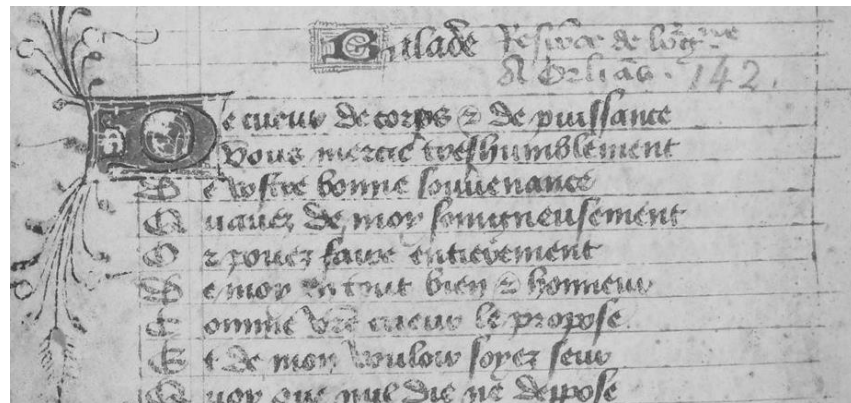Burgundy. The poem suddenly aquires a context for its composition.[12]

Figure 4.1. Detail of Paris BnF MS fr 25458, p. 218.

Furthermore, the ballade seems to make references to Charles' ongoing negotiations for his

release from custody.

> Je doy estre une saison
> Eslargi pour porchasser
> La paix, aussi ma raençon.
> Se je puis seurté trouver
> Pour aler et retourner,
> Il fault qu'en haste la quire
> Se je vueil brief achever
> En bons termes ma matiere. (9-16)
> (I am to be at liberty for a season in order to work for peace and
> my ransom as well if I can find some security for my going and
> returning. I must make haste in seeking it, if in a short time I wish
> to bring my mission to a happy conclusion.)

The stanza seems to allude not only to his final year in England but more specifically to a

personal petition written by Charles in July 1440 to King Henry VI and to the young king's

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[12] For Charles' personal annotations in his French book see Pierre Champion, *Le manuscript autographe des poésies de Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Champion, 1907), pp. 4, 30-32 and Jane H.M. Taylor, *The Making of Poetry: Late-Medieval French Poetic Anthologies* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), p. 103.

written response that Charles could finance his freedom with a reasonable sum on condition that

he actively support Henry's search for a "pacem finalem et perpetuam" (final and lasting peace)

to the Hundred Years War.[13] The poem responds easily to the exigencies of a biographical

reading, as do the other poems grouped together in his personal manuscript under the rubric

Balades de plusieurs propos. The poet encourages such readings.

Biographical reading can be a speculative venture at best and utterly fanciful at worst,

reducing the "lyric I" to a mere symptom of economic, social or political forces. It would be

better, instead, to limit that speculation and remain within the very materiality of documents,

their written words, as they work specifically within a poem. The impression that Henry's

pacem is apparently cited in Charles' *paix* underscores less a biography than a documentary

effect, which can also be found in poems that are less topical and more allegorical and amorous

in nature.   Finally, Charles' French seems marked by occasional expressions of the bureaucratic

English "Law French" found in documents drafted by clerks throughout England and their

French territories. Charles' *seureté* then is a poetic rendering of Henry's assurances that he will

produce *lettres de seurte* in regards to Charles' release.[14]

If *citability*, according to Emily Steiner, allows a document to be transmitted across

multiple texts, whether in other documents or poems, then Charles' biographical strain may be

tied to a deliberate movement from document to poem.[15] In a remarkable chant royal with

refrains, "Ung jour a mon cuer devisoye" (B 97), a poem not included in his English book for

reasons that will later be obvious, a private conversation between the poet and his heart can only

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[13] Thomas Rymer, ed. *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica*, etc. vols. 3-4
(Farmsborough, England: Gregg, 1967; orig. 1739), 10.777.
[14] Ibid. 10.707.
[15] "The document figures so largely in medieval English literature because it was considered to be an eminently
citable text. It was citable, not just because it was precious, authoritative, or true, but also because its *brevity*, by
which I mean both its conciseness and portability, made it citable as a writing outside writing, a writing that acts
precisely because it is a writing that ends." Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 3.

be settled once his heart, as the refrain repeats over and over again, has "visité ses papiers" (consulted or reviewed his papers). These papers, whether loose or copied in an account book, found in a "comptouer," or chest, among "plusieurs vieulx cayers" or documents that enumerate receipts or memoranda, ultimately result in the presentation of a book:[16]

>
> Ung livre qu'en sa main tenoit
> Ouquel dedens escript portoit
> Ses faiz, au long et bien entiers (20-22)
> (He held a book in his hands in which was written a full account of all
> his doings)

This accounting of a life reflects, on the one hand, a mercantile or administrative reckoning of his deeds, presumably written in narrative form, or perhaps in the Italian innovation of double-entry bookkeeping as when Charles' heart "getoit et assommoit/ Le conte des biens et dangiers" (counted and added up the reckoning of benefit and hardship)(29-30). On the other hand, in the end, his heart presents him with a book, the gathering together of experiences rendered in writing. Though the book itself is made up only of poetry, I contend that the existence of this elaborate administrative frame makes Charles' books in both French and English examples of a hybrid prosimetrum in the way Chaucer's *Canticus Troili* is a hybrid ballade and chant royal. Administrative prose documents, the records of his life as a prisoner, not only become lyricized—that would be a biographical reading—but find themselves in the poetry in the same way the narratives of the mixed genre find their way in the inserted lyrics that surround them.

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[16] Frédéric Godefroy, *Lexique de l'ancien français* (Paris: Champion, 1967), Alain Rey, *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 1995) and Algirdas Geimas and Teresa Mary Keane, *Grand dictionnaire: Moyen français* (Paris: Larousse, 2007). Rey gives 1559 the date for this definition of *cahier*, but this definition seems to reflect not only this poem but also Greimas and Keane's understanding of the word. On chests holding books and documents see both Thomas Frederick Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England: The Wardrobe, the Chamber and the Small Seals*, vol. 5 (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1930), p. 84 and Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1980), pp. 93-4.

Charles' reference to his papers and his book can perhaps serve as a poetic model for a documentary, not biographical, reading of Charles' work.

To be sure, this documentary trace derived from a bureaucratic milieu surrounding Charles' imprisonment could easily reduce a poem like "Des nouvelles d'Albion" to a series of biographical references based on his "life records," to the conditions of his parole and his need for legal surety. But at the same time, it can also suggest a way of using language that can convey in a lyric fashion the experience of that imprisonment. Using Henry's words as material for poetry, for example, implies a certain intimacy with a king and his government that makes lyric conventions associated with love appropriate to the occasion: desire, hope and the lady as lord coincide with Charles' own relation to the king. His use of documentation to frame his poetry, it seems, works on both these levels, with the topical seemingly subordinated to the amorous and vice versa depending on whether a poem is written in English or French. At the same time this juncture between a prosaic administrative frame and an amorous poetry attentive to that frame's language contextualizes the poetry differently from the *Tristan en prose* and *The Knight's Tale* or even Gower, allowing Charles the duke to be present before our eyes.

2. Poetic Instrumentality and the Schedule

Charles works with documents and refers to documents with some deliberation as part of a poetic project designed to demonstrate the political *locus* of his poetry, while simultaneously working through the loci of love poetry. In the process, he transcends the circumstances so concretely recorded in both English administrative records and the vocabulary of his poetry. In so doing, the traces of physical documents, a word or phrase or context, are consciously set in his poems. I will argue that Charles' texts are firmly supplemented by the documentary, that is, they

openly reflect, in his aspirations to write a new book of love, the world of documents that describe and define his imprisonment. But they also stage Charles' search for ways to incorporate, or better, *lyricize*, these records of imprisonment, to make monumental such documentary moments by sublimating the documentary source.[17]

Charles plays with the ways a document's instrumentality seems to simultaneously speak for the will of the writer or institution—to transmit "the author's voice and authority"—while at the same time functioning independently as a text in the world.[18] Charles' mixture of instrumentality and lyric conventions, his emphasis on the way a document frames an absent subject's desire and poetry represents that desire in a conventionally expected autonomy and anonymity, is not unique and can be glimpsed more easily in the petitionary poems of Thomas Hoccleve. Hoccleve's case serves as a more explicit example of the approach I wish to explore when reading Charles of Orleans, the moment when documents serve as the material basis for poetry.

A passing question was once posed at a roundtable in regards to Hoccleve that went beyond the already defined contours of what Knapp felicitously called the "bureaucratic muse": Could the kind of documents Hoccleve handled at the Privy office be found *within* his poetry?[19] The answers given were inconclusive and most revolved around his well-known practice of writing poetic petitions.[20] But a unique *balade* found in Huntington Library MS. HM 111—

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[17] I borrow the terms monument and document loosely from Zumthor with the document reflecting a primary use of language — primary in the linguistic sense of the word, as the common everyday use of language — and the monument, a secondary use based on a universalizing of language brought about by *grammatica* and *rhetorica*. Paul Zumthor, *Langue et techniques*, pp. 27-69. For *lyricization*, the narrowing of poetry into our now received idea of the lyric as a solitary, emotional expression, see Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[18] Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, pp. 17-28 (qt. 60).

[19] The question was posed at one of the Babel roundtables at Kalamazoo in 2012 but was never really answered.

[20] For Hoccleve and the petitionary poem, see J. A. Burrow's influential "The Poet as Petitioner" *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 3 (1981): 61-75.

balade as a rubric in this manuscript functions as a more general term for any variety of lyric

forms including the ballade, chant royal and their many variations—reveals the kind of

documentary trace I find so irresistible.[21] The sixteenth poem in the manuscript, a *ballade à*

quatre strophes without refrains, opens with

> See heer, my maister Carpenter, I yow preye,
> How many chalenges ageyn me be;
> And I may not deliure hem by no weye,
> So me werreyeth coynes scarsetee,
> That ny Cousin is to necessitee.
> For why, vn-to yow seeke I for refut,
> Which that of confort am ny destitut. (16.1-7)[22]

Hoccleve's familiar difficulty with his annuity is extended here to a problem of a debt, most

likely for a private writ drafted by the clerks in expectation of a "present" or payment for their

work.[23] His address to John Carpenter, *secretarius* and parliamentarian for the city of London,

may have reflected his popularity as a "mediator in legal disputes."[24] But just as likely

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[21] Hoccleve's *balades* show how elastic the *formes fixes* could be and confirm Deschamps' observations in the *Art de dictier* that innovations occurred across the ballade and chant royal, the former picking up the chant royal's envoy and the latter picking up the ballade's refrains. Two treatise of the Seconde Rhétorique note that with the chant royal refrains are optional (though one of the examples is under the rubric *Balade*). However, the early sixteenth-century *L'art et science de rhétorique* notes that if a refrain is omitted, the final line of the stanza must rhyme with the first line. Hoccleve's ballades show amplification (an additional stanza) and lack of refrains also from the chant royal. As for the Huntington manuscript, its thirteen *formes fixes* poems are the following: a rondeau tercet and twelve *balades* in a variety of forms all without refrains, an innovation we find as well in Gower's French ballades and in Lydgate and Charles' English ones though there with the retention of at least a final refrain word repeated. Besides the traditional three stanza ballade (pp. 56, 58, 61, 62), one transcribed from the *Regiment of Princes*, and the five stanza ballade or more properly the *chant royal* (39) there are also two *ballades à quatre strophes* (59, 63), one double ballade (i.e. six stanzas) (47), two double *ballade à quatre strophes* (i.e. eight stanzas) (59, 63), one double chant royal (i.e. ten stanzas) (64) and one triple chant royal (i.e. 15 stanzas) (67). Ernest Langlois, ed. *Recueil d'arts de Seconde Rhétorique* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), pp. 62-3 and 304-6. For the *ballade à quatre strophes* see Daniel Poiron, *Le poète et le prince: L'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orleans* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), p. 370 and James Laidlow, "L'innovation métrique chez Deschamps" in Danielle Buschinger, ed. *Autour d'Eustache Deschamps: Actes du Colloque du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie-Jules Verne, Amiens, 5-8 Novembre 1998* (Presses du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales, 1999), pp. 127-40. Laidlow suggests it may be an experimental form.

[22] Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz, eds. *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, EETS, 1897, 1970), pp. 63-64.

[23] On employing Privy clerks in private matters, such as the writing of warrants or writs and not being paid see Tout, *Chapters*, vol. 5, pp 90-91.

[24] "As common clerk, his primary domain was the documentary culture that defined the enfranchisement of the city: the proclamations he signed in the name of the mayor, aldermen, and commonalty; the court records he was entirely responsible for maintaining; the financial records of the city he alone could access." Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*,

Hoccleve's appeal is personal: he wants Carpenter to pay him and "Tho men whos names I aboue express" (16.8) for the *extra curica* or fees owed for services done on behalf of Carpenter personally so that they can "Rekne" their "dettes" (16.12). This appeal reflects Linne Mooney's assertion that Hoccleve was no lowly clerk in a dead-end department but at the very least a supervisor or "secondary" responsible for clerks below him in an important but less prestigious arm of government.[25] We see this sense of responsibility when he speaks on behalf of himself and his fellow clerks "Baillay/ Hethe & Hofforde" (13.25-6) in another *ballade à quatre strophes* with an accompanying rondeau to a baron of the Exchequer, Sir Henry Somer.

More important, for our purposes, the addressee in the poem, "Carpenter," is written in the manuscript "over an erasure," to quote Furnivall, its editor, "The original having probably
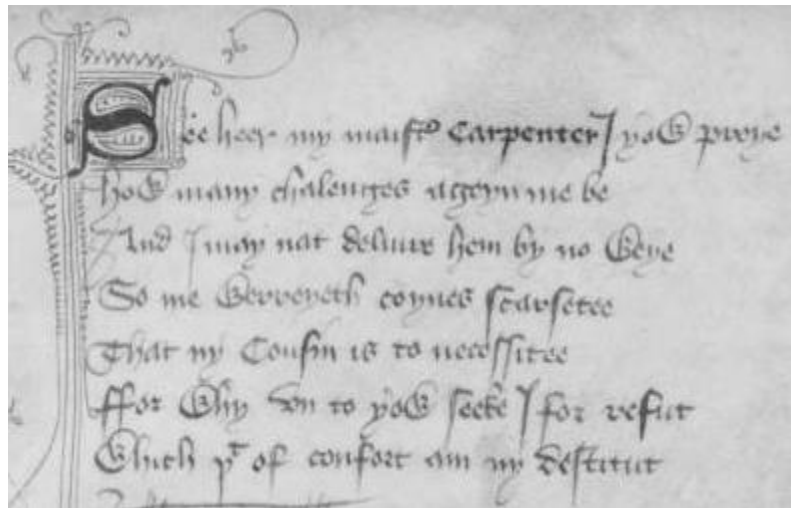

Figure 4.2. Detail of Huntington Library MS. HM 111, San Marino, California, f. 41r.

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p. 92. For a recent discussion of Carpenter see George Shuffelton, "John Carpenter, Lay Clerk," *Chaucer Review* 48.4 (2014): 434-56.

[25] Linne R. Mooney, "Some New Light on Thomas Hoccleve" *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 29 (2007): 293-340. On the Privy Seal as a dead end in the bureaucracy as well as Hoccleve as a "secondary," see Tout, *Chapters*, vol. 5, pp. 74-79 and A. L. Brown, "The Privy Seal Clerks in the Early Fifteenth Century" in D. A. Bullough and R. L. Storey, eds. *The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honor of Kathleen Major* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), pp. 260-81. Tout and Brown found that the Privy Seal offered little career advancement outside of the office in comparison to the Chancery. As for the role of the "secondary" and the office of the Privy Seal as essential to the administration of the king's government see Tout and the introduction to Elna-Jean Young Bentley, ed. "The Formulary of Thomas Hoccleve" (Diss. Emory University, 1965).

another name, to whose owner it had been sent, as it was doubtless afterwards sent to other moneyful folk."[26] In other words, Furnivall imagines Hoccleve rubbing out one name to replace it with another, thus creating what could only be described as a "form poem" in which he could insert the name of a respected person whose debt he hoped to collect on behalf of himself and his men. It is not a stretch then to see the poem as a poetic example of the form letters Hoccleve compiled in his famous formulary.

This unique document, compiled between 1423-1425, during Henry VI's infancy, gives us an idea of the kind of documents that passed under Hoccleve's pen and reveals the kind of work he did in the office of the privy seal. Hoccleve compiles for future clerks in his *ars notaria* all the necessary form letters an inexperienced cleric would need to fit a particular situation, some in a highly formulaic Latin, the rest in Anglo-French.[27] M. T. Clanchy observed in his important book on the proliferation of documentation in England that standardizing letters not only produced precision but also freed supervisors from the necessary oversight of a single letter's drafting.[28] In ways that recall Dragonetti's virtual poetry, the medieval document is already written. All that is required for the clerk is to fill in the particulars. Instead of blanks, as we find in our own form letters, Thomas Hoccleve uses either random capitol letters for names— though T.H. often makes his presence felt—or *tiele* in the French letters and *talis* in the Latin

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[26] Furnivall, *Hoccleve's Works*, p. 63n.

[27] Legge describes Hoccleve's "letter-book" as an example of "semi-Registers, semi-Formularies, drawn up by officials for their private use." M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions* (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1941), p. xi. For the change from *inventio* to copying (*reproductio*) in letter writing and the resulting formularies of the *ars notaria* see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 199-202, 218-219, 261-67 and Malcolm Richardson, "The *Dictamen* and its Influence on Fifteenth-Century English Prose," *Rhetorica* 2.3 (Autumn 1984): 207-26, esp. 209, 218.

[28] M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 3rd edition, 2013), p. 69.

letters ("such and such") for both names and numbers to be inserted, as seen in the following

example:

> Pur paier tiele somme pur parchemyn, ynke, et cire etc. despenduz en
> loffice du prive seal. Roy as tresorer et chamberlains de notre
> eschequer, saluz. Nous vous mandons que a notre ame clerc T.H.
> facez paier tiele somme pur parchemyn, ynke, et cire rouge par lui
> achatez dun tiel, haburdassher de Londres, et despenduz en loffice de
> notre prive seal de tiel jour, tiel an, en cea. Donne etc.[29]
> (To pay such-and-such sum for parchment, ink and wax, etc. used in
> the office of the Privy Seal: The King to the Treasurer and
> Chamberlains of our Exchequer, greetings. We command you that you
> pay to our beloved clerk T.H. such-and-such sum for parchment, ink,
> and red wax purchased by him from so-and-so haberdasher of London,
> and used in the office of our Privy Seal from such-and-such day, such-
> and-such year in this. Given, etc.)

If we look at Hoccleve's ballade from the perspective of his formulary, the name written over the

erased name functions in the same way as the *tiel* in the form letter. Instead of "See heer, my

maister Carpenter, I yow preye," we should understand the first line as "See heer, my maister so-

and-so, I yow preye." Obviously names longer or shorter than "maister Carpenter" would have

to be modified to maintain the line's decasyllable meter.

The directness of the address is also worth noting. Malcolm Richardson has pointed out

that the *ars dictaminis*, or art of letter writing, as practiced in the king's government, brought

organization and clarity to the writing of English prose but not a general directness. That

appeared later as the formulaic nature of the *ars notoria* declined by the end of the fifteenth

century and letter writing in English spread among the population.[30] It is striking then how

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[29] Bentley, "The Formulary of Thomas Hoccleve," p. 214. Hoccleve's Anglo-French shows certain patterns of
anglicization in the French, *inke* and *haburdassher* as well as particular forms such as *despendus* instead of
despensés. Thanks to Prof. Douglas Kibbee for his thoughts.

[30] Richardson, "The *Dictamen*" and "The Fading Influence of the Medieval *Ars Dictaminis* in England After 1400,"
Rhetorica 19.2 (Spring 2001): 225-47. Richardson, following in the footsteps of his dissertation director, John
Fisher, identifies the Chancery as the source of this standardization of English writing. Much of this has to do with
the fact that the Chancery maintained the records of English business on a variety of administrative rolls. However,

direct the poem's opening is: "See heer, my maister Carpenter, I yow preye." Even in terms of

petitions for redress, there are no examples I could find in English or Anglo-French with such an

opening even into the late fifteenth century.[31] His ballade without refrains to Henry V, for

example, opens with a buttery address, "Victorious Kyng, our lord ful graciousness" (15.1), full

of the flattery Hoccleve would consider necessary to set up his argument to a king who had just

achieved an important victory at Agincourt (where Charles will be captured). The next two lines

of that poem mimic the very petitions his boss, the keeper of the privy seal, would customarily

receive as a member of the king's council: "We, humble lige men to your hynesse,/ Meekly

byseechen yow (o kyng pitous!)" (15.2-3).[32] This beseeching is the formula by which a

petitioner could identify himself, in this case Hoccleve and his fellow clerks.[33]   Hoccleve's

form-poem to Master Carpenter and any other person previously erased under Carpenter's name

is more contentious. There is a tone of exasperation palpable in the opening lines. See here, our

creditors are at the door! "How many chalenges ageyn me be" (16.2), he demands, before you

pay what you owe? The argument is very different from the ballades trying to move a sluggish

bureaucracy to issue his annuity or pay. This medieval example of our modern "demand of

payment" letter is rare and in the examples where we find one, as in the Armburgh letters, the

customary apostrophe ("Dere and welbelouyd frend") and *salutatio* ("I commaunde me to you")

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it should be noted that many of these records preserved in the rolls are warrants and writs received from the Privy
Office, Exchequer and Signet office, transcribed, issued under the Chancery's prestigious great seal and then
enrolled. John H. Fisher, "Chancery English and the Emergence of Standard Written English," *Speculum* 52 (1977):
870-89; Bentley, "The Formulary of Thomas Hoccleve," pp. xii, xxvi-viii and J. L. Kirby, ed. *Calendar of Signet
Letters of Henry IV and Henry V (1399-1422)* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1978), p. 9.
[31] See for example the collection of English language petitions in John H. Fisher, Malcolm Richardson and Jane L.
Fisher, eds. *An Anthology of Chancery English* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1984). For Anglo-Latin see
Legge, *Anglo-Norman Letters*.
[32] Bentley, "The Formulary of Thomas Hoccleve," p. xv.
[33] Fisher, *Anthology of Chancery English*, p. 21.

are present.[34] However, in the Paston letters, we do find a similarly blunt opening. Devoid of both the apostrophe and *salutatio,* John Paston writes to James Gresham in 1450: "James Gresham, I prey yow laboure forth to have answer of my bill for myne especial assise," while a mutilated letter in the Stonor papers responds to a demand for payment in an equally blunt manner: "Sir, as touchant þe ffynes þat 3e sende to me, syr…, I knowe ham no3ht what þay be."[35]

Hoccleve's example in his *ballade à quatre strophes* suggests a form of letter writing less conventional than we find in the royal "issues" of his formulary, less polite and more direct. Nevertheless, Hoccleve is skillful enough to blunt the edge of his demands through a series of personal appeals—he has to keep creditors at bay, he is losing sleep—all written in a popular stanzaic form, Machaut's *septains* or the so-called "rhyme royal" stanza, a humorous evocation of Chaucer's prestige as a model for writing literature in English, in order to brighten the forward nature of his request while at the same time temper the urgency. Hoccleve's example not only confirms a documentary presence within his poetry, but this presence also ties the poem to a larger, more administrative, and by extension, dysfunctional bureaucratic world.[36] The poem shows that lyricizing documents can have an instrumental purpose, a way to soften worrying political circumstances through the disarming amusement of a request in meter and rhyme. By being a "form" poem—that is, reusable when the occasion is needed—it also allows for Hoccleve to appear not as the figure of the poet but as the historically specific clerical supervisor

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[34] Christine Carpenter, ed. *The Armburgh Papers: The Brokholes Inheritance in Warwickshire, Hertfordshire and Essex, c.1417-c.1453: Chestham's Manuscript Mun. E.6.10 (4)* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1998), p. 69.

[35] James Gairdner, ed. *The Paston Letters, A.D. 1422-1509* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2010), vol. 2, p. 136 (letter 136) and Christine Carpenter, ed. *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), p. 32.

[36] See Sarah Tolmie's deeply subtle article, "The Professional: Thomas Hoccleve," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 29 (2007): 341-73, which reads Hoccleve against Chaucer (usually, it's the opposite) and finds a poet "exposed" to the world, something profoundly missing in Chaucer.

speaking on behalf of his charges. It marks out the poem as lived in the same way the recurrence

of "T.H." in the formulary not only defines the clerk's career and responsibilities in the privy

office but also acts as a final conscious bid for bureaucratic immortality before retiring.

Charles, on the other hand, in participating in this unique English tradition, transforms the

document with its quotidian attachments to produce more monumental effects, to elevate his own

administrative imprisonment into the literal *matière* for poetry. The documents surrounding his

life authorize, the transformation of a clerk's genre into a lyric project. They also reproduce the

inherent urgency of Hoccleve's petitionary voice by spreading it across a variety of poetic forms

associated with the amorous. Charles' example of the mixed genre plays with great specificity,

like Hoccleve, to the surrounding prose documentation of his imprisonment: letters, whether

patent, close or signet, found in the chancery rolls; the surviving minutes of the King's council

kept in the privy office; and petitions and their royal responses found in the parliamentary rolls.

These documentary poems written as contracts, letters and petitions give structure to the book.

And the *papiers* make the prince, and not the persona of the poet as we have seen in other

prosimetra or mixed verse *dits*, appear in his poetry. The documents that inspire Charles' own

documentary poems provide a larger contextual frame through which Charles as prince and poet

can appear in the book as subject.

Both the French and the English book, for example, include at the beginning a *Copie de

la lettre de retenue*, that is, a poetic rendering of a copy of an indenture of retainer made between

the god of love and Charles for the duke to join Love's retinue. This voluntary and reciprocal

contract stipulates Charles' promise of service and loyalty to the god in return for promises of aid

in love.   And as a copy, the contract will be kept among his papers or accounts book as was

expected with any written contract.[37] As noted already, Charles' French book has the air of an

accounts book. More importantly, the *Copie*, a poem as document, replicates all the features of

what has been described as an earlier type of indenture, the "indented letters patent." Similar to

the *Copie*, these indentures also open with an address ("A tous amans" or "To louers alle"),

followed by a greeting ("Salus de cueur" or "We hertly gretyng sende") before proceeding to the

details of the agreement ("Savoir faison" or "Doyng yow wite").[38]

Charles' version concludes with an interesting dating clause, "Donné le jour saint

Valentin martir" (453), or as we find in the English book, "Gyve on the day of Seynt Valentyn þe

martere" (53), for a feast day associated with Oton de Grandson, Geoffrey Chaucer and John

Gower, all Valentine poets.[39] One could argue that omitting a year to the clause would hardly be

necessary for an allegorical book of love but Charles does include a poem with a complete dating

clause. The *Copie* without its missing year does not replicate the indenture patent perfectly but it

does replicate the drafting of the English king's personal letters issued under his signet in the

same way the *Copie* is drafted by Good Faith, "d'Amours chief secretaire" (Love's chief

secretary) (*Retenue* 387), in the narrative, under the god's command, and sealed by Loyalty,

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[37] Michael Jones and Simon Walker, eds. "Private Indentures for Life Service in Peace and War, 1278-1476," *Camden* (Fifth Series) 3/*Camden Miscellany* 32 (1994): 1-90 (esp. 13-14). There were always two copies for every indenture, one retained by the lord and the other by the man being retained. The contract was always written twice to prevent forgery on one parchment with a blank space in between then separated by a wavy "indented cut," that is, a cut with jagged or tooth-like edges so that if copies needed to be compared, their authenticity could be verified. Each side was sealed by the other's seal. J. M. W. Bean, *From Lord to Patron: Lordship in Late Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1989), p. 13; Michael Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 226: and Pierre Chaplais, *English Royal Documents: King John-Henry VI, 1199-1461* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), pp. 33-34

[38] The patent form is very different from the formula found in the majority of openings: "Ceste endenture faite parentre," "Hec indentura facta inter" and "This endenture made bitwen." However, the patent form did survive unto the early fifteenth century. Jones, "Private Indentures," pp. 17-18.

[39] For Valentine's Day see Grandson's *Le Songe Saint Valentin*, the model for the second part of Charles' English *dit*, Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles* and ballades 34 and 35 of Gower's *Cinkante Balades*. For Chaucer and Grandson, see Haldeen Braddy, "Chaucer and Graunson: The Valentine Tradition," *PMLA* 54.2 (June 1939): 359-68; Jack B. Oruch, "St. Valentine, Chaucer and Spring in February," *Speculum* 56.3 (July 1981): 534-65; and Henry A. Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of Saint Valentine* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

another clerk, with the god's personal "seel d'Amours" (Love's seal)(*Retenue* 390).[40] As J.A.W.

Bennet once noted about Chaucer's use of parliament, Charles is after "*vraisemblance* rather

than complete exactitude," but a resemblance to a kind of writing that can both evoke Charles'

administrative binding as royal prisoner and its possible reinterpretation through the conventions

of love allegory. In that way, Charles' poetic "lectres patentes" (411) or "lettir patent" (11), as

they are called in both books, allow his works to be understood within a literary fashion—and we

can imagine Charles reading portions of the book to his educated keepers—while simultaneously

reflecting the real constraints on his ability to communicate openly as a prisoner.[41]

  When we finally read the content of Charles' copy of the indenture—since, as a patent

letter, it functions as an open letter for all to acknowledge (patent from Latin *pateo*, lie open or

exposed)—we find many promises Venus and Cupid "him gardone/ Vndir oure seele" (47-48).

And yet, readers of Charles' near contemporary Hoccleve have become attentive to the way

bureaucratic fiction works and understand well how patent letters play out in such narratives.

The promise of the seal is something we find in Hoccleve too when in the *Regiment of Princes*

he notes that

> a princes ooth or his promesse,
> Whan they nat holden been, him deshonure,
> His lettre and seel, which more open witnesse
> Beren than they, good is take heede and cure
> That they be kept; wrytynge wole endure. (2367-71)[42]

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[40] J. Otway-Ruthven, *The King's Secretary and the Signet Office in the XV Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1939), pp. 25-6; A. L. Brown, "The Authorization of Letters under the Great Seal," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 37.96 (Nov. 1964): 125-56 (esp. 136); Kirby, *Signet Letters*, p. 7.

[41] J. A. W. Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), p. 169. For sketches of Charles of Orleans' keepers see both William Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers" and Derek Pearsall, "The Literary Milieu of Charles d'Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and the Authorship of the Fairfax Sequence" in Mary-Jo Arn, ed. *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415-1440)* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 27-45, 145-56.

[42] Thomas Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, edited by Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1999)

When a prince fails to uphold an oath, the patent letter with its seal openly bears witness—or as Venus and Cupid write in the *Copie*, "Tesmoign noz seaulx" (Our seal bears witness)(448)—to that forgotten promise. The *Copie* equally proffers great pronouncements concerning the aid and security of the lover Charles against "Cursid Daunger and wickid Ielowse/ And fals Dissayt" (27-8) and the promise of a "pension en joyeuses attentes" (410) or as the English version promises, the "fayrist pencioun" (10). It even orders the "officiers de nostre Parlement" (418) or in the English, "alle whiche ben as of oure parlement" (18)—a wonderful conflation of *parlement* as both an assembly and intimate love talk—to help guarantee Charles' future "Plaisirs Mondains" (Worldly Pleasures)(457). Ultimately, like Hoccleve's annuity as a surety against poverty, we know that this service will lead to unpromised anxiety and suffering. The documentary frame must submit to the conventions of love poetry. From the perspective of a poet like Hoccleve, the greatest intents put in writing are ultimately documents that make scarcity and anxiety *patent* because they are written down.[43]

But Charles's books work differently. Instead of Hoccleve's poetic use of the documentary form to secure either his annuity or fees, while recognizing that his failure to secure those ends through normal bureaucratic channels has led to poetry, a genre invested in images of failure, Charles' books instead use the document as a stand in for the *papiers* enforcing the conditions and quality of his imprisonment. The surety of the *Copie* will be contrasted with a series of ballades that recount in a lyrical manner the sudden sickness and death of his lady. This shift from hope to grief seems to alternate between the conventional, as represented in Machaut's *Lay de Plour* or Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, and historic fact, the death of his second wife

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[43] Simpson makes a similar observation when he writes, "The most instrumental and bureaucratic of forms, such as petitionary letters and formal bills, are used precisely in order to underline their impotence as diplomatic instruments." James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), p. 130.

Bonne of Armagnac while imprisoned. Biography insists on making an appearance. This narrative cycle—the English book has a second one with a new love after his lady's death—ends with what can only be described as a documentary break from Love's service after her death: Charles petitions in Parliament his release from Love's service.[44] This new poem will reinforce not only the biographical tendencies fostered by the books, but more importantly, reveal in a clearer fashion Charles' idea of creating an implicit prosimetrum between the administrative prose frame, including those found in the parliamentary rolls that refer to his imprisonment, and the poetry of his two books.

Deciding to withdraw from Love's service, Charles prepares a written document, a petition or "bill in maner of request" 2693), called in the French book *La requeste*. The motivations for this decision come to him in a dream, a poem in the French entitled the *Songe en complainte*. There, Age returns to him, reminding him that it was he who originally "lettres apporta" (19-20) or "writing brought" (2558) which moved Charles out of the custody of Childhood to Youth and eventually into Love's retinue. Age also warns, and this language is unique to the English book, that Old Age has a "Writ tane of dotage/ To tache me with" (2647-48), obviously, a writ of attachment to secure his arrest. Because his lady is dead, Age recommends that Charles draw up a petition to Love to break his contract or indenture of retainer, requesting "humblement/Qu'il lui plaise de reprandre l'ommage" (57-58) or quite simply to "yielde thee thyn homage" (2597) and return his heart for Love's failed service in return. Convinced by Age's advice, Charles is inspired to write.

> Pour ce tantost, sans plus prandre respit,
> Escrire vueil, en forme de requeste,
> Tout mon estat, comme devant est dit;
> Et quant j'auray fait ma cedule preste,

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[44] See Arn's wonderful study of the narrative frame of the English book, "Poetic Form as a Mirror of Meaning in the English Poems of Charles of Orleans," *Philological Quarterly* 69.1 (Winter 1990): 13-29.

> Porter la vueil a la premiere feste
> Qu'Amours tendra, lui mostrant par escript
> Les maulx qu'ay euz et le peu de prouffit
> En poursuivant l'amoureuse conqueste. (153-60)
> (And so at once, without any respite, I wish to write, in the form of a
> petition, my whole situation, as spelled out above. And when I have
> finished writing my schedule, I wish to take it to the first feast that
> Love will hold, showing him through my written document, the evils
> that I have suffered and the little I have profited in pursuing amorous
> conquest.)

The documentary features of his poetry at this moment seems to converge with the idea of a

biographical context found in the schedule or *cedule*, that separate supplementary document

stitched together with a petition or *requeste* to flesh out the details of a grievance.[45]   However,

within the fiction of a life emerging through the book's documentary frame, a frame used to

contextualize each individual lyric, this extra-literary context, as conceived in the *requeste*, is

instead the very book he described as his accounting book, "Ouquel dedens escript portoit/ Ses

faiz" (B97). As tempting as it seems to use documents to explain Charles's poetry in

biographical fashion, this book is also a topos in its own right, the traditional medieval Book of

Life understood as administrative.[46] Nevertheless, the accounting book and the schedule

function in a similar way to the mixed-genre's narrative frame through which the figure of the

poet as an identifiable subject, engaged in conventional poetry making, emerges. Here, the

poet's experiences—or to be more clear, his persona's experiences—become documentary

evidence of his plight as a supplementary stitching to each poem when "mostrant par escript" all

his misfortune. The book and all its poetic *faitz* are conceived then less as biographical than

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[45] For example, "Fait assavoir, q'en ceste parlement, furent baillez une petition et une cedule consuitz ensemble, tachez ore a le dorse de ceste rolle de parlement, de la quell petition le tenure cy ensuit" (Let it be known that a petition and a schedule sewn together were delivered in this parliament, which are now attached to the dorse of this roll of parliament, the tenor of which petition follows here). Chris Given-Wilson, ed. *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275-1504* (PROME) CD-Rom version (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), Nov. 1422, item 18.
[46] For the book in the Middle Ages see Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1990; orig. 1953), pp. 302-47 and Jesse Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology and Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1985).

documentary support for his poetic project. Documents and poetry then exist side-by-side in Charles' project. And as will be seen, when juxtaposed, they not only seem to mutually inform one another, but they also create tensions with one another.

In the French *Songe en complainte*, Charles can suggest a personal experience in ways similar to the tradition of inspiration promoted in the mixed genre. But in Charles, this inspired subjectivity is discovered through other kinds of writing, not just song. To express and enhance his complaints, figured conventionally as amorous, legal documents, instead, are put forth. This figuring of a self, collecting, consulting and affixing documents to his poetry, reveals his true self, a documentary self, if you will, in a remarkable coincidences between his conventional poetry and the prose documentation that can transform his mixed-verse French book into a secret prosimetrum with inserted lyrics expressing, after the fact, experiences already recorded in prose documents found in a variety of archives. But in the English book, as will be seen, all mention of this new frame, the "schedule," if you will, is entirely absent.

Charles then is asking us to read into his poetry a documented life, not the fictional life of the amorous persona found in the *dits amoureux* but that of the poet himself. But Charles' project resembles Gower's multiple signatures and the impression of an historic self perceived in Venus' mirror. Far from establishing facts about either poet or his persona, Charles' supplements can destabilize the relation between fact and fiction. For example, the *Copie de la quittance dessus dicte*, Love's documentary poem that finally frees Charles of his contractual service, ends with a dating clause mixing the allegorical with the factual:

> Escripte par nostre ordonnance
> Presens mains notables recors,
> Le jour de la Feste des Mors,
> L'an mil quatre cent trente et sept,
> Ou chastel de Plaisant Recept. (410-14)

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(Written by our decree in the presence of many notable witnesses, on
All Soul's Day 1437, at the Castle of Pleasant Refuge)

Charles' letter of thanks, *A tresnoble, hault et puissant seigneur*, also ends with a dating clause,

matching Love's.

> Escript ce jour troisiesme, vers le soir,
> En novembre, ou lieu de Nonchaloir.
> Le bien vostre, Charles, duc d'Orlians,
> Qui jadis fut l'un de voz vrais servans. (547-50)
> (Written on this third day of November, in the evening, at the Castle of
> Indifference. Yours truly, Charles, duke of Orleans, who once was
> one of your true servants.)

In both cases, we find ourselves looking for a supplementary schedule, a document related to

Charles' imprisonment, in this case, a november in 1437. Perhaps the poem refers to an order

sent to his keeper Sir Reynold Cobham to bring Charles to London by late October to be present

before the king and his council to discuss another potential peace conference to end the

Hundreds Years War.[47] However, this blurring of the boundaries between poet and persona that

seems to clarify the biographical identity of Charles even as it ambiguates the poetic one.

Charles, the generic persona of the *dits*, the prisoner of love named in the petition as "Charles, le

duc d'Orlians" (181), becomes the actual duke imprisoned in England. This is a very different

movement from the way Gower's name works in the *Confessio Amantis*, a book Charles seems

to have used as a model for his own *dit*.[48] In Gower, his naming seems to reveal the identity of

Amans but in fact, functions as a literary substitution for the naming of a new persona, the *senex*

amans, another literary figure, in this case, for derision. Venus' mirror does not reflect Gower

looking upon his own writing but rather literary conventionality itself looking upon its own

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[47] Harris Nicolas, ed. *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, 5 vols. (London: Public
Records, 1834-5), vol. 5, pp. 67-68. Also, Pierre Champion, *Vie de Charles d'Orléans (1394-1465)* (Paris: Honoré
Champion, 2010, 3rd edition), p. 283.
[48] On Charles' use of the *Confessio Amantis* see Summers, *Prison Writing*, pp. 104-106.

representations in a mirror that begins to take on the characteristics of a literary *mise-en-abyme*.[49]
As for the historic John Gower himself, the aged lawyer or judge, he is nowhere to be found
when surrounded by such figurative writing. But for Charles of Orleans, this *cedule*, this affixed
supplementary document of the poet as imprisoned duke, invites us to read his poems as the
product of a self verified in documents. We've already seen this supplement in the Italian
troubadour *chansonniers* with each Occitan troubadour including a *vida* and with each canso, a
razo.

With Charles, however, any supplementary relationships between documents and poems
are mediated by his choice of language and the nature of the book. The French is relatively more
open, though not entirely because of the language—we must assume that his noble keepers,
especially those with service in France or interested in literature, had some familiarity with the
language of French poetry—but because the French book itself is more like an anthology or
album of poetry.[50] Besides the opening *dit*, which seems to give structure to the beginning of the
book, it also includes a *Complainte de France*, that political genre responding to English
occupation, famously associated with Alain Chartier's allegorical *Quadrilogue invectif*, as well

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[49] Lucien Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme* (Paris: Seuil, 1977)

[50] There is much controversy about the knowledge of French among the aristocracy and the gentry by the fifteenth century. We know from a letter by Burgundian ambassador Hue de Lannoy that Charles felt linguistically isolated enough to make friends with the only French speaker in his keeper's household, a Burgundian barber and fellow French speaker. On the other hand, there is also indication that Charles was able to communicate in French with at least two of his keepers, Robert Waterton, his first keeper once he was sent out of London, and the earl of Suffolk, who also seems to have composed poetry in French and English. Waterton's French must have been good enough that Henry V became concerned that he was being "blynded" by the duke's "faire speche" that he transferred Charles out of his custody. For Lannoy and Waterton see Joseph Stevenson, *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1861-64), vol. 2.1, p. 236 and James Halliwell, *Letters of the Kings of England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1848), vol. 1, p. 92. For French in England see Douglas A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewly: The French Language in England, 1000-1600: Its Status, Description and Instruction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991), the work of William Rothwell and David Trotter and the important volume Judith A. Jefferson and Ad Putter, eds. *Multiculturalism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066-1520): Sources and Analysis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

as a groups of political epistolary ballades under the rubric *Balades de plusieurs propos*.[51] How

his keepers would respond to these poems is pure speculation, if they even saw them. What is

more important is that instead of politics, the English book is made up of a complete *dit*

amoureux written in the maternal language of his captors. The *Complainte* is excised while the

political ballades are so completely subsumed under the conventional needs of the genre that

they vanish before our eyes. The startling transformation of his French ballades—cautiously

articulated in their original, anonymous state, identified only later when back in France—allows

for the author to make an appearance in a way that is as startling as Gower's appearance in the

mirror. In looking at the way the *faitz* that make up each ballade's schedule are submerged under

the needs of a new love story added to the English book, the duke can be seen working on his

poems, making us aware of the way a document's citability, including the citation of another

poem for the benefit of translation—from language to language and genre to genre—can be

placed under pressure by both Charles' political reality and his literary needs.

3. Bourbon, Burgundy and the English Book

The English book poses a particular challenge to this kind of reading. Whereas the

administrative prose frame as a kind of schedule or *cedul*e seemingly affixed to individual poems

in Charles' mixed French book is always present in such political poems as the ballade "Des

nouvelles d'Albion"—even when its true political players are discreetly concealed in the poetic

first and second persons to be revealed only later once Charles was home in France—the English

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[51] For French poetry's response to the Hundred Years War see Isabelle Bétemps, "Ecrivains médiévaux de la Guerre de Cent Ans: Alain Chartier, Pierre de Nesson, Charles d'Orléans" in Jean Maurice, Daniel Couty and Michèle Guéret-Laferté, eds. *Images de la Guerre de Cent Ans* (Paris: Puf, 2003), pp. 113-24; and Liliane Dulac, "La representation de la France chez Eustache Deschamps et Christine de Pizan" in Danielle Buschinger, ed. *Autour d'Eustache Deschamps: Actes du Colloque du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie-Jules Verne Amiens, 5-8 Novembre 1998* (Amiens: Presses du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales, 1999), pp. 79-92.

book either omits or conceals any ballade with an overtly political or documentary origin. Charles' "Albion" poem, for example, is not included in the English book, nor the famous ballade "En regardant vers le païs de France" (B75) where Charles looks across the channel from Dover and in anticipation of crossing—presumably to one of several potential peace conferences around Calais—and launches "la nef d'Esperance" (the ship of Hope)(15) loaded with "Tous mes souhaitz" (all my desires)(16). In fact, the English book becomes a place where political poems go into hiding, where political ideas are redirected into purely amorous expressions.

And yet there are still traces of political ideas in the English book, such as the "schepe of Freche Tyding" (1037) in which Charles hopes to cross with the help of a "ioly wynd als blowing into Fraunce" (1044), where his "sovl maystres" (1045) awaits. But there are also more discreet appearances that are less optimistic. For example, the first line of the French ballade "Loyal Espoir, trop je vous voy dormir" (Loyal Hope I see you sleep too long)(B23) is rendered in English as "O Royall Hope, to long y se the slepe!" (B23), a change that seems to reveal Charles' hope for Henry VI's assistance in setting him free. That he asks Royal Hope to awake and take note of "sum plesaunt remembraunce to kepe" (889) is also a documentary movement, more material than "un plaisant souvenir" (a pleasant memory)(3) because a *remembraunce* was also a kind of memorandum.[52] Furthermore, in the same ballade, France makes a subtle appearance in the word "fraunchise," or domain, when he writes that "Woo of weele hath raught him þe fraunchise" (893). France, represented as a place separated from him, becomes an absent word in his English book, but nevertheless remains a domain, a *fraunchise*, in another context, localizing a profound sadness that can never be revealed to his captors. The references are only

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[52] In the Amburgh papers, there are letters beginning abruptly, "Here is a remembrance of" or within a sentence an "I have made yow here aremembrance of" in order to remind the receiver of information in order to achieve an end. Carpenter, *The Armburgh Papers*, pp. 110, 140, 144.

clear when the two books are placed side by side. But when the French book is taken off the table, the impression is no longer political but amorous. Charles' concealment becomes part of the writing of his English *dit*.

Doubts about Charles' honesty is a repeated trope in the documents. Because of his pleasing and gracious demeanor, Henry V was famously worried about Charles' "faire speche" and his guards' "recheles governance."[53] Charles' keepers were instructed to be watchful. When Charles' younger brother, Jean d'Angoulême, a hostage held in England since 1412 for Charles' previous debts owed the English during the Armagnac-Burgundy civil war, wished to visit him in 1437, Henry's council set very strict conditions: "The earl of Angulesme in Wallers may go to the Duc of Orleans to speke with him in both their kepers sight and hearing."[54] On the other hand, Charles' "Royal Hope," Henry VI, seemed satisfied with his keeping, even arguing in 1440 for his release because Charles could not be dangerous because he was ignorant of state secrets. He "hath be restreyned by his kepers, the whiche have not be accoustumed to suffre men to speke with him, but in her presence and hering."[55] But Charles did maintain a certain secretiveness, concealing his true motivations even while promising the young king that he would support him as his partner for peace.[56] In a remarkable moment during his meeting with Burgundy's ambassadors in 1433—at that moment when Burgundy was still an ally with England before jumping ship in 1435 and joining the Dauphin's cause—he declares, in the presence of his English keeper and member of the king's council, the cultured earl of Suffolk, "je

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[53] Henry Ellis, *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, Series 1 (London: Harding, 1825), vol. 1, p. 1 and Rymer, *Foedera* 9.801, J. L. Kirby, ed. *Calendar of Signet Letters of Henry IV and Henry V (1399-1422)* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1978), pp. 179-80
[54] Nicolas, *Proceedings*, vol. 5. p. 82.
[55] Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, vol. 2.2, p. 459.
[56] However, the ballade "Comment voy je ses Anglois esbays!" (How I see the English shocked)(B101), written after his return to English after Guyenne was recovered in 1453, shows much sympathy for Henry VI's plight— "maintenant en doubteuse balance" (26)—as England, known, he says, for overthrowing their kings, is on the brink of civil war after the loss of their French holdings.

ne desire point tant a traittier ma deliverance que je fay la dite paix" (I do not desire so much to deal with my own deliverance as to make the said peace) after which he pinched Burgundy's chief diplomat Hue de Lannoy on the arm "tres fort et par deux fois" (very hard and two times) to convey "quil ne ozoit point dire ce quil eust bien voulu dire" (that he would not dare say what he wanted to say).[57] The pinch becomes a sign of dissembling, suggesting that behind every word is another hidden agenda, not to be attached like the "schedules" to the French poems.

In fact, the *cedule* discussed earlier disappears entirely from the English book. Whereas Charles' persona in the French book seems to merge, like Gower's, with Charles the imprisoned duke because these documents are affixed to the poems, in the English book that relationship is not clear. Charles' persona remains intact even though Charles the duke can be seen working behind the amorous *dit* he is writing.

> Wherefore that y, withouten more respite,
> Wol make a bill in maner of request,
> And how it is befalle me in it write,
> And when that hit is redy at the lest
> I shall hit bere, when Loue next holdith fest,
> To shewe him rudely as y can endyte
> What paynes feel ther is and small profit!
> In pursewyng of Lovis hard conquest. (2692-99)

In the English, the *requeste* is autonomous, a complete writing instrument without the need of a schedule or extra-textual explication. The poetry then stands on its own, as it were, demanding interpretation based on its content and form rather than on extra-textual resources. The English *dit amoureux*, in that way, allows for a reading in situ, like other English *dits*, both within and without the place of love. This "bill" does not take us to Charles' own petition to Henry VI or the many other petitions surrounding his imprisonment found in the parliamentary rolls but to the poetry of Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate and his own keeper, Suffolk. The French book's

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[57] Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, vol. 2.1, pp. 134 and 234.

presumption that the document or *escript* will supply greater clarity to the poems is not a feature of the more "literary" English book. Instead, the English version raises a question of style: whether the petition lacks elegance or *rudeness*. That concern, unfounded in the French, situates Charles' participation concretely in an English tradition associated with a unique variation of the modesty topos.[58]

As a consequence of the missing *cedule*, the documentary effects found in the French book becomes more lyrical in the English. That book foregrounds a more literary persona while at the same time paradoxically makes explicit the duke's editorial procedure. The result is a new documentary context with the duke weighing his words as he handles and compares two poems, trying to decide when he should cite lines that may be damaging to his purposes. The result benefits the English book's monumental re-fashioning as a playful *dit amoureux* concerned less with imprisonment and more with the loss of his beloved and the attainment of a new love with the help of Venus. Substituting the *cedule* for a new narrative gives the English book a less personal—unlike the "notebook"-like organization of the French book—and more finished as a work of great emotion and subtlety.

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[58] David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," *ELH* 54.4 (Winter 1987): 761-99. The apology for unsophisticated and inelegant writing was a convention of Middle English poetry, a variation of the modesty topos. Charles of Orleans is a perfect case study for this phenomenon when he is clearly translating his French verse into English. After asking Bonne Nouvelle for good news of his lady, Charles comforts himself with the thought that while isolated from him, she can still bring to mind "Toutes les choses que je dy" (All the things that I say)(B31.22). In English, he worries about what "y so rudely out of my wordis shoue" (1156). The word *shoue* does not refer to the manifestation of his inelegant speech ("show") but to the very action of pushing his inelegance forward in a violent manner ("shove"), since *shoue* must rhyme with the refrain's *loue*, "love." In the *Songe en complainte*, Charles has a petition written up for Love detailing "par escript/ Les maulx qu'ay euz et le peu de prouffit" (in writing the ills I have suffered and little the profit) (158-59) but in English, the petition is written "rudely as y kan endyte" (2697). After living in England as a prisoner for so long, Charles seems to have internalized this uniquely English topos so much that it appears surprisingly in his French verse as well. In describing a decline in his literary powers, he writes, "Onques mais je ne me trouvay/ Si rude" (Never have I found myself so inelegant) (B 72.20-21). In the English version, there is no *rudeness* but pessimism: "I wold hit mende but what my tonge ne may" (3091), that is, my language cannot mend it. Charles shows that this "rudeness" was a conventional expectation in English literature, a variation of the modesty topos that could also find its way into his French verse. For the traditional modesty topos, see Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1990; orig. 1953), pp. 83-85 and Dragonetti, *La technique poétique*, pp. 152, 555.

However, the English book is a mirror image, refined and complete though it is, of the French book in many ways. When placing the books together, comparing poems as if each line is a possible citation to be reused by the other, one quickly becomes aware of certain omissions. The result brings into focus less a poet-persona of the *dit* tradition like Machaut, Froissart or Chaucer than a poet-prisoner in need of dissimulating his true thoughts in order to escape, especially when composing in the language of his captors. Henry V's concerns about Charles' charming dissemblance are not off the mark when we think of the English book. The pinch described earlier becomes the action of a poet concealing his intent while simultaneously revealing to the sympathetic reader an imprisoned person behind the extended amorous conceits of the English book. And yet, the English book is equally weighty because of the latent power of its omissions. One senses the power of the work in its increasingly sublimated expressions of political aspirations and loss, even without the concrete presence of biography and documentation.

The most explicit examples of this phenomenon in the English book, of concealing a documentary project behind the monumental art of love poetry, is the transformation of three French ballades from the political *Balades de plusieurs propos* associated with Jean, the duke of Bourbon, a fellow prisoner taken at Agincourt like Charles, and Philip the Good, the duke of Burgundy, an English ally whose father had Charles' father assassinated. As "correspondances lyriques," to use Estelle Doudet's term, both sets of poems are of a political nature and because of their addressees, since some are named in the poems in annotations by Charles' own hand, biography becomes an inescapable necessity.[59] The impression given is that the *dit* Charles had

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[59] Estelle Doudet, "Orléans, Bourbon et Bourgogne, politique de l'échange dans les *Ballades* de Charles d'Orléans" in Denis Hüe, ed. *Lectures de Charles d'Orléans: Les Ballades* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), pp. 125-39.

been writing in French was suddenly suspended to discuss pressing political circumstances about his deliverance before returning to the book's complaints and love *chansons*, his variation of the rondeau. This sort of political digression in works on love is quite conventional, as we have seen in Machaut's *Voir Dit* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. In Charles' English book, on the other hand, many of these politically sensitive ballades relating to Charles' imprisonment are either left untranslated or transformed into pure love poetry.[60]

The French Bourbon and Burgundy poems, made up of three poems for Bourbon and seven written for and by Burgundy, are set close to each other in the French book but in the English book, these ten poems are reduced to three: one for Burgundy, one for Bourbon and one by Burgundy. None of the poems in English make any explicit references to the three dukes, but then neither does the French book when we exclude Charles' later annotations. While Bourbon's name is included in the opening lines of the first two French ballades, the third an obvious reference to him as Charles' "chier cousin" (85.2), references to Burgundy, the duke who betrayed England during the 1435 peace conference at Arras and then laid siege to Calais the next year, are left unmentioned in the poems themselves. Only later, did Charles in his cramped, abbreviated annotatations identify the writers and addressees of these ballades. In the English book, the French poems' original political connections and identities are dissolved into purely amorous ones when translated into English, including their explicit *translatio* out of a political space, the *Balades de plusieurs propos*, into the new English love narrative.

The first French ballade from this set to be used in the English book is addressed to the duke of Bourbon, a tragic figure in his own right. He was captured at Agincourt with Charles in

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[60] See N. L. Goodrich's chapter on the differences of Charles' treatment of the Hundred Year War in the French and English book in *Charles of Orleans: A Study of Themes in his French and in his English Poetry* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), pp. 149-65.

1415, and given parole on three seperate occasions to find money for his ransom. Failing, he returned to England where he died a prisoner in 1434. Charles and Bourbon are linked in a series of prisoner exchanges after their capture. In 1419, fearful his keeper Robert Waterton was too much under the sway of Charles' verbal powers, Henry V ordered Waterton to take Bourbon and Sir Nicholas Montgomery, Bourbon's second keeper, to take Charles. At one point, it seems they may have been together again after leaving the Tower of London before Bourbon was returned to Montgomery and Charles sent to another keeper, Sir Thomas Burton.[61] Later, when Bourbon returned to England after failing to secure his ransom, he was placed in the custody of Sir Thomas Cumberworth, Charles' keeper.[62] After Bourbon died, Cumberworth was given the ultimate responsibility of distributing the dead nobleman's goods.[63]

The ballade "Puis qu'ainsi est que vous alez en France" (And so since you are going to France)(B83) focuses on one of Bourbon's many paroles from England.[64] Addressed to the "Duc de Bourbon, mon compaignon treschier" (2), the poem conveys a secret message:

> Mon fait vous vueil descouvrir et chargier
> Du tout en tout, en sens et en folie.
> Trouver ne puis nul meilleur messagier
> Il ne fault ja que plus je vous en die. (5-7)
> (I want to reveal and make an account of my circumstances, all of them, whether in good sense or folly. I cannot find a better messenger. It is not necessary now that I say more about it to you.)

The desire to reveal his thoughts faces a contradiction imposed by the very impersonality of the refrain, not a "je ne puis vous dire" but a "Il ne fault ja que je vous en die," a construction that evokes the idea of surveillance, as if the pinch we described earlier had become a poem. And yet

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[61] Nicolas, *Proceedings*, vol. 2, pp. 268-70, 271-72; Frederick Devon, *Issues of the Exchequer: A Collection of Payments Made out of his Majesty's Revenue from King Henry III to King Henry VI Inclusive* (London: John Murray, 1837), pp. 352, 353.

[62] Devon, *Issues*, p. 414.

[63] Rymer, *Foedera* 10.570 and Nicolas, *Proceedings*, vol. 4, pp. 201-202.

[64] Mühlethaler recognizing the limits to a fully biographical reading offers any of the three possible years Bourbon left for France, 1420, 1430 and 1433, in *Ballades*, p. 303.

there is an awareness given in the ballade that it refers to his *fait*, the facts of his life, the same

facts accounted for in both his account book and *cedule* poems. However here, they are kept

under wraps. Instead, the ballade is organized around an enigmatic request:

> Recommandez moy, sans point l'oublier
> A ma dame; ayez en souvenance,
> Et lui dictes, je vous pry et require,
> Les maulx que j'ay, quant me fault eslongnier,
> Maigré mon vueil, sa doulce compaignie. (10-14)
> (Commend me to my lady, without forgetting it. Remember this and
> speak to her, I pray and ask, about the ills that I suffer when I must be
> separated, in spite of my desire, from her sweet company.)

 The poem on the surface is amorous in nature. His separation from the lady, however, is not

simply involuntary—we have seen Daungier elsewhere exerting great force in preventing him

from seeing her—but almost impersonal, as if by a decision that is reinforced again by these

impersonal constructions. This time, the verb *eslongnier* is used less as a generic movement of

separation, as we find in poems using the topos of *amour lointain* or Jaufre Rudel's "faraway

love," than a juridical removal associated with exile. We also find the same conversion of

France from the political to the amorous.

Finally, the refrain's reappearance implies an implicit understanding between the two

dukes, as if the *cedule* necessary to elucidate the hidden motives behind the poem could not be

affixed because of potential reprisals from the impersonal forces at work constraining his

movement and his speech. Even the meter of the Bourbon ballades come into play, not in

octosyllabics like the vast majority of his French poetry but in the decasyllabics associated with

English verse.[65] A constrained request made in an English meter identified with Chaucer, an

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[65] Though the decasyllabic ballade was popular with Machaut when writing in *septains*, the so-called "rhyme royal," and with Deschamps when writing in *huitains* and *dizains* that is not the case with Charles except in his English book. Of the 120 ballades in Champion's edition—minus the two chants royals—only 19 are decasyllabic in a variety of stanza lengths with 10 being in *huitains* and the rest evenly distributd in 7's, 9's, 10's and 11's. The influence of English documentary poetry can also be seen, I would argue, in the final two decasyllabic stanzas of the

author Charles was deeply influenced by, becomes a secret request hidden within the metrical

confines of an English imprisonment. This is no accident. Charles is an accomplished poet

metrically representing both of them as prisoners of England. The final stanza reveals how

difficult this kind of communication can be.

> un amy doit pour l'autre veillier
> Se vous dictes: Je ne sçay, sans doubtance,
> Qui est elle, vueilliez la enseignier?
> Je vous respons qu'il ne vous fault serchier,
> Fors que celle qui est la mieulx garnie
> De tous les biens qu'on sauroit souhaidier:
> Il ne fault ja que plus que je vous en dye. (18-24)
> (a friend should keep watch over the other. If you say, "I do not know,
> without a doubt, who she is. Would you point her out?" I will answer
> you that it is necessary to look only for her who is most graced with all
> the virtues one could desire. It is not necessary now that I say more
> about it to you.)

Friendship's implied responsibility, an idea reflective of a fifteenth-century humanist interest in

Cicero's *De amicitia*, becomes friendship's vigilance under duress.[66] Like the pinch, the poem

implies a reader who should understand the hidden meaning behind constrained speech. A pinch

can only be understood if the two interlocutors share the same experience.

If we are to think of this poem as a coded and political message coming secretly out of

England for France, it is a message to place some sort of moral onus on Charles' true king,

Charles VII, the so-called Dauphin, to resolve his situation and to take up his cause, ending his

enforced separation from her, France. In the envoy, biography explicitly steps into the poem

making the duke's presence clear. He tells Bourbon that he has charged his secretary,

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Retenue, with the drafting of the indenture, breaking the previous *Roman de la Rose* inspired 38 stanzas in octosyllabics. For Daniel Poiron's table for the meter of ballades among Middle French poets see *Le poète et le prince: L'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orleans* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), p. 374.

[66] Doudet, "Orléans, Bourbon et Bourgogne," pp. 129-30. Doudet sees in Bourbon the traditional figure of *amis*, there to help the lover.

"Guilleaume Cadier" (25), constantly to keep in the mind of his lord the "fait du prisonier" (the reality of the prisoner)(28). The *cedule*, so important for much of our readings of Charles, finally finds its attachment to the poem explicit.

The English version could not be more different. No longer a political poem, "O lo myn hert, syn ye wol gone yowre way" (B112) is found among the original English poems written to his new love. Charles first conceals the poem's original addressee, "Duc de Bourbon, mon compaignon treschier," by switching in the subject of another ballade, "Cueur, trop es plain de folie" (B81), a ballade placed a few pages before the Bourbon sequence that describes Charles grappling with his heart's planned departure. In that ballade, Worry and Care try to end his heart's restless search abroad and to bring him back "Ou royaume d'Angleterre" (to the kingdom of England), as the refrain notes, and to accept "l'estat de prisonnier" (the condition of being a prisoner)(13) and the melancholy experienced by all "prisonniers pris en guerre" (prisoners taken in war)(20).

Naturally, this ballade is not included in the English book. But the heart's departure, instead of Bourbon and his secretary, allows for the ballade to be reframed within the context of a *dit amoureux*. Charles' heart has followed his new love's "departying" (6268), leaving him "soole" (6255) or alone. This is not the prisoner creating a coded allegorical lady France in the tradition of Deschamps' *Balades de moralitez* or Chartier's *Quadrilogue invectif* within the conventions of the *prison amoureuse*.[67] Instead, we are completely within the conceit of an amorous genre where he has lost a heart he has spent much to recover after his lady's death. The

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[67] For Deschamps' personifications of France in *Balades de moralitez* see "Par fondement me doy plaindre et plourer" (B141), "Povre d'amis, defaillant de confort" (B159), "Lasse, lasse, chetive et esgarée" (B164) and "Complainte de pays de France" (B255). Le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire, ed. *Oeuvres completes de Eustache Deschamps: Publiées d'après le manuscrit de la Bibliothèque nationale*, vols. 1 and 2 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1878, 1880). For a Middle English translation of Chartier's *Quadrilogue invectif* see Margaret S. Blayney, ed. *Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Alain Chartier's Le Traite de l'Esperance and Le Quadrilogue Invectif* (Oxford: Oxford University, EETS, 1974).

message he gives to his heart is to remind her to take heed to the "playnt of my matere" (6259), sufferings that are unnecessary to "rehersen here" (6261) because we already have access to them through the context of the second ballade sequence associated with this new love. Here, the traditional lover as poet found in the mixed *dits amoureux* is foregrounded, expecting good "Thought" (6273) sent his way, not the troubling "Pensement" (30) promised by Worry and Care or the anxiety that maybe France has forgotten his plight. The "fait du prisonnier" in the French version's envoy also makes an appearance in the English envoy but this time as a simile, that the "oth" (6280) he has made as a lover must be kept "lijk a prisonere" (6279); in other words, guarded closely. This is a coded reference to Bourbon's forays *en parole* into France, looking for money to pay his ransom and if failing, returning to England on his honor, even to face ultimately his own death there as a prisoner. It is at this moment when the persona gives way to the duke, as if, in comparing two poems in his hands, he comes alive indirectly between them. The duke appears then in English, not through the same documentary process we find in the French, where the self emerges in the voicing of an administrative context that defines a particularly autobiographic feature of his poetry, but through the context of the French ballade as a document for the making of a new, more amorous one, designed to promote that ironic self-representation he admired so much in Chaucer and Machaut, while at the same time, effacing the clearly political stances of the French book. The fact that neither Robert Steele nor Mary-Jo Arn in their editions recognized the English poem's connection to the Bourbon one, reveals how clever Charles could be in concealing the political in the amorous.

This movement can be seen as well in Charles' transformation of the ballade exchanges between Phillip, the duke of Burgundy, and himself. In the English book, between the amorously transformed Bourbon ballade, Charles places two ballades associated with his poetic

correspondence with Burgundy, one by himself, "Pour le haste de mon passage" (B88) and another by Burgundy, "De cueur, de corps et de puissance" (B88a). The presence of this sequence in the English book would have been a provocation, proof of his lack of trustworthiness to his English captors, especially after 1435, when at the peace conference of Arras, Burgundy abandoned the English alliance by accepting "reconciliation" with the French. Previously, as seen with the pinch, peace with Burgundy would have meant ending a feud and forming an alliance between Burgundy, Charles and the English. But Burgundy's decision to join the French party was shocking to the English considering Charles VII, the Dauphin, participated in the assassination of Phillip's own father John the Fearless in 1419, in response to John having Charles' own father, Louis of Orleans, murdered in 1407 over a struggle to control Charles VI's administration. The resulting civil war between the Burgundians and Armagnac parties was devastating for France but an opportunity for Henry V to reclaim English rights. Finding "la paix," one of the defining intents of this poetic exchange in the French, first implied that Charles would end his feud with Burgundy to allow for his own return to France.[68] In fact, it was Burgundy who ultimately financed his ransom.

Charles' ballade to Burgundy, "Pour le haste de mon passage," takes us to Calais with Charles ready to sail back to England, a crossing he describes as an impersonal action "Qu'il me couvient faire oultre mer" (that they insist I make across the sea). Charles is a master of presenting himself as not being a player in his attempts to find his own "deliverance" (8), that and the long sought after "paix" (8) found in many documents. The mentioning of the beautiful Portuguese duchess of Burgundy, Isabelle, his "cousine" (28), the Burgundian representative and

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[68] For a discussion of the Burgundy poems as peace poems see Deborah McGrady, "'Guerre ne sert que de tourment': Remembering War in the Poetic Correspondence of Charles d'Orléans" in Noah D. Guynn and Zrinka Stahuljak, eds. *Violence and the Writing of History in the Medieval Francophone World* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 151- 67.

not the traitor Phillip, allows for some biographical certainty that the poem refers to a 1439 peace

conference when the English party, including Charles, met with the French outside the city walls

"en la marche de Calais" (on the border of Calais).[69] Charles standing outside of Calais, on

French soil, explains why in an earlier ballade to Burgundy he can describe himself as his

"voisin/ En ce païs presentement" (neighbor in this country at the moment)(87.1-2).

    As in the Bourbon poem, there is an awareness in the poem of others listening. Because

Charles has forged an alliance with his captors' enemy, there is great need for discretion: "Tout

ce que j'ay en mon courage/ A present ne vous puis mander" (Everything that I have in my heart,

at present I cannot send to you)(3-4). But here, there is an edge. Charles is communicating with

the enemy of his captors. Furthermore, because of the "haste de mon passage," he must be brief,

to speak "sans plus despendre langage" (without wasting more words)(23), and rely on "cours

mots" (short words)(24). Poetry's concise diction will be used for the service of secret

diplomacy. Finally, there is the sending of a "message" (messenger)(12), described as "Loyal,

secret et assez sage" (loyal, discrete and sufficiently wise) (13), who will be able to "bien a plain

vous infourmer" (fully inform you)(15). As noted in our discussion of Gower, this speaking

plain implies not only a message carried that is brief and to the point (*planus*), but also full of

vital information (*plenus*), information that conveys to him that their feud is over and that "Tout

Bourgongnon sui vrayement" (I am truly all Burgundian)(38), a provocative statement if heard

by the English. Like the schedule, Charles' messenger can supplement the words of his poem.

    The ballade's imposition of socially discrete speech also has an amorous tint as would be

expected with a book that flirts with images of the *prison amoureuse*. This amorous connection,

furthermore, alludes to events found in the love documents that organize the narrative frame at

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[69] Rymer, *Foedera*, 10.718, 720. The conference held in "marchiis Calesie" is described in detail by the king's
secretary, Thomas Beckington. Nicolas, *Proceedings*, vol. 5, pp. 334-407.

the beginning of the book. The ballade's final stanza, for example, begins with the language of petitions: "plaise vous penser/ Que vous laisse mon cuer en gage/ Pour tousjours, sans jamais faulser" (May it please you to think that I leave my heart as a pledge for always, never prove to be false)(24-26).[70] This same petitionary formula is found in the *Requeste* when Charles asks to be released from Love's retinue after his lady's death, a clear breach of contract: "Qu'il vous plaise regarder/ Et passer/ Ceste requeste presente,/ Sans la vouloir refuser" (That it may please you to consider and pass a verdict on this present petition without wanting to refuse it) (191-93). Furthermore, once the use of Charles' heart as a pledge to guarantee the arrangement with Love is released—Charles giving Love his heart "en gage" is found not only in the *Requeste* but also in the the *Retenue*, the *Copie*, the *Departie* and the *Quittance*—Charles' heart then is loose, free to find new patrons to pledge his service and devotion. Finally, his "cueur en gage" can be read as both an act of feudal "hommage" (*Quittance* 180) as well as a kind of contractual guarantee or "seurté" (surety)(*Retenue* 392) associated with bastard feudalism. The latter fits nicely in the Burgundy poem but in a manner more evocative of Charles' other concerns. He turns his heart into a hostage, a kind of personal surety—since a heart is not an object but the allegorical representation of his love—to guarantee, like his brother Jean and the other "hostages du Charles duc d'Orlians," as mentioned in a parliamentary petition, a promise to fulfill the obligations of a debt.[71] But the agreement Charles is after is open ended, his heart is granted in perpetuity, "Pour tousjours." By granting his heart to him as a hostage, Charles is assuring Burgundy of his

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[70] The formula beginning with "Please," whether in French or English, is part of the *petitio*, when a request is made. It is located after the address clause, the beseeching clause, used to identify the petitioner—always in the third person—and the *narratio* or statement of circumstances leading up to the petition. The petition ends with a benediction. Note that Charles places the *petitio* before the *narratio* in the *Requeste*. John H. Fisher, Malcolm Richardson and Jane L. Fisher, eds. *An Anthology of Chancery English* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1984), p. 21 and Camargo, *The Middle English Verse Love Epistle*, pp. 9-11.

[71] For the many ways agreements, financial and military, were secured by hostages during the Hundreds Year War see Adam J. Kosto, *Hostages in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2012).

loyalty, that he will not breach this agreement, nor that he is counterfeiting his feelings of love for Burgundy, all legal meanings of *faulser*.

In a manuscript filled with other poets' works, Burgundy responds with his own ballade, "De cueur, de corps et de puissance," which opens with the refrain from Charles' own ballade. Though its identification was added only later in the manuscript as a "Responce de Bourgogne a Orlians" once Charles was back in France, the *je* as Burgundy thanks him and offers him help. He also directs Charles towards recognizing that "L'estat et le gouvernement/ De la noble maison de France" (the condition and governance of the noble house of France)(11-12) is in a pitiful state. France is in ruins because of this war. But a poem is not the appropriate place to divulge further information, so he informs Charles—the *vous* in the poem—that in time,

> Vous saurés tout, quoy et comment;
> Je n'en dy plus pour le meilleur.
> Mais on en dit tant et expose
> Que c'est a oïr grant orreur,
> Quoy que nul dye ne depose. (15-18)
>
> (You will know all, the how and why. I say no more. That would be for the best. But people have said so much and exposed the truth that it is a great horror to hear no matter what anyone says or affirms.)

These are ominous words. Henry V himself, when Charles was first taken prisoner at Agincourt, asked his "Beau cousin" why he would not eat or drink then tried to console him by reminding him that perhaps God wanted France's defeat because of its moral decay, a civil war so wide spread that "pitie est de recorder et horreur aux escoutans de loyr" (it is a pity to remember and a horror to the listener to hear).[72] Later his son, Henry VI, in thinking about the continuing Hundred Years War, described it as "to grete a sorrow and an orrour to thinke or here it."[73] That acute awareness of a French "desordonnance" caused by the war is also found elsewhere in

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[72] Waurin, vol. 2, p. 219.
[73] Rymer, *Foedera*, 10.724.

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Charles' ballades though often times it is equated with love and his lost lady. Finally, Burgundy responds to Charles' hopes "Touchant paix et ma deliverance" (in regards to peace and my deliverance)(88.8), terms found together multiple times in the documents linking Charles' release to his active participation in the peace process, by pleading to concentrate on his "deliverance" (19) because "sans ce, je n'ay esperance/ Que nous ayons paix nullement" (without this, I have no hope that we will ever have peace)(22). Burgundy, once an ally of England, was privy to previous peace discussions and was well aware that Charles, as a peer of France, was a necessary piece and if he hoped for a release, playing a role in ending the war was a necessity. How honest a broker he was for the English cause, on the other hand, was not as important as his appearance in doing so, as can be seen in the way Charles ultimately persuaded Henry VI that he supported his claims to the dismay of a skeptical Gloucester. [74]

In the English book, both Burgundian ballades are radically altered to fit within the narrative confines of a *dit amoureux*. Epistolary exchange and dialogue becomes the traditional monologue. "Honure, ioy, helthe and plesaunce" (B111), Charles' ballade, leaves only the refrain translated. And yet in this petitionary appeal, France as the reticent woman who forces his retreat, even though he leaves behind his heart "en gage" in hopes of solidifying dubious possibilities, becomes his new English love he hopes will reserve for him a new, permanent space—perhaps the very place of love described in Froissart's *Joli buisson de jeuness* and inhabited inappropriately by Gower's Amans in the *Confessio Amantis*—that he need not desert so quickly against his will. After giving his heart and body as a surety of his love, "as be ye very sewre" (6233), he makes a request:

> This wolde y yow biseche: that of yowre grace
> Hit like yow lo to graunt me all this yere

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[74] Gloucester's opposition to Charles' "deliverance and eslargissement" can be found in Rymer, *Foedera* 10.764-65 and Stevenson, *Letters and Papers*, vol. 2.2, pp. 440-51.

> As in yowre hert to haue a dwelling place,
> Al be hit neuyr of so lite a space,
> For which as this the rente resceyve ye shall. (6235-40)

Charles' description of love here is conceived not only as an amorous space, a space not far from the *prison amoureuse* context still alive in the English book, but one associated as well with land grants. This is desperation couched in the language of a business negotiation. If she provides him with a space—and he reminds her earlier that his love is "small" (6) and all he seeks is "Sum litill, prati corner" (18), an imagined nook in her heart—she will profit from the *rente*, a nice example of an Anglo-French word slipping into Charles' English book; that is a rich payment of "loue and seruice" (15) on a regular, dependable basis.[75]

Bachelard's observation that it is in the corners of a room where we find the poet is relevant here. It is in a constricted space, a haven, that the poet retreats to find consolation for his thoughts while conversely announcing in an indirect sort of way his own sense of stasis, non-movement, immobility. A corner, Bachelard writes, "radiates immobility."[76] But a corner, no matter how little or pleasant, will, in the end, reflect a retreat. This is a horrifying image when we consider that his Dover poem, "En regardant vers le païs de France" (B75), imagines the movement of a carrack or *nef*, three-sailed, colorful and full of hope, crossing what was once seen as an immense sea but now, because of hope, the narrow channel the English passage to Dover always was.[77] The English book's "litill, prati corner" then is a solution grounded in an

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[75] On the absorption of the Anglo-French *rent* into English as a "regular, fixed payment made in return for the possession/use of a house, farm etc. over a fixed period of time" see William Rothwell, "The French Vocabulary in the Archive of the London Grocers' Company," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 102.1 (1992): 23-41, esp. pp. 38-9. Alain Ray attests to this English meaning of the word in the *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 1995), vol. 2, p. 1768.

[76] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon, 1969; orig. 1958), p. 137.

[77] Hutchinson implies that by the fifteenth century, *navis* always implied a carrack. Hutchinson, *Medieval Ships*, 42-3. For color of medieval ships see Nicholas Harris, *A History of the Royal Navy: From the Earliest Times to the Wars of the French Revolution*, vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), pp. 445-7 and Joe Flatman, *Ships and Shipping in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: The British Library, 2009).

English reality of land grants and rents, far from the bustling "ports/ De Desire" (28.5-6) or

"ioyfull port" (1041) towards which the prows of Charles' other allegorical ships point as they

cross the potentially treacherous "mer de Fortune" (28.7) or "See of Fortune" (1043). It also

resolves disappointment, providing the simple satisfaction of being with the lady, instead of

stormy crossings or hasty retreats from the one he truly loves. But to say that a corner "radiates

immobility" also evokes a contradiction, worthy of Jaufre Rudel whose own journey of love

seems to both advance and recede simultaneously.[78] To radiate implies a spreading movement,

but here it is a movement that announces its retreat and ultimately conveys its non-movement.

By going nowhere, the new lady becomes an English reality. She becomes a comforting

England.

Charles' rewriting of Burgundy's ballade, "With hert, body, and my hool puysshaunce"

(B113), though placed within the context of the new love narrative where the lady seems to be

wavering, also plays with Burgundy's encouragement about Charles' potential deliverance. In

this rewriting, Burgundy the consoler becomes Charles the lover who can only hope "that yowre

myddil smal/ Be onys within myn armys brouȝt" (6297-98). The "I" of the biographical reading

is loosened for a lyric one. The horror Burgundy spoke of in regards to the state of France

becomes conventional anxiety about a woman's indecision. Still, there is hope, when he

demands: "So shape me of hit delyueraunce/ When ther are noon but y and ye" (6301-302).

Once she brings about *their* deliverance, all suffering caused by Danger and Jealousy's cruelty

will be lessened; though he doubts in the end if even that is possible. The ballade's envoy ends

with Charles hoping she will allow him to launch a ship before the "wynd apalle/ And clowdid

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[78] Jonathan Hsy has equally shown, in his comparison of two ballades, that the movement of the "nef de Bonne
Nouvelle" (B28) and the "schepe off Freche Tydng" (B28) appears suspended, like Iseut's boat in Thomas' *Tristan*,
not because any wind has died but because contrary winds send one to France and the other away from her, together
holding the ship in a state of immobility that can only frustrate desire. Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, pp. 81-84.

be þe mone aloft" (6310-11). Left adrift at sea, without wind in its sails and the sky to navigate, that port of desire recedes farther and farther away.

The English book ends without any real conclusion, just like Charles' Hundreds Year War limped along with one planned peace conference after another failing until finally the whole of France was lost to the English thirteen years after his release in 1453, leading ultimately to a civil war in England that would last for another thirty. Even with the book's final energetic "farewell! farewell! farewell! farewell!" (B121) there is hope he will see her again as there is hope that he will be delivered of his suffering. With the inclusion of Danger and Jealousy, love becomes an allegory for a dark political state with allegorical guards watching his every move. But that is only because we recognize Charles working through Burgundy's poem, attempting to conceal what is not said, yet always implying it, within a more complete English *dit amoureux*.

Charles' books, while documentary in design, equally represent the expressive purposes found in the mixed genre, where a subject is made to emerge from the singing of a song. Documents function in as a narrative frame. Though they seem impersonal, with disembodied voices—or the voice of administrative culture—they reflect in the end a will. One could argue, as Zumthor did when claiming that the song and its rhetorical conventions, and not the author, sing, that it is not the drafter but the document's own detached will that is expressed. But documentary poetry shows how an impersonal, officially social language can reflect on the personal circumstances of the author, once those circumstances, whether as a narrative or a schedule, are put into play. If anything, they reveal the ways an institution impinges on the subject by constraining him or her to work in a language that denies all identity and yet identity can still be revealed, with all its rhetorical effects, both in acts of persuasion associated with a

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legal tradition and moments of eloquence with poetry, within the circumstances of a framing.[79]

If Hoccleve's example of poetic petitions shows how meter, imagery and rhymes can soften a political blow, Charles' political poems equally show this softening by implying a harsher direct discourse behind the discretion of his poetry. As we have seen, the French book's documentary elements seem to conspire in treating delicate political issues within an atmosphere of amorous concealment, to make Charles as prisoner disappear into the "lyric I." Still, these moments foreground Charles the duke, allowing us to see beyond the persona of the lover-poet finding expression within a narrative of lost—and found—love. Instead, we find another frame, documentary and prosaic in origins, which seems to foreground a political figure at work, writing into his love book the reality of a never-ending imprisonment of twenty-five years.

Still, with both works, we find ourselves wanting to resist that "dread of unmodern biographism" when thinking about love poetry.[80] But with Charles we see the first glimpses of a modern poet explicitly representing his thoughts and feelings through a fictional work. This is very different from the ironic self-representations we find in Machaut or Chaucer, personas active in the English book too, especially when "Charlis" (4788) falls in love with the new lady, raising questions about his retirement to the castle of No Care. Venus even accuses him of mercantile tendencies, of picking and choosing positions. Charles also reminds us of Froissart's *Joli Buisson* where the past can suddenly come alive in the present. Wherever he goes, as he roams through his castle of No Care, she is there, her absence made present.

> In yondir bayne so se y hir all nakid
> And this and that y saw hir yondir worche.
> Here y fond hir slepe, and yondir wakid

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[79] See Dodd's fascinating article comparing a unique first person petition in English and its traditional, third person petition in French needed to make the English one readable. Gwilym Dodd, "Thomas Paunfield, the 'heye Court of rightwisnesse' and the Language of Petitioning in the Fifteenth Century" in W. Mark Ormrod, Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Mussen, eds. *Medieval Petitions: Grace and Grievance* (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 222-41.
[80] Käte Hambürger, *The Logic of Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995; org. 1957), p. 275.

>And in this wyndow pleide we at the lorche
>And from this stayre y lad hir so swetly syng
>And in this chamber led y hir daunsyng (4827-33)

Such grief is palpable. And when we think of the Ciceronian conception of *memoria artificiosa* as a place where scenes are made present before the mind, we can imagine too Charles in his variety of residences during his confinement, sitting in Bachelard's corners, thinking about the death of his real wife and daughter as well as the guilt of being responsible for his younger brother's continual confinement as a hostage.[81] The same can be said of France. In every song or dance, every letter in its Anglo-French, every interaction with his captors, the French language must have reminded him of France's absence. The new lady, England perhaps, became a new way to achieve his deliverance and yet coded so as not to betray its true nature unless placed next to the French and compared document to document. If we are attentive to the way documents move in the French book, we can also see how in the English book, the French works as its *cedule*, another document providing yet another, concealed context. The result is remarkable in the way poetic documents can both evoke and obscure identity when a once overtly political poem disappears into another while still making its presence felt in the rewriting.

The workings of documents, whether administrative citations in the French book or French poems in the English book, create a subject very different from what we have seen emerge in the prosimetrum and mixed-verse genre where a self is posited at the origin of every conventional song once a narrative makes identifiable the singing of a song. In Charles' case, we find a singer less typical of that genre, even though the persona of the *dit* is always present and affective. Instead, we glimpse an author at work in our modern sense of the word, a writer who seems purposefully to associate his self-representation with the "life records" that give form for

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[81] *Ad Herennium* 3.16.29. In the Middle Ages, *Ad Herennium* was attributed to Cicero.

the scholar to both his biography and the handling of those records. With Charles, we find a

writer who intends to represent his self as the product of life experiences, very different from

Chaucer or Froissart, though Machaut's *Voir Dit*, Deschamps' moral ballades and Gower's

Confessio point in that general direction.   With the purposeful omission of a *cedule* to his

English book, that book reveals, ironically, political decisions, an identifiable author whose

intent can be interpreted though hidden behind so many concealed gestures. On the surface, the

English book encourages a total lyricization of his documentary aesthetic akin to Chaucer.   And

like Gower, Charles the duke can appear to recede back into poetry, into the long shadow of

poems not included in his English book. But the "schedule" that can make manifest in

bureaucratic prose what was already there in the French verse reveals as well a duke concealing

the state of his imprisonment in the amorous poetic conventions of his English captors.

Several questions appear worth asking: What compelled Charles the writer to retain the

skeleton of the political poems found in the *Balades de plusieurs propos* inside the English

book's new love narrative? Why rewrite what already seems to have been written under duress,

written with the assumption that open clarity had to be avoided? There seems to be a discernable

shift when Charles changes languages, a shift that seems to replicate the conditions of

surveillance Charles suffers and the necessity to be watchful in his own dealings with others.

Perhaps poetry had become secondary to his own situation and he was so despondent that he felt

he needed to ensconce himself further in more comfortable conditions to be important to the

English king. Maybe England became an accessible and knowable lady in the same way that

France had become inaccessible and unresponsive, the perfect expression of *amour lointain*. Or

maybe the English lady, with her inviting nature and then increasing distance, represented for

him the fickle conditions of his imprisonment there. In either case, biography presses against

any effort to force precise historic moments onto poetry, forcing us again to set temporal limits, when poetry itself appears too expansive, too cumulative, too conventional, to be set into one particular moment in time; and yet at the same time, reflective of a time, heard through the snatches of words shared by his poems and the documents that organized and described his imprisonment.   If the French book could finally be given its fullest expression by later identifying and annotating the political ballades, once he was back in Blois, to particular figures and circumstances, it was that conflicted English book that Charles left behind when he was finally able to cross the passage into France.

CODA

BETWEEN VERSE AND PROSE:
SHAKESPEARE'S *ROMEO AND JULIET*

The prosimetrum and its mixed verse variation has proven to be a very flexible genre that enables poets not only to think about poetry and its relation to narrative but also about the way they present themselves within the context of their own works. The study of this remarkable genre, from the thirteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth, seems from a medievalist perspective adequate and yet, those of us working at the far reaches of the fifteenth century are beginning to agree with Jacques Le Goff that perhaps where there was once a Renaissance is now the end of a very long and "extended" Middle Ages.[1] Why not proceed into so-called "Renaissance," "Early Modern" or "Pre-Modern" studies to continue the thread. As scholars are now recognizing, the transition between two seemingly distinct literary periods as the Medieval and the Renaissance can in no way be considered decisive or abrupt.[2] Petrarch for example was

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[1] Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), p. 22. Criticism of Renaissance or "pre-modern" or "early modern" scholars is almost an industry. See, for example, Lee Patterson, "On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History and Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65.1 (January 1990): 87-108 and David Aers, "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject'" in David Aers, ed. *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1992), pp. 177-202; and Margreta de Grazia,"The Modern Divide: From Either Side," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37:3 (Fall 2007): 453-67; and David Matthews, "Periodization" in Marion Turner, ed. *A Handbook of Middle English Studies* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 253-66.

[2] See, for example, A. C. Spearing's sensitive but flawed study of Chaucer's influences from the Italian Renaissance, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985) as well as James Simpson's ground breaking *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002) and Brian

deeply influenced by the troubadours, especially Arnaut Daniel, and his mixture of sonnets and

canzoni represents a troubadour aesthetic, while for A. E. B. Coldiron, Charles of Orleans and

his "approach to the erotic, his use of puns, wordplay, and rhetorical devices, his formal

complexity and experimentation, his stance or voice: all these place him well outside the

fifteenth-century literary milieu in which he found himself in England."[3] Furthermore, in

regards to books, William Kuskin reminds us that medieval books not only "endure, but they are

reprinted" during the period, while Lucy Munro describes the emergence of a new literary style,

anachronistic, inspired by the "discovery" of Old English and Middle English through early

printed editions.[4] Contrary to our received understanding of the Renaissance as either

teleological progression or epistemological break, as in politics and religion, traditional forces

always seem to have a profound and lasting power.[5] They conserve ideas, approaches and

practices. Modernity does not come that easy.

　　　Literary genres are also conservative. The Renaissance shares with the Middle Ages the

continuation of the mixed genre, not so much the mixed-verse variety with its rich evocation of

medieval dreamers, though sonnet cycles, under the influence of Petrarch's *Canzonieri*, often

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Cummings and James Simpson's Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010). Stillinger's study of Chaucer's *Troilus* and its Italian sources is understood as an exploration of "late-medieval and early-Renaissance intertextuality." Stillinger equally objects to the very idea of a chasm between the two so-called periods…for a long Middle Ages? Earlier, Gilson found continuity, not rupture, between the two periods because of medieval humanism. Thomas C. Stillinger, *The Song of Troilus: Lyric Authority in the Medieval Book* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992), p. 2 and Etienne Gilson, "Humanisme médiévale et renaissance" in *Les Idées et les lettres (*Paris: J. Vrin, 1932), pp. 171-96.

[3] A. E. B. Coldiron, *Canon, Period and the Poetry of Charles of Orleans* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000), p. 11. Pearsall argues that Charles introduced before Wyatt a "intimate, passionate speaking voice." Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1977), p. 217.

[4] William Kuskin, "Recursive Origins: Print History and Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*" in Curtis Perry and John Watkins, eds. *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009), pp. 126-50 (qt. 127) and Lucy Munro, *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590-1674* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013).

[5] See, for example, Eamon Duffy's study of the messy transition to an officially Protestant England, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University, 1992, rpt. 2005), as well as James Simpson's critique of "revolutionary thinking" in "Diachronique History and the Shortcomings of Medieval Studies" in Gordon McMullan and David Matthews, eds. *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), pp. 17-30.

include a narrative arc. Rare is the example of Samuel Daniel's *Delia* with its medieval mixture of narrative, letters and Petrarchan complaint as well as an evocation of both documentary poetry and Chaucer's *Troilus*.[6] As for the prosimetrum, it found greener, more pastoral settings, as found in Robert Greene's *Menaphon*, for example, or Sidney's *The Old Arcadia*. Shakespeare too registers this medieval genre, but not in the sense Stephen Greenblatt or Michael O'Connell imagine: a young, Catholic Shakespeare taken with an old medieval cycle of plays before their suppression by Protestant fundamentalists.[7] Instead, we see the mixed genre as the very material for his own work, whether Gower stepping onto the stage in *Pericles* to "sing a song that old was sung" (Pro 1.1) or Palamon entering the stage "as out of a bush with his shackles" (3.1.31) to attack Arcite in *Two Noble Kinsmen* or even Charles of Orleans exclaiming "O Seigneur! Le jour est perdu, tout est perdu!" (4.5.2) before being taken prisoner in *Henry V*.[8] Setting aside such obvious references, I want to discuss briefly one play, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the way it uses the prosimetrum to reconfigure tragedy as a revival of medieval conventions of love and poetry. By focusing on the play's use of three sonnets, the form most identified with Petrarch, though

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[6] In the first sonnet, for example, Daniel complains to Delia, "Here I unclasp the book of my charged soul,/ Where I have cast th'accounts of all my care;/ Here have I summed my sighs. Here I enroll/ How they were spent for thee. Look, what they are./ Look on the dear expenses of my youth," (5-9). Daniels also evokes Chaucer not only with his "Go, wailing verse" (2.1) while Chaucer's translation of Petrarch in the *Canticus Troili* appears the opening lines to each quatrain and couplet to sonnet 9, "If this be love." Martha Foote Crow, ed. *Elizabethan Sonnet-Cycles* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896).

[7] Michael O'Connell, "Vital Cultural Practices: Shakespeare and the Mysteries," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.1 (Winter 1999): 149-68 and "Blood Begetting Blood: Shakespeare and the Mysteries" in Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper and Peter Holland, eds. *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013), pp. 177-89; Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004), pp. 31-40. However, for a discussion of Greenblatt's tendency to repeat "pre-modern" commonplaces about the Middle Ages, see Sarah Beckwith, "Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet* and the Forms of Oblivion," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.2 (Spring 2003): 261-80.

[8] For Shakespeare reading Gower and Chaucer, see Helen Cooper, "'This worthy olde writer': *Pericles* and other Gowers, 1592-1640" in Siân Echard, ed. *A Companion to Gower* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 99-113 and E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (New Haven: Yale University, 1985). The medieval Shakespeare is also explored in variety of approaches: Perry, *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages*; Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray, eds. *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2009) and Ruth Morse, *Medieval Shakespeare*.

Englished, the prosimetrum highlights a conflict between prose narrative, understood as social, and verse which aspires towards the lyrical anonymity and autonomy we discussed previously as fundamental in understanding love as a musical form.

1. Prose and Verse

Jill Levenson has written much about how the play bends genre, not only tragedy and comedy but also lyric sequences, including not only sonnets and their various stanzaic parts, Italian octaves or English quatrains, but under the influence of the *Canzonieri*, a variety of other poetic forms: the aubade and the epithalamium; each lyric illuminates the other generic features of the play.[9] *Romeo and Juliet* is not often thought of as a prosimetrum in the way we have been discussing the genre, although its alternating use of poetry, whether rhymed or blank verse, and prose, is well documented as an important stylistic feature. There has been much debate over why Shakespeare would alternate prose and verse in such a manner. Some see the presence of the same medieval *genera* we discussed in Gower where the social status of the speaker, the subject of the discourse and the style all coincide with prose representing the low and verse the high.[10] However, this social feature of style seems in practice more flexible depending as much upon the dramatic situation at hand as upon the intentions of the speaker, whether a nobleman rebuking an inferior or a rustic aspiring to love, as well as Shakespeare's own interest in

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[9] Jill Levenson, "Romeo and Juliet: Tragical-Comical-Lyrical History" in *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 12-13 (1987-88): 31-46 as well as her introduction to *The Oxford Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), pp. 49-61. Hanson and Kiparsky make the same observation about Romeo and Juliet's in their linguistics study of the prosimetrum. Kristin Hanson and Paul Kiparsky, "The Nature of Verse and its Consequences for the Mixed Form" in Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl, eds. *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 17-44 (esp. 40).
[10] David Crystal, *Think on My Words: Exploring Shakespeare's Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 208-19.

"foiling" characters, ideas, emotions and even scenes by playing with opposites.[11] In *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, Mercutio acts as the prose foil to Romeo's expressions of love in verse. When Benvolio announces, "Here comes Romeo!" twice, Mercutio responds,

> Without his roe, like a dried herring. O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in: Laura to his lady was but a kitchen wench; marry, she had a better love to be-rhyme her; Dido a dowdy; Cleopatra a gipsy; Helen and Hero hildings and harlots; Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose. Signior Romeo, bon jour! There's a French salutation to your French slop. You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night. (2.4.37-45) [12]

Commentators have glossed the sexual connotations of his opening sentences: love sick without his Rosaline, his roe or deer/dear—unlike Friar Lawrence, Mercutio is not in on Romeo's change of heart—he looks pale and dry. But Mercutio also deflates the "numbers" or metrical lines of Petrarch's spiritualized love, the medieval *exempla* of true lovers and the whole ethos of French and Italian love poetry. As for being counterfeit, not only did Romeo give his friends "the slip" (2.4.48) but he has also been patently false. The allegorical rose of medieval poetry, his Roseline, reveals an inauthentic poetry "read by rote, that could not spell" (2.3.88), a poetry copied by the head, not truly written by the heart. Shakespeare plays with Romeo as a figure of both an aversion to and fascination with poetry. For Mercutio, as representative of what has traditionally been seen as a "social" prose, Romeo perhaps "apes" too many poetic conventions.[13]

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[11] Quincy Guy Burris, "'Soft! Here Follows Prose': Twelfth Night II. v. 154," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2.3.(July 1951): 233-39; Jonas Barish, "Mixed Verse and Prose in Shakespeare's Comedy" in Michael Cordner, Peter Holland and John Kerrigan, eds. *English Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994), pp. 55-67; Jacob Tootalian, "Without Measure: The Language of Shakespeare's Prose," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 13.4 (Fall 2013): 47-60.

[12] All quotes from G. Blakemore Evans, ed. *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

[13] On the "ape" (2.1.16) as the laughable imitator of true art, see Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1990), pp. 538-40. Note: Curtius' reference to the image in *The Winter's Tale*.

This dissertation thus far has not been concerned strictly with this formal shifting between prose and verse, but more with the authenticity of songs and their identifiable singers. In *Romeo and Juliet*, we also have examples of song: two insulting ones sung by Mercutio, "An old hare hoar" (2.4.132) and the refrain "lady, lady" (2.4.141) from the ballad "The Constancy of Susana," as well as another by the servant Peter, who sings the opening line to "In Commendation of Music" by Richard Edwards, "When griping griefs the hearts doth wound" (5.1.123).[14] With these three cases, *Romeo and Juliet* participates in the vernacular tradition of the mixed genre beginning with Jean Renart and found as well in Chaucer's *Canticus Troili*, works that narrate the singing of "found" songs, not original compositions. The dramatic context for "found" songs is generally realistic when the singing of songs is placed within the spheres of social activity. In that way, the song align with prosaic motivations. When Romeo asks, "What hast thou found?" (2.4.129), Mercutio's *inventio* is the singing of a well-known, dirty little song designed to offend both Romeo and Juliet's nurse. Peter likewise spars with a group of musicians in prose, asking them to sing the ballad "Heart's Ease" to counter the dolorous melody, "My heart is full of woe" (4.5.103-4), played by his heart, a direct quotation from the same ballad before he offers an exegetical singing of "In Commendation of Music."[15]

Interestingly, Shakespeare also stages the narrative action found in the words of these found songs as scenes for his play. For example, the lyrics to the ballad Peter asks to be sung, "Heart's Ease," end with a young female musician, who has previously implored her lute to "complain on him" (1), being visited by her "gallant" (15) and eagerly sleeping with him "in

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[14] All quotations from the songs come from Ross W. Duffin, ed. *Shakespeare's Songbook* (New York: Norton, 2004). The "lady, lady" song is also called "Chaste Susana" or "The Goodly and Constant Wife Susanna" in Peter Holland, ed. *Romeo and Juliet* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 54n. and Weis, *Romeo and Juliet*, p. 220n.
[15] "Hey ho! My heart is full of woe!" (7) found in Duffin, *Shakespeare's Songbook*, pp. 189-90. Note only the Fourth Quarto clarifies the heart being full "of woe."

delightful sport" (37). Once the sun rises and discovers them, the lyrics say she asks him, "And

wilt thou then be gone?" (47), which he soon is. After watching him go, she lies back in bed,

takes out her lute and plays a variation of the opening lines, "Complain my lute, complain with

me" (55). In the play, Juliet's own *alba* after sleeping with Romeo opens with the same

question, "Wilt thou be gone?" (3.5.1). Shakespeare's audience, like the audience of John Gay's

Beggar's Opera, would understand the wandering ways of lyrics. By resituating popular ballads

as parody, for the comical mixing of the play, while at the same time recuperating the

authenticity of such an expression of loss, Shakespeare seems to play with a very medieval idea

that love songs are expressive of narrative events. When Romeo drops off the balcony a second

time, he reminds Juliet that "all these woes shall serve/ For sweet discourses in our times to

come" (3.5.52-53). This is the promise of the prosimetrum beginning with the *Tristan*: that any

lived experiences can become the material for poetic expression. If Juliet were a musician like

Iseut, she would have at that moment begun tuning her harp or, since we're in the sixteenth

century, her lute. For Greg Stone, the persistent power of the prosimetrum even in a Renaissance

play would seem to show that the narrativization of a once independent, anonymous and

rhetorical lyric would seem to be well on its way.[16] All that would be left is its theorization in

the hands of Sir William Jones, John Stuart Mills and William Wordsworth to complete the

process.

    Still, Juliet's momentary, almost insignificant citation of a line binding a broadside ballad

to her own *alba* full of nightingales and pomegranate trees quickly reveals how unsettling love

and the garden which engenders both love and music—Romeo must climb over walls into

Juliet's orchard—can be. This medieval harmony of the *locus amoenus* is disrupted, not only by

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[16] See Gregory B. Stone's essential work *The Death of the Troubadour: The Late Medieval Resistance to the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1994).

the sun, but also by the "Straining harsh discords and unpleasant sharps" (3.5.28) of the lark

playing "so out of tune" (3.5.27). Juliet is rebuking as medieval "hearsay" a topos that goes all

the way back to Alain de Lille, that "Some say the lark makes sweet division" (3.5.29). [17] That

the lark "doth not so, for she divideth us" (3.5.30) instead calls to mind a more Platonic reading

of love—or more precisely, Aristophanes' recounting of the division of the orbs in the

Symposium, a separation also accounted for in the medieval poets. In that way, the increasing

sunlight then shines not on shame, as we find in the ballad "Heart's Ease," but what Lacan once

described as a terrifying recognition, as if someone is suddenly awakened to the realization that

love cannot exist.[18] The only solution then is death. No wonder then that when Juliet looks

down from her balcony into the garden she does not see a seemingly stable four cornered garden

derived from the *Roman de la rose*—though even Genius declares that the garden is perilous

within its design—but an open grave: "Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,/ As one dead in

the bottom of a tomb" (3.5.55-56). One cannot help but recognize the contrast between the

spiritual vision of Petrarch in the face of despair and death and a deeply pessimistic view of love

and poetry.

The contrast between Petrarch and our two lovers is not only explicit in the text but

deeply integral to the play itself.[19] Mercutio insults Petrarch's beloved, Laura, by socializing her

in his prose as a "kitchen wench" (2.4.40) in the same way Don Quixote's Dulcinea is described

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[17] Alain describes the lark as a noble harpist whose voice, "separating tones into subtle chains, kept dividing semitones until they reached indivisible units" (quae tonos in tenues subtilizans particulas, semi tonia in gumphos divisibiles dividebat). Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae* 2.24. Winthrop Wetherbee, ed. *Alan of Lille: Literary Works* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[18] Jacques Lacan, "Improvision: Désir de mort, rêve et reveille," *L'Ane* 3 (1981): 3.

[19] On Petrarchan influences in Shakespeare and their undoing, see A. J. Earl, "*Romeo and Juliet* and the Elizabethan Sonnets," *English* 27.2 (Summer-Autumn 1978): 99-119; Jill L. Levenson, "The Definition of Love: Shakespeare's Phrasing in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Studies* 15 (1982): 21-36; Gayle Whittler, "The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.1 (Spring 1989): 27-41; and Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1995).

by Pancho Sanchez as a sweaty peasant. Even Peter's half sung "In Commendation of Music," a song about the salvic relief supplied by music's "silver sound" (3), becomes disputed not only on the musicians' grounds of payment but also Petrarchan ones. In no way can we accept music's ability to "turn the mind,/ Like as the stern doth rule the ship" (19-20) when, to evoke a Petrarchan image, ships seem to be under the tempestuous rule of storms. This seems a critique of Peter, and by extension, Friar Laurence's own delusions that love can be tempered. It can also be read as an affirmation that Romeo and Juliet's experience of love as shaped by the ornament of "calamity" (3.3.3) *is* essential even if Laurence calls it "Misshapen" (3.3.131).

2. Three Sonnets

If there is a strain of parody and skepticism in the way medieval coneptions of love are treated in song, there is also the recognition that love has a way of formally shaping poetry. That at least, is the drive behind the prosimetrum, but at the same time poetry gives shape to expressions of love and even forms the very idea of love.   As a prosimetrum, what is remarkable about *Romeo and Juliet* is not only how the play seems to respond to medieval ideas of love as expressed through songs but more importantly, but also the way the play and that love seem to be organized around poetry's ghostly formal presence, or more specifically, around sonnets that seem to highlight a conflict between the social and the amorous, between prose and verse. The sonnets become a way to acess Shakespeare's take on love and poetry.

The first sonnet, the prologue to Act 1 is the most famous and focuses on a public narrative to describe the conditions of this tragedy. Expository in nature, the conventional

literary conflict between "two lovers," the very stuff of amorous poetry, as Gayle Whittler has

observed, is substituted for "Two households."[20]

> Two households, both alike in dignity,
> In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
> From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
> Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
> From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
> A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
> Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
> Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
> The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
> And the continuance of their parents' rage,
> Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
> Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
> The which if you with patient ears attend,
> What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. (Pro. 1.1-14)

The sonnet's outlook is not amorous, as we expect from sonnets, but social in its description of a

conflict first described among family groups but then quickly implying other social groups,

resulting, as the prince complains, in political problems. While the narrative character of the

sonnet cycle was already explored by Petrarch, Du Bellay's Rome sonnets, the prose rubrics in

Totell's Miscellany or even Samuel Daniels' mixture of narrative and amorous sonnets in *Delia*,

each showing how the love sonnet can be marked by the very contingency narrative represents,

the social feature of the sonnet, on the other hand, has been a recent way of looking at this poetic

form since Arthur Marotti's important study of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and the sonneteers

in his wake. Marotti argued that sonnets must always be understood as socially inflected,

conveying what he describes as the "coterie circumstances of sociopolitically encoded love

poetry."[21] David Schalkwyk has added that sonnets, once performed on the stage, take on a

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[20] Whittler, "The Sonnet's Body," p. 28.
[21] Arthur F. Marotti, "'Love is Not Love': Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order," *ELH* 49.2 (Summer 1982): 396-428 (qt. 418).

certain corporality associated with the world.[22] The use of a chorus reinforces this impression by voicing a form usually associated with solitary complaints. As collective and expository, sonnet sequences raise questions about the dividing line between the social and the private.[23] And yet, as will be seen in Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet, two voices can imply not only a shared communal voice but also a shattered one of the Petrarchan kind, where two voices can come to represent one.[24]

Still, while the chorus, those intermediators of the classical stage, reinterprets a personal tragedy by its social causes—and that is if we accept the premise that their deaths are tragic, considering their fatal, "death-mark'd love" does resolve their "parents' strife"—politics has a way of being refracted by poetic conventions (Charles of Orleans' *prison amoureuse*) or enveloped into an amorous work as a conventional feature of the mixed-genre (Machaut's *Voir Dit* and Gower).[25] In that way, the social, with its attendant political dimension as when the Prince appears, may not be enough to explain the fatal love we witness on the stage or read as a play. Love has a way of generating its own causalities. And yet here, retooled to set the scene for a social conflict between two houses and not two lovers, the sonnet chooses to locates all strife specifically in "the fatal loins of these two foes" (Pro. 1.5) and not its own proper and amorous "star-cross'd" fatality.

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[22] David Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), pp. 60-65.

[23] Ibid., p. 66.

[24] See as well Jackson G. Barry, "Poem or Speech? The Sonnet as Dialogue in *Love's Labor's Lost* and *Romeo and Juliet*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 19.1 (1983): 13-36.

[25] For discussions of the writer's limits in the prologue see as well Helen Vendler, "Shakespeare's Other Sonnets" in Thomas Moisan and Douglas Bruster, eds. *In the Company of Shakespeare: Essays on English Renaissance Literature in Honor of G. Blakemore Evans* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University, 2002), pp. 161-76; Jonathan Hart, "Conflicting Monuments: Time, Beyond Time, and the Poetics of Shakespeare's Dramatic and Nondramatic Sonnets" in in the same collection, pp. 177-205; and Judith Haber, *Dramatic Form in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009).

We see this diminishment of love throughout the play, whether as Queen Mab galloping through "lovers' brains" (1.4.71) or "Young Abraham Cupid" (2.1.13) bearing "Love's weak childish bow" (1.1.210). But in this sonnet we cannot help but recognize that the lovers are also "death-mark'd" (Pro. 1.9). Who marks a lover with death? Who makes stars fatal? The god of love, of course. As we know from medieval literature, Love is a hunter, a dark lord, who can force a lover to obey his law. In the *Roman de la rose*, we find love pursuing his prey:

> dieus d'amors qui, arc tendu,
> Avoit touz jorz mout entendu
> A moi porsivre et espier,
> Si ere apoiez lez .i. figuier (1678-81) [26]

(the god of love who, with bow drawn, had the whole time followed
and spied on me, leaned against a fig tree).

In Chrétien de Troye's *Cligés*, love is merciless:

> Or la fera Amors dolente,
> Et molt se cuide bien vangier
> Del grant orguel et del dangiers
> Qu'ele li a toz jorz mené (450-53) [27]

(Now Love will make her sorrowful, and intends to take revenge for
the great pride and resistance that she has shown towards him).

The medieval examples of Love's malevolent designs are commonplace. Likewise in *Romeo and Juliet*, we sense in the sonnet for the third act's prologue love acting as a foe of socially correct expressions of love.

> Now old desire doth in his death-bed lie,
> And young affection gapes to be his heir;
> That fair for which love groan'd for and would die,
> With tender Juliet match'd, is now not fair.
> Now Romeo is beloved and loves again,
> Alike betwitched by the charm of looks,
> But to his foe supposed he must complain,
> And she steal love's sweet bait from fearful hooks:
> Being held a foe, he may not have access

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[26] Armand Strubel, ed. *Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun: Le roman de la rose: Edition d'après les manuscrits BN 12786 et BN 378* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1992).
[27] Alexandre Micha, ed. *Cligés* (Paris: Champion, 1978).

To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear;
And she as much in love, her means much less
To meet her new-beloved anywhere:
But passion lends them power, time means, to meet
Tempering extremities with extreme sweet. (Pro. 2.1-14)

As narrative verse in the style of Daniels' sonnet-cycle, this sonnet conditions amorous

conventions within a poetic form identified with love. And yet, as a sonnet, instead of refracting

a Petrarchan instability through one voice, it again, collectively, narrates Romeo's inconstancy

and the ensuing problems of loving Juliet as a "foe" within the social conflict played out in the

streets of Verona. As Schalkwyk notes, Petrarchan impossibility is "represented as a real rather

than merely a literary response to love, caught in the exigencies of a particular social and

political context."[28] But Verona is also a garden, an orchid under Juliet's balcony, and his

involuntary loving of a foe makes Romeo the subject of another foe, the god of love, who

subjects fickle lovers to the test and makes them write complaints.

Even though this sonnet renders narrative the conventions of love lyric as the product of

social forces, medieval love language also determines Romeo's actions just as deterministically

as the god of love's arrows force the lover into submission in the *Roman de la rose*. Elsewhere

in the play, we get the impression that Romeo seems to sense some power determining his

actions. After intuiting "Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars" (1.4.107), Romeo

proclaims, "But he that hath the steerage of my course/ Direct my sail! (1.4.112-13). Who is *he*?

Not *God* as the editors presume, but the medieval god of love.[29] Furthermore, it is a Petrarchan

image found in his sonnets. This is where love sonnets undo the social structures played out in

Shakespeare's two prosaic sonnets, sonnets which on the surface seem to offer nothing more

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[28] Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance*, p. 74.

[29] Whether by gloss (Pelican Shakespeare), by parenthetical (Oxford) or by orthography (Riverside's *He*). Only the Arden edition notes that "Romeo probably means 'Love.'" René Weis, ed. *Romeo and Juliet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 165n.

than a restatement or introduction to the dramatic material represented in the play. I would argue that their presence in sonnet form ultimately reinterprets this social conflict as the result of a poetic one, more powerful than mere "aping."

Allow me for a moment to unpack the consequence of this prosimetric dynamic present in *Romeo and Juliet*. Two forms seem to be at odds: One, verse, associated with love in all its rhetorical folly, and the other, prose, associated with social strictures designed to limit the potentially destructive tendencies in poetry. As we discussed in the introduction, the voice of love poetry is the voice of the poem itself under the rubric of the so-called "lyric I," a subjective marker that in fact denotes no subjectivity. This at least was the argument of Zumthor and the Geneva school. The "I" becomes the voice of poetry, of a poetry founded in commonplaces and figures. It becomes the voice of love, whether idealistic or unsettling. Furthermore, as we saw in our discussion of Gower, once an individual becomes a lover or *amans*, all identity dissolves, a paradox inherent in the ideal lyrical "I." Or to evoke Hambürger, identity vaporizes into the night.[30] In this context, narrative has no role to play other than to account for love's progressive dismantling of the self.[31] This is astounding because the mixed genre implies the exact opposite: that a poem, once without a subject, accrues subjectivity with the addition of a frame. With a narrative context, a singing subject suddenly appears. But even in the prosimetrum, there is also a powerful variation, as seen in the *Tristan en prose*, whereby love poetry reflects the willing eradication of the self through death. In this process of eradicating the subject, death becomes the narrative frame, a chronological end stop that ironically shields the lovers from giving up

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[30] Käte Hambürger, *The Logic of Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995; org. 1957), p. 290.
[31] Even Whitler notes that "Romeo seeks to be the author of the persona he imitates, an artificer born out of an artifact." Whittler, "The Sonnet's Body," p. 30.

their identities even in song. With *Romeo and Juliet* that conflict between social frames and love's demanding dissolution is staged as drama in the prosimetrum.

The third sonnet, set between the two social examples in the Prologues to Act 1 and 2, hints at this fatal narrative accounting but in the lyrical turn towards suspended time in an amorous present. There, we can easily recognize how Shakespeare represents the whole conflict of the prosimetrum between context and convention in a sonnet. The problem is in the staging and staging is the domain, in this play, of society's representation.

> *Romeo*
> If I profane with my unworthiest hand
> This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
> *Juliet*
> Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
> Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
> For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
> And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
> *Romeo*
> Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
> *Juliet*
> Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
> *Romeo*
> O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
> They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
> *Juliet*
> Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
> *Romeo*
> Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take. (1.5.94-107)

Within the context of the "ancient grudge" (Pro. 1.3), that is within the play's social frame, Romeo and Juliet's flirtations around the theme of pilgrimage, what Dragonetti called a *coulour religieuse*, is filled with foreboding anticipation, that once dead, their "monument" (5.3.274) and Juliet's "statue in pure gold" (5.3.299) will be the object of future veneration and songs, as

Romeo promises Juliet that second time on the balcony. [32] Their woe will be the material for golden eloquence and that eloquence will assure their love's immortality. We have seen that promise made often in Shakespeare's sonnets. On the other hand, if their shared sonnet is exchanged while masked, since the party at Capulet's house appears to be a masquerade, it can only but announce in a dramatic way their inevitable enfolding—or enforming—into conventional love poetry with its accompanying evaporation of all identity.[33] Of course, dramatically, a masked Romeo can only be perceived by his bearing, not his identity, and hence, is safe to wander Capulet's grounds during the party. But by keeping them anonymous from each other, Shakespeare equally conveys the truth of their love by denying any connection to something so fickle as mere sight, what Friar Lawrence associates with "Young men's love" because it "lies/ Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes." Note as well in the second sonnet, a social condemnation of their love, that "Alike" they are "betwitched by the charm of looks" (Pro. 2.6). But Romeo and Juliet fall in love *before* they can see each other. Their love does not derive from sight, the traditional conduit in medieval conceptions of love. Furthermore, their love makes contact with the improbable, a kiss.[34] Romeo and Juliet then are not conceived as the victims of the god of love, nor do they suffer in ways associated with the Petrarchan sonnet tradition, even though death hovers on the horizon.[35] Shakespeare seems to frame their love as

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[32] Roger Dragonetti, *La technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise: Contribution à l'étude de la rhétorique médiévale* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), p. 113.

[33] Capulet asks a cousin during the party, "How long is't now since last yourself and I/ Were in a mask?" (1.5.32-33) and Tybalt remarks after overhearing Romeo, "This, by his voice, should be a Montigue" (1.5.55). Kottman, in his odd Hegelian reading of the play, interprets anonymity as the unknown and argues instead for Romeo and Juliet's increasingly mutual recognition and freedom. Paul A. Kottman, "Defying the Stars: Tragic Love as the Struggle for Freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63.1 (Spring 2012): 1-38 (esp. 12-13).

[34] Earl remarks that "the kiss that the troubadours and their latterday heirs, the Elizabethans, had yearned for, is granted in this sonnet." In other words, as Schalkwyk notes, the kiss is the resolution of a "defining condition" of the lyric that "it should not achieve that desire." Earl, "*Romeo and Juliet*," p. 116 and Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance*, p. 68.

[35] Whittler notes that for Juliet to be a "saint," she has to die while Rappaport and Vendler observe that not only does their shared sonnet prefigure death, but also the appearance and abrupt interruption of a fourth sonnet, which survives only as a quatrain (1.5.94-108-11). Whittler, "The Sonnet's Body," p. 35; Gideon Rappaport, "Another

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true because they avoid those conditions. Instead they are seduced by the purest form of seduction: sweet, sonorous poetry.

Though a social conflict embedded within the sonnets seems to undermine the amorous claims of the genre, love and poetry are still set apart, not only in the sonnet but the play in general. Love is *not* political. Instead, Shakespeare furnishes love and by extension, poetry, a private, idealized space distinct from what Laurent Dubreuil describes as the tyrannizing presence of "the City."[36] The Prince's city state may assert its prosaic powers—even if Shakespeare's prince is alliterative—like Mercutio belittling Petrarch in prose as a way of limiting the power of poetry and its concurrent dissolution of the self in the negative presence of oxymoron. "Thy wit is very bitter sweeting" (2.4.78) he mocks Romeo. Then he ridicules the whole genre of the complaint while trying to bring Romeo to his senses, to recognize himself as an inhabitant of the city: "Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature" (2.4.87-89). Mercutio recognizes the role of the language arts and the place of identity within those arts but his language is identified with prose and the social self within a political place.[37] Equally, his ability to identify those conventional forces in poetry that work against the contextual

Sonnet in Romeo and Juliet," *Notes and Queries* 25.2 (April 1978): 124; and Vendler, "Shakespeare's Other Sonnets," pp. 165-67.

[36] Laurent Dubreuil, "Preamble to Apolitics," *Diacritics* 39.2 (Summer 2009): 5-20 as well as "Leaving Politics: *Bios*, *Zoe*, Life," *Diacritics* 36.2 (Summer 2006): 83-98. Much contemporary debate on the *apolitical*, a term still politically determined, is grounded in an Italian reading of Foucault and yet, it is in Foucault and his description of the *pratique de soi* that he describes a practice whereby an individual can "affect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power" outside the expressions of power for the benefit of a "set of truth obligations: learning what is truth, discovering the truth, being enlightened by truth, telling the truth." Foucault's *pratique de soi* explains how Christian conversions can occur in the face of Imperial persecution and why a distinctly 60s argument that the "personal is political" is an overreach. Michel Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude" in Marshall Blonsky, ed. *On Signs* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), p 367.

[37] Likewise Henderson argues that the sonnet is not only a "social form" but the amorous subject is also politically subject to princes. Diana E. Henderson, "The Sonnet, Subjectivity and Gender" in A.D. Cousins and Peter Howarth, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011), pp. 46-64

subjectivity we have explored clarifies the defining issue of the play: that the idea of the anonymous lover willing to submit himself to poetry's power prevents the prosimetrum's creation of an individual subject.

Mercutio's determining prose on the whole is incapable of localizing this social Romeo. "Where the devil should this Romeo be?" (2.4.1) Mercutio asks before Romeo makes his appearance. But Mercutio is not the only one. Lady Montigue asks, "O, where is Romeo? Saw you him today? (1.1.115). Even Romeo is aware that his identity is receding as his assumption of the poetic lover increases: "Tut! I have lost myself; I am not here;/ This is not Romeo, he's some other where" (1.1.196-97). Benvolio too makes the same recognition, "for 'tis in vain/ To seek him here that means not to be found. (2.1.41-42). But Mercutio knows where to find him: *inside* the poetic conventions. "Nay, I'll conjure too./ Romeo! Humours! Madman! Passion! Lover!/ Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh (2.2.6-8). He even jokes that through the *blazon*, that fragmentary figure of *efficio*, Romeo will be made to appear

> The ape is dead, and I must conjure him.
> I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
> By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
> By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh
> And the demesnes that there adjacent lie,
> That in thy likeness thou appear to us! (2.1.16-21)

Romeo will appear in a poem about his Rosaline but Rosaline is just the apprentice's work. When he leaps over the wall into Juliet's garden, she asks, "By whose direction found'st thou out this place?" to which Romeo replies, "By love" (2.2.79-80). And once he finds the place—also characterized as "the place death" (2.2.64)—Romeo sheds his name. "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized./ Henceforth I never will be Romeo" (2.2.50-51). Romeo is not crafting an identity in response to social relations or history as argued by Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*; he is crafting the identity of the conventional lover, whose formal appearance

arises from lyric conventions. But unlike Gower's Amans, Romeo has shed his identity to find a

truer self and in that way, we are closer to Greenblatt's source, to Foucault's model of the

pratique de soi with its concomitant truth obligations. But even then we are incorrect. Both

Greenblatt and Foucault depend on an individual's conscious self-regard. Instead, like the

medieval lovers before him, Romeo has been taken over by an alien power, love, and as a result

has been changed, transformed into…nobody.[38] His creaturely facticity, his "bodily being," to

evoke Julia Lupton's engagement with Shakespearean subjects as accidently inhabiting a world

filled with everyday objects and social exchanges, becomes null and void.[39] He has become

poetry.

To truly find Romeo in the play's third sonnet, to make poetry really happen, we first

have to suspend all social identity by dropping the rubric designating each speaker's name, to

read the sonnet as a poem instead of dramatic encounter on a peopled stage.[40] We have to undo a

tradition of reading the play as both the dramatization of lyric content and Shakespeare's

"'unmetaphoring' of literary devices, his sinking of the conventions back into what, he somehow

persuades us, is 'reality,'" as Rosalie Colie once wrote.[41] Instead, we want to restore metaphor,

but not as a critique of "empty rhetoric, self-enclosed lyric, and empty form" as Judith Haber

sees it, but as a way to register lyric power outside social conceptions of rhetoric in the non-

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[38] Greenblatt also makes mention of "self-fashioning" as submission "in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile," but this "threatening Other—heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor Antichrist—must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed" (9). Much of Greenblatt's "self-fashioning" as well as "being fashioned" is Protestant in perspective, modeled on Foucault's notions of discipline/power and surprisingly Burckhardt's Renaissance subject. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980), p. 9.

[39] Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essays on Politics and Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011).

[40] Laurence Perrine, "Form and Content Kiss/Intention Made the Bliss: The Sonnet in *Romeo and Juliet*," *The English Journal* 55.7 (Oct. 1966): 872-874; Rudolf Stamm, "The First Meeting of the Lovers in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*," *English Studies* 67.1 (1986): 2-13; and Diane E. Henderson, *Passion Made Public: Elizabethan Lyric, Gender and Performance* (Urbana, 1995).

[41] Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 1968) and Rosalie Colie, *Shakespeare's "Living Art"* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1974), p. 145.

referentiality of what Whittler calls the "Petrarchan word."[42]   The dissolution of their names is

the only way we can achieve a true reading of their love sonnet. Death is just an extension of

that lyrical dream. Once love speaks, lovers seem to disappear.

> If I profane with my unworthiest hand
> This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
> Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
> Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
> For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
> And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
> Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
> Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
> O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
> They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
> Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
> Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take. (1.5.94-107)

When Romeo and Juliet are extracted from the world of prose and dramatic frames, their shared

sonnet takes on a different hue. No longer a flirtatious meeting in the house of Capulet, their

shared sonnet becomes one sonnet. As for genre, while clearly a *débat amoureux*, the

interlocutors are unclear, either a lover and his lady, as we have seen with Gower, or a variation

of the kind we find in Charles: the lover's self-examination as a debate between the poet and his

heart.[43] After the first quatrain, with its use of the pilgrimage topos as the arduous road to love

and the fear of profaning the holiest of shrines, the second quatrain responds with a gentle

rebuke. But is it his lady or his conscience? More probably, the pilgrim is his lips from which

both golden eloquence is pronounced and pleasurable kisses received. Although the poem's

conceits are not fully developed—"pilgrim" is affixed to the poet, each of his lips, hands; the

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[42] Judith Haber, *Dramatic Form in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009), p. 51 and Whittler, "The Sonnet's Body," p. 30. Strangely, Whittler characterizes this non-referentiality as "androgynous" (33), as if rhetorical poetry's ability to annihilate identity has anything to do with suspending sexuality.
[43] Dubrow discusses briefly the sonnet as dialogue in "The Sonnet and the Lyric Mode" in A. D. Cousins and Peter Howarth, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*, pp. 25-45 (esp. 39-41).

lady as shrine or goddess or "saint"—the impression is nevertheless the sense of a gathering, as a

pilgrimage is usually understood, not individual but collective. That first reading of the poetic

"I" as universal, offered by Leo Spitzer, is here most relevant.[44] Within that "I" is found a

collective gathering, like Gower's vision of Venus' court where lovers compose in response to

their own experiences, but share the same conventions and, most importantly, the same singular

grammatical marker, minus the individualizing features. It is the prose narrative that

individualizes the poem while the pilgrimage makes poetry a social event for narrative as can be

seen in Chaucer's own prosimetrum, *The Canterbury Tales*.[45] Love's poetry always seems to be

bounded by social and narrative configurations.

The lovers, then, seem to act as if outside the bounds of social conventions to enact poetic

conventions. Looking at the third sonnet free of any social boundaries or markers of identity

allows us to read the two narrative sonnets similarly, not as lyric sonnets filled with social

content but as a social world of strife formed literally by lyric conventions. Verona's political

context becomes a place created to make lovers possible, to speak in the language of sonnets.[46]

Even the prosaic world of political Verona is shaped proportionally, metrically and figuratively

by poetry, including, as seen in the two narrative sonnets, rhymed couplets. The couplet is a

feature of Shakespeare's general deviation from blank verse, but with the sonnet's presence in

Romeo and Juliet, those couplets take on another hue, that of the *volta*, the final two lines of the

English sonnet: conclusive, sententious, advisory, sometimes ironically; but also contradictory,

inconclusive, and unresolved.[47] Not only Romeo and Juliet but all the players find themselves

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[44] Leo Spitzer, "Note on the Poetic and the Empirical 'I' in Medieval Authors" *Traditio* 4 (1946): 414-422.
[45] See Eleanor Johnson's reading of the *Canterbury Tales* as a prosimetrum in *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago).
[46] Henderson notes that unlike Beatrice and Laura, "Romeo's ladylove joins in the sonneteering." Henderson, *Passion Made Public*, p. 1.
[47] For a complete discussion of the sonnet's couplets, see Michael Peterson, "'Truth Needs no Colour…Beautie no Pensell': Couplets and Sententa in Shakespeare's Sonnets" (diss. Northern Illinois University, 2010).

influenced by the volta's particular turns, making every rhymed couplet's appearance in the play potentially under the influence of that shading. Verona the prosaic city then becomes Verona the poetic garden. In that way, poetry gets the upper hand. For the reader invested in politics and the city, and by extension, prose, this argument abounds in "chopped logic" (3.5.150) but for lovers who drink from the same "vial" as Juliet or in the case of the *Tristan*, the same grail, they imbibe another language, a poetic one, which speaks *through* them in figures strange and absurd, until all that is left is song. This is the true formalism of poetry. By becoming a song, love formally comes into existence. Love then becomes more than an expression of conventions, it makes love an emanating reality. And conversely, without poetry and its conventions, love has no form; it cannot exist. This is the lesson the Middle Ages bequeathed to Shakespeare. By disappearing before our eyes, love comes into being and can be heard in all those conventions we previously thought absurd, as Mercutio mockingly points out. Shakespeare's depiction of Romeo and Juliet surrendering their social selves to the topoi of sonnets shows the way in which poetic conventions become the only language within which we can conceptualize love at all. Rather than deriving from lived experience, love's forms derive from poetry. And every true lover and poet under Love's dominion understands this fact. From the outside, it is bewildering and tragic, but for lovers like Romeo and Juliet, it is the only way to live. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* then can be seen as staging a conflict first identified with the Middle Ages, a conflict between song as a virtual and anonymous expression of love as an art of conventions and the prosimetrum's narrative drive to contextualize every song and make every singer appear in the frame in his own particular splendor in a larger social world.

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